



INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (IECE) COUNTRY QUESTIONNAIRE – ICELAND

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.

All children have the right to attend pre-primary education by law. Pre-school constitutes the first level of education in the school system and is intended for children below the compulsory school age. Under the Pre-school Act no. 90, 12 June 2008, pre-school undertakes the upbringing, care and education of children of pre-primary age at the request of parents.

Local authorities are responsible for pre-primary operations. Local authorities take the initiative to ensure places for children in pre-schools and are responsible for the general organisation and operation of the municipality's pre-schools, the development of individual pre-schools, housing and facilities, special solutions on offer in pre-schools, specialist services, evaluation and monitoring, information collection and distribution as well as the implementation of pre-primary activities in the municipality. Local authorities formulate a general policy for pre-primary operations in the municipality and present it to its inhabitants.

Municipalities organise specialist services for pre-schools. Specialist services include support for pre-primary aged children and their families, as well as for pre-primary activities and staff. The municipalities determine the organisation of specialist services and endeavour to provide the services within the pre-school itself. Children who need special assistance and training according to evaluation by recognised diagnostic specialists are entitled to such services within the pre-school. The service is carried out under specialist supervision according to decisions by the pre-school head teacher and the specialist services, with the parents' collaboration.

Provision in pre-primary education is available for all children in Iceland from 18 months old to six years old when they start primary school. Provision all day (8 hours), including three meals, costs approximately 200–250 euros per month for married couples, but less for single parents and students, who pay approximately 150 euros.



Guiding questions	Country response
<p data-bbox="148 315 496 398"><i>Legislation and policy at national level</i></p> <p data-bbox="148 423 518 824">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 data-bbox="148 848 469 1021">2. Is there support available to enable every child to attend ECE?</p> <p data-bbox="148 1046 510 1173">3. Is there a period of compulsory ECE before school starts?</p> <p data-bbox="148 1198 504 1460">4. Are arrangements in place for transition from home to ECE and from ECE to primary education for all children?</p> <p data-bbox="148 1485 518 1702">5. Is inclusion stated as a goal of ECE provision? Is there a policy making ECE accessible to all children?</p> <p data-bbox="148 1727 512 2040">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 data-bbox="544 315 1442 533">The National Curriculum Guide for Pre-schools is based on the Pre-school Act no. 90, 12 June 2008. As far as content is concerned, it is based on the objectives in article 2 of the Pre-school Act and is a guide for work in the pre-schools.</p> <p data-bbox="544 557 1442 958">The National Curriculum Guide for Pre-schools is issued in the same manner as the regulations; it details the role of the pre-school based on the Pre-school Act and the regulations on education, upbringing and care in pre-schools. The National Curriculum Guide describes the role of education, upbringing and care in the pre-school, the objectives and the organisation of pre-school operations and the requirements and rights of everyone concerned in the school community.</p> <p data-bbox="544 983 1442 1473">The role of the National Curriculum Guide for Pre-schools is to co-ordinate the education, upbringing and care of pre-primary aged children as far as it is deemed necessary and, at the same time, to be a tool to ensure equal opportunities for pre-primary aged children in education and upbringing in Icelandic pre-schools. It is therefore the role of the National Curriculum Guide for Pre-schools to implement the provisions of law, to serve as instructions for educational authorities on education policy and as a collection of the common objectives of pre-school activities.</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<p><i>Practice at national level</i></p> <p>1. What percentage of children attend mainstream ECE provision at ages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 years • 4 years • 5 years (if not primary) • 6 years (if not primary)? <p>2. What are the main factors preventing some children from accessing mainstream ECE?</p> <p>3. Are there children who attend special ECE settings? Please provide data if available.</p> <p>4. Describe arrangements for inter-service collaboration to enable children's attendance and participation?</p> <p>5. What proportion of children is formally identified as having additional needs at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 years • 4 years 	<p>The percentage of children that attend ECE provision in Iceland 2014 (Hagstofa Íslands):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 3 years old: 96.07%; – 4 years old: 96.87%; – 5 years old: 97.27%; – 6 years old: 98.3%. <p>Children who need special assistance and training according to an evaluation by recognised diagnostic specialists are entitled to such services within the pre-school. The service is carried out under specialist supervision according to decisions by the pre-school head teacher and the specialist services, with the parents' collaboration. The pre-school head teacher co-ordinates the work of those that take care of matters concerning individual children.</p> <p>The municipality social services are also consulted in matters concerning individual children as needed. When organising specialist services, municipalities shall emphasise a good connection between the pre-school and compulsory school, with the aim of reaching coherence in school activities.</p> <p>Municipalities recruit pre-primary education specialists to provide counselling and support to pre-schools regarding innovation and development in pre-school activities. They also take care of monitoring pre-school operations and encourage co-operation between pre-schools as well as between school levels.</p> <p>The number of children that are identified as having additional needs 2014 (Hagstofa Íslands/Statistics Iceland):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 3 years old: 3.4%; – 4 years old: 7.4%; – 5 years old: 9.5%;



