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

### INTRODUCTION

Switzerland, with its federal organisation, is actually in a transition period due to two major changes in the field of IECE. The '[Intercantonal Agreement on the Harmonisation of Compulsory Education](#)' (HarmoS Agreement) has introduced compulsory pre-primary classes, and the '[Intercantonal Agreement on Co-operation in Special Needs Education](#)' (Special Needs Education Agreement) transfers special education from social security (medical model) to the field of education ('education for all').

The '*Scuola dell'infanzia*' in the Italian-speaking canton of Ticino differs from the pre-primary settings of the French and German speaking regions ('*kindergarten*' or '*école enfantine*') as it is accessible for the children from the age of three.

Both reforms were mostly implemented in 2015 but the first statistical data will only be available in 2017. The Swiss association of early intervention services ([VDHS](#)) collects annual data on children with special educational needs enrolled in early intervention services, but unfortunately this data is not published. Some of the (statistical) data requested in this questionnaire is not yet available or is no longer up to date.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) for young children is based on voluntary services such as child day-care facilities, day-care families and informal care services. As children start pre-primary education from different backgrounds, childcare establishments are increasingly being called upon to offer a stronger educational orientation. In urban centres in particular there are projects specifically promoting disadvantaged children or children with a migrant background. The Swiss Network on ECEC (<http://www.netzwerk-kinderbetreuung.ch/de/innovation/orientierungsrahmen/>) published an orientation framework on quality in service delivery in the field of ECEC.

For more than 40 years, early childhood special education (early intervention), speech therapy and psycho-motor therapy provide home or centre-based support to children with disabilities or developmental delays, limitations or risks and to their families from birth to up to two years after starting school. These early interventions were financed by the federal [disability insurance](#) (educational and therapeutic measures) in order to prepare the child for primary school. Now they are all integrated into the missions of public education and funded by the cantons or the communes.



The actual changes in the Swiss education system have been influenced by the Equal Rights Act ([Federal Act of 13 December 2002 on Equal Rights for People with Disabilities](#)).

## 1. ACCESS, PROCEDURES AND PARTICIPATION

### Key principles

1.1 Provision that is available and affordable to all families and their children.

1.2 Provision that encourages participation, strengthens social inclusion and embraces diversity.

Guiding questions	Country response
<p><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>4. Are arrangements in place for transition from home to ECE and from ECE to primary education for all children?</p> <p>5. Is inclusion stated as a goal of ECE provision?</p>	<p>1. The Swiss education system is characterised by federalism and organised in a decentralised manner. The primary responsibility for education is assumed by the 26 cantons. These are responsible for the education system, except where the Federal Constitution declares the Federation to be competent. In questions which require a joint solution, the cantons co-ordinate between each other. For some areas (e.g. in compulsory education), the Federal Constitution requests the co-ordination.</p> <p>Early childhood education and care (ECEC) for children under four falls within the sphere of family and social policy. The use of public or private day-care facilities is voluntary, and the parents pay a share of the costs depending on their financial resources. The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Social Affairs (<a href="#">SODK</a>) assumes a co-ordinating role at national level and adopts recommendations on early childhood childcare.</p> <p>2. The cantons are responsible for regulating pre-primary education, while the communes are responsible for operating state-run pre-schools. The cantons decide whether ECE is compulsory. Attendance at state-run ECE is free.</p> <p>In 2007, the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (<a href="#">EDK</a>) drew up the Intercantonal Agreement on the Harmonisation of Compulsory Education (HarmoS Agreement) to co-ordinate compulsory education between cantons. Cantons which have signed the HarmoS</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<p>Is there a policy making ECE accessible to all children?</p> <p>6. Is there a policy that obliges mainstream publicly funded ECE to make adaptations so that all children can attend and participate? Please describe</p>	<p>Agreement harmonise objectives and structures in compulsory education.</p> <p>3. In 2015–16, three different systems of compulsory ECE (pre-school) can be distinguished:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Two years of ECE are compulsory (compulsory attendance) (17 cantons);</li> <li>– One year of ECE is compulsory but the communes have to provide two years of ECE (compulsory provision) and the parents can choose (7 cantons);</li> <li>– One year of ECE is compulsory but the communes can offer two years of ECE and the parents can choose (2 cantons).</li> </ul> <p>Only in the canton of Ticino do the communes have to provide three years of pre-school.</p> <p>4. The SODK, together with the EDK, has adopted a joint declaration to co-ordinate day-care centres and pre-schools or schools.</p> <p>5. and</p> <p>6. Since 2008, the cantons have the full operational, legal and financial responsibility for the education of children and young people with special educational needs (0–20-year olds) and for special education measures. In 2007, the EDK drafted an Intercantonal Agreement on Co-operation in Special Needs Education (Special Needs Education Agreement). One of the main goals of the agreement is the inclusion of all children in mainstream schools by providing individualised support.</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> </ul>	<p>1. At the moment, no exact data for attendance is available. Data from 2015 only concerns the provision rate of mainstream ECE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 3 years: no data;</li> <li>– 4 years: 87%;</li> <li>– 5 years: 100%;</li> </ul>



