INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (IECE) COUNTRY QUESTIONNAIRE – SLOVENIA

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.

In Slovenia, pre-school is highly accessible to all users, in accordance with the law (the Kindergarten Act – 1996, officially consolidated text, Official Gazette of RS št.100 / 05 and the Law on the Placement of Children with Special Needs – 2011 – ZOUPP-1).

Guiding questions	Country response
Legislation and policy at national level 1. Is there a national policy and legislation	 The Kindergarten Act – 1996, officially consolidated text, Official Gazette of RS št.100 / 05 and the Law on the Placement of Children with Special Needs – 2011 (ZOUPP-1).
that gives the right to all children, without exception, from at least 3 years onwards, to attend mainstream Early Childhood Education (ECE)?	 Yes. We have a legislative institution in the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, as well as supportive national institutions, such as the National Educational Institute of Slovenia, Pedagogic Institute, Centre of Social Services, community health centres, NIJZ – National Institute of Public Health, Municipalities' sections and NGOs.
2. Is there support	3. No, pre-school attendance is not compulsory.
available to enable every child to attend ECE?	 The pre-school curriculum states that the transition from home to pre-school, as well as from pre-school to school, should be gradual. There are recommendations
3. Is there a period of compulsory ECE before school starts?	prepared by the National Educational Institute of Slovenia and the Pedagogic Institute. Each pre-school and school has internal practices and agreements on
4. Are arrangements in	how to make transitions as gradual as possible.
place for transition	There are good practices, such as:
from home to ECE and from ECE to primary	 progressive implementation of children into the



Guiding questions	Country response
education for all children?	pre-school programme;
	 extra-curricular activities for pre-school children;
5. Is inclusion stated as a goal of ECE provision?	 a variety of extra-curricular activities;
Is there a policy making	 individual integration plans;
ECE accessible to all children?	 exchange of information;
6. Is there a policy that	 joint projects, gatherings, activities;
obliges mainstream publicly funded ECE to	 exchanging visits between schools and pre-school institutions.
make adaptations so that all children can attend and participate? Please describe	5. Children with special needs are included in mainstream groups, yet a maximum of two are allowed in each group; consequently, the number of children could be reduced to six.
	The integration of children with special needs is based on the principle of inclusion. In the process of working with children with special needs, the emphasis lies on various educational needs, particularly on children's strengths and less on their deficits.
	There is a policy that makes ECE as accessible as possible, but for some groups of children with very significant needs there is still no inclusion on the national level.
	6. The education of children with special needs in Slovenia is based on the objectives and principles laid down in the laws governing individual fields of education and on the following objectives and principles:
	 equal opportunities and respect for diversity of children;
	 maintaining the balance between different aspects of the child's physical and mental development;
	 involvement of parents in the education process;
	 ensuring appropriate conditions that enable optimal development of each child;
	 timely referral to an appropriate programme of



Guiding questions	Country response
	education;
	 the organisation of education and training as close as possible to the place of residence;
	 the integrity and complexity of upbringing and education;
	 individualised approach;
	 continuity of education programmes;
	 interdisciplinary.
Practice at national	1. ECE attendance of children In school year 2014/15:
level	• 3 years: 82.8%
1. What percentage of children attend	• 4 years: 89.3%
mainstream ECE	• 5 years: 91.8%
provision at ages	(Source: www.stat.si/StatWeb/sl/prikazi-
• 3 years	novico?id=5162&idp=9&headerbar=7).
• 4 years	2. Factors:
 5 years (if not 	Health factors
primary)	 No need (extended family)
• 6 years (if not	Conviction (religion, personal beliefs).
primary)? 2. What are the main factors preventing some children from accessing mainstream	 Yes. In 2014, there were 1,074 children with special needs attending mainstream pre-school settings and 249 children attending special developmental ECE settings.
ECE?	4. In the process of adapted programme implementation
3. Are there children who attend special ECE settings? Please provide data if available.	and additional professional assistance for children in the kindergarten, the team of experts collaborates with other institutions involved in monitoring the development of individual children. Professional assistance is provided to some parents even as early as at the time of the child's enrolment in the kindergarten.
4. Describe arrangements for inter- service collaboration to	The process continues through co-operation with professional workers during the lead-in period of the child. The process of providing a child with adapted