Guiding questions	Country response
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5 years• 6 years	– 6 years old: 12.6%.



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.

Upon recruitment of a pre-school head teacher and staff, provisions of the Local Government Act shall apply, as well as further provisions of the local government board agreement as applicable.

The pre-school head teacher, assistant head teacher and teachers must have completed pre-primary teacher education according to the Act on Education and Recruitment of Teachers and Head Teachers in Pre-school, Compulsory School and Upper-Secondary School. Non-skilled personnel may participate in the care and education of children, in the event that skilled pre-primary teachers are not available. Regulations may further stipulate the pre-school head teacher's instructional and administrative role towards other pre-school staff. Individuals who have been convicted for breaking provisions of Chapter XXII of the Criminal Act may not be recruited for this purpose. Upon recruitment, the person's criminal record is made available or the head teacher is authorised to obtain information from the official charge sheet.

Pre-school staff must carry out their job in a professional, attentive and conscientious manner. All staff must show politeness, consideration and subtlety in their demeanour towards children and parents, as well as co-workers. The pre-school head teacher shall take the initiative to formulate a plan of how to organise lifelong learning for the staff, to best comply with the emphasis of the pre-school, the municipality and the pre-school curriculum guide. Pre-school head teachers and teachers shall, according to the local authorities' decision and provisions in general wage agreements, be offered the chance to participate in lifelong learning with the purpose of enhancing their professional competences, to study the latest development in pre-primary matters and pedagogy and get support concerning innovation and development.

Guiding questions	Country response
<p><i>Legislation and policy</i></p> <p>1. What level of qualification is required</p>	<p>At least 75% of workers must have a five year master's degree in pre-primary teaching. The other 25% of staff will have other skills.</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<p>to work in ECE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for teachers? • for other staff? <p>2. What regulation is there for staff-child ratios in ECE?</p> <p>3. What provision is there for additional staffing to support children with diverse and additional needs?</p> <p>4. Does the initial training of staff include understanding and supporting children with diverse and additional needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for teachers? • for other staff? <p>5. Does initial training include preparation for working in partnership with families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for teachers? • for other staff? <p>6. Is there a policy for in-service training? Does it cover inclusive education skills?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for teachers? • for other staff? 	<p>There is no longer a regulation regarding child ratios, but pre-schools in Iceland have a long tradition of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 4 children aged 1–3 per teacher; – 6 children aged 3–4 per teacher; – 8 children aged 4–5 per teacher; – 10 children aged 5–6 per teacher. <p>The same goes for other staff.</p> <p>Pre-school teachers lead developments in the field of pedagogy and education, follow the latest developments and share their knowledge. Pre-school teachers are role models in their work with children and make an effort to improve the professional role of the pre-school. Pre-school teachers are the leading co-workers of children, parents and other staff in the pre-school. They ensure that every child is respected according to merit and that the learning environment is organised in such a way that children can enjoy their childhood.</p> <p>The initial training for teachers (provided in two universities in Iceland) includes understanding and supporting children with diverse and additional needs and working in partnership with families.</p> <p>Training for other staff is mostly organised by municipal authorities and differs accordingly.</p>
<p><i>Practice at national level</i></p>	<p>30% of workers have a pre-primary teacher's degree. 70% have a lesser or other qualification.</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<p>1. What proportion of staff has the required qualification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• for teachers?• for other staff? <p>2. Please describe any proposed changes to the required qualifications.</p> <p>3. Describe the role of leaders of ECE settings in ensuring inclusive practice?</p> <p>4. Provide any data on staff–child ratio.</p> <p>5. Please describe the range of specialist support that is available and how it is organised?</p> <p>6. How do regular and support staff collaborate in IECE settings?</p> <p>7. Describe the role of support assistants in the ECE setting?</p>	<p>Municipalities organise specialist services for pre-schools. Specialist services include support for pre-primary aged children and their families, as well as support for pre-school activities and staff. The municipalities determine the organisation of specialist services and endeavour to provide the services within the pre-school itself. Children who need special assistance and training according to evaluation by recognised diagnostic specialists are entitled to such services within the pre-school. The service is carried out under specialist supervision, according to decisions by the pre-school head teacher and the specialist services, with the parents' collaboration.</p> <p>The municipality social services are also consulted on matters concerning individual children as needed. When organising specialist services, municipalities emphasise good connections between the pre-school and compulsory school, with the aim of reaching coherence in school activities.</p> <p>Municipalities recruit pre-primary education specialists to provide counselling and support to pre-schools regarding innovation and development in pre-school activities. They also take care of monitoring pre-school operations and encourage co-operation between pre-schools as well as between school levels.</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.

According to the Icelandic Curriculum Guide for Pre-schools from 2011, children’s interests and welfare are the primary mission in all pre-primary activities. Children should be provided with care and education, offered a healthy and encouraging environment to grow up in, as well as safe conditions in which to learn and play. Learning through play is encouraged in a creative environment where children enjoy a variety of opportunities to grow. Pre-primary practice and methods shall be characterised by tolerance and affection, equality, democratic co-operation, responsibility, concern, forgiveness, respect for human values and the Christian heritage of Icelandic culture.

The main objectives in the upbringing and instruction in pre-schools are:

- to monitor and encourage children’s general development in close co-operation with parents;
- to provide systematic linguistic stimulation and contribute to common skills in the Icelandic language;
- to provide children with mental, intellectual and physical care to meet the needs of each individual, so that they may enjoy their childhood;
- to encourage children’s broadmindedness and strengthen their moral values;
- to lay the necessary foundations for the children to become independent, autonomous, active and responsible participants in a democratic society which is undergoing rapid and continuous development;
- to cultivate children’s expressive and creative abilities with the aim of strengthening their self-esteem, health awareness, confidence and communication skills.

Guiding questions	Country response
<p><i>Legislation and policy</i></p> <p>1. Is there a national ECE curriculum for <i>all</i></p>	<p>At pre-school children learn through play and everyday activities both indoors and out. They learn in co-operation with other children and through support and encouragement from adults. The pre-primary learning</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<p>children?</p> <p>2. Does it include skills and competences to be achieved by children?</p> <p>3. Describe how the curriculum facilitates inclusion?</p> <p>4. Is the use of new technologies included in the curriculum?</p> <p>5. Is the curriculum adaptable to meet the needs of all children?</p> <p>6. How are parents involved in the adaptation of the curriculum to individual children?</p> <p>7. Is there awareness of the impact of labelling on children's participation</p>	<p>areas are an integral part of all pre-school activities and take into account the six fundamental pillars of education. They are based on creative and critical thinking and are linked to play and everyday activities in the pre-school.</p> <p>The concept of competence is defined in the general section of the National Curriculum Guide for Pre-school, Compulsory Schools and Upper-Secondary Schools. It states that the concept includes knowledge, skill and moral values, but competence is defined with reference to the children's age and maturity and the educational objectives in each instance.</p> <p>Pre-school activities are based on the Pre-school Act, where the emphasis is on the values of play. Furthermore, when organising pre-school operations, the pre-school guidelines, the fundamental pillars of education and the pre-primary learning areas should be taken into consideration. The curriculum guide describes the knowledge, skill and moral values that the school activities aim for. In their school curriculum guide, pre-schools should expand on how they work with the competences in accordance with the children's age and maturity.</p> <p>The pre-primary learning areas are literacy and communication, health and wellbeing, sustainability and science, creativity and culture.</p> <p>The pre-primary learning areas must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – be part of children's play; – be integrated into everyday pre-school activities; – be integral and based on children's experience; – be based on children's interests and ideas; – take into consideration the social and emotional factors of education; – be organised in co-operation with school staff, parents and children; – encourage co-operation and collaboration;



Guiding questions	Country response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – encourage independence and initiative; – encourage imagination and creativity; – encourage curiosity, examination and exploration; – be enjoyable and conducive to children’s wellbeing; – stimulate children’s interest in learning and encourage them to study and increase their knowledge, skill and competence; – encourage clearer self-image and self-knowledge; – encourage wholesome communication, friendship and joy.
<p><i>Practice at national level</i></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 children?</p> <p>5. How do staff adapt (prepare and present) the curriculum and the learning activities to</p>	<p>Regular assessment of children’s learning and development takes place in pre-schools according to the Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Pre-schools (2011). According to the guide, evaluation is an inseparable factor in school activities and children and young people’s learning. Evaluation gives information about how far children have attained learning objectives, encourages them to succeed and is useful for teachers and staff to promote progress in learning. The aim of evaluation of school activities is to ensure that children’s rights are secured and that they obtain the education and service they are entitled to by law. Evaluation is both internal and external.</p> <p>Screening of children’s functioning and the monitoring of children’s engagement and participation in ECE activities is the responsibility of each pre-school, in accordance with the national curriculum guides and municipal policies. Methods of assessment should be varied and in accordance with the emphases and educational work and apply to as many aspects of learning as possible.</p> <p>Assessment must give special consideration to the needs of children and especially any learning disabilities.</p> <p>Assessment should give children and their parents, teachers, school authorities and receiving schools the</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
make them accessible to all children?	necessary information about study progress which can guide educational planning.
6. How are parents involved in this process?	ECE settings should, according to the national curriculum guides, reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of all children.
7. How are children themselves involved in this process?	The pre-primary learning areas are to be organised in co-operation with school staff, parents and children. Children are considered active citizens and participants and everyone gets an opportunity to contribute to and influence the pre-school environment.
8. How is ICT used to overcome barriers to participation and learning?	Uniqueness and individual opinions should be respected and children encouraged in their daily relations.
9. What provisions are there for meeting children's additional needs?	As the environment is an important factor in the children's education, its design, utilisation and organisation should be based on the different children's experiences, interests and development.
10. How is the environment adapted to the needs of all children?	Pre-schools must provide room for creative processes, including exploring and working with various materials and using diverse technology.



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.

When evaluating children's development, education and welfare, emphasis is placed on the following:

- overall development;
- independence;
- areas of interest;
- participation in indoor and outdoor play;
- social skills and solidarity;
- initiative and creative force;
- expression and communication.

Each pre-school develops a variety of methods to collect, register, organise and define information concerning children's development, education, wellbeing and competence and adopt appropriate work procedures in this regard. The work procedures are discussed in the school curriculum guide, are accessible to those concerned and are linked to the internal evaluation of the pre-school, where applicable.

It is important that the evaluation is based on the participation and co-operation of pre-school teachers, other staff, parents and children. Children should have the opportunity to take part in evaluating their education, setting objectives and making suggestions. Parents have valuable information and knowledge concerning their children and should participate in evaluating their wellbeing and education.

Evaluation that is carried out in co-operation between pre-schools, parents and children advances better understanding and insight into the children's learning processes, their areas of interest and strengths. It helps parents to encourage their children at home and enhances children's awareness of their abilities and strengths and the best way for them to learn. Evaluation also strengthens children's self-confidence and self-image and contributes to equal rights to education.



Guiding questions	Country response
<p><i>Legislation and policy</i></p> <p>1. What standards are in place for ensuring the quality of ECE at national level?</p> <p>2. Describe the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the quality of ECE provision?</p> <p>3. How is the participation of all children reflected in the national quality standards for ECE?</p> <p>4. How does national policy identify and address inequalities in participation in ECE?</p> <p>5. How does research inform policy and practice in ECE?</p>	<p>Evaluation of children’s education, development and welfare involves collecting information about what children are interested in, what they do, what they know and understand. The information is used in organising pre-school activities, in consultation with parents, to support children’s education and welfare. This process should be integrated into the daily activities of the pre-school and involve organisation, registration, evaluation and reflection of children’s education, development and welfare.</p> <p>The aim of this evaluation is to increase the knowledge and understanding of pre-school teachers and other staff, parents and children of children’s development, education and wellbeing. Additionally, the evaluation is to ensure that the pre-schools operate according to the provisions of law, regulations and the National Curriculum Guide for Pre-schools and that children’s rights are respected.</p> <p>Evaluation focuses on children’s interests, abilities and competence. Children express their abilities, knowledge, competence and interests in different ways. Therefore, evaluation should focus on the individual and be structured to encourage each child. Based on this, children should be given appropriate study opportunities and encouragement so they can take an active part in school activities.</p> <p>The specialist pre-primary services in the municipalities should encourage equal rights of all children to education and wellbeing. If parents and/or pre-school staff consider it necessary, specialist services offer counselling and information to ensure good education, upbringing and care and an appropriate environment.</p>
<p><i>Practice at national level</i></p> <p>1. How do staff monitor and evaluate the participation and</p>	<p>Evaluation and assessment should give children and their parents, teachers, school authorities and receiving schools the necessary information about study progress which can be a guide for educational planning.</p> <p>The pre-primary learning areas are organised in co-</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
learning of all children? 2. How are parents involved in this process? 3. How are children themselves involved in this process?	operation with school staff, parents and children. Children are considered active citizens and participants and everyone gets an opportunity to contribute to and influence the pre-school environment.



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.

The Minister of Education, Science and Culture governs the affairs covered by the Pre-school Act, excluding matters regarding the foundation and management of pre-schools. The Minister of Education, Science and Culture ensures compliance with the provisions of the Act and any Regulations issued thereof. The Minister of Education, Science and Culture reports to Althingi (the Icelandic Parliament) every three years on the implementation of pre-school activities in Iceland.

Local authorities are responsible for pre-primary operations. Local authorities take the initiative to ensure places for children in pre-schools and are responsible for the general organisation of school operations in the municipality's pre-schools, the development of individual pre-schools, housing and facilities, special solutions on offer in pre-schools, specialist services, evaluation and monitoring, information collection and distribution as well as for the implementation of pre-primary activities in the municipality. Local authorities formulate a general policy for pre-primary operations in the municipality and present it to its inhabitants. A pre-primary committee, elected by the local authorities, shall be in charge of pre-primary affairs on behalf of the local authorities. Pre-school head teachers, staff and parents in the municipality each elect one representative and one alternate to represent them in committee meetings, with the right to speak and propose a motion.

Pre-schools have a head teacher who is the director of operations on behalf of the operating body. The head teacher administers the daily operations and activities of the pre-school and ensures that pre-school activities comply with law and Regulations, the National Curriculum Guide for Pre-schools and other current provisions. The head teacher encourages co-operation between parents, staff and other professionals, with children's welfare as the main objective. The head teacher calls meetings of teachers and staff as needed. The head teacher reports to the pre-school operators and the local authorities on pre-school activities in an annual report.



Guiding questions	Country response
<p><i>Legislation and policy</i></p> <p>1. Under which ministry(ies) / department(s) are ECE provisions regulated and funded?</p> <p>2. How is intersectorial (health, social and education) collaboration promoted among all stakeholders in ECE?</p> <p>3. How is free or affordable provision guaranteed to all children age 3 years and over?</p> <p>4. What additional economic measures are available for children with additional needs and their families to access mainstream ECE?</p> <p>5. How is additional funding allocated?</p>	<p>ECE provisions are regulated under the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and funded by municipalities.</p> <p>Municipalities organise intersectorial collaboration among all stakeholders in ECE.</p> <p>Municipalities guarantee affordable provisions to all children aged 3 years and over and provide additional economic measures for children with additional needs and their families to access mainstream ECE.</p> <p>Additional funding is allocated according to expert evaluation of additional needs.</p>
<p><i>Practice at national level</i></p> <p>1. How far does the standard of ECE provision vary across regions and localities?</p> <p>2. How effective is collaboration between the ECE and health,</p>	<p>The standard of ECE varies across regions and localities and there is a tendency towards a lack of provision, particularly in smaller localities.</p> <p>Collaboration between ECE and health, social and other relevant agencies is generally effective.</p> <p>The numbers of children that were identified as having additional needs in 2014 and could make use of additional funding are (Hagstofa Íslands/Statistics Iceland):</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<p>social and other relevant agencies for children and families?</p> <p>3. What proportion of children (3 years to primary education) make use of additional funding?</p> <p>4. How well does additional funding support inclusive education?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– 3 years old: 3.4%;– 4 years old: 7.4%;– 5 years old: 9.5%;– 6 years old: 12.6%. <p>How additional funding supports inclusive education depends on how the additional funding is used. This differs between municipalities and pre-schools. It also depends on whether it is possible to recruit teachers or staff with the educational background to support the whole group, not just the child with special needs.</p>