Guiding questions	Country response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><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>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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– 6 years: 100% (primary).</li></ul> <p>2. Disability, language difficulties (e.g. migration/refugee – all children with an uncertain refugee status have access to compulsory education), behavioural problems or giftedness are the main factors for exclusion from mainstream compulsory ECE or for specific support measures.</p> <p>3. Two kinds of special settings are distinguished, special classes and special schools. Only general data from 2008–09 is available for the whole period of compulsory education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– 3.1% of the children are enrolled in special classes;</li><li>– 2% are enrolled in special schools.</li></ul> <p>New data will only be available in 2017 but it will reflect the impact of the transformation processes started in 2007 (Special Needs Education Agreement and HarmoS Agreement). The actual data shows a trend towards an increasing inclusion rate since 2005.</p> <p>4. The early intervention services have a long tradition of working together with families and other service providers to prepare children with special educational needs for school attendance.</p> <p>5. No actual data is available.</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>1. The following qualifications are required for different professionals in the field of ECE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– (early) childhood educator: national professional diploma in ECE;</li> <li>– teachers: Bachelor of Arts (Bachelor of Science) in Pre-primary Education;</li> <li>– specialist teacher: Master of Arts in Special Needs Education (with a focus on specialist education);</li> <li>– early interventionist: Master of Arts in Special Needs Education (with a focus on early intervention);</li> <li>– speech therapists: Bachelor of Arts in Speech and Language Therapy;</li> <li>– psycho-motor therapists: Bachelor of Arts in Psycho-motor Therapy.</li> </ul> <p>2. Staff-child ratios are regulated at the cantonal level. The size of the class can be adapted to the special needs of the children (special or small classes, preparatory classes, language classes) or individualised support can be provided in mainstream classes (inclusive settings).</p> <p>3. The Special Needs Education Agreement describes the basic special needs measures as early intervention, speech therapy, psycho-motor therapy, specialised education to support children with special needs in mainstream classes and extended measures provided in special schools.</p> <p>4. The general EDK guidelines for the recognition of pre-</p>



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>	<p>primary teacher diplomas require some training in the field of special needs education. Different universities offering teacher training sometimes include inclusive education skills in their curricula. The curricula for specialised staff (early interventionist, speech therapist, psycho-motor therapist and specialist teacher) provide training for special needs education.</p> <p>5. The initial training of all staff includes preparation for working in partnership with families and with other professionals.</p> <p>6. The <a href="#">EDK recommendations for teachers' continued education and training</a> (CET) define CET as a part of a teacher's professional mission. The cantonal education acts and regulations oblige teachers to complete CET, and often also provide an entitlement to CET, however the content of CET is often not laid down.</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> <p>4. Provide any data on staff-child ratio.</p> <p>5. Please describe the</p>	<p>1. In the sector of compulsory education, all staff members have the required qualifications either for teaching, support or therapy.</p> <p>2. In some inclusion projects, a new function is being created to support children with special educational needs in more personal issues, such as mobility or personal care. Currently no initial training or qualification exists for the 'personal school inclusion assistant', but professionals with training in the wider field of social or educational sciences are enrolled in this function.</p> <p>3. The cantonal ECE leaders are responsible for policymaking (legislation, financing, etc.) and for the general administration of inclusive practice (implementation models, planning of individual or collective resources, etc.). Community ECE leaders manage the implementation and supervision of resources. The ECE leaders at the school level are responsible for deploying the resources allocated to the school.</p> <p>4. In 2010, the child-teacher ratio was 14.9 children per teacher in primary schools.</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<p>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>5. Young children with disabilities or developmental disorders/delays are given support as early as possible (e.g. through early intervention or different therapies). During their compulsory schooling speech therapy, psycho-motor therapy or special needs measures are available for them in mainstream classes, or special schools are provided. Where necessary, children can also be cared for in school-based day-care facilities or at boarding schools and they are provided with transport to school and therapy venues. In addition to the support provided in the different types of special school for specific disabilities and also in special or small classes (with a reduced number of learners) and preparatory classes (curriculum for the first primary school class spread over two academic years), inclusion in mainstream classes with individualised support is more frequent. Inclusive solutions are implemented for especially gifted children. The support provided to gifted children includes fast-tracking (starting school early, skipping a year, etc.), enrichment (e.g. more in-depth project work, additional offerings) and assistance for teachers (guidance, continued education and training).</p> <p>6. The collaboration between the mainstream teacher and support staff takes different forms: team-teaching, regular meetings and a shared educational plan.</p> <p>7. The support staff in inclusive settings assist one or more children in or outside the classroom, collaborate in teaching or advise the mainstream teacher. Partnerships with parents and service co-ordination issues are other forms of co-operation.</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.