Guiding questions	Country response
enable children's attendance and participation? 5. What proportion of children is formally	programme implementation and additional professional assistance abides by the principle of voluntariness, mutual agreement and the confidentiality of data in the welfare of the child and their family.
 identified as having additional needs at: 3 years 	Active participation of all children is guaranteed by active involvement of children in planning, implementing and evaluating educational process according to their chronological and developmental age.
 4 years 5 years 6 years	Children are provided with a supportive learning environment and individual, joint and collective forms of work according to their individual needs and strengths. The educational work is process-oriented and ensures compliance with developmental characteristics and individual needs. It takes place in working playing corners and in the implementation of daily routines.
	Emphasis is placed on the importance of spontaneous children's play, various learning environments and guided learning activities where all children, including children with special needs, are enabled to actively participate on their own initiative and without any specific additional support from adults. All children, including children with special and various educational needs, have the opportunity to express themselves through their strengths and are able to choose the content they are interested in. Great importance is placed on promoting positive self- esteem and self-confidence with respect to children's competencies.
	Through the development of a process approach, the child's holistic development is at the forefront. Furthermore, there are no right or wrong answers, but there exist a large range of various strategies, perceptions, expressions and thinking. It is of great significance that children reveal strategies which help them learn about the world in which they live.
	The professional staff prepare individualised programmes for all children with special needs, which contain certain



Guiding questions	Country response
	adjustments according to the child's disability. Furthermore, individualised programmes are also prepared for children from different social and cultural backgrounds. Children's individual characteristics, abilities, interests, motivation, strengths and weaknesses are taken into consideration while planning adjustments and individualised programmes. Moreover, great importance is placed on planning possible forms and methods of work, allocating responsibilities, monitoring progress, working with parents, forms of necessary adjustments and collaboration with experts in the relevant fields from other institutions (health, school, etc.).
	The Curriculum for Kindergartens (Ministry of Education and Sport, 1999) is applied when organising pre-school educational work. This ensures the application of the basic principles of educational work with pre-school children.
	 The principle of equal opportunities and respect for diversity among children and the principle of multiculturalism underline this. These provide equal terms and conditions for the optimal development of each child. The characteristics of age group, as well as individual differences in development and learning, should be taken into account. These principles ensure optimal conditions for the expression of differences arising from gender, social and cultural background and worldview. They enable children to select content, activities and materials and facilitate experiential learning through which they can learn about their immediate and wider environment.
	The principle of active learning and providing opportunities for verbalisation and other modes of expression allow children to be active in learning. Each child is an individual and has their own way of learning, research and exploring. Activities for children in kindergarten offer various opportunities to find their own answers to their questions and, at the same time, require



Guiding questions	Country response
	listening to each other. The child's expression is an important independent activity which provides guidelines for further planning and designing new objectives.
	There is constant concern about the on-going assurance of a comfortable and supportive environment for learning that facilitates both planned and unplanned guidance for educators, as well as the child's own initiatives.
	The principle of co-operation with parents is also taken into consideration. Parents can provide suggestions and concrete activities to enrich the work of the kindergarten. When working with families, their privacy, culture, identity, language, worldview, values, beliefs, attitudes, habits and customs should be recognised.
	In accordance with the instructions to the curriculum for kindergarten programmes with adapted implementation and additional professional assistance for children with special needs (adopted at 57. meeting SSSI, 17.4.2003), principles of integration and inclusions are also implemented. Furthermore, children with disabilities are provided with the normalisation of conditions in terms of life without exclusion and a common education in an appropriate environment. Special attention is dedicated to early detection and diagnosis and to providing appropriate support to the child.
	5. In 2015, 1.56% of pre-school children included in pre- school institutions were formally identified as having additional needs.

