



INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (IECE) COUNTRY QUESTIONNAIRE – AUSTRIA

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.

Legislation and policy at national level

Guiding questions	Country responses
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>In Austria there is no legal right to a kindergarten place from three years of age.</p> <p>Kindergarten attendance is mandatory from the age of five, after which there is also a legal claim (see paragraph 3).</p>
2. Is there support available to enable every child to attend ECE?	<p>The cost of attending a kindergarten is regulated in Austria.</p> <p>The obligatory attendance from the age of five is free throughout Austria.</p> <p>In some provinces such as Upper Austria, attendance in ECE settings is free from the age of 36 months.</p>
3. Is there a period of compulsory ECE before school starts?	<p>Since the kindergarten year 2010–2011, half-day kindergarten attendance (at least 16 hours) is compulsory for children from five years of age from September to June, excluding school holidays.</p> <p>In addition to school holidays, a holiday of up to three weeks can also be claimed.</p> <p>Children who already attend school, or for who kindergarten is</p>



Guiding questions	Country responses
	<p>unsuitable (for various reasons including illness, serious physical or mental disability, medical reasons, remote location, etc.), or who are in domestic or childminder's care are exempt. Exemption from the attendance requirement requires a request from the parents or other guardians, an educational assessment of the child, legitimate justification of the parents' or other guardians' interests and a home visit to the child.</p>
<p>4. Are arrangements in place for transition from home to ECE and from ECE to primary education for all children?</p>	<p>Requirements of the education reform commission (since September 2014):</p> <p>School entry phase and primary school package, new language support:</p> <p>Transition phases are designed for children in which their basic skills, talents and interests are strengthened. The last compulsory year of kindergarten and the first two years of primary school are classed as the school entry phase.</p> <p>Groups of learners enrolling, new holistic view:</p> <p>Data from kindergarten is considered during the transition to school. Descriptions of individual developments (Education Compass) are included in the tailor-made planning of children's primary education. Primary school teachers, pedagogues and other professionals support the child's transition.</p> <p>Funding-related data exchange:</p> <p>A nationwide base for the distribution and use of data is created and communicated between kindergartens and primary school institutions. Kindergarten teachers and pedagogues know about the development, strengths, weaknesses, talents, interests and abilities of each individual child thanks to their observations applied in kindergarten portfolios (Education Compass). This knowledge must not be lost. The information therefore follows the child through primary school and is built on, encouraging and promoting the child's development.</p> <p>There is further development and nationwide expansion of the co-operation between kindergarten and primary school</p>



Guiding questions	Country responses
	<p>teachers and pedagogues (schools network), through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– the evaluation of past collaborations;– educational development;– the gradual implementation of the new school entrance phase;– knowledge transfer of best practice examples in the system;– meetings of managers from primary schools. <p>The goal is professional guidance and reflection on the new school entrance phase, data exchange, language training, the curriculum, quality of development and the intensification and interlocking of competencies between the institutions.</p>
<p>5. Is inclusion stated as a goal of ECE provision? Is there a policy making ECE accessible to all children?</p>	<p>Since 2009 the '<i>Bunderländerübergreifende</i> education master plan' applies to primary education facilities across Austria. 'Inclusion' and 'diversity' are two of its twelve principles.</p> <p>National Disability Action Plan 2012–2020.</p> <p>The Austrian Federal Government Strategy on the Implementation of the UN Disability Convention – Children with disabilities:</p> <p>Article 7 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) states that Austria must take all necessary measures to ensure that children with disabilities can enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children. A screening process is undertaken to determine abnormalities in children as early as possible, to enable appropriate early intervention or therapy to be carried out.</p> <p>In these cases, a central contact and co-ordination centres for children with disabilities are regionally available. These organisations co-ordinate treatment units for disabled children.</p> <p>According to Article 7 paragraph 1 of the Federal Constitution, the equal treatment of people with and without disabilities should be ensured in all areas of daily life. The Federal</p>



Guiding questions	Country responses
	<p>Constitutional Law on the Rights of Children in 2011 explicitly states that every child with disabilities has the right to such protection and care as their special needs require, which is constitutionally guaranteed.</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>National Disability Action Plan 2012–2020.</p> <p>The Austrian Federal Government Strategy on the Implementation of the UN Disability Convention.</p> <p>An expanded range of childcare places from 2008 help to combat child poverty and contribute to the work-life balance. A total of €100 million was contributed by the federal government for this between 2008 and 2014.</p> <p>Due to an increase in individual care expenses, children with disabilities benefit disproportionately from this state-sponsored expansion.</p> <p>Children with disabilities:</p> <p>The family allowance is a major part of the Family Compensation Act 1967 (FLAG). For children with significant disabilities or disorders a higher family allowance is paid; in 2010 around 70,000 people qualified for increased family allowances.</p> <p>In each province family counselling centres offer counselling for families with disabled members. Every year these 22 information centres receive around €500,000 to distribute from the family counselling fund to target families who are identified by the centres. The aim is to encourage children with disabilities to receive the specific therapy they require from an early age.</p> <p>Regular, high-quality treatment in childhood contributes to the reduction of permanent severe disability. Parents and relatives of children with disabilities are particularly supported. In order to enable the parents to work, disabled children can attend public and private childcare facilities (kindergartens, nurseries, etc.) during the day. They should be as close to home as possible and supervised by teachers. Tax relief and increased family allowance for severely disabled children continue to be</p>



Guiding questions	Country responses
	made available. Child rehabilitation is to be expanded on the basis of a study by the Health Austria GmbH.

Practice at national level

Guiding questions	Country responses
<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)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 73% of 3-year-olds attend Austrian kindergartens and crèches; – At the age of 4, the enrolment rate is 92%; – At the age of 5, the rate is 96%. <p>(OECD report, 2015).</p>
<p>2. What are the main factors preventing some children from accessing mainstream ECE?</p>	<p>There is no data for this.</p>
<p>3. Are there children who attend special ECE settings? Please provide data if available.</p>	<p>There are opportunities to attend the following, if needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ‘Control group with single inclusion’ (<i>Regelgruppe mit Einzelintegration</i>); – ‘Inclusive group’ (<i>Integrationsgruppe</i>); – ‘Special education group’ (<i>Heilpädagogische Gruppe</i>). <p>Inclusive groups in kindergartens or nurseries with a child with disabilities include at least 10 but no more than 20 children.</p> <p>Inclusive groups in kindergartens or nurseries with two to four children with disabilities include at least 10 but no more than 15 children.</p>



Guiding questions	Country responses
	<p><i>Heilpädagogische</i> (special education) groups contain at least 5 but no more than 12 children.</p> <p><i>Heilpädagogische</i> (special education) groups with children with severe impairments have at least 5 and a maximum of 8 children.</p>
4. Describe arrangements for inter-service collaboration to enable children's attendance and participation?	<p>Kindergartens and nurseries are regulated regionally in Austria and are therefore all different.</p> <p>In Upper Austria, for example, the following applies:</p> <p>Reimbursement for special education groups Remedial groups (§ 2 para 1 no. 6) are entitled to a reimbursement of costs determined by the amount of strictly necessary expenses less income.</p> <p>Children with disabilities who attend special education groups or are included in mainstream nursery are granted a reimbursement for transportation, unless an internal accommodation of the Upper Austria Equal Opportunities Act is continuously available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Reimbursement for support services <p>The cost of accumulating support service hours within the scope of the available annual budget is reimbursed. The total reimbursement for support services is a maximum of €14.60 per assigned study.</p>
5. What proportion of children is formally identified as having additional needs at: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 years• 4 years• 5 years• 6 years	There is no data for this.



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.

Legislation and policy

Guiding questions	Country responses
<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>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 5 years in the BAKIP (training college for pre-primary teachers), plus, since September 2016, BAfEP (training college for primary education), resulting in matriculation and diploma examination; – 5 semesters in college (diploma examination). <p>Other staff: See part 2.</p>
<p>2. What regulation is there for staff-child ratios in ECE?</p>	<p>Austrian Institute for Family Studies:</p> <p>Maximum numbers in kindergarten groups are between 20 and 25 children. Actual group sizes in Austrian kindergartens in 2009–10 averaged 19.9 children per group. At full capacity ratios vary from 1:12 to 1:17 staff to children.</p> <p>Even in kindergarten groups an educational specialist is uniformly provided for each group that requires training for kindergarten teachers.</p> <p>In addition, many states require auxiliary staff, in which differences in skill sets are seen in different states. Staff range from having no particular professional qualification to having completed 60- to 300-hour courses on inclusive practice.</p>
<p>3. What provision is there for additional staffing to support children</p>	<p>There is no uniform, nationwide, mandatory training for support and auxiliary staff.</p> <p>‘Consultancy for Integration’ is a 5-semester course completed</p>



Guiding questions	Country responses
with diverse and additional needs?	by specialist kindergarten teachers, or, since September 2016, the compulsory course for inclusive primary education.
<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>Special Education is included in the fourth and fifth years of teacher training (1–2 hours per week). From 2016 ‘Inclusive Education’ will also be included (2 hours per week).</p> <p>There is no nationwide prescribed training for other staff.</p>
<p>5. Does initial training include preparation for working in partnership with families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for teachers? • for other staff? 	<p>‘Educational partnerships’ is part of the curriculum in basic teacher training.</p> <p>There is no nationwide prescribed training for other staff.</p>
<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>Teachers have the right to education in the extent of the working week. The content can be determined individually.</p> <p>There are no regulations for other staff.</p>

Practice at national level

Guiding questions	Country responses
1. What proportion	In 2015–16, there were 35,218 qualified teachers in



Guiding questions	Country responses
<p>of staff has the required qualification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• for teachers?• for other staff?	<p>kindergarten (Statistik Austria). There are no records for other staff.</p>
<p>2. Please describe any proposed changes to the required qualifications.</p>	<p>–</p>
<p>3. Describe the role of leaders of ECE settings in ensuring inclusive practice?</p>	<p>Not regulated</p>
<p>4. Provide any data on staff–child ratio.</p>	<p>See above</p>
<p>5. Please describe the range of specialist support that is available and how it is organised?</p>	<p>Each state employs a certain number of professionals who give ‘expert advice for inclusion’, with every specialist being responsible for approximately 2.5 children per hour.</p>
<p>6. How do regular and support staff collaborate in IECE settings?</p>	<p>In Austria there is hardly any co-operation; the federal state mainly undertakes technical discussions.</p>
<p>7. Describe the role of support assistants in the ECE setting?</p>	<p>Ancillary activities and support for individual children is undertaken under the guidance and supervision of an educational specialist.</p>



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.

Legislation and policy

Guiding questions	Country responses
1. Is there a national ECE curriculum for <i>all</i> children?	The <i>Bunderländerübergreifender</i> Education Master Plan has been in place since 2009.
2. Does it include skills and competences to be achieved by children?	The focus is on individual promotion and support of each child. It does not outline any objectives or skills to be achieved.
3. Describe how the curriculum facilitates inclusion?	'Inclusion' and 'diversity' are two of its twelve principles.
4. Is the use of new technologies included in the curriculum?	They are not explicitly mentioned.
5. Is the curriculum adaptable to meet the needs of all children?	Yes – set in the pedagogical orientation.
6. How are parents involved in the adaptation of the curriculum to	'Educational partnership' is one of its twelve principles.



Guiding questions	Country responses
individual children?	
7. Is there awareness of the impact of labelling on children's participation and learning.	This is expressly mentioned in the educational philosophy of the Master Plan.

Practice at national level

Guiding questions	Country responses
1. Is there assessment of the learning and development of children from age 3 years?	The Education Master Plan is specifically aimed at children aged 3 to 6.
2. What arrangements are there for the screening of children's functioning?	There are not any listed in the Education Master Plan. Throughout Austria, language proficiency positions are provided in the nursery for each child from the age of 4.
3. Is children's engagement and participation in ECE activities monitored?	The Education Master Plan is specifically aimed at children aged 3 to 6.
4. How do ECE settings reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of all children?	'Inclusion' and 'diversity' are two of the twelve principles in the Education Master Plan.
5. How do staff	Individual professionals tend to work differently.



Guiding questions	Country responses
adapt (prepare and present) the curriculum and the learning activities to make them accessible to all children?	
6. How are parents involved in this process?	Parents are informed through information meetings or development discussions.
7. How are children themselves involved in this process?	The Education Master Plan is basically orientated against the self-determined and individual learning of children in individual education sectors.
8. How is ICT used to overcome barriers to participation and learning?	–
9. What provisions are there for meeting children's additional needs?	The Consultancy for Integration may approve additional support or an assistant for a child.
10. How is the environment adapted to the needs of all children?	After consulting a specialist, group rooms are adapted accordingly to allow inclusion.



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.

Legislation and policy

Guiding questions	Country responses
1. What standards are in place for ensuring the quality of ECE at national level?	There are no Austria-wide standards.
2. Describe the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the quality of ECE provision?	Quality assurance is regulated individually in the provinces. In Upper Austria, the country has an evaluation method that must be undertaken annually by each setting.
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 participation in ECE?	–
5. How does research inform	OECD report on education in Austria in 2016.



Guiding questions	Country responses
policy and practice in ECE?	

Practice at national level

Guiding questions	Country responses
1. How do staff monitor and evaluate the participation and learning of all children?	See above
2. How are parents involved in this process?	Not at all
3. How are children themselves involved in this process?	Not at all



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.

Legislation and policy

Guiding questions	Country responses
1. Under which ministry(ies) / department(s) are ECE provisions regulated and funded?	Ministry of Education and Family Ministry
2. How is intersectorial (health, social and education) collaboration promoted among all stakeholders in ECE?	–
3. How is free or affordable provision guaranteed to all children age 3 years and over?	There is no guarantee of a place in kindergarten before 5 years of age.
4. What additional economic measures are available for children with additional needs and their families to access mainstream ECE?	See point 1.6



Guiding questions	Country responses
5. How is additional funding allocated?	–

Practice at national level

Guiding questions	Country responses
1. How far does the standard of ECE provision vary across regions and localities?	Due to the different legal requirements the standards of the facilities are very different.
2. How effective is collaboration between the ECE and health, social and other relevant agencies for children and families?	–
3. What proportion of children (3 years to primary education) make use of additional funding?	There is no record of this.
4. How well does additional funding support inclusive education?	–