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 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>1. Switzerland has three different curricula for children, one for each linguistic region: the French '<a href="#">Plan d'études romand</a>' (PER), the German '<a href="#">Lehrplan 21</a>' and the Italian '<a href="#">Piano di studio</a>'. The ECE curricula are built on the same bases and educational objectives as curricula for the primary level. However, they emphasise holistic, interdisciplinary education geared towards the child's developmental stage.</p> <p>2. Focus is placed on the development of socio-emotional, psycho-motor and cognitive skills and competencies. The teaching of basic skills (reading, writing, and arithmetic) is reserved for the primary level curricula. At pre-primary level, however, corresponding skills are practised in preparation. The contents are drafted as binding learning objectives. Depending on the curriculum, objectives are defined for subject areas (e.g. people and environment, exercise, language, crafts, music, basic mathematics, etc.) or drafted as interdisciplinary learning objectives (e.g. developing exercise options, distinguishing cognitive abilities, dealing with success and failure, identifying and discussing natural processes, identifying and using rules of everyday language, etc.).</p> <p>3. The work at pre-primary level is primarily guided by the children's developmental stage and not by standards based on the age group. Differentiated teaching is promoted and should facilitate inclusion.</p> <p>4. The curricula include the use of new technologies.</p> <p>5. The curricula can be adapted to the needs of each child, for example in cases of:</p>





Guiding questions	Country response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– intellectual disability: adapted curriculum with individual support;</li> <li>– physical or sensory disability: same curriculum with adjustments to compensate for disability-related disadvantages;</li> <li>– migration background: adapted curriculum with additional support for the classroom language;</li> <li>– giftedness: enriched curriculum.</li> </ul> <p>6. Parents are informed of the adaptations and are involved in the elaboration of the individual education plan.</p> <p>7. The Special Needs Education Agreement specifies that inclusive solutions are preferable to segregation, taking into account the welfare and development opportunities of the child and the school environment and organisation.</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 children?</p>	<p>1. In compulsory school levels, assessment is requested.</p> <p>2. and</p> <p>3. The teacher monitors and evaluates the child's learning progress by applying the national educational standards which describe the basic competences to be achieved (HarmoS Agreement) and by observing the special educational needs of the child (Special Needs Agreement) in collaboration with specialist staff where necessary.</p> <p>The child's special educational needs are assessed within the standardised assessment procedure (<a href="#">SAV</a>): for more information visit <a href="https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/switzerland/national-overview/identification-of-special-educational-needs">https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/switzerland/national-overview/identification-of-special-educational-needs</a>. This procedure is based on the principles of the international classification of functioning (<a href="#">ICF/ICF-CY</a>) and was developed by teaching universities and by the Swiss Institute for Special Needs Education (<a href="#">SZH</a>). It is used if the special education resources available locally are not adequate and additional resources need to be made available for a child's education. It serves the cantons</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<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>	<p>primarily on a decision-making basis for the arrangement of enhanced special needs measures.</p> <p>4. The EDK '<a href="#">Recommendations for the education of children with foreign language backgrounds</a>' describe the basic principles for promoting and implementing intercultural education for all children.</p> <p>5. Staff are asked to adapt curricula, teaching materials and class schedules to the children's specific additional needs in order to offer differentiated teaching.</p> <p>6. Parents should be adequately informed and listened to. They may be involved by the teacher in assessing or describing the competences of their child, but they must be included in decision-making on important issues. In the case of special educational needs, the parents are associated in the process of assessing the child's strengths and difficulties and in evaluating the requested support in different contexts.</p> <p>7. The individual needs, resources and interests of the child are assessed to differentiate the teaching.</p> <p>8. The Swiss Centre for Information Technologies in Education (<a href="#">SFIB</a>) provides services for the use of information technology in schools. The Swiss Foundation on Electronic Aids (<a href="#">FST</a>) delivers individual ICT and mobility solutions to meet children's special educational needs. The individualised solutions can be funded by disability insurance.</p> <p>9. Two different types of provision can be distinguished: individual support inside or outside the classroom to meet the additional needs of a specific child, or support for groups of children with similar needs in inclusive or separated settings.</p> <p>10. With respect to the principle of proportionality, the school environment must be adapted to meet the needs of all children.</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.

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>5. How does research inform policy and practice in ECE?</p>	<p>1. At national level, the Confederation and the cantons have introduced the Swiss education monitoring process. The HarmoS Agreement and the accompanying nationwide educational standards and three curricula contribute significantly to quality assurance in compulsory education (pre-primary, primary and lower-secondary level). The Special Needs Education Agreement provides a catalogue of <a href="#">quality standards</a> for special needs service providers.</p> <p>2. Three organisations provide information on the quality of ECE provision. The Swiss Co-ordination Centre for Research in Education (<a href="#">SKBF</a>) collates information concerning research in education throughout Switzerland and is mandated to monitor the development of education provision. The Swiss Institute for Special Needs Education (<a href="#">SZH</a>) assumes tasks in the field of special needs education such as collating documentation and information concerning special needs education programmes and advising the EDK and the cantons on all questions of specialised pedagogy. The Federal Statistical Office (<a href="#">FSO</a>) collects a wide range of data on the Swiss education system.</p> <p>3. As stated in the Special Needs Education Agreement, the participation of all children in inclusive settings is preferable to separate education.</p> <p>4. and</p> <p>5. Published every four years under the direction of the EDK, the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (<a href="#">SERI</a>) and the FSO, the <a href="#">Swiss education report</a></p>



Guiding questions	Country response
	is the major tool for informing policy and practice regarding the development and evolution of the education system. The report describes and analyses the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of each level of the education system. It aims to provide the best possible summary of current knowledge based on actual data from research and official statistics.
<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 process?</p> <p>3. How are children themselves involved in this process?</p>	<p>1. In the field of compulsory ECE, the participation of children is controlled by the local school authorities. The teacher monitors and evaluates the child's learning progress by applying the national educational standards which describe the basic competences to be achieved (HarmoS Agreement) and by observing the special educational needs of the child (Special Needs Agreement).</p> <p>2. Parents can also be asked by the local school authorities to evaluate their child's education.</p> <p>3. Children are more likely to be involved at higher levels of primary or post-primary school.</p> <p>Internal monitoring may be carried out by an external evaluation at different levels (individual, school, system).</p>



## 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>1. Compulsory ECE and special education are regulated and funded by the cantonal departments/directors for education. ECEC is regulated by the cantonal departments/directors of social affairs.</p> <p>2. The SODK and the EDK adopted a joint declaration on children’s day-care centres in order to organise and coordinate support with regard to school matters, leisure activities and catering for children outside school lesson times (mornings, lunchtimes, afternoons). School classes exist in larger hospitals for teaching children who are in hospital care.</p> <p>3. ECEC: parents or legal guardians have to pay for childcare. The services are mainly funded by parental contributions. The public sector pays a share of funding. ECE: In the public sector, compulsory education and pre-school are free. The cantons and communes assume the state funding.</p> <p>4. Special needs measures are free.</p> <p>5. Additional funding can be allocated for specific technical/electronic aids by disability insurance, cantonal or local authorities, or by private institutions or foundations.</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<p data-bbox="150 320 464 398"><b><i>Practice at national level</i></b></p> <p data-bbox="150 427 491 600">1. How far does the standard of ECE provision vary across regions and localities?</p> <p data-bbox="150 629 501 887">2. How effective is collaboration between the ECE and health, social and other relevant agencies for children and families?</p> <p data-bbox="150 916 501 1133">3. What proportion of children (3 years to primary education) make use of additional funding?</p> <p data-bbox="150 1162 432 1335">4. How well does additional funding support inclusive education?</p>	<p data-bbox="549 320 1445 629">1. The federal organisation offers a variety of different service provisions across the cantons. The federal agreements: The cantons that have accepted agreements such as the HarmoS or Special Needs Education Agreements have to apply the minimal principles of the agreement, but other cantons are free to apply none, one, more, or all of the principles of the agreement.</p> <p data-bbox="549 658 983 689">2. No current data available.</p> <p data-bbox="549 719 983 750">3. No current data available.</p> <p data-bbox="549 779 983 810">4. No current data available.</p>