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
<i>Legislation and policy</i> 1. What level of qualification is required to work in ECE:	One pre-school teacher and one pre-school teaching assistant work directly with each group of children. In the first age period, with children aged from 1–3, they must be simultaneously present for at least six hours per day
 for teachers? for other staff? 2. What regulation is there for staff-child ratios in ECE? 	and in the second age period for at least four hours a day. In accordance with the law (Kindergarten Act – 1996, official consolidated text, Official Gazette of RS št.100 / 05), a pre-school teacher and a pre-school teaching assistant implement the educational programme. Other kindergarten employees include advisory workers, special
3. What provision is there for additional staffing to support children with diverse	needs teachers, organisers of the health/hygiene regime, organisers of the diet and technical staff, such as cookery staff, laundry workers, and cleaning and maintenance staff.
and additional needs? 4. Does the initial training of staff include understanding and supporting children with diverse and	Kindergarten pre-school teachers have degrees or diplomas obtained through education or study in the field of early childhood education. Alternatively, they have higher education in the appropriate direction and completed the education or study programme for advancement in the field of early childhood education.
additional needs:for teachers?for other staff?5. Does initial training	Pre-school teaching assistants have secondary education obtained through the educational programme for pre- school education or have completed the fourth year of gymnasium and a professional course for work with pre- school children.
include preparation for working in partnership with families:	Advisory workers must have a university degree in an appropriate field and pedagogical qualifications. Organisers of the health/hygiene regime and organisers of



Guiding questions	Country response
for teachers?for other staff?	the diet must have at least higher professional education in the appropriate area.
 6. Is there a policy for in-service training? Does it cover inclusive education skills? for teachers? for other staff? 	Pre-school teachers who provide additional help for children with special needs must have a university degree in defectology, social pedagogy, psychology or pedagogy. To provide physical help for children with physical disabilities, kindergartens can hire a special needs assistant in cases where they cannot ensure the implementation of the statement within the existing staffing or through other appropriate means. The special needs assistant's workload and the duration of their employment is determined according to the number of children needing physical assistance and the range or number of hours of providing physical assistance arising from the decision on the direction and individualised programmes prepared by the expert group. The special needs assistant must have completed secondary
	education or secondary professional education. The kindergarten provides all professionals with continuing additional training and networking with relevant support institutions, such as health centres, developmental clinics, centres for mental health and social work centres. They are fully aware of the importance of the early detection. With good teamwork, co-operation among teachers, assistants and advisory workers, and regular observations, early detection enables up-to-date necessary adaptations of the programme.
	An internal questionnaire that helps to detect deviations and systematic observation and evaluation of children can also be used for help. Parents are actively involved in the process.
<i>Practice at national</i> <i>level</i> 1. What proportion of staff has the required qualification:	100% of the staff have the required qualification. There is more educational content on methods and didactics for children with special needs. Institutional vision, connectivity, policy-making,



Guiding questions	Country response
• for teachers?	leadership.
for other staff?2. Please describe any	 There is a reduced number of children in the group when children with special needs are included.
proposed changes to the required qualifications. 3. Describe the role of leaders of ECE settings in ensuring inclusive	 Additional individual professional assistance and support is carried out in specific groups according to the type and degree of disability, or disturbances in the department or outside the department, but also individually in the department or outside the department.
practice?	 Advisory professional assistance.
4. Provide any data on staff–child ratio.	 Adaptation of site and facilities in accordance with the instructions tailored to programme
5. Please describe the range of specialist	implementation and in accordance with special educational needs.
support that is available and how it is organised?	Supporting services are organised.
6. How do regular and support staff collaborate in IECE settings?	
7. Describe the role of support assistants in the ECE setting?	

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
<i>Legislation and policy</i> 1. Is there a national ECE curriculum for <i>all</i>	1. Yes: Curriculum for Kindergartens (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, 1999) and the adaptive Curriculum for Kindergartens.
children? 2. Does it include skills and competences to be achieved by children?	2.–7. Yes, as described in Question 4 (<i>Practice at national level</i>) and Question 6 (<i>Legislation and policy at national level</i>) in Section 1 (Access, Procedures and Participation).
3. Describe how the curriculum facilitates inclusion?	
4. Is the use of new technologies included in the curriculum?	
5. Is the curriculum adaptable to meet the needs of all children?	
6. How are parents involved in the adaptation of the curriculum to individual children?	
7. Is there awareness of the impact of labelling on children's participation	
Practice at national level	 Yes: evaluation, reflection, individual programme, team professional groups.



Guiding questions	Country response
1. Is there assessment of the learning and development of children from age 3	 Observation, individualised programmes; Developmental milestones – migration, social integration, active participation. Yes.
years? 2. What arrangements are there for the screening of children's functioning?	 Activities to promote intercultural diversity, tolerance and awareness, recognising diversity, etc. Regular work activities; individual adaptations. Active participation, parents' meetings, individual
3. Is children's engagement and participation in ECE activities monitored?	 conversations, exchange of information, cultural presentations, presenting their professions, customs. 7. – 8. Using computers and ICT for educational work, e-
4. How do ECE settings reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of all children?	 materials, videotapes, photos, evaluation, portfolio. 9. Provisions: A reduced number of children in the group.
5. How do staff adapt (prepare and present) the curriculum and the learning activities to make them accessible to all children?	 Additional individual professional assistance and support is carried out in specific groups according to the type and degree of disability, or disturbances in the department or outside the department, but also individually in the department or outside the department.
6. How are parents involved in this process?7. How are children themselves involved in	 Advisory professional assistance. Adaptation of site and facilities in accordance with the instructions tailored to programme implementation and in accordance with special educational needs.
 this process? 8. How is ICT used to overcome barriers to participation and learning? 9. What provisions are 	 Space adjustment: ensure adequate space (intimate playing corners) for individual work, special equipment (e.g.: a special chair for children with physical disabilities, various orthopaedic aids, accessories for feeding, communicator, wheelchairs, etc.).
there for meeting children's additional	 Physical assistance: an assistant is granted for



Guiding questions	Country response
needs?	children with physical disabilities.
10. How is the environment adapted to the needs of all children?	 Time adjustment: anticipating additional time in various functions, movement and integration of verbal description with their own sensory/motor experience. Enabling the corresponding transitions between different activities, constant routine. Checking a child's understanding.
	 Adjustments in programme implementation: the use of additional teaching aids to promote and graph motor skills, visual resources, and more incentives.
	10.Some examples of adjustments for children with visual impairment:
	• A constant assistant to overcome physical barriers and encourage independence.
	 Spatial adjustment: permanent space planning, tactile markings for orientation on fences, doors, floors. Adjustments to the playroom for free passage.
	 Marking paths for guidance, tactile markings, and different tactile structures (floor mark from the entrance of the kindergarten to the playroom, the playroom entrance, bathroom and toilet; a permanent place in the group is established).
	• All the children's names indicated in Braille in the dressing room.
	• Toys that develop all the senses and compensatory skills.
	 Application of specific natural materials, designs and models.
	 Allowing extra time for characterisation, demonstrations and familiarising themselves with new content, in facilities and movement, and integration of verbal description with their own



Guiding questions	Country response
	sensory-motor experience.

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.

- Yearly plan, individual support plan, developmental plan of institution, expert centres.
- Support services, questionnaires, surveys about parents' and employees' satisfaction.
- Individual planning, monitoring the child's progress
- Observations, evaluations, inclusion

Guiding questions	Country response
<i>Legislation and policy</i> 1. What standards are in place for ensuring the quality of ECE at national level? 2. Describe the	 Statutory norms and provision; legislation. Self-evaluation reflection and reporting of the institution, Business plan, yearly working plan, developmental plan, vision; evaluation and reflection of planning. Curriculum for Kindergartens (Ministry of Education
 arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the quality of ECE provision? 3. How is the participation of all children reflected in the national quality standards for ECE? 4. How does national policy identify and address inequalities in 	 and Sport, 1999). 4. Legislation: The Kindergarten Act – 1996, officially consolidated text, Official Gazette of RS št.100 / 05, the Law on the Placement of Children with Special Needs – 2011 – ZOUPP-1, The White Paper, Guidelines for integrating children with special needs, Guidelines for inclusion. 5. Through the expert institutions: National Educational Institute of Slovenia, Pedagogic Institute of Slovenia, Department for Pre-School Education, universities, initiatives by civil incentive, NGOs.
participation in ECE? 5. How does research inform policy and	



Guiding questions	Country response
practice in ECE?	
<i>Practice at national</i> <i>level</i> 1. How do staff monitor	 Through direct work: observation, evaluation, planning, team meetings, individual adaptations of educational process, implemented curricula, etc.
and evaluate the participation and learning of all children?	2. Parents' participation and involvement is very clearly described in the Curriculum for Kindergartens. Parents can provide suggestions and concrete activities to
2. How are parents involved in this process?	enrich the work of the kindergarten. When working with families, their privacy, culture, identity, language, worldview, values, beliefs, attitudes, habits and customs should be recognised.
3. How are children themselves involved in this process?	There are different forms of participation: individual conversations, playing hours, presentation of their culture, occupation, open days, parental meetings, surveys, the daily exchange of information, individual interviews, a questionnaire to parents at enrolment, the daily exchange of current information, email notifications, active participation of parents in the implemented curriculum.
	Additionally, parents play an active part in kindergarten leadership: each group of children has a chosen representative who participates in the parents' council. The parents' council has three representatives in the institute's council.
	 Active participation, individualisation of work: Active participation of all children is guaranteed by active involvement of children in planning, implementing and evaluating educational process according to their chronological and developmental age.
	Children are provided with a supportive learning environment and individual, joint and collective forms of work according to their individual needs and strengths. The educational work is process-oriented and ensures compliance with developmental characteristics and individual needs. It takes place in working playing corners



Guiding questions	Country response
	and in the implementation of daily routines.
	Emphasis is placed on the importance of spontaneous children's play, various learning environments and guided learning activities where all children, including children with special needs, are enabled to actively participate on their own initiative and without any specific additional support from adults. All children, including children with special and various educational needs, have the opportunity to express themselves through their strengths and are able to choose the content they are interested in. Great importance is placed on promoting positive self- esteem and self-confidence with respect to children's competencies.
	Through the development of a process approach, the child's holistic development is at the forefront. Furthermore, there are no right or wrong answers, but there exist a large range of various strategies, perceptions, expressions and thinking. It is of great significance that children reveal strategies which help them learn about the world in which they live.
	The professional staff prepare individualised programmes for all children with special needs, which contain certain adjustments according to the child's disability. Furthermore, individualised programmes are also prepared for children from different social and cultural backgrounds. Children's individual characteristics, abilities, interests, motivation, strengths and weaknesses are taken into consideration while planning adjustments and individualised programmes. Moreover, great importance is placed on planning possible forms and methods of work, allocating responsibilities, monitoring progress, working with parents, forms of necessary adjustments and collaboration with experts in the relevant fields from other institutions (health, school, etc.).

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.

- A very clear definition of the roles, duties and responsibilities in the vertical.
- Guided encouragement for active participation of all stakeholders, allowing personnel and material and other conditions for participation.
- Co-operation shall promote and facilitate local community, Ministry and NGOs.
- Project initiatives, calls for co-operation, common actions and co-operation.
- Legislation is changing in support of inclusive education and environment. Trend towards more inclusive environments.
- Integration of children in suitable programmes.
- Autonomy of the kindergarten to make inclusive adaptations for children.
- Open curriculum with a holistic approach.

Guiding questions	Country response
1. Under which ministry(ies) /	 MIZŠ – Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and local municipality
	2. Education, project work, examples of good practice.
	3. The MIZŠ – Ministry of Education, Science and Sport – always provides 23% of the kindergarten fee. Parents may pay a maximum of 77% of the total price according
2. How is intersectorial (health, social and education) collaboration promoted among all stakeholders	to their income and social status.
	 Parents must apply for reduced fees and then they can pay according to their social and economic status. The government pays the difference.
in ECE?	5. For the second child enrolled in the kindergarten, the
3. How is free or	parents pay only 30% of the price of the first child. For the third child enrolled in the kindergarten, parents do



Guiding questions	Country response
affordable provision guaranteed to all children age 3 years and over?	not have to pay anything. The kindergarten fees are set at municipality level.
4. What additional economic measures are available for children with additional needs and their families to access mainstream ECE?	
5. How is additional funding allocated?	
Practice at national level	 It does not vary: it is equal across regions and localities, as provided for by law and equal norms and curricula.
 How far does the standard of ECE provision vary across regions and localities? How effective is collaboration between the ECE and health, social and other relevant agencies for children and families? 	 It is very efficient and very good. - It is regulated by law and it supports inclusive environments.
3. What proportion of children (3 years to primary education) make use of additional funding?	
4. How well does additional funding support inclusive education?	