



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

## 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.

Local governments are obliged to provide all children aged from 1.5 to 7 years who are permanent residents with the opportunity to attend a pre-primary childcare institution in their catchment area if the parents so wish. This obligation includes children with physical, speech, sensory or intellectual disabilities or those who need special help or special care (children with special educational needs).

Currently 93.5% of 4- to 7-year-old children are in pre-primary education; 77% of 1.5- to 3-year-old children are in pre-primary education and 10% are in other childcare.

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>According to the Pre-school Childcare Institutions Act, pre-primary childcare institutions are educational institutions for pre-primary aged children offering day-care alongside the opportunity to acquire pre-primary education. Childcare institutions support a child’s family and promote the growth and development of the child and their individuality.</p> <p>After parental leave, all 1.5- to 7-year-old children have the opportunity to attend pre-primary childcare institutions. For children with special needs, conditions are created for learning in inclusive groups together with other children. If there are no opportunities to establish an inclusive group in a children's institution, the local municipality or city government creates special groups or establishes special pre-schools.</p> <p>It is not obligatory to attend pre-primary childcare institutions.</p> <p>Parents who want to enrol their children in a pre-primary</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<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? 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>childcare institution should contact the local authorities to find out about the admission requirements and documents required for enrolment. Municipalities are obliged to guarantee a place in a local pre-primary childcare institution for all children aged between 1.5 and 7 years.</p> <p>Parents can choose which pre-primary childcare institution they want to send their child to, provided there are places available. They can also choose the type of institution – private or municipal. Pre-primary childcare institutions must hold an education licence, which can be verified at the Estonian Education Information System (EHIS) website.</p> <p>In accordance with the Pre-school Childcare Institutions Act, a pre-primary institution issues a ‘readiness for school’ card to children who have completed the institution’s curriculum, demonstrating child development. Parents submit the ‘readiness for school’ card to the school where the child begins their compulsory school attendance. The procedure for completing ‘readiness for school’ cards is set out in the Ministry of Education and Research’s ‘List of learning and education-related mandatory documents for a pre-school childcare institution and the procedure for completing such documents’. A ‘readiness for school’ card outlines the child’s achievements in the development of general skills and in fields of learning and educational activities, following the national curriculum for pre-primary childcare institutions. The child’s strengths are described, as well as aspects that need development. Evaluation and the compilation of ‘readiness for school’ cards support the smooth transfer of a child from pre-primary to school education. The card helps the class teacher to understand the child’s individuality and development and to plan necessary co-operation with parents and support specialists. The class teacher takes account of the child’s previous experiences and, in co-operation with the family, creates opportunities to support the child’s individual</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
	<p>development.</p> <p>If the parents so wish, local governments are obliged to provide all permanently residing children aged from 1.5 to 7 years with the opportunity to attend a pre-primary childcare institution in the catchment area. According to the Pre-school Childcare Institutions Act § 14, this obligation includes children with physical, speech, sensory or intellectual disabilities or those who need special help or special care (children with special educational needs).</p> <p>Conditions will be created for children with special needs to learn in inclusive groups together with other children. If it is not possible to establish an inclusive group, the local municipality or city government creates special groups or establishes special pre-schools.</p> <p>Parents can choose the childcare institution for their child as long as there are vacant places in the institution they wish the child to attend. If vacant places exist in a childcare institution after the admission of children permanently residing in the catchment area, children from outside the catchment area will be admitted, starting with children permanently residing in the same rural municipality or city, followed by children whose parents are employed in the catchment area. When admitting children residing outside the catchment area, applications are considered on a first come, first served basis.</p> <p>Children with special educational needs are admitted to inclusive or special groups on the basis of a written application from a parent and a decision from an advisory committee. The Ministry of Education and Research has established the procedures and principles for admission of children to, and their exclusion from, special pre-schools or groups.</p> <p>Estonian language training is funded by the state budget for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– children whose home language is not Estonian;</li><li>– children who attend immersion groups or groups</li></ul>



Guiding questions	Country response
	<p>with a language of instruction other than Estonian;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– children who attend Estonian-based groups and require Estonian language training as a supporting study.</li> </ul> <p>Support from the state budget is allocated for both the organisation of learning and obtaining teaching aids.</p> <p>Fees in all Early Childhood Education (ECE) settings are regulated and range from 0–78 PPS (purchasing power standard), with an average of 35 PPS monthly (food is an additional 2 PPS per day, which makes a monthly total of 82 PPS). The maximum fees cannot exceed 20% of the minimum salary (1 PPS = EUR 0.739836).</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>According to the Estonian Education Information System (EHIS) 2015:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 88.9% of 3-year-olds attend mainstream ECE provision</li> <li>– 91.4% of 4-year-olds attend mainstream ECE provision</li> <li>– 91.8% of 5-year-olds attend mainstream ECE provision</li> <li>– 93.3% of 6-year-olds attend mainstream ECE provision.</li> </ul> <p>Local governments are obliged to provide all children aged from 1.5 to 7 years who are permanent residents of the catchment area with the opportunity to attend a pre-primary childcare institution in the catchment area if the parents so wish. There are no factors preventing some children from accessing mainstream ECE.</p> <p>Children attending pre-primary childcare institutions have guaranteed access to speech therapists and special education teachers. According to the 2014/2015 data from the Estonian Education Information System (EHIS), such support systems are made available to 11,090 children, nearly 16% of those attending mainstream pre-</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<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"><li>• 3 years</li><li>• 4 years</li><li>• 5 years</li><li>• 6 years</li></ul>	<p>primary childcare institutions.</p> <p>Local governments and pre-primary childcare institutions also use services provided by regional counselling centres (speech therapists, special education teachers, psychological and social-pedagogical counselling) which receive state support.</p> <p>11,090 children, nearly 16% of 1.5- to 7-year-old children, are formally identified as having additional needs.</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><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>Teachers and head teachers have a higher education degree equivalent to a bachelor’s degree (at least three years of study) in pre-primary education. Universities provide higher education in the specialised subject of early childhood education at bachelor’s, master’s and doctorate levels and pursue research in educational sciences.</p> <p>According to the Pre-school Childcare Institutions Act and with the objective of ensuring a safe educational environment for children, the organisation of staff in a pre-primary institution is based on the principle that during the whole working time in a group there is one person employed in the field of learning and teaching or an employee assisting a teacher for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– up to seven children in a crèche group;</li> <li>– up to nine children in a mixed group;</li> <li>– up to ten children in a pre-school group;</li> <li>– up to eight children in an inclusive group;</li> <li>– between two and six children in a group of children with special needs, depending on their specific needs.</li> </ul> <p>In the case given in a sub-section of the Pre-school Childcare Institutions Act, there may be one person employed in the field of learning and teaching or an employee assisting a teacher for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– up to eight children in a crèche group;</li> </ul>



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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– up to ten children in a mixed group;</li> <li>– up to twelve children in a pre-school group.</li> </ul> <p>Qualification requirements for teachers at pre-primary childcare institutions are established by a Ministry of Education and Research (2002) regulation. According to the regulation, teachers and support specialists must have competencies for supporting children with diverse and additional needs.</p> <p>Teachers must undergo continuing education. Funding for the continuing education of teachers and other staff is provided from the state budget.</p> <p>Funding for the continuing education of teachers and other staff is provided from the state budget.</p> <p>Based on the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020, the professionalism of teachers and other staff and the professional development of teachers and staff, including inclusive education skills, are priorities of the Estonian Teacher and Early Childhood Education Policy 2014–2020 (Government of the Republic 2014).</p>
<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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 93% of teachers have the required qualification;</li> <li>– 98% of leaders have the required qualification;</li> <li>– 99% of support specialists have the required qualification.</li> </ul> <p>There are no proposed changes to the required qualifications.</p> <p>The childcare institution’s curriculum is its source document for education. Childcare institutions prepare their curricula based on the national curriculum. An institution’s curriculum is prepared and developed with the participation of the teachers and with the involvement of the parents. The head teacher of a childcare institution approves the curriculum based on a proposal from the teachers’ council after hearing the opinion of the board of trustees. The following is set out in a childcare</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<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 settings?</p> <p>7. Describe the role of support assistants in the ECE setting?</p>	<p>institution’s curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the principles for the development of children, including the organisation of analysis and assessment;</li> <li>– the principles for the development of children with special needs, including the organisation of support;</li> <li>– the principles for co-operation with parents, including how it will be organised.</li> </ul> <p>Promotion of a child’s development, including in inclusive education, is through teamwork, for which the head teacher of the childcare institution is responsible.</p> <p>No data available on staff–child ratio. However, please refer to the ‘Legislation and policy section’ above for information about relevant legislation.</p> <p>Local governments and pre-primary childcare institutions use services provided by regional counselling centres (speech therapists, special education teachers, psychological and social-pedagogical counselling).</p> <p>In order to ensure the availability of pedagogical and psychological counselling, a national ESF (European Social Fund) programme, Developing an Educational Counselling System, has been implemented, with the aim of ensuring early childhood intervention in all regions, improving the counselling system and training service providers. The counselling centres, <i>Rajaleidja keskused</i>, established as a result of the programme will be used to improve collaboration between education, social affairs and health care organisations in identifying the particular needs of children with special needs and their families and providing them with support.</p> <p>Assistants usually implement activity programmes designed for children, prepare craft materials and assist children in using them. They also organise the daily routine (prepare and serve meals, arrange transition periods such as lunch and rest for children) and guide</p>



---

<b>Guiding questions</b>	<b>Country response</b>
	children in their activities.



### 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.

According to the National Curriculum for Pre-school Childcare Institutions, the common objective of teaching and education is the versatile and consistent development of children through co-operation between home and pre-primary childcare institutions. Based on the common objective, teaching and education fosters the physical, mental, social and emotional development of children as a result of which the children develop a comprehensive and positive self-image, understanding of the surrounding environment, ethical behaviour and initiative, basic working habits, physical activity and understanding of the importance of taking care of one’s health, and play, learning, social and self-management skills develop.

Co-operation between teachers and staff and the inclusion of parents are important factors in the work of a pre-primary childcare institution. They contribute to the creation of an educational environment which supports the development of the child. The responsibility of teachers and parents has grown with regard to assessment and support of a child’s development (e.g., holding development interviews with children).

Promotion of a child’s development, including in inclusive education, is through teamwork, for which the head teacher of the childcare institution is responsible.

Guiding questions	Country response
<p><b>Legislation and policy</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</p>	<p>There is National Curriculum for Pre-school Childcare Institutions.</p> <p>It includes skills and competences to be achieved by children.</p> <p>For the purposes of the curriculum, ‘a child with special needs’ means a child whose development, abilities, state of health, linguistic or cultural background or personal characteristics require changes or adjustments to be made to the child’s growing environment (playing and teaching aids, rooms, schooling and education methods, etc.) or in group activity plans. Fostering the development of children with special needs, including talented children, in</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<p>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>pre-primary schools requires team working for which the head teacher of the childcare institution is responsible.</p> <p>If necessary, the group teachers prepare an individual education plan at the beginning of the academic year, in co-operation with speech therapists or special education teachers, other specialists and the child's parents. At least once an academic year a summary is made of the implementation of the individual development plan, the suitability of the environment for development and the future needs of the child.</p> <p>In co-operation with the Foundation Innove and Lasteveeb OÜ, internet-based teaching materials have been developed to support pre-primary age children in learning Estonian as an additional language.</p> <p>The purpose of the Information Technology Foundation for Education (HITSA) is to promote young people's interest in IT and introduce them to the future possibilities in the field. Activities are aimed at encouraging pre-primary teachers to use technology (including programming and robotics) more widely in teaching. To support this goal, the HITSA implements programmes which offer varied opportunities for integrating technology into studies, including basic and in-service training courses, subject-based model lessons and tasks, learning and teaching materials and examples of curricula that integrate technology.</p> <p>The principles of education take into account the individuality and development potential of a child. The curriculum is adaptable to the needs of all children.</p> <p>Estonian pre-schools put a strong emphasis on value education, including supporting children's wellbeing and safety, preventing bullying and facilitating tolerance, care, respect and courage in children and families.</p> <p>In 2010–2014, the Ministry of Education and Research supported the project 'Kindergartens Free of Bullying' which was implemented in co-operation with the Danish</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
	<p>children’s protection union ‘Save the Children’ and the Estonian Union for Child Welfare. To date, two thirds of the pre-schools in Estonia have joined the project. All pre-primary childcare institutions in Estonia are expected to have joined the programme by 2020.</p> <p>At least once per academic year, the teacher carries out a development process-orientated interview with parents, giving feedback on their child’s development and study results and exploring the parents’ views and expectations regarding the child’s development.</p> <p>Parents, along with other stakeholders, are involved in preparing the child’s individual education plan.</p> <p>Analysis and assessment of a child’s development is important in order to understand the child’s specific characteristics, ascertain their special needs, promote positive self-esteem and development and to plan education in co-operation with the parents.</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 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</p>	<p>Please refer to the previous paragraph above.</p> <p>Assessment of a child’s development is a part of the everyday education process. Teachers carry out observations according to a certain plan and children are observed in everyday activities, undirected play and in activities guided by the teacher.</p> <p>A child’s development is assessed based on expected general skills and the results of the educational subject fields.</p> <p>In 2012, the Ministry of Education and Research drew up an electronic instruction on the assessment and support of child development and the organisation of work in pre-primary childcare institutions.</p> <p>The principles of education are to value the cultural traditions of Estonia and take into account the specific characteristics of other cultures.</p> <p>The state funds Estonian language training for:</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<p>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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– children who speak a language other than Estonian at home;</li> <li>– children who attend immersion groups or groups with a language of instruction other than Estonian;</li> <li>– children who require additional Estonian language training as a supporting study.</li> </ul> <p>The state budget also funds both the organisation of learning and teaching resources.</p> <p>Education is based on the group's daily schedule, which determines the daily rhythm based on the children's age. Everyday activities alternate between play, undirected activities and activities planned by the teacher.</p> <p>When planning activities, a teacher should take into account the development level, age and interests of a child. While the child grows and develops the content of teaching, as a rule, is based on the principle 'from closer to farther, from single to general.'</p> <p>When planning group education the objectives, subject matter, content of teaching and activities for the planned period (a week, a month, etc.) should be specified. Planning group education should be flexible and enable the teacher to make changes, if necessary.</p> <p>In order to support child development, the teachers in a childcare institution co-operate with the parents. This co-operation should be based on dialogue, mutual trust and respect.</p> <p>The teacher informs the parents regularly of the child's development, studies and educational organisation. The teacher provides opportunities for parents to receive support and advice on education issues.</p> <p>Parents are allowed to participate in the planning and execution of the education process and can provide feedback regarding the childcare institution's activity.</p> <p>According to the National Curriculum of the Pre-school Childcare Institutions Act, the child is an active participant</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
	<p>in education who takes pleasure in action. A child should be involved in the planning of activities, be directed to make choices and analyse what has been done.</p> <p>Within education conditions should be created which develop a child's ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– plan their own activities, to make choices;</li><li>– relate new knowledge to earlier experiences;</li><li>– use the acquired knowledge in different situations and activities;</li><li>– talk about the acquired knowledge and skills;</li><li>– assess the efficiency of their own activity;</li><li>– take pleasure in success and the success of others and cope with failures.</li></ul> <p>Internet-based teaching materials have been developed in co-operation with the Foundation Innove and Lasteveeb OÜ. These materials support the learning of Estonian as an additional language for pre-primary age children.</p> <p>The purpose of the Information Technology Foundation for Education (HITSA) is to encourage young people to consider future possibilities in the field of IT and as such, pre-primary teachers are supported in using technology, such as programming and robotics, more widely in teaching. The HITSA also implements programmes offering opportunities to integrate technology into studies, including in-service training courses, subject-based model lessons, learning and teaching materials and examples of curricula that integrate technology.</p> <p>Teachers work with speech therapists, special education teachers, other specialists and parents to prepare an individual education plan at the beginning of the year. The individual education plan, the suitability of the environment for development and the child's future needs are then evaluated and summarised at least once a year. A national ESF programme called Developing an Educational Counselling System has been put into place,</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
	<p>which ensures the availability of pedagogical and psychological counselling. This in turn guarantees early childhood intervention in all regions, while improving the counselling system and training service providers. As a result, counselling centres, <i>Rajaleidja keskused</i>, have been established, which will improve collaboration between educators, social affairs organisations and health care services. Improved collaboration will assist in the identification of children's special needs and the needs of their families and will help in providing support.</p> <p>Children with special needs are entitled to changes or adjustments in their environment (playing and teaching aids, rooms, schooling and education methods, etc.).</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.

According to the Pre-school Childcare Institutions Act, internal evaluation is obligatory in pre-primary institutions and organisations under state supervision. The aim is to support the creation of internal quality insurance systems in pre-primary institutions.

The objective of internal evaluation is to ensure conditions that support children’s development and the consistent development of the institution. This is done by identifying the institution’s strengths and issues for improvement in its activities, from which an action plan for implementation of the developments can be produced.

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>In Estonia the criteria for internal evaluation in ECE settings have been set through regulation from the Ministry of Education and Research. These criteria cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– leadership and management;</li> <li>– personnel management;</li> <li>– co-operation with interest groups and stakeholders, including children and parents;</li> <li>– resource management;</li> <li>– the education process and children’s results;</li> <li>– statistics for the pre-primary institution (covering children aged from 18 months to 7 years), including children to adult ratios, group size and teachers’ wage levels.</li> </ul> <p>Internal evaluation is conducted at pre-primary institutions and is a continuous process. The purpose of internal evaluation is to ensure conditions that promote children’s development and the consistent development of the institution. This is done by identifying the</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
5. How does research inform policy and practice in ECE?	<p>institution's strengths and areas for improvement, from which an action plan for implementation of developments can be produced. Based on this, learning and teaching and the management of learning and teaching and its effectiveness are analysed through the internal evaluation of the pre-primary institution.</p> <p>The Ministry of Education and Research or, at the request of the Ministry, the pre-primary institution's county governor, (hereafter referred to together as the supervisory agency) exercise administrative supervision over the learning and teaching at pre-primary institutions.</p> <p>The function of the supervisory agency is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– to monitor compliance with the legislation regulating learning and teaching;</li><li>– to analyse problems arising from implementation of the legislation regulating learning and teaching.</li></ul> <p>The national curriculum for pre-primary childcare institutions is the basis for the organisation of learning and teaching in the pre-primary institution.</p> <p>According to the Estonian Education Information System (EHIS) 93.5% of children aged 4–6 years and 77% of children aged 1.5–3 participated in early childhood education institutions in 2014. An additional 10% of 1.5- to 3-year-olds were covered by other childcare. The unmet need for early childhood education and childcare in 2014/2015 was 2,290 places, including 1,962 for children between 1.5 and 3 years of age.</p> <p>At the end of 2015 the Ministry of Education and Research adopted a new concept of early childhood education and care. According to an ECES (Early Childhood Education Study) Policy Report a new Act for early childhood education and care is in preparation. The purpose of the new Act is to ensure access to high-quality early childhood education and care for all children between 1.5 and 7 years old and to establish an integrated approach instead of the two parallel systems (Pre-school Childcare</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
	<p>Institutions Act and Social Welfare Act) that exist today. The planned changes will give local governments more flexibility in organising the provision of early childhood education and care opportunities, based on the needs of children and families. With the help of ESF (European Social Fund) and ERF (European Refugee Fund) funds, local governments have the chance to create around 3,200 new kindergarten or childcare places. About 47 million euros will be invested during the years 2014–2020.</p> <p>According to an ECES Policy Report a new Act for early childhood education and care is in preparation.</p> <p>A European Social Fund programme (EDUKO) was launched in 2009 to help to make teachers’ professional preparation more open, more flexible and more focused on practice. As part of the EDUKO project three studies were produced which were highly influential in designing the professional training. These studies (‘Professionalism of pre-school teachers in Estonia, Finland, Sweden and Hungary’ and ‘Leadership influence to the professionalism of pre-school teachers in Estonia, Sweden and Finland’) analysed the views and opinions of pre-primary teachers and head teachers about the professionalism of pre-primary teachers who work in a cross-cultural context. The results from these studies have been used to prepare professional standards for pre-primary teachers in Estonia. These standards are now used as the basis for teachers’ and head teachers’ initial and in-service training and to plan their careers.</p>
<p><b><i>Practice at national level</i></b></p> <p>1. How do staff monitor and evaluate the participation and learning of all children?</p> <p>2. How are parents involved in this</p>	<p>In Estonia the criteria for internal evaluation in ECE settings have been set through regulation from the Ministry of Education and Research. These criteria cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– leadership and management;</li> <li>– personnel management;</li> <li>– co-operation with interest groups and stakeholders, including children and parents;</li> </ul>



Guiding questions	Country response
process? 3. How are children themselves involved in this process?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– resource management;</li><li>– the education process and children’s results;</li><li>– statistics for the pre-primary institution (covering children aged from 18 months to 7 years), including children to adult ratios, group size and teachers’ wage levels.</li></ul>



## 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><i>Legislation and policy</i></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 and funded under the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Social Affairs.</p> <p>Since 2010, the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research has been supporting a joint venture between the Danish branch of ‘Save the Children’ and the Estonian Union for Child Welfare, entitled ‘Kindergartens Free of Bullying.’ The majority of Estonian pre-primary childcare institutions have joined the initiative. Estonian pre-primary childcare institutions also belong to a network dedicated to improving children’s health.</p> <p>According to the Social Welfare Act a child has a right to state-funded childcare services if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the child has a severe or profound disability;</li> <li>– the child is in need of care services in accordance with a rehabilitation plan;</li> <li>– the child’s need for care services is not satisfied by other social services;</li> <li>– the childcare service is provided late, in the calendar year in which the child turns 18.</li> </ul> <p>According to the Pre-school Childcare Institutions Act the rural municipality or city council will set the fee amount to be covered by parents, which may vary depending on the child (for example, ECE provision is free of charge for at-risk families and children). The amount covered by parents per child should not exceed 20% of the minimum wage</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
	<p>established by the Government of the Republic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Support person service: the aim of the support person service is, in co-operation with parents/guardians, to support a child in their development, including with personal care procedures where necessary, such as for physically disabled children. The support person assists the child in activities which promote development, guides and motivates the child to cope in everyday life and helps in communication with family members and outside the home.</li> <li>– Social services and benefits: local authorities establish procedures for the provision of social welfare assistance and these must contain at least a description of social services and benefits, their funding and the conditions and procedure for applying for them. Local authorities may organise social services and pay supplementary social benefits from a local authority budget under the conditions of and in accordance with their own procedures.</li> </ul> <p>Additional funding is allocated through the social services and benefits system, in accordance with the Social Welfare Act.</p>
<p><b><i>Practice at national level</i></b></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</p>	<p>In Estonia there is a national standard – the National Curriculum for Pre-school Childcare Institutions.</p> <p>According to the Estonian Education Information System (EHIS) 93.5% of children aged 4–6 years and 77% of children aged 1.5–3 participated in early childhood education institutions in 2014. An additional 10% of 1.5- to 3-year-olds were covered by other childcare.</p> <p>At the end of 2015 the Ministry of Education and Research adopted a new concept for early childhood education and care. A new Act for early childhood education and care is in preparation. The purpose of the new Act is to ensure access to high-quality early childhood education and care</p>



<b>Guiding questions</b>	<b>Country response</b>
<p>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>for all children between 1.5 and 7 years old and to establish an integrated approach instead of the two parallel systems (Pre-school Childcare Institutions Act and Social Welfare Act) that exist today. The planned changes will give local governments more flexibility in organising the provision of early childhood education and care opportunities, based on the needs of children and families, better collaboration between the ECE, health and social sectors and clearer responsibility and funding support for inclusive education.</p> <p>799 children with severe or profound disabilities received state-funded childcare services in 2014.</p>