

BELGIUM

ECEC Workforce Profile

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Belgium is a federal, multi-lingual state comprising three autonomous Regions (Flemish Region, Walloon Region, Brussels-Capital Region), three language Communities (Flemish, French, German-speaking), and four language areas (Dutch, French, German and in the Brussels-Capital Region bilingual, French/Dutch). Of a total population of 11.7 million in 2016, 6.4 million were Dutch-speaking and lived in the Flemish Region and 3.5 million were French-speaking, living in the Walloon Region. In the bilingual Brussels Region (1.2 million inhabitants) a large majority is French-speaking. The German-speaking Community accounts for 0.7 percent of the total population (76,645 inhabitants in 2016).

Wherever possible, separate accounts are given in this report for the Flemish Community, the French Community and the German-speaking Community. Otherwise, unless specifically stated, the data presented refer to the whole country.

1. ECEC governance

Flemish Community

In the Flemish Community, there is a clear division of responsibilities for 'education' and 'care' (OECD2006). The *kleuterscholen* (pre-primary education) for children from 2½ years up to school entry come under the general auspices of the Minister for Education and Training (*Vlaams ministerie van onderwijs en vorming*). In the case of provision for younger children and out-of-school provision for school children, the Ministry for Welfare, Family and Equal Opportunities (*Ministerie van Welzijn, Gezin en Gelijke Kansen*) delegates supervisory duties to a government agency called *Kind en Gezin* (Child and Family). *Kind en Gezin* is responsible for regulations, allocation of places, funding, quality standards and quality management. The day-to-day running of childcare centres is the responsibility of the service providers (local authorities, non-profit organisations, and also private for-profit providers). All childcare services must be registered with *Kind en Gezin* and 70% of the places are offered by services subsidised by *Kind en Gezin*. In cities such as Antwerp and Ghent, childcare services are overseen by a section of the education department.

French Community – (Wallonia-Brussels Federation - FWB)

In the French Community, the traditional split in the organisation of provision continues. The *écoles maternelles* (pre-primary education) for 2½- to 6-year olds come under the general auspices of the Minister for Education (*Ministre de l'Éducation*) and, more specifically, under three umbrellas: the state, local authorities or church-affiliated, subsidised organisations. In the case of provision for younger children and out-of-school provision for school children, the Minister for Culture and Childhood (*Ministre de la Culture et de l'Enfance*) delegates responsibility to a government agency called ONE (*Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance* - Birth and Childhood Office). All care facilities for children up to age 12 have to be registered with ONE and to comply with their specified quality standards (*Code de qualité de l'accueil*) issued in 1999, revised in 2004.

German-speaking Community – (Deutschsprachige Gemeinschaft - DG)

In the German-speaking Community, responsibility for ECEC is shared between the Minister for Education and Scientific Research (*Minister für Bildung und wissenschaftliche Forschung*; pre-primary education) and the Minister for Families, Health and Social Affairs (*Minister für Familie, Gesundheit und Soziales*; childcare). The organising agency for childcare provision is the Regional Centre for Childcare Facilities (*Regionalzentrum für Kleinkindbetreuung – RZKB*). Besides providing family day care services, the organisation also supervises the two infant-toddler centres in the Community and an out-of-school facility for school-age children.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

The administrative split in services for 0 to 6 year olds between ‘childcare’ for the under-threes and ‘education’ for children aged 2½ years up to school entry is also reflected in the qualifications required for work in these two different sectors. Core practitioners in pre-primary education receive their professional Bachelor education/training alongside teachers in the school system. Practitioners working with children in services for the under-threes are mostly Infant Care Workers (secondary vocational level). Management staff are medical nurses, social workers or pedagogical coach (Bachelor level).

Flemish Community

In April 2014, a new decree on childcare for the 0- to 3-year olds was implemented (*Decreet Opvang van baby's en peuters*) in the Flemish Community. This legislation stipulates that all persons working in childcare have to have some kind of qualification by 2024 and that every Childcare Worker has the right to pedagogical guidance from a pedagogical coach. According to the new law, every provider of childcare will have to guarantee pedagogical guidance for all employed childcare workers. All unqualified staff are required to register for one of the available qualification routes which will ensure that they are fully qualified by 2024. The government has allowed for a transition period of ten years, otherwise contracts will be terminated.

In 2011, a new Bachelor's degree for pedagogical coaching (*Pedagogisch Coach – ‘Pedagogy of the Young Child’*) was established in Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent, and the first students graduated in 2014. These graduates take up a post as Pedagogical Coach or adviser, designing the pedagogical policy of the childcare centre with the practitioners with an upper secondary level qualification and supervising non-qualified staff working towards a qualification. They are also trained to work with children and their parents. Some of these newly qualified professionals work as part of the management staff in childcare centres, and it is envisaged that they will gradually replace the nurses and social workers currently working in childcare centres.

French Community (FWB)

In the French Community, a new law (Government Order) on childcare for the 0- to 3-year olds is forthcoming. In view of this, three research programmes on Initial Professional Studies (IPS) under two project managers were commissioned by the ONE administration and the government (see *Section 7*). The projects proposed recommendations for improving the quality of the workforce in childcare and out-of-school services. A further research programme focusing on the IPS of teachers in general and including Pre-primary Teachers could stimulate a reform in the near future (see *Section 7*).

German-speaking Community (DG)

In March 2014, a new decree on childcare for the 0- to 3-year olds was implemented (*Dekret über die Kinderbetreuung*) in the German-speaking Community. Amongst other things, it contains the conditions for the accreditation of childcare institutions and family day care services.

Table 1 outlines the profiles and minimum qualification requirements of professionals working directly with children. Core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) are categorised according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see *Box 1* below).

Table 1

Belgium: ECEC staff in centre-based settings

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
<p>Childcare Worker (Childcare centres)</p> <p>Auxiliary Worker (Pre-primary settings)</p> <p><i>Flemish Community</i> Begeleid(st)er Kinderopvang</p> <p><i>French Community</i> Puéricultrice</p> <p><i>German-speaking Community</i> Kinderbetreuerin</p> <p>Profile: Social Care/Health Care Professional</p>	<p>Childcare centres 0–3 years</p> <p><i>Flemish Community</i> Kinderdagverblijf; groepskinderopvang</p> <p><i>French Community</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crèches • Crèches parentales • Prégardiennat • MCAE – Maison Communale d’Accueil de l’Enfance • Pouponnière <p><i>German-speaking Community</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kinderkrippen and Mini-Krippen • Kinderhorte <p>In Flemish and French Communities only: Pre-primary education 2½- to 6-year olds Kleuterschool École maternelle</p>	<p>Core practitioner with group responsibility in infant-toddler centres</p> <p>Qualified Auxiliary Worker in pre-primary settings, mostly with 2- and 3-year olds (not in the German Speaking Community)</p>	<p>0–6 years</p>	<p>Childcare Certificate 3 years upper-secondary qualification plus 1 year specialisation</p> <p>or through adult education</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a² EQF: Level 4 (upper secondary) and 5 (adult education) ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 4/5</p> <p>Note: <i>Flemish Community</i> For work in independent childcare centres (zelfstandig kinderdagverblijf), no minimum qualification requirements will be set until 2024.</p>
<p><i>Flemish Community</i> Kleuterleider or Kleuteronderwijzer or Leraar Kleuteronderwijs</p> <p><i>French Community</i> Institutrice préscolaire /Institutrice maternelle</p> <p><i>German-speaking Community</i> Kindergärtnerin</p> <p>Pre-primary Teacher</p> <p>Profile: Pre-primary Education Professional</p>	<p>Kleuterschool École maternelle Kindergarten</p> <p>Pre-primary education 2½/3-to 6-year olds</p> <p>A few also work in childcare centres 0–3 years</p>	<p>Core practitioner with group responsibility</p>	<p><i>Flemish and French Community</i> 2½-6 years</p> <p><i>German-speaking Community</i> 3-6 years</p>	<p>Bachelor’s degree 3 years university college</p> <p>ECTS points: 180 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6</p>

¹UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012, 2014.

²n/a: not applicable

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
Flemish Community Pedagogisch Coach Pedagogical Coach <i>Profile:</i> Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional	<i>Kinderdagverblijf</i> Childcare centres 0–3 years <i>Initiatief voor buitenschoolse opvang</i> Out of school centres 3–12 years Some also work in a <i>Kleuterschool</i> 2½–6 years or <i>Lagere school</i> primary school 6–12 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility Centre head / management Pedagogical coach of teams	0–12 years	Bachelor's degree in 'Pedagogy of the young child' 3 years university college ECTS points: 180 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 6

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0– 6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (sometimes focus on early childhood, usually broad focus, including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Flemish Community

In the Flemish Community, over 90% of staff working in **pre-primary settings** with 2½- to 5-year olds have a Bachelor level qualification; around 10% of the workforce in the *Kleuterschools* are assistants qualified at upper secondary vocational level.

In the school year 2015-2016, 19,326 Teachers were employed in **pre-primary education**, of which 619 (3.2%) were male (Onderwijs Vlaanderen 2016). In June 2016, the Minister of Education declared that a total of '21,213 hours of childcare' had been allocated to the *Kleuterschools* (Commissie Onderwijs 2016).

Since the introduction of the new Decree on Childcare in 2014, all Childcare Workers in **childcare centres** for under-threes are obliged to have a secondary vocational qualification with one year of specialisation (EQF level 4). Currently, 87% of the workforce in childcare centres are qualified, of whom 11.3% are currently following a qualification pathway specially adapted for this work setting. By 2024, every Childcare Worker will be required to have this qualification.

In 2001, men comprised only 0.9% of the workforce in **childcare and out-of-school centres**; following a campaign, the proportion rose to 3.4% in 2010, then it dropped to 2.9% in 2014/15

2.2% of practitioners working directly with children in childcare settings and 4.5% of managers are male.

Table 2

Belgium - Flemish Community: Structural composition of ECEC workforce - qualifications, gender and ethnicity

Staff categories:	Year / Proportion of workforce
Staff with specialist higher education degree	Pre-primary education: 2014/15: 90.6% Childcare sector: No data available
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	n/a
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary)	Pre-primary education: 2014/15: 9.4% (<i>kindbegeleiders</i> /infant care workers working as assistants) Childcare sector: 2016: 87%
Staff with non-specialist qualification	n/a
Staff without formal IPS/unqualified	Pre-primary education: No unqualified staff Childcare sector: 2016: 11.3% are in the process of obtaining a qualification
Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists)	2014/15: 622 or 3.2% of workforce
Male staff	Pre-primary education: 2015/16: 3.2% of all teachers in pre-primary education 2014/15: 2.9% among staff with <i>Bachelor in het Onderwijs, kleuteronderwijs</i> (teaching qualification)* 2014/15: 11.8% of staff in pre-primary settings in the age-group 20- to 29-year olds and 12.3% in the age-group 30- to 39-year olds* 2014/15: 2.2% of special needs staff Childcare sector: 2010: 3.4% in childcare centres and out-of-school care 2014/2015: 2.2% of practitioners working directly with children and 4.5% of managers
Staff with a background of migration	No systematically compiled national data

Source: *Onderwijs Vlaanderen 2016

French Community (FWB)

In 2015, nearly 100% of Pre-primary Teachers (*institutrices maternelles*) were qualified: 95.5% with a specialised Bachelor's degree in pre-primary education (*bachelier instituteurs maternelles*), 2.3% with a Bachelor's degree in primary education (*bachelier instituteurs primaires*), 1.3% with a general Bachelor's degree and an additional specialisation (AESI, *Agrégation de l'Enseignement Secondaire Inférieur*), 0.6% with a Master's degree in Educational Sciences (*Indicateurs de l'Enseignement 2015*). These Pre-Primary Teachers are sometimes supported by an assistant in the first year of the *école maternelle* (*classe d'accueil*) with 2- and 3-year olds.

In 2015, in addition to these teachers, 818 (8.1%) full-time equivalent (FTE) *puéricultrices* (compared to 10,134 FTE *institutrices maternelles*) were employed as auxiliary workers in *écoles maternelles* financed by the FWB, others were employed and paid directly by the school heads (no data available). Assistants without any formal qualification may also be part of the staff, although it should be noted that not every *école maternelle* employs an assistant or an auxiliary worker. The fairly low number of specialist support staff tend to be mostly *maîtresses de psychomotricité* (742 FTE); only three speech therapists are employed in the French Community.

Data on workforce qualifications in publicly funded childcare services are only available up to 2010, and there are no data available for private ECEC settings. The proportion of publicly funded childcare services that require an upper secondary qualification for all practitioners has increased, from 40.9% in 2000 to 47.8% in 2013 (Pirard et al. 2015) and to 47.2% in 2014.

In the French Community, 97% of Pre-primary Teachers are female and there are only a small number of male workers in the childcare centres for under-threes (no official data). Recent research emphasizes that the current professional education/training needs to focus more on gender-neutral competences (Pirard, Schoenmaeckers, and Camus 2015).

Table 3

Belgium – French Community: Structural composition of ECEC workforce in public settings: qualifications, gender and ethnicity

Staff categories:	Year / Proportion of workforce
Staff with specialist higher education degree	<i>Pre-primary education:</i> 2015: 86.5% teachers FTE (10,134 FTE of 11,597 total) <i>Public childcare services:</i> No recent data
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	n/a
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary)	<i>Pre-primary education:</i> 2015: At least 7% (FTE) - 818 of 11,597 total childcare workers as auxiliary workers <i>Public childcare services:</i> No recent data
Staff with non-specialist qualification	n/a
Staff without formal IPS	No current data available
Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists)	<i>Pre-primary education:</i> 2015: 6% (742 FTE of 11,547) staff for psycho-motor support <i>Public childcare services:</i> No support staff
Male staff	<i>Pre-primary education:</i> 2015: 3% <i>Childcare sector:</i> No current data available
Staff with a background of migration	No data available

Source: Ministry of Wallonia Brussels Federation, Administration générale de l'Enseignement (unpublished)

German-speaking Community (DG)

No data available.

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

For a long time now, the administrative split in services for 0 to 6 year olds between 'childcare' for the under-threes and 'education' for children aged 2½ years up to school entry has been reflected in the qualifications required for work in these two different sectors. Core practitioners in pre-primary education predominantly have a Bachelor's degree and core practitioners in childcare settings have a vocational qualification or no formal IPS at all. This is starting to

change since the Flemish Community decided to invest in a new Bachelor's degree in childcare. Holders of the degree will mostly work in management positions, but not necessarily. In pre-primary education a growing number of Childcare Workers now work as an Auxiliary Worker (Teacher's Assistant).

The IPS at Bachelor level take place at higher education institutions – university colleges – specialising in teacher education or pedagogy of the young child (*Hogeschool, Department Onderwijs – Institut Supérieur de Pédagogie - Autonome Hochschule*). The upper-secondary vocational qualification route for Childcare Workers takes place in secondary schools or adult education courses.

Table 4

Belgium: Pre-primary Teacher

<p>Job title in Flemish Community: <i>Kleuterleid(st)er, Kleuteronderwijzer, Leraar Kleuteronderwijs</i></p> <p>Job title in French Community: <i>Institutrice maternelle</i></p> <p>Job title in German-speaking Community: <i>Kindergärtnerin</i></p> <p>Profile: Pre-primary Education Professional</p>
<p>Entry requirements: 12 years of schooling (general or vocational), upper secondary education school-leaving certificate. Applicants with vocational certificate: 1 extra year or equivalent qualification.</p> <p>Professional studies:</p> <p><i>Flemish Community:</i> 3 years higher education institution affiliated to a university (<i>Hogeschool, Department Onderwijs</i>)</p> <p><i>French Community:</i> 3 years higher education institution affiliated to a university (<i>Institut Supérieur d'Enseignement Pédagogique or Haute école</i>)</p> <p><i>German-speaking Community:</i> 3 years higher education institution affiliated to a university (<i>Autonome-Hochschule</i>)</p> <p>Award:</p> <p><i>Flemish Community:</i> <i>Bachelor in het onderwijs: kleuteronderwijs</i></p> <p><i>French Community:</i> <i>Bachelier instituteurs maternels; bachelier instituteurs primaires</i></p> <p><i>German-speaking Community:</i> <i>Bachelor Kindergärtner/in</i></p> <p>ECTS points: 180</p> <p>EQF level: 6</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0112</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Pre-primary settings <i>Kleuterschool, École maternelle, Kindergarten</i> (2½- to 6-year olds, in DG: 3- to 6-year olds). A few also work in childcare centres (0 to 3 years) or in primary education (6- to 12-year olds)</p>

Table 5

Belgium (Flemish Community only): Pedagogical Coach

<p>Job title in Flemish: <i>Pedagogisch Coach</i></p> <p>Profile: Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>
<p>Entry requirements: 12 years of schooling (general or vocational), upper secondary education school-leaving certificate. Applicants with vocational certificate: 1 extra year or equivalent qualification.</p> <p>Professional studies: 3 years higher education college affiliated to a university (<i>Hogeschool, Departement Onderwijs, sociaalwerk en gezondheidszorg</i>)</p> <p>Award: <i>Bachelor pedagogie van het jonge kind</i></p> <p>ECTS points: 180</p> <p>EQF level: 6</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0922</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Childcare centres (0 to 3 years), extra-curricular activities in childcare and out-of-school centres (3 to 12 years). A few also work in pre-primary education and youth activity centres.</p>

Table 6

Belgium: Childcare Worker

Job title in Flemish Community: <i>Begeleid(st)er Kinderopvang/ Kinderzorg</i> Job title in French Community: <i>Puéricultrice</i> Job title in German-speaking Community: <i>Kinderbetreuerin</i> Profile: Social Care/Health Care Professional
Entry requirements: 9 years of schooling Professional studies: 3 years upper secondary level (vocational branch) plus 1 year specialisation Award: (1) Diploma (vocational secondary education) Flemish Community: <i>Kinderzorg</i> French Community: <i>Puéricultrice</i> German-speaking Community: <i>Kinderbetreuerin</i> ECTSpoints: n/a EQF level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 4 Award (2): Certificate (adult education) Flemish Community: <i>Begeleid(st)er in de kinderopvang</i> French Community: <i>Puéricultrice</i> German-speaking Community: <i>Kinderbetreuerin</i> ECTSpoints: n/a EQF level: 5 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 5 Main ECEC workplaces: Childcare centres (0 to 3 years), extra-curricular activities in childcare and out-of-school centres (3 to 12 years). A few also work in pre-primary education and youth activity centres. In both the Flemish and French Communities also as Auxiliary Worker in pre-primary education (<i>Kleuterschool, Écolematernelle</i>), mostly with 2- and 3-year olds.

3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes for core practitioners

Flemish Community

Pre-Primary Teacher (*Leraar Kleuteronderwijs*)

In Flanders, a reform of teacher education programmes is once again on the agenda. The last reform dates back to September 2007 (Eurydice/Eurostat 2009). The so-called integrated teacher training programmes combine subject-specific, didactical and pedagogical/teaching components throughout the entire three-year study route for Pre-primary Teachers. They also focus on building capacity and experience in practice through extensive internships in authentic learning environments. The pre-primary route leads to a professional Bachelor's degree in Education (*Bachelor in het onderwijs: kleuteronderwijs*). The total course comprises 180 ECTS points (60 credits per year), with one credit representing a work load of 25 to 30 hours. The practical component accounts for at least 45 credits.

In 1998, and again in 2007, the first official professional profiles for Pre-primary Teachers were established which assigned the profession ten specific roles, including an instructional role (*lerende*) and an educational role (*opvoedende*) (Vlaamse Regering 2007). It was the first time that official documents on Pre-primary Teachers were written in a gender neutral style and consequently all references to 'motherly love' were eliminated. This curriculum forms the basis for the individual syllabus of the higher education institutions, which have autonomy in this area. The curriculum is based on developing and strengthening competences and attitudes such as decision-making skills; critical thinking; inquisitiveness; organisational skills; co-operative skills; sense of responsibility; flexibility (Eurydice/Eurostat 2009).

Competence specifications:

- Supporting young children in their learning and development processes, taking into account the starting situation of the group and each child's context;
- Setting achievable and challenging general and specific goals;
- Choosing curricular learning areas and experiences;
- Providing stimulating materials and adopting appropriate didactic approaches;
- Working autonomously and expressing himself/herself in 'Standard Dutch';
- Creating an agreeable, challenging, structured and safe environment to play, live and learn, paying attention to the social and emotional development of the children, the physical wellbeing of the group and the individual child;
- Employing a holistic approach, showing respect for the social, cultural and language diversity of the group and promoting empowerment, individual development and social participation;
- Having thorough knowledge both about developmental issues and the curriculum (Dutch, Mathematical Initiation, Lifeworld Orientation, Arts and Cultural Education, Physical Education and Cross-curricular themes), including the learning goals stipulated by the Minister of Education;
- Implementing an integrated approach, including digital technologies, and promoting digital literacy;
- Following trends and innovations with a healthy sense of criticism.
- Drawing up an activity plan that is both child and goal centred;
- Managing the expected administrative tasks;
- Taking responsibility for professionalism and innovation based on appropriate theoretical frameworks and academic research;
- Communicating with parents/caregivers about the child, school and education and involving them in the classroom and school life;
- Working in a team in a collaborative way and assuming responsibility for the implementation of school policy;
- Establishing contact and collaborating with education related initiatives and other partners;
- Participating in the public debate concerning educational topics and the role and place of the educator in society;
- Reflecting critically and in an open-minded way on developments in policy and politics, economics, cultural aesthetics and science.

Pedagogical Coach (*Pedagogisch Coach*)

Competence specifications (Bachelor: Pedagogy of the Young Child):

- *Educating*: creating a stimulating pedagogical and social climate in the group: positive, safe, healthy, hygienic, well-structured, child-oriented; responding sensitively to the basic needs of each child and supporting basic trust.
- *Supporting the holistic development of the child*: fostering interaction; using observation and documentation methodology to create a stimulating environment for the child.
- *Bridging the ECEC setting and the home environment*: guaranteeing a continuum between the child's family setting and the ECEC setting; organising pedagogical practice in cooperation with the centre staff and in dialogue with the parents on the basis of the individuality of each child, a clear set of values and a coherent vision.
- *Involving parents as partners*: establishing a confidential relationship with each parent in the interest of the child; working in partnership with parents based on professional expertise and respecting the parents as experts on the child.
- *Supporting the professional development of each staff member and of the team*: stimulating and motivating staff members to participate in professional development activities;

- trying to increase pedagogical competencies at the team level; emphasising the importance of partnerships with parents; acting as a role model for the team by reflecting on daily pedagogical practices and creating a learning community.
- *Co-constructing a social-pedagogical approach*: realising the social-pedagogical aims of the ECEC centre together with the multidisciplinary team; actively creating the conditions for a learning community at the team level.
 - *Involving external partners*: working in a proactive way in the local social context; initiating cooperative projects with external partners (e.g. neighbourhood and welfare organisations, schools...).
 - *Social orientation*: being aware of the societal importance of his or her profession and actively following relevant developments in society, in government policy and in the sector of ECEC at the regional and international levels (examples of interesting practice, research).
 - *Reflecting and innovating*: together with the staff team, co-constructing and implementing new pedagogical knowledge and integrating it into the policy of the service; using research based findings to create innovative pedagogical practices.
 - *Managing diversity*: being aware of personal values and beliefs and acting with respect towards the cultural, ethnic and gender identity of others (children, parents, staff and external partners); supporting the development of each child's identity.

The curriculum of this new Bachelor's degree also includes the coaching of employees with lower qualifications.

Childcare Worker (*Begeleider Kinderