

CHAPTER 9:

Individual Country Profiles

These eight individual country profiles for each participating country are presented alphabetically. Each profile begins with a diagram illustrating the structure of the mainstream ECE system that is available to all children¹ and a summary description of the ECE system in order to set the data presented into the context.

Below the age scale, each diagram contains a line indicating:

- the maximum possible length of childcare leave (accumulated length of maternity, paternity and parental leave);
- the age range that is defined as ISCED level 0; and
- the age range falling into the ISCED level 1 definition.

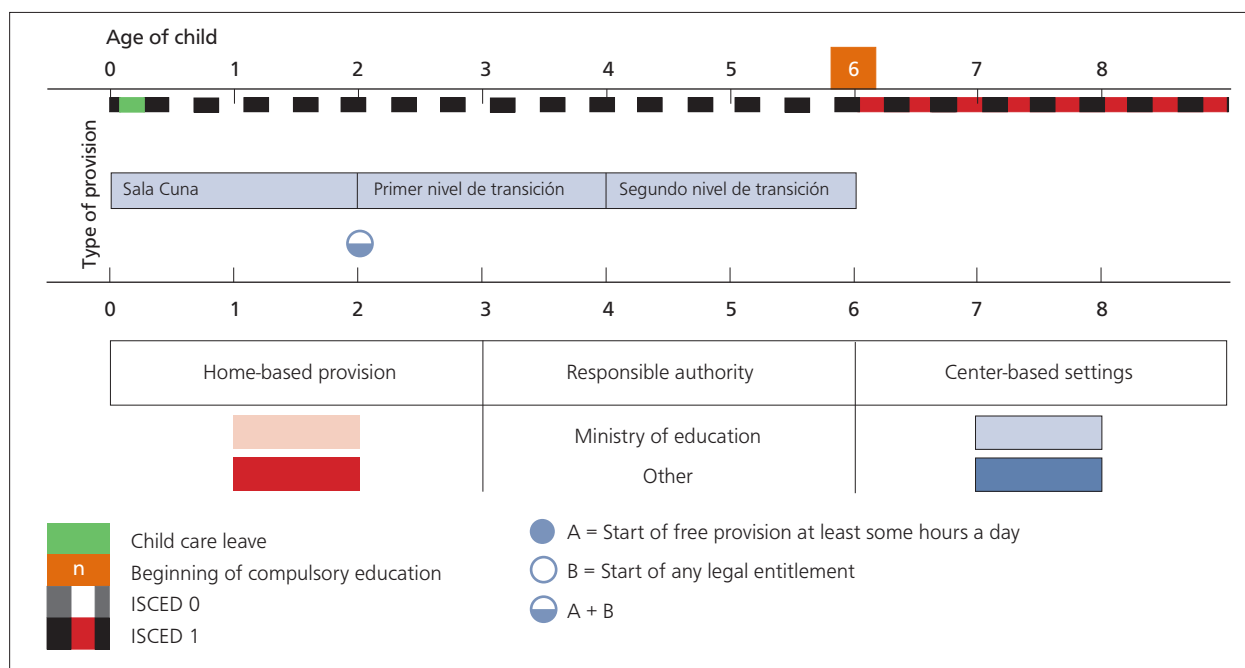
The diagrams also indicate the range of official ages at which children become eligible for admission to certain settings or types of ECE provision. The terms either relate to the ECE settings that are shown in the diagram or the type of provision if this was considered more appropriate, and are provided in the official language of the country. The diagrams visually summarize provision of center-based and/or home-based settings, with or without the involvement of the national Ministry of Education. When appropriate, different types of provision, cycles or key stages are indicated.

The diagram and the description of the ECE structure is then followed by a focused summary of each country's data as provided in the main report set out under five key sub-headings: Public policy; Delivery models and providers; Participation and enrollment; Supporting quality in ECE systems; and Expectations for child outcomes. More detailed data and information are provided in previous sections of the report.

¹ Separate provision outside the mainstream ECE system for children with special educational needs is not included in the graphics.

Country Profile: Chile

Structure



Source: Based on European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat (2014), with permission. Data provided by the Chilean NRC.

ECE in Chile is a split system. The ECE level in Chile is considered by the General Law of Education (LGE) as the first level of the educational system. The LGE divides ECE into three levels, and, in turn, each level is subdivided into two-year cycles. First level: Nursery level (age 0–2), subdivided into junior nursery (age 0–1) and senior nursery (age 1–2). Second level: Middle level (age 2–4), subdivided into junior middle level (age 2–3 and senior middle level (age 3–4). Third level: Transition level (age 4–6), subdivided into first level of transition (or prekinder, age 4–5) and second level of transition (kinder, age 5–6). Children enter primary school at six years of age.

Public Policy

Chile has a wide range of policy aims for its ECE system which balance child care and early education priorities. These include providing child care to support parental employment and parental education and training, and providing early education to enhance children’s socio-emotional skills; positive attitudes and dispositions; language and literacy competencies; basic mathematics skills; physical development; school preparation; and safeguarding. Governance and system management are centrally located, with responsibility for ECE being at national level, reflecting a single-level governance model. However, various national bodies are responsible for other strategic and operational aspects of the system, such as policy and legislation; quality; regulation, compliance and accountability; and funding and service delivery. For children from birth to three years (ECED), responsibility is divided among four departments: Education, Health, Work and Employment, and Social Welfare. For children aged three to six years (PPE), responsibility is split among three departments: Education, Health, and Social Welfare. Statutory entitlements for children and parents provide children

with free, universal services from birth to six years of age, with the last year mandatory and a prerequisite to enter primary school at age six years. ECE is not considered compulsory, and there are no requirements for a child to enter ECE. In 2014, the second level of transition (for five to six year olds) became compulsory. For parents there is national statutory entitlement to parental leave; this is in the form of targeted paid maternity and targeted paid paternity leave. From 1999-2014 there have been policy changes across four key policy areas, including increased expenditure, enhanced statutory entitlements, improved staff:child ratios, and regulation and monitoring. Further policy changes are planned in relation to staff qualifications, ECE curriculum, quality assurance regulations, and child assessment.

Delivery Models and Providers

There is a diverse range of regulated, center-based provider types and settings offering services for under-threes, and three- to six-year-olds, including various types of kindergarten, integrated settings, and schools. These settings offer part and extended day services and offer long hours of opening. Settings can be public, private, community or charitable, and funded with public, private or a mixture of public and private subsidy. Funding mechanisms include supply-side funding through staff salary subsidy and capital grants, and demand-side funding through tax credits/relief.

Participation and Enrollment

Enrollment levels of children remain relatively low but increase with the age of the child; 19.2% of under-threes, and 77.3% of three- to five-year-olds are enrolled in services (2014). For under-threes, 12% of children enrolled come from low-income families and for three- to six-year-olds, 49% of enrolled children are from low-income families. These data suggest that, despite a targeting strategy, with national regulations for allocating prioritized places for children from low-income families, there may be economic and/or social barriers to families enrolling their children in ECE programs. Coverage of provision is universal for three- to six-year-olds, but for under-threes there is more limited coverage, particularly in rural areas. Strategies to enhance participation levels focus on extending geographical coverage, targeting low-income neighborhoods, and encouraging all-year-round services and full-day opening. There is a range of early intervention programs to support the participation of low-income families and minority ethnic groups, and children with special needs or disability. Chile has strategies and legislation to support cultural diversity in the delivery of early childhood services, including speech and language support programs.

Supporting Quality in ECE

Responsibility for the regulation of early childhood services is mainly at a national level, compliance bodies including the *Superintendencia of Educación*, JUNJI (National Board), the Quality Agency and the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Development, and the *Controloría General de la República*. At a subnational level, compliance bodies include the Municipality of each council, the *Superintendencia of Educación*, the *Controloría General de la República*, the Ministry of Education, JUNJI and the *Fundación Integra*. Staff qualifications, training and remuneration vary with the type of setting and age of child served. There are two main categories of staff, namely teachers and teacher assistants, and one category of leadership, namely the director or principal. Teachers and leaders are usually required to have an ISCED Level

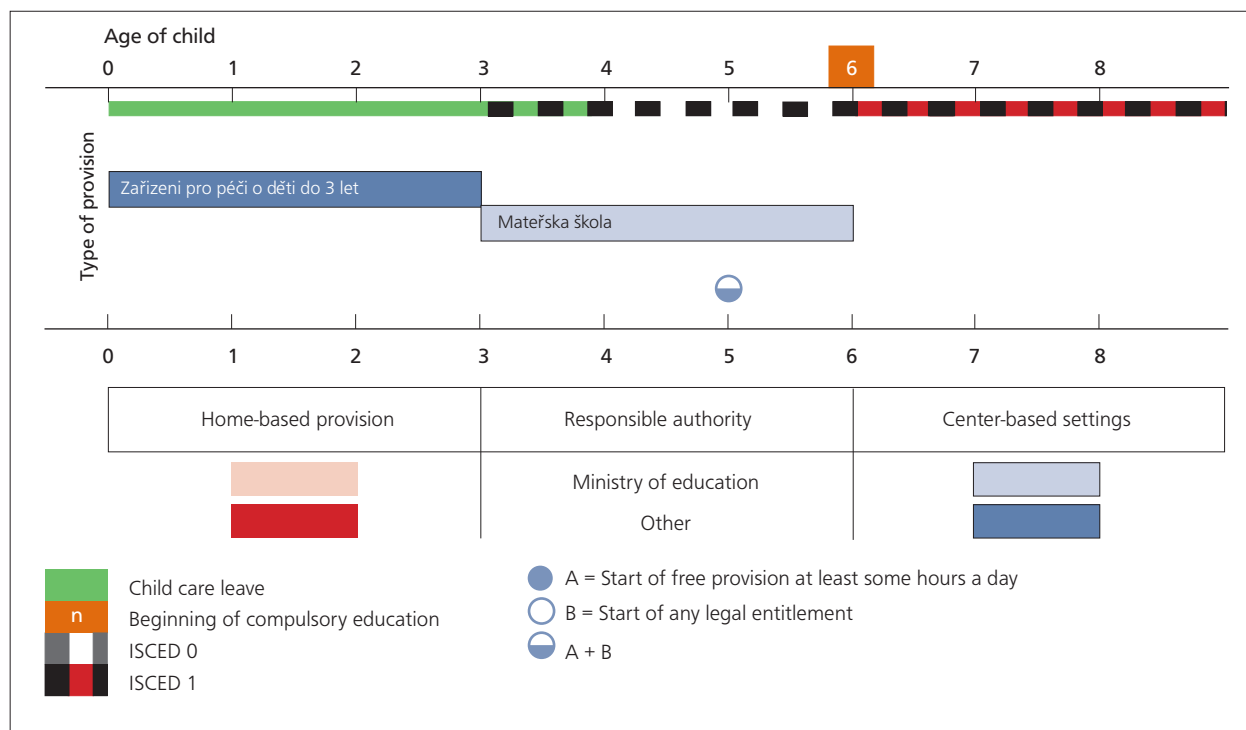
5 qualification and teacher assistants must hold an ISCED Level 3 qualification. Group sizes are quite large and range from 32 children (aged between two and three years) to 45 children (aged five to six years). Staff:child ratios increase as the children get older with more children per staff member. There are national health and safety regulations, which cover indoor space, indoor equipment, outdoor space, outdoor equipment, toilets, catering and nutrition. Chile has national curriculum guidance for ECE that encourages a broad and balanced learning program, including personal and emotional development; social development and citizenship; attitudes and dispositions to learning; physical development and health; language development and communication skills; reading and literacy skills; mathematical skills; understanding the world; science; and expressive arts, music and creativity. There is no specific guidance on a particular pedagogical approach for ECE. Parental participation in children's learning is supported by guidance on information transmission and consultation, and dialogue with parents. There is a national body responsible for the accreditation and inspection of ECE services that focuses on regulation compliance, staff performance, leadership and management, the curriculum program, and financial sustainability. The results of quality assurance are reported to the setting, the provider, and national bodies with responsibility, as well as being published on the internet for the wider public for use in strategic planning and service development.

Expectations for Child Outcomes

There are a broad range of expectations for child outcomes throughout the early childhood age phase, which includes personal and emotional development; social development and citizenship; attitudes and dispositions to learning; physical development and health; language development and communication skills; reading and literacy skills; mathematical skills; understanding the world; science; and expressive arts, music and creativity. Of these, six are formally assessed (personal and emotional development; social development and citizenship; physical development and health; language and communication; reading and literacy skills; mathematical skills) at the pre-primary level, and sometimes earlier, using a blend of assessment methods, including standardized tests and tasks. Outcomes data are reported to the national body responsible for ECE and used to inform strategic planning for policy and service development throughout the age phase.

Country Profile: Czech Republic

System Structure



Source:

Adapted from European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat (2014), with permission.

ECE in the Czech Republic is a split system divided into two main structures: settings for children from birth to three years and settings for children aged from three to six years, after which they enter primary schooling. Center-based crèches or *Jesle* are the most common form of provision for under-threes, but the majority of children are cared for by their families or other informal care during this phase. For children from three to six years, public *mateřská škola* (kindergarten) is the predominant service, with a long history. From the age of five years, children are legally entitled to pre-primary education. Early childhood services are fee paying, with the exception of the final year of kindergarten, which is publicly-funded and provided free of charge.

Public Policy

The Czech Republic has a limited set of policy aims for its services for under-threes, which are mainly focused on supporting parental employment and supporting parental work/life balance. During the pre-primary phase, a wide range of policy aims are identified which balance child care and early education priorities. These include providing child care to support parental employment and parental work/life balance, and providing early education to enhance children's socio-emotional skills, attitudes and dispositions to learning, language and literacy skills, basic mathematical skills and physical development. Further policy aims include the preparation of children for school and for citizenship, to support children with special needs, to safeguard vulnerable children, to reduce inequality and social disadvantage, and to support children when home and national language are different. Governance and system management are

centrally located, with one national body taking responsibility for services: for children under three years this is the Ministry of Work and Employment, and for pre-primary education this is the Ministry of Education. This reflects a single-level governance model. Statutory entitlements for children and parents provide children with free, universal services from three to six years of age but this is not considered compulsory. Parents have a statutory entitlement to parental leave in the form of paid maternity and paid paternity leave. Over the last five years there have been few policy changes but changes are currently planned for pre-primary education in relation to expenditure and the curriculum, and it has been debated by the government whether to make the final year of kindergarten compulsory.

Delivery Models and Providers

In the Czech Republic the range of provider types and settings are limited. For children under three years, crèches are the main center-based provision, and for three- to six-year-olds, public *materšská škola* (kindergartens) are the predominant service. Kindergartens are organizationally divided into classes. It is possible to place children of the same or different ages in a class and create classes that are homogenous or heterogeneous in terms of age. In the same way, it is possible to place children with special educational needs into a common kindergarten class and thus create an integrated class. Kindergartens are mostly established as full-day operations (providing more than 6.5 hours child care per day, and at most 12 hours care per day). The largest founder of kindergartens is the municipalities, but a small number have been established by private founding entities and churches. Kindergartens are funded by public, private or a mixture of public and private subsidy. Funding mechanisms at pre-primary level include supply-side funding through staff salary subsidies, resource grants and capital grants, and demand-side funding through tax credits/relief and family allowances.

Participation and Enrollment

Child enrollment levels to ECE increase significantly with the age of the child, with only 4.0% of under-threes enrolled, climbing to 78.9% of three- to five-year-olds. During the pre-primary year (five- to six-year-olds) this again rises to 90.5% enrollment. There are no regulations for allocating prioritized places to children from low-income families, or strategies and legislation to support cultural diversity in the delivery of early childhood services. Coverage of ECE provision is universal for three- to six-year-olds, but for under-threes there is more limited coverage, particularly in rural areas and for children with special needs or disability. Currently, there are no reported national strategies to enhance participation levels for under-threes, but for pre-primary school age children there are a range of early intervention programs to support the participation of children from low-income families, children with special needs or disability, minority ethnic groups, and children where the home language differs from the national language.

Supporting Quality in ECE

Responsibility for the regulation of early childhood services is mainly at a national level with some aspects being regulated at commune level. Staff qualifications, training and remuneration for those working with under-threes are not documented, but at pre-primary there are two main categories of staff, namely teachers and teacher assistants, and one category of leadership, the head teacher. Teacher assistants are required to have an ISCED Level 2 qualification, teachers an ISCED Level 5 qualification and

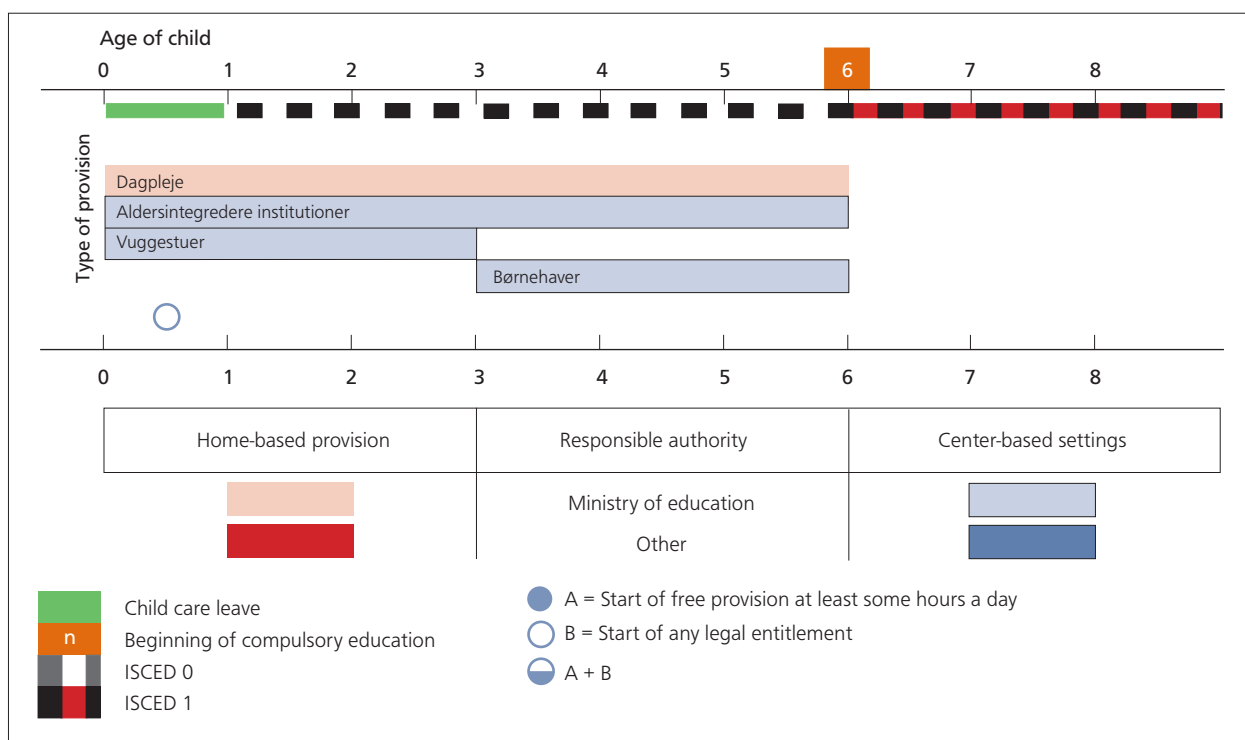
head teachers an ISCED Level 6 qualification. Group sizes are between 24 and 28 children and staff:child ratios are 13 children to 1 adult throughout the pre-primary phase. There are national health and safety regulations, particularly for pre-primary settings, which cover such areas as staffing, indoor space, indoor equipment, outdoor space, outdoor equipment, toilets, catering and nutrition. The Czech Republic has no national curriculum guidance for settings working with under-threes, but a for pre-primary education, the national curriculum encourages a broad and balanced learning program, including personal and emotional development; social development and citizenship; attitudes and dispositions to learning; physical development and health; language development and communication skills; reading and literacy skills; mathematical skills; understanding the world; science; and expressive arts, music and creativity. There is no specific guidance on a particular pedagogical approach for ECE. Parental participation in children's learning is supported by guidance on information transmission, consultation and dialogue, and active participation of parents in children's learning. There is a national body responsible for the accreditation of all ECE settings, but only pre-primary settings receive inspection, which focuses on regulation compliance, staff performance, leadership and management, the curriculum program, children's learning outcomes, children's well-being, and financial sustainability. The results of quality assurance are reported on the internet for the wider public, and are used in the development of policy and practice in the following ways: performance management of ECE providers; commissioning providers; used by central, regional, local and provider bodies to inform strategy; used by settings to inform planning of services; used by ECE practitioner groups to inform the planning of services; and used by parental bodies to inform choice in ECE.

Expectations for Child Outcomes

There is a broad range of expectations for child outcomes for children in the pre-primary phase, but not for under-threes. These include personal and emotional development; social development and citizenship; attitudes and dispositions to learning; physical development and health; language development and communication skills; reading and literacy skills; mathematical skills; understanding the world; science; and expressive arts, music and creativity. There are no national assessments in the ECE phase.

Country Profile: Denmark

System Structure



Source:

Adapted from European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat (2014), with permission. Additional information provided by the Danish NRC.

ECE in Denmark is both a split and unitary system with four different structures. Home-based care or *Dagpleje* is publicly funded, and provides part-time and extended day places to children from birth to three years of age. Nurseries or *Vuggestuer* are regulated, publicly-funded, center-based settings providing part-time and extended day places to children from birth to three years of age. Integrated Centers or *Integreret daginstitution* are publicly-funded centers that cater for children from birth to six years of age. They provide part-time and extended day places. Kindergartens or *Børnehaver* cater for children from three to six years of age. These settings are publicly funded and provide part-time and extended day places. Primary education starts at six years of age.

Public Policy

Denmark has a wide range of policy aims for its ECE services for children from birth to six years, which balance child care and early education priorities. These include providing child care to support parental employment, parent education and training, and parental work/life balance, and providing early education to enhance children’s socio-emotional development, positive attitude and dispositions, language and literacy, basic mathematical skills, and physical development, preparedness for school, citizenship, special needs, safeguarding of vulnerable children; support for children where home language is different to the national language, and reductions in inequality. Further policy aims include the preparation of children for school and for citizenship, support for children with special needs, safeguards for vulnerable children, reductions in inequality and social disadvantage, and support for children whose home

language differs from the national language. Governance and system management in Denmark are distributed between national and subnational levels, reflecting a multi-level governance model with one integrated department with responsibility for ECE. Statutory entitlements for children and parents provide children with free, universal services from birth to six years of age, but this is not compulsory. Parents have a statutory entitlement to parental leave in the form of paid maternity and paid paternity leave. Over the last five years, there have been policy changes in expenditure, staff qualifications and child assessments.

Delivery Models and Providers

In Denmark, there are four different provider types and settings. For children under three years, there is home-based and center-based provision, and for three- to six-year-olds there are nurseries and kindergartens. In addition, there are integrated centers that cater for children from birth to six years. All settings offer part and extended day services. All provision is publicly funded or subsidized. Funding mechanisms include supply-side funding through staff salary subsidies, resource grants and capital grants, and demand-side funding through reduced fees.

Participation and Enrollment

Child enrollment levels to ECE are high and increase with the age of the child; 65.7% of under-threes are enrolled and 94.1% of three- to five-year-olds. During the pre-primary year (five- to six-year-olds) enrollment rises further. There are no prioritized places for children, as there is universal entitlement and high levels of enrollment. Denmark has legislation and strategies to support cultural diversity in the delivery of early childhood services. Coverage of ECE provision is universal for children throughout the age phase and strategies exist to encourage the participation of children from low-income families. There is also a range of early intervention programs to support the participation of children from low-income families, children with special needs or disability, minority ethnic groups, and children whose home language differs from the national language.

Supporting Quality in ECE

Responsibility for the regulation of early childhood services is mainly at a national level with some aspects being regulated at local level. Staff qualifications, training and remuneration are regulated, with two main categories of staff, namely pedagogue and assistant pedagogue, and one category of setting leader. Assistant pedagogues are required to have an ISCED Level 2 qualification, and pedagogues and managers an ISCED Level 5 qualification. Staff remuneration is the same for both ECED and PPE, and the terminology used for the staff roles is also consistent between the two phases. Professional development is optional for all staff, including setting leaders. Group sizes are 10–14 for children aged birth to three years and 20–25 for children aged between three and six years, but this a recommendation rather than a regulation. Staff:child ratios are also not nationally regulated in Denmark, but government recommends that there are four to six children per educator at one to three years of age and eight children per educator at age three to six years. In reality, there are usually 11 children per adult for the age range three to six years and six children per adult for the age range birth to three years. There are health and safety regulations that cover such aspects as indoor space, outdoor space, toilet facilities, catering facilities, nutrition standards, suitability of staff, and risk assessments. Denmark has national curriculum guidance for ECE designed to

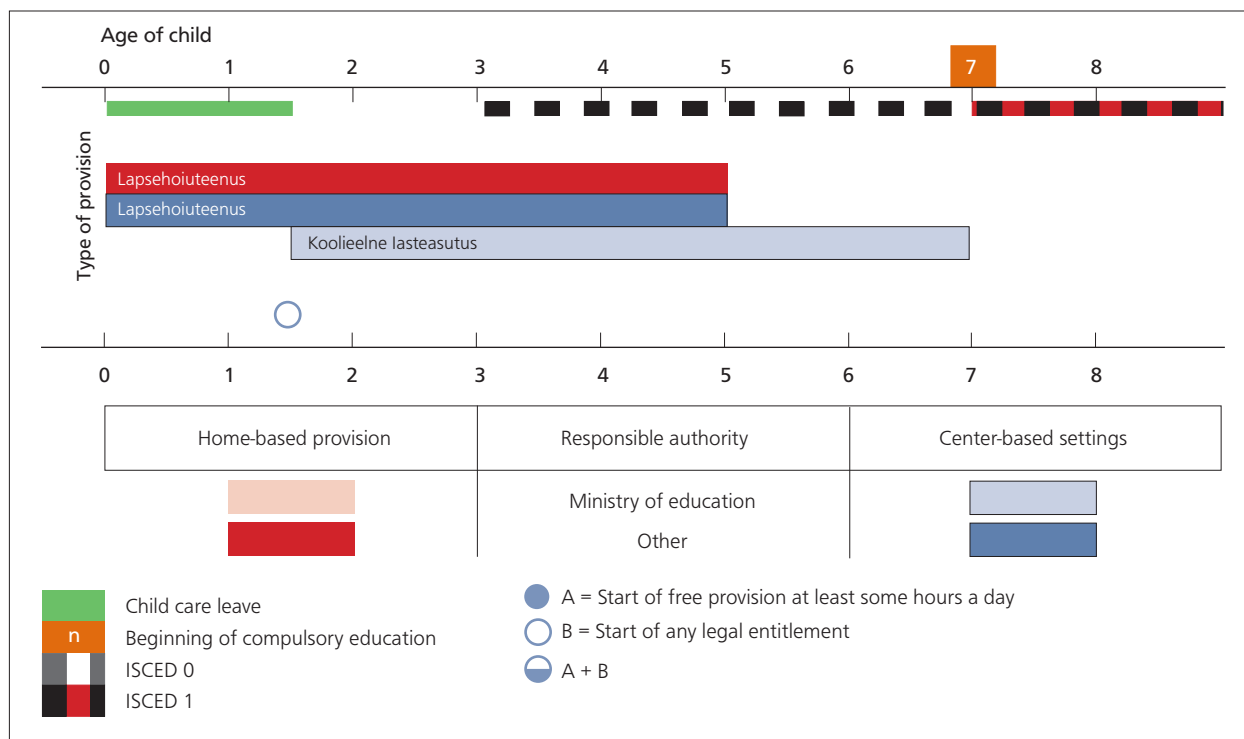
encourage a broad and balanced learning program, including personal and emotional development; social development and citizenship; attitudes and dispositions to learning; physical development and health; language development and communication skills; reading and literacy skills; mathematical skills; understanding the world; science; and expressive arts, music and creativity. Parental participation in children's learning is supported by guidance on information transmission, consultation and dialogue. There is a national body responsible for inspection that focuses on regulation compliance; staff performance; leadership and management; children's learning outcomes; curriculum program; children's well-being; parental satisfaction; financial sustainability; and value for money. The results of quality assurance are reported to settings, parents, providers, and local and regional ECE bodies, and the findings are used to inform development of policy and practice.

Expectations for Child Outcomes

There is a broad range of expectations for child outcomes for children in ECE. These include personal and emotional development; social development and citizenship; attitudes and dispositions to learning; physical development and health; language development and communication skills; reading and literacy skills; mathematical skills; understanding the world; science; and expressive arts, music and creativity. There are no national or subnational assessments, and children's learning outcomes are not reported.

Country Profile: Estonia

System Structure



Source:

Adapted from European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat (2014), with permission.

ECE in Estonia is a unitary system. There are two main structures in the ECE system; child care centers called *Lapsehoiuteenus* and fully integrated educational institutions called *Koolieelne lasteasutus* for children aged from one and a half years to seven years offering day care and pre-primary education. Estonia has a unitary child care and education system under the responsibility of Ministry and Education and Research. Children start primary education at the age of seven years.

Public Policy

Estonia has a wide range of policy aims for its ECE services for children from birth to six years, which balance child care and early education priorities. These include providing child care to support parental employment, parent education and training and parental work/life balance, and providing early education to enhance children's socio-emotional development; positive attitude and dispositions; language and literacy; basic mathematical skills; and physical development; preparedness for school; citizenship; special needs; safeguarding vulnerable children; supporting children where home language is different to the national language; and reducing inequality. Further policy aims include the preparation of children for school and for citizenship, supporting children with special needs, safeguarding vulnerable children, reducing inequality and social disadvantage and supporting children when home and national language differ. Governance and system management in Estonia are distributed between national and subnational levels, reflecting a multi-level governance model with responsibility for ECE shared between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Welfare.

Statutory entitlements for children and parents provide children with free, universal services from eighteen months to seven years of age, but this is not compulsory. Parents have a statutory entitlement to parental leave in the form of paid maternity and paid paternity leave. Over the last five years there have been significant policy changes in curriculum, staff qualifications and child assessments, and further changes are planned in expenditure, staff:child ratios, quality inspection and monitoring, and teacher education and development.

Delivery Models and Providers

In Estonia there are two different provider types and settings delivering services to children from eighteen months to seven years, one having a child care orientation and the other a preschool orientation, though both types offer care and early education. Both of these setting types are publicly funded and funding mechanisms include supply-side funding through staff salary subsidy, place subsidy, resource grants and capital grants, and demand-side funding through reduced fees, tax credits/relief and family allowances.

Participation and Enrollment

Child enrollment levels to ECE are high and increase with the age of the child, with 23.6 % of under-threes and 89.8% of three- to five-year-olds enrolled. During the pre-primary years (five- to seven-year-olds) this rises to 100 % of six- to seven-year-olds. There are no explicitly prioritized places for children as there is universal entitlement and high levels of enrollment, but there are guidelines that give preferential places to children whose elder siblings are already enrolled and to children whose home language differs from the national language. Estonia has legislation and strategies to support cultural diversity in the delivery of early childhood services. Coverage of ECE provision is universal for children throughout the age phase and strategies exist to encourage the participation of children from low-income families and to extend coverage in rural areas, and for ethnic minority children and children with special needs or disability. There is also a range of early intervention programs to support the participation of children from low-income families, children with special needs or disability, minority ethnic groups, and where the home language differs from the national language.

Supporting Quality in ECE

Responsibility for the regulation of early childhood services is mainly at a national level, with some aspects being regulated at local level. Staff qualifications, training and remuneration are regulated, with three main categories of staff, namely teacher, assistant and nurse, and two categories of setting leader, director and head teacher. Assistants are required to have an ISCED Level 3 qualification, nurses an ISCED Level 4 qualification, and teachers, directors and head teachers an ISCED Level 5 qualification. Staff remuneration is independent of the age of the children. Professional development is optional for teachers and assistants and required for directors and head teachers. Group sizes are 14–16 for children aged birth to three years and 20–24 for children aged between three and six years, and staff:child ratios are 7–8 children per educator for children from one to three years of age and 12 children per educator at age three to seven years. There are health and safety regulations that cover such aspects as indoor space, indoor equipment, outdoor space, outdoor equipment, toilet facilities, catering facilities, nutrition standards, medicine protocols, illness protocols, suitability

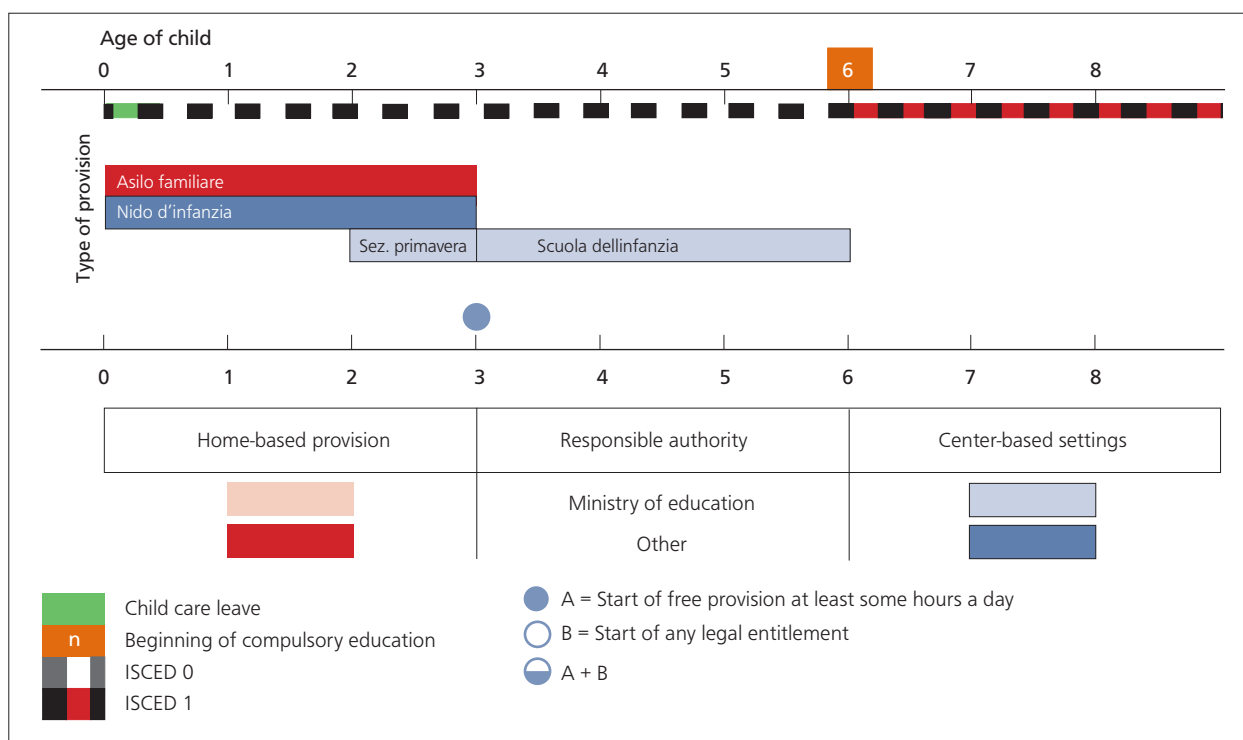
of staff, and risk assessments. Estonia has national curriculum guidance for ECE that encourages a broad and balanced learning program, including personal and emotional development; social development and citizenship; attitudes and dispositions to learning; physical development and health; language development and communication skills; reading and literacy skills; mathematical skills; understanding the world; science; and expressive arts, music and creativity. In addition, from age three to seven years, children learn a second or foreign language. There is national or subnationally prescribed guidance on pedagogic approach for the entire age phase, which emphasizes creative, experiential, play-based pedagogies. Parental participation in children's learning is supported by guidance on information transmission, consultation and dialogue, and the active participation of parents in children's learning. There is a national body responsible for accreditation throughout the age phase, which focuses on regulation compliance, leadership and management, curriculum program, and financial sustainability. There is also a national system for inspection that evaluates staff performance; leadership and management; children's learning outcomes; curriculum program; children's well-being; parental satisfaction; financial sustainability; and value for money. The results of quality assurance are reported to all stakeholders (settings, providers, parents, local, regional and national bodies), and published in media and on the internet. The findings are used to inform all elements of developing policy and practice: accountability and performance management; commissioning providers; central, regional and local planning of ECE services; provider bodies strategic planning; settings strategic planning; ECE practitioner groups strategic planning; and used by parent groups to inform choice of ECE setting.

Expectations for Child Outcomes

There are a broad range of expectations for child outcomes for children in ECE. These include personal and emotional development; social development and citizenship; attitudes and dispositions to learning; physical development and health; language development and communication skills; reading and literacy skills; mathematical skills; understanding the world; science; and expressive arts, music and creativity. Children's learning outcomes in these areas are assessed, but the assessment methods differ between the under- and over-threes. For under-threes, assessments are only conducted using practitioner observations, whereas for pre-primary children there is a mixture of methods, including standardized tests and standardized tasks, as well as observations. The child outcomes data are collected and reported to both settings and parents. Outcome data are not reported to local, regional or national bodies or published in local media or on the internet. The outcome data are used to inform the development of ECE policy and practice, and used by settings and by practitioner groups to inform the planning of ECE programs.

Country Profile: Italy

System Structure



Source:

Adapted from European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat (2014), with permission. Additional information provided by the Italian NRC.

ECE in Italy is currently a split system. The recent reform of the education system with the passing of Italian Law 107 of July 2015 requires new legislation for the reunification of the split system in order to establish an integrated or unitary ISCED Level 0 system catering for children from birth to six years under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. How this is going to be achieved cannot be reported here, due to the transitional period until such further legislation is issued. The country profile is thus based on the extant situation of the split system, supplemented by information on the expected changes whenever applicable.

Center-based provision for children aged birth to three years is in *asili nido* (nurseries, formerly *nido d'infanzia*) and other types of "integrative" services (including some home-based regulated care). These services are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. ECE is not mandatory, but locally organized and subsidized: all municipalities and 21 regions and autonomous provinces have regulating competence over this matter. The Department of Family within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers also funds some birth to age three policies. Parents generally need to contribute to the costs of ECED provision, though in many regions costs tend to be low due to subsidies for lower-income families. Center-based provision for children aged three to six years is in *scuole dell'infanzia* (preschools), which is the first step of the state education system; this is not mandatory for children, and is free of charge (except for meals and transportation), enabling almost universal access. State preschools are generally hosted within comprehensive institutes with a curriculum for children aged

three to fourteen years. Municipal pre-primary schools are also widespread and, in some areas (Rome for example), these may be linked to *asili nido* in the same area to offer integrated services for children aged birth to six years. State and municipal preschools generally offer also two additional options for children aged two to three years: the so-called *anticipi* (anticipation of enrollment to a pre-primary school) for children of two-and-a-half to three years old) and the *sezioni primavera* (literally spring sections) for children aged two to three years. These are two ways for children to start preschool earlier than three years of age. These services also function as a connection between the ECED and the PPE system. Anticipated enrollment and spring sections are particularly widespread in Southern Italy and generally located in deprived areas, since this provision is free in state preschools or considerably cheaper for parents in non-state preschools compared with *asili nido*. Private provision, some of which subsidized in schools with “state status” equivalence, is available for both age ranges. Children enter primary education at six years of age.

Public Policy

Italy has a limited set of policy aims for its services for under-threes, which are mainly focused on supporting parental employment, supporting parental work/life balance, and remediating special needs (e.g. language delay). This is expected to change with the new reform, anticipating the introduction of an additional educational component into ECE for under-threes. During the pre-primary phase, a wide range of policy aims is identified, designed to balance child care and early education priorities. These include providing child care to support parental employment and parental work/life balance, and providing early education to enhance children’s socio-emotional skills, attitudes and dispositions to learning, language and literacy skills, basic mathematical skills, and physical development, while introducing young children to citizenship, and reducing inequality and social disadvantage. Further policy aims include the preparation of children for the school transition, support for children with special needs, safeguarding vulnerable children, reducing inequality and social disadvantage, and support for children whose home language differs from the national language. Providing support for parental employment, parental education and training, and parental work/life balance are not stated aims for PPE in Italy. Governance and system management in Italy are distributed between national and subnational levels, reflecting a multi-level governance model with responsibility for ECE at a national level shared between the Ministry of Education (PPE, plus anticipated enrolments in PPE and Spring Sections) and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies/Welfare and other cross-departmental bodies. The Ministry of Health cuts across ECED and PPE, with responsibility on periodic control of hygiene in preschools and nurseries; diagnosis and certification of disability for all children; control of diets for children in nidi; and pediatric visits in nidi. The Ministry of Finance has responsibility for the allocation of funds for early childhood according to a financial law passed in 2015. The July 2015 education system reform (Law 107) anticipates new legislation affecting governance: the Ministry of Education is expected to be responsible for the forthcoming integrated 0–6 system, with a new definition of functions and competencies at the regional and local level. It is important to notice that 0–3 services will be excluded from the set of services at individual demand. In Italy there are no statutory entitlements for children to education and care services, yet PPE is free for children to attend. Employed parents do have statutory entitlement to paid and unpaid maternity and paternity leave, and an optional parental leave system (for

a maximum of 10 months) which can be carried forward until a child's third birthday. From 2009-2014 there have been policy changes in expenditure (ECED and PPE), staff:child ratios, staff qualifications, curriculum, and inspection and monitoring (PPE only). Further changes are planned involving structural changes to reunify the birth-to-six age group to form an integrated or unitary model of service delivery (according to the recently passed Law 107, July 2015).

Delivery Models and Providers

In Italy there are three main provider types and settings. For children under three years, there are child care nurseries or *Nidi d'infanzia* and integrative services or *Servizi integrativi* that include various types of provision, such as play spaces, child and parent groups, and home services. For three- to six-year-olds there are infant schools (preschools) or *Scuola dell'infanzia* offering early education. All settings offer part- and full-day services. Some settings are solely publicly funded, some solely privately funded and some receive a mix of public and private funding. Funding mechanisms include supply-side funding through resource grants and capital grants, and demand-side funding through tax credits/relief, vouchers and reduced fees (in ECED only).

Participation and Enrollment

Child enrollment levels to ECE in Italy increase with the age of the child, with 24.2% of under-threes and 95.7% of three- to five-year-olds enrolled. There are no explicitly prioritized places for children as there is universal entitlement and high levels of enrollment in the PPE sector. Italy has legislation and strategies to support cultural diversity in the delivery of early childhood services. Despite an intention to provide universal access to services, coverage of ECE provision can be poor for some children, particularly for children under the age of three, and strategies exist to encourage the participation of children from low-income families and to extend coverage where shortages exist. The new July 2015 reform aims to increase low access rates for birth to two-year-olds with the future introduction of the unitary system. There are no reported early intervention programs to support less advantaged children. However, PPE support teachers exist for children with special needs and disabilities, in line with the inclusive nature of Italian preschool.

Supporting Quality in ECE

Responsibility for the regulation of early childhood services is at a national and subnational level, with some aspects being regulated at local level. Staff qualifications, training and remuneration are complex, and ECED and PPE staffing differs, staff groupings including nursery school educators, infancy school teachers, teacher aides, pediatric nurses, and four categories of setting leader. At the ECED level, senior staff are likely to be less qualified than their counterparts in PPE settings (Level 3 or upper secondary school level as compared with Level 5 or first stage tertiary level). Teacher aides or assistants in ECED and PPE settings do not need formal qualifications. There is also differentiation between the private and public preschool sector: in state preschools, teachers require an ISCED level 5 degree. Those in leadership positions are usually expected to have a level 5 or first stage tertiary level qualification, yet this is not always the case in the private sector. Teachers and head teachers in schools receive mandatory professional development (CPD) during their first year of service. The new July 2015 reform introduced mandatory training for all teaching staff, including

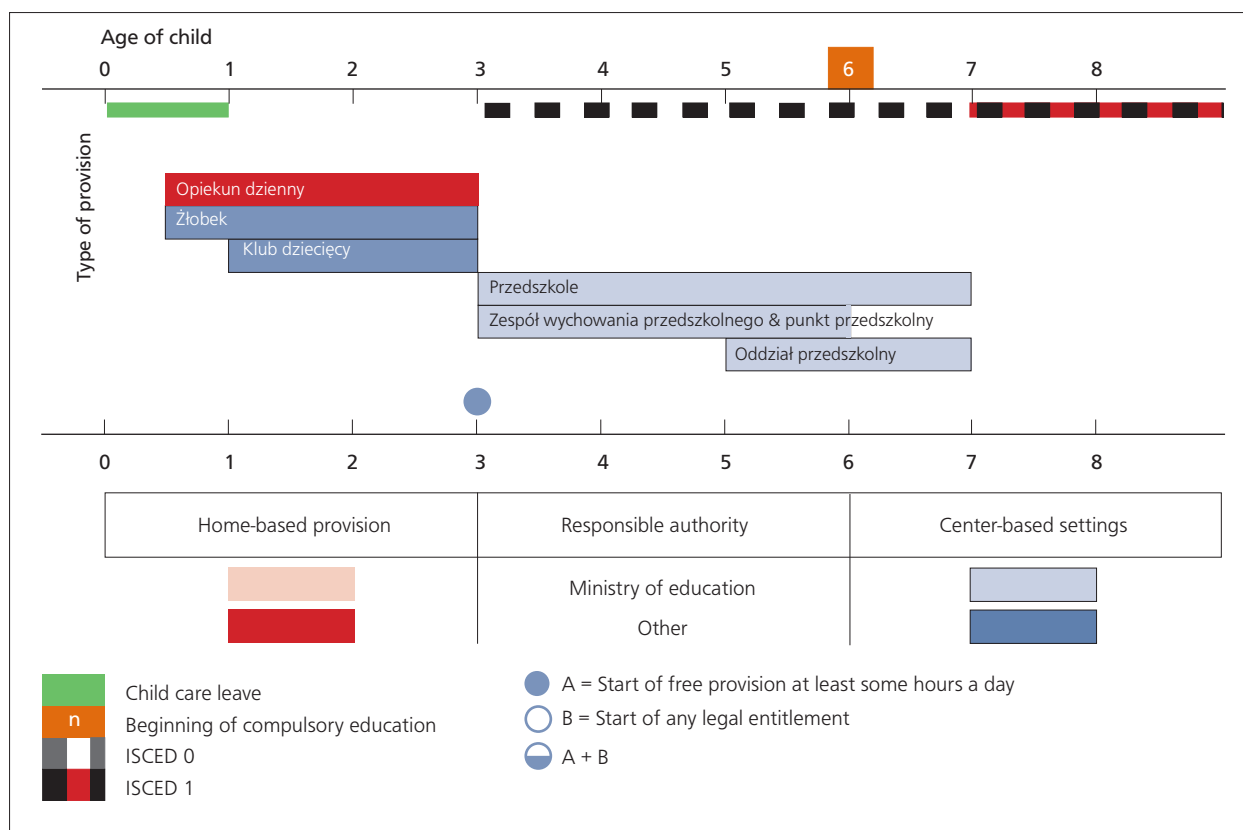
preschool teachers in state schools. CPD is optional for all other staff and leaders. The qualifications, remuneration and training of staff and leaders are expected to change both for the new national contracts under discussion and for the new 2015 education system reform, subject to legislation anticipated as part of the 0–6 system reunification. Group sizes for settings for under-threes are determined by the size of the setting rather than the group size, and the teacher:child ratio is determined by typology of setting and teacher contract. For pre-primary state settings, classrooms have a minimum of 18 and a maximum of 26 children, with locally determined staff:child ratios in municipal PPE. Again, group sizes and staff:child ratios are expected to be altered, especially in the birth to two years segment, after the system reform. There are health and safety regulations that cover such aspects as indoor space, indoor equipment, outdoor space, outdoor equipment, toilet facilities, catering facilities, nutrition standards, medicine protocols, illness protocols, suitability of staff, and risk assessments. Italy has national curriculum guidance for pre-primary education (but not for ECED), which encourages a broad and balanced learning program, including personal and emotional development; social development and citizenship; attitudes and dispositions to learning; physical development and health; language development and communication skills; reading and literacy skills; mathematical skills; understanding the world; science; and expressive arts, music and creativity. A person-centered humanistic pedagogic approach is explicitly included in the 2012 curriculum guidelines for PPE, however this is balanced by the constitution, which recognizes school and teacher autonomy. Parental participation in children's learning is supported by guidance on consultation and dialogue, and active participation of parents in children's learning. There are national bodies responsible for accreditation and inspection for pre-primary settings, and subnational/local accreditation and inspection for settings serving children aged under three. Accreditation focuses on regulation compliance and curriculum program (PPE only). There is also a national system for inspection for PPE within the broader education system. The results of quality assurance are generally not reported to all stakeholders (just settings and providers).

Expectations for Child Outcomes

There are a broad range of expectations for child outcomes for children in pre-primary education, but none stated for under-threes. These generally match the areas of learning and development set out in the national curriculum guidelines for PPE. In Italy there are no national or subnational assessments or reporting of children's learning outcomes.

Country Profile: Poland

System Structure



Source:

Adapted from European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat (2014), with permission. Additional information supplied by the Polish NRC.

ECE in Poland is a split system. For children under the age of three there is home-based day care or nannies. Center-based care is usually in *crèches* or, more recently, in kids clubs. Care up to age three is the responsibility of Ministry of Work and Social Policy. From age three to six years, the child is eligible for an optional preschool education. As from the school year 2004/2005, all six-year-old children attend a nursery school (*przedszkole*) or preschool classes (*oddziały przedszkolne*) in primary schools, as the School Education Act introduced a one-year obligatory preschool preparation.

Public Policy

Poland has no stated policy aims for its services for under-threes, but during the pre-primary phase, a wide range of policy aims are identified, which balance child care and early education priorities. These include early education to enhance children's socio-emotional skills, attitudes and dispositions to learning, language and literacy skills, basic mathematical skills, and physical development. Further policy aims include the preparation of children for school and for citizenship, to support children with special needs and to safeguard vulnerable children. Governance and system management for ECE in Poland are located mainly at national level, reflecting a single-level governance

model, with responsibility for under-threes being located with the Ministry of Health and an integrating body, and over-threes with the Ministry of Education. In Poland there are no statutory entitlements for children to education and care services under the age of three, but from three to six years universal part-time entitlement exists. Parents have statutory entitlement to paid and unpaid maternity and paternity leave. Over the last five years there have been policy changes in expenditure, staff:child ratios, staff qualifications and inspection and monitoring, and currently there are no further policy changes planned.

Delivery Models and Providers

In Poland there are three main provider types and settings. For children under three years, there is home-based care and center-based care, which can take two forms: crèche or kids clubs. The commune establishes crèches and kids clubs as public sector units at the commune level, or they can delegate the responsibility for their administration to other institutions, selected through an open competition. The default and most popular and oldest option are crèches. Kid clubs are smaller versions of crèches: they offer less hours of day-care, they are a bit less restrictive and (also for this reason) they are also frequently run by individuals (and not by communes themselves). For children from three to six years old there are kindergartens or *Przedszkole*, preschool classes in primary schools or *Oddział przedszkolny w szkole podstawowej* and preschool units or *Inne formy wychowania przedszkolnego: punkty przedszkolne i zespoły wychowania przedszkolnego*, all of which offer pre-primary educational programs. Most settings offer part-time, full or extended day services. Some settings are solely publicly funded and some receive a mix of public and private funding. Funding mechanisms include supply-side funding through staff salary subsidy and capital grants, and demand-side funding through reduced fees.

Participation and Enrollment

Child enrollment levels to ECE in Poland increase with the age of the child, with 6.9% of under-threes and 59.7% of three- to five-year-olds enrolled. At five to six years the enrollment rate is 94.0%. There are no explicitly prioritized places for children as there is universal entitlement. Poland does not employ strategies to support cultural diversity in the delivery of early childhood services for under-threes, but there is legislation to ensure cultural diversity is respected in programs during pre-primary education. Coverage of ECE provision can be poor for children under the age of three, and strategies exist to encourage the participation of children under the age of three by extending coverage in rural areas where shortages exist. There are no reported early intervention programs to support less advantaged children.

Supporting Quality in ECE

Responsibility for the regulation of early childhood services is at a national and subnational level with many aspects being regulated at local level. Staff qualifications, training and remuneration are complex and the profile and professional training of staff are very different in settings that serve children under three years (ECED) compared to settings that serve children from three to six years old (PPE). For example, there is a much wider range of staff working with the younger children, including child carers, teachers, nurses, childbirth assistants, doctors and voluntary workers. Senior staff have a minimum ISCED Level 5 or first stage tertiary level qualification and assistant staff

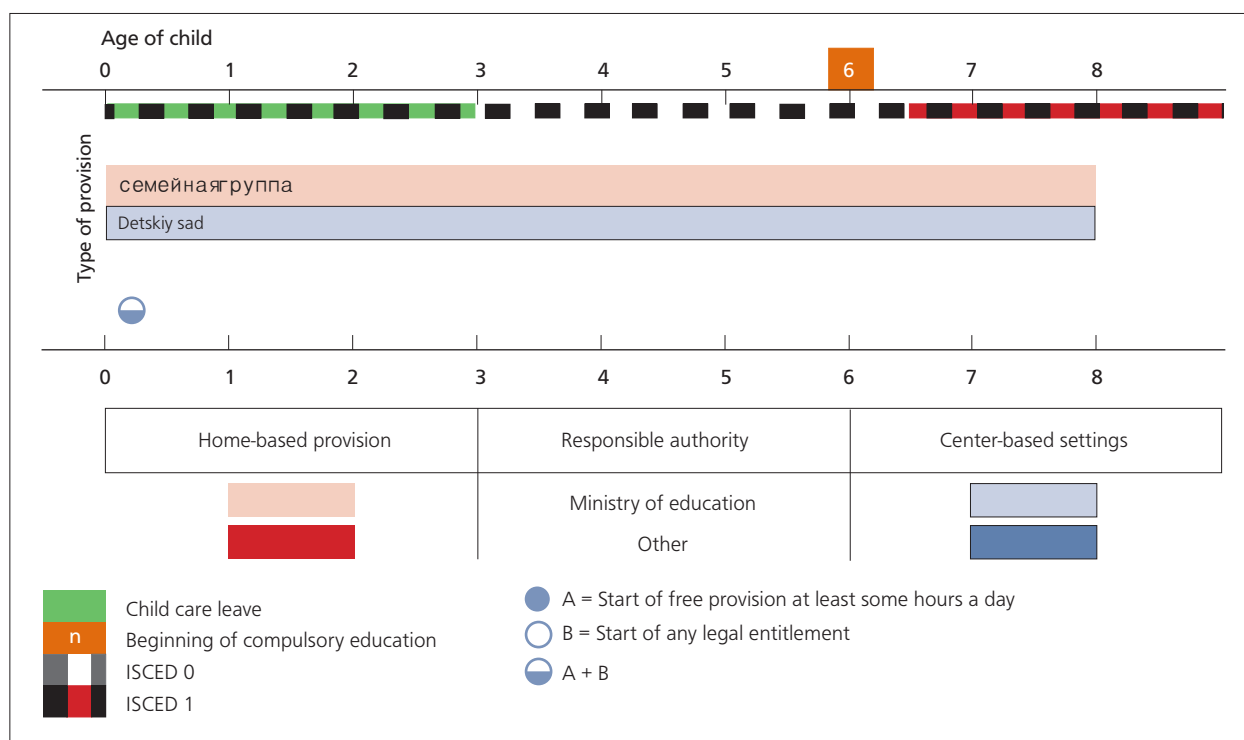
have a minimum ISCED Level 3 or upper secondary school level qualification. Health oriented staff can be qualified at ISCED Level 4 or 5 and are required to undertake CPD. The settings leaders (principals) have to have higher qualifications if they work in PPE settings, and they earn significantly more. Group sizes and staff:child ratios are not regulated. There are health and safety regulations that cover such aspects as indoor space; indoor equipment; toilet facilities; catering facilities; medicine protocols; suitability of staff; and fire safety. Poland has no national curriculum guidance for settings serving under-threes (ECED) but for pre-primary education the national curriculum guidance encourages a broad and balanced learning program, including personal and emotional development; social development and citizenship; attitudes and disposition to learning; physical and health education; language and communication; reading and literacy; mathematical skills; understanding the natural world; science; technology and the digital world; and second/foreign language. Poland prescribes two pedagogic approaches: an academic formal approach and an experiential approach. Parental participation in children's learning is supported by national guidance on information transmission and active participation of parents in children's learning. There are subnational bodies responsible for accreditation and inspection for all ECE settings. Accreditation focuses on regulation compliance and curriculum program (PPE only). Inspection of pre-primary education focuses on staff performance; leadership and management; children's learning outcomes; curriculum program; children's well-being; parental satisfaction; and financial sustainability. The results of quality assurance are reported to the settings and the local bodies with responsibility for the setting. For pre-primary settings, results are also published on the internet and the NRCs report that the findings are used to inform the development of policy and practice at national, local and setting level.

Expectations for Child Outcomes

There are no child outcome expectations for children under the age of three years in Poland. For children aged from three to six years there are a broad range of expectations for child outcomes for children in ECE. These include personal and emotional development; social development and citizenship; attitudes and dispositions to learning; physical development and health; language development and communication skills; reading and literacy skills; mathematical skills; understanding the world; science; and expressive arts, music and creativity. Children's learning outcomes in these areas are assessed and the assessment methods include standardized tests and standardized tasks, as well as teacher observations. This child outcomes data are collected and reported to settings, parents, providers, local, regional and national bodies responsible for ECE, and results are published on the internet. The outcome data are used by government to inform and develop policy and practice nationally through accountability and performance management of settings, and by central, regional and local bodies to inform strategic planning.

Country Profile: Russian Federation

System Structure



Source:

Based on European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat (2014), with permission. Data provided by the Russian Federation NRC.

ISCED level 0 is regulated by federal state law published by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation in 2012. Preschool education (ISCED Level 0) is one of the stages of general education. Citizens in the Russian Federation have the right to preschool education and the state guarantees this right. Preschool education is public, free of charge and non-compulsory, and it has two forms: home-based and center-based. Home-based education is mostly presented by family groups; this can be organized by preschool settings on a home basis or it can be a private home-based group. Center-based preschool education can be taken starting from two months of age, but programs for children from two months to eighteen month are very rare and not presented as part of the public preschool educational service. Women have three years child care leave, with the first one-and-a-half years paid; the last one-and-a-half years are non-paid. Therefore public education and child care is only needed when a child is about one-and-a-half years old. Public educational programs for one- to three-year-olds were highly represented in the system, but in the last two years they have decreased. All the public preschool educational resources are focused on providing full-time, center-based, preschool education for three- to seven-year-old children, increasing its availability and coverage. Primary school can be started between six-and-a-half and eight years of age. A new federal law on education has introduced the new possibility of organizing groups of care and supervision of children from two months to seven years in a preschool setting without the implementation of an educational program of preschool education. This service is not subventioned by the Federal Ministry of

Education. Preschool education can be provided by either public or private settings as long as they have a license.

Public Policy

The Russian Federation has a wide range of policy aims for its ECE services, which balance child care and early education priorities. These include providing child care to support parental employment and parental work/life balance, and providing early education to enhance children's socio-emotional skills, attitudes and dispositions to learning, language and literacy skills, basic mathematical skills, and physical development. Further policy aims include the preparation of children for school and for citizenship, to support children with special needs, to safeguard vulnerable children, to reduce inequality and social disadvantage and to support children when home and national language are different. Governance and system management in the Russian Federation are distributed between national and subnational levels, reflecting a multi-level governance model with responsibility for ECE at a national level shared between the Ministries of Education, Health and Work and Employment and other cross-cutting departmental bodies. There are statutory entitlements for children to free, public education and care services. Parents have statutory entitlement to paid and unpaid maternity and paternity leave. Over the last five years there have been policy changes in staff:child ratios; national curriculum; regulation, inspection and monitoring; child assessment and teachers' salaries; and the financing model. There are no further changes currently planned.

Delivery Models and Providers

In the Russian Federation there are two basic delivery models and provider types and settings: home-based child care and center-based kindergartens of various types. Most settings offer part, full or extended day services (including overnight in some settings). Some settings are solely publicly funded and some receive a mix of public and private funding. Funding mechanisms include supply-side funding through staff salary subsidy and capital and resource grants, and demand-side funding through reduced fees.

Participation and Enrollment

Child enrollment levels to ECE in the Russian Federation increase with the age of the child, with 84% of three- to five-year-olds enrolled. There are prioritized places for children from low-income families. Strategies and legislation exist to support cultural diversity in the delivery of early childhood services. Coverage of ECE provision is universal, but access can be difficult in some rural areas and for children with special needs or disability. Strategies exist to encourage the participation of children by extending coverage in rural areas where there are shortages. There are early intervention programs to support low-income families; children with special needs/disability; minority ethnic groups; and children whose home language differs from the national language.

Supporting Quality in ECE

Responsibility for the regulation of early childhood services is at a national and subnational level, with many aspects being regulated at local level. Staff qualifications, training and remuneration are complex as a wide range of professionals from the health, care and education are represented in the workforce, and tend to be highly qualified. These staff include educators, educator assistants, junior educators, methodists, speech therapist teachers, psychologists, music teachers, physical development teachers, and

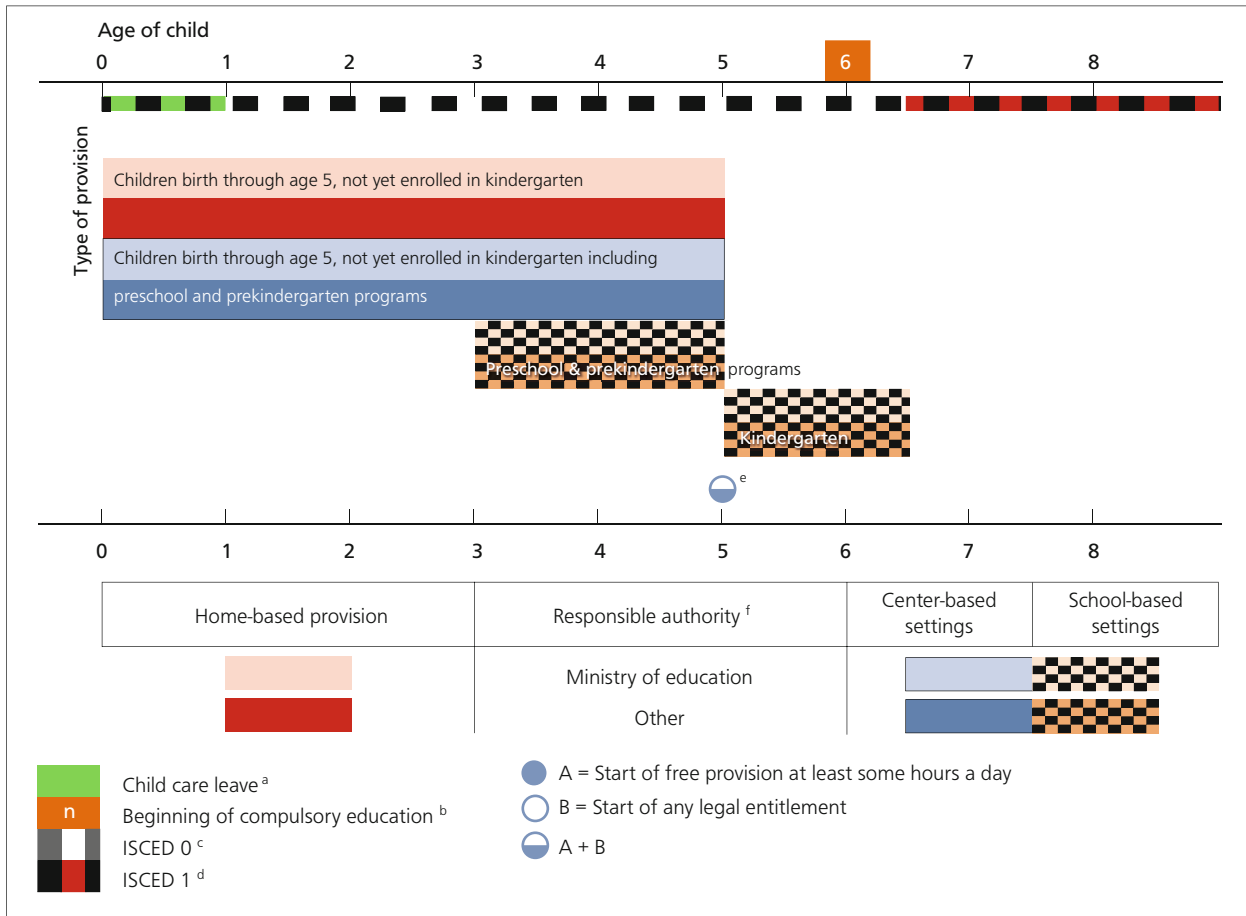
three categories of leader. Senior staff have a minimum ISCED Level 6 qualification and assistant staff have a minimum Level 3 qualification. Health oriented staff are qualified at Level 4 to 6 and must undertake CPD, which is optional for other staff categories. Group sizes and staff:child ratios are regulated by the size of setting and its floor space rather than the size or age of the group. There are health and safety regulations that cover such aspects as indoor space; indoor equipment; toilet facilities; catering facilities; medicine protocols; suitability of staff; and fire safety. In addition, regulations cover natural and artificial rooms lighting; requirements for heating and ventilation; requirements for water and sanitation; requirements for admission of children in preschool organizations, the regime of the day and the organization of education process; requirements for the organization of physical education; requirements for sanitary maintenance of preschool rooms; requirements to undergo preventive medical examinations, hygiene education and training, personal hygiene of staff; and requirements for sanitary. The Russian Federation has national curriculum guidance for settings serving under-threes (ECED) and children aged three to six (PPE) that encourages a broad and balanced learning program, including personal and emotional development; social development and citizenship; attitudes and disposition to learning; physical and health education; language and communication; reading and literacy; mathematical skills; understanding the natural world; science; technology and the digital world; and second/foreign language. There is also national or subnationally prescribed guidance on pedagogic approaches, which is the same for both ECED and PPE. These are creative/progressive, experiential, and a play curriculum, as well as a child centered approach based on Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory. Parental participation in children's learning is supported by guidance on information transmission and the active participation of parents in children's learning. There are no accreditation processes, but there are subnational bodies responsible for inspection for all ECE settings. Inspection focuses on regulation compliance, financial sustainability, and value for money. The results of quality assurance are reported to the settings and the regional bodies with responsibility for the setting, and they are also published on the internet. The NRC reports that findings are used to inform the development of policy and practice at national, local and setting level.

Expectations for Child Outcomes

There are a broad range of expectations for child outcomes for children under three, which include personal and emotional development, physical development and health, and language and communication. For three- to six-year-olds, the expectations for learning include personal and emotional development, social development and citizenship, attitudes and dispositions to learning, physical development and health, language and communication, and understanding the natural world. In the Russian Federation there are no national or subnational assessments or reporting of children's learning outcomes.

Country Profile: United States

System Structure



Source:

Based on European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat (2014), with permission. Data provided by the United States NRC.

Explanatory notes:

- ^a Within the United States, parental leave falls under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), where parents are allowed 12 work weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave within the first 12 months from when a child is born, adopted or placed in foster care. Therefore parents with children above the age of 1 only qualify if the child was adopted or placed in their care in that 12 month period. This entitlement can also be used by parents if their child has a serious health condition. All eligible employees are allowed up to 12 workweeks of unpaid job-protected leave that can be used for when a child is ill with a serious health condition and needs to be cared for by the parent, regardless of the age of the child. Employees eligible for this entitlement usually must have worked for the specific company for at least 1 year before they qualify.
- ^b Within the United States, the beginning of compulsory education varies by state, from age 5 to age 8. Age 6 is the most frequently occurring age, within 25 states. Age 7 is the next most frequently occurring age, within 13 states.
- ^c Within the United States, children from birth through kindergarten are classified as ISCED 0. Within the United States, in the majority of states, kindergarten begins the last week of August or the first week of September and to enroll children must be five years of age by the start of kindergarten (this varies by state).
- ^d Within the United States, ISCED 1 begins with first grade.
- ^e Within the United States at ages 5-6 (kindergarten) there is more or less a universal entitlement. 45 out of 50 states plus the District of Columbia require school districts to offer kindergarten. Of those, 34 require school districts to at least offer half day services, while 11 states plus DC require school districts to offer full-day kindergarten.
- ^f Reflecting a multi-level governance model, in the United States responsibility for early childhood education (ECE) is largely at the state- and local-level with some federal-level support and involvement. Responsibilities for ECE at both the state- and the federal-level are shared between such agencies as the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services. In the figure, any state- or federal-level involvement in ECE is coded as Ministry of Education. In the United States ECE is also privately provided. This is true of home-based, center-based, and school-based settings from birth through kindergarten. Private provision is coded as "other." Therefore in the figure, all settings for all age groupings are coded as both government and private.

Early childhood education and care in the United States is largely decentralized. ISCED Level 0 within the United States includes children from birth through to their kindergarten year. Within the United States, the last year of ISCED 0 is children's kindergarten. ECE is described with different names, such as child care, day care, preschool and prekindergarten. It is delivered in different settings, from within a center, within a home, and within the local public or private school. Some programs are offered at little or no cost to parents, particularly for low-income parents. Other programs may cost a high proportion of a parent's income. The majority of ECE settings that serve children from birth through age of five (that is children not-yet-enrolled-in-kindergarten) are private fee-based services. There are some notable state-funded or federally-funded programs as well, but currently the majority of these programs are not universally available to all age eligible children within the state. Below are examples of some of the programs and legislation in the United States that are designed to make ECE more accessible and affordable for all children:

- **Head Start and Early Head Start:** Head Start and Early Head Start are federally-funded programs that promote the school readiness of young children from low-income families through agencies in their local community. Head Start programs support the mental, social, and emotional development of eligible children aged three to five-but-not-yet-enrolled-in-kindergarten, while Early Head Start programs are available to eligible families from birth until the child turns three years old.
- **Title I:** Title I is a federal grant program designed to give educational assistance to students living in areas of high poverty. The Title I program originated in 1965, when Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and was reauthorized in 2001 with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act. Over 600,000 children are served through preschool programs funded through federal Title I allocations to school districts and schools.
- **The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):** IDEA ensures that all children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. IDEA provides guidelines concerning the funding and services to children from birth to two years of age, and from age three to age twenty-one. For example, IDEA states that every family is entitled to appropriate and timely identification and intervention services for children aged birth to two years. For eligible children aged three to twenty-one, every child is entitled to a free and appropriate public education.
- **The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG):** CCDBG helps low-income families, families receiving public assistance, and those families transitioning from public assistance in obtaining early education and care.
- Two new programs began in 2015. The Preschool Development Grants program supports states to develop or enhance preschool programs and expand opportunities for high-quality preschool to children from low- to moderate-income families. The Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships support local programs in improving the quality of child care.
- Currently, forty-four states and the District of Columbia have a state preschool program or are piloting one. During the 2013–2014 school year, 29% of four-year-olds and 3% of three-year-olds were served in such programs; more than 1.3 million children attended state-funded preschool, including 1.1 million at age four (Barnett et al., 2015).

Within the United States the final year of PPE for most children is kindergarten. In the United States, kindergarten is regulated by individual states. In 45 states and DC, school districts are required to provide kindergarten programs, 11 states plus DC require school districts to offer full-day kindergarten and, in 15 states and DC, kindergarten attendance is mandatory.

Public Policy

The United States has a wide range of policy aims for its ECE services, which balance child care and early education priorities. These include providing ECE to enhance children's socio-emotional skills, approaches to learning, language and literacy skills, cognitive skills such as early mathematics and science skills, and health and physical development. Further policy aims include the preparation of children for school, support for children with special needs, safeguarding vulnerable children, and reducing inequality and social disadvantage. Governance and system management in the United States are largely at the state and local level, with some federal responsibilities, reflecting a multi-level governance model. Responsibility for ECE at the federal level is shared between such federal agencies as the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Defense, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. There are no statutory entitlements for children to ECE, but in the majority of states, school districts are obliged to offer kindergarten programs. In the United States there is no statutory entitlement to parental leave and pay, but the FMLA provides certain employees with up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave per year. Policy changes in ECE in a number of areas are planned between 2014–2019, reflecting changes underway in the system.

Delivery Models and Providers

In the United States, a wide range of settings comprise the ECE system. Settings vary in terms of location, from private homes to more formalized settings such as centers or within schools. They vary in terms of hours of operation, with some more than covering the work day and others providing half-day services. ECE within the United States is described using different names, such as child care, day care, preschool, prekindergarten, and transitional kindergarten. Services are funded through private and public subsidy. Funding mechanisms include supply-side funding through funded places, staff salary subsidy, and capital and resource grants, through programs such as Head Start, Child Development Block Grants, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Funding mechanisms also include demand-side funding through tax credits, vouchers and reduced fees.

Participation and Enrollment

Child enrollment levels to ECE in the United States increase with the age of the child, with approximately 43% of ECE aged children participating in ECE and 61% of PPE aged children participating in ECE. There are prioritized places in some programs such as Head Start, for children from low-income families, children with special needs or disability or from certain minority ethnic groups. Strategies and legislation exist to support cultural diversity in the delivery of early childhood services. Coverage of ECE provision is not universal, and access can be difficult for children from low-income families or with special needs or disability. There are early intervention programs to encourage the participation of children from low-income families; children with special needs/disability; minority ethnic groups; and children whose home language differs from the national language.

Supporting Quality in ECE

Responsibility for the regulation of early childhood services is concentrated at the state level. Staff qualifications, training and remuneration are complex in the United States due to the decentralized nature of the system and the different types of home- and center-based provision. ECE staff includes lead teachers, teachers, assistant teachers and aides. For staff who work in ECED settings, qualification requirements vary. There are specific setting types within the broader category “center-based” that require certain levels of education. For example, Early Head Start/Head Start programs have education requirements for different levels of staff. However, there is no uniform requirement across all of the different kinds of center-based settings within the US center-based day care centers, preschools or prekindergarten programs. Group sizes and staff:child ratios are set at the state licensing level, but the majority of states with ECE initiatives set class size and ratio requirements that are consistent with standards developed jointly by the American Public Health Association (APHA) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Ratios and group sizes increase with the age of the child, with a group size of eight, and a staff:child ratio of one adult per four children for children under one year, a group size of 17–18 and a ratio of one adult per 10 children for three-year-olds, and finally a group size of 20, and a staff:child ratio of one adult per 10 children for five-year-olds. There are health and safety regulations that are set at state licensing level covering such matters as health and safety, child protection, and staff vetting procedures. The United States has no national curriculum; however, the United States does offer national guidance or recommendations on elements that should be covered in a curriculum for under-threes and children aged from three to five years. Individual states have Early Learning Standards which cover birth to five years. The guidance generally encourages a broad and balanced learning program, including personal and emotional development; social development and citizenship; attitudes and disposition to learning; physical and health education; language and communication; reading and literacy; mathematical skills; understanding the natural world; science; technology and the digital world; and second/foreign language. The guidance also identifies a range of pedagogic approaches that might be adopted, including an academic/ formal instruction approach; creative or progressive learning; an experiential approach; and a play curriculum approach. Parental participation in children’s learning is supported by guidance on information transmission, consultation and dialogue, and the active participation of parents in children’s learning. There are accreditation and inspection processes to support quality assurance. Accreditation is voluntary, and often accreditation guidelines exceed those of licensing guidelines. Examples of the range of accrediting bodies, include the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Head Start Renewal system, Montessori, Reggio Emilia Alliance, and the IB Primary Years Program. In the United States, each state has its own licensing inspection, whereas the federal government monitors and inspects federally-funded programs such as Head Start. The results of quality assurance are reported to the settings and more widely, and used to inform the development of policy and practice at federal, state and setting level.

Expectations for Child Outcomes

There are a broad range of expectations for child outcomes in the United States for children from birth through to kindergarten, which include personal and emotional; social development and citizenship; attitudes and dispositions; physical and health; language and communication; reading and literacy; mathematics; understanding the natural world; science; and expressive arts, music and design. In the United States there are no typical national or typical subnational assessments or reporting of children's learning outcomes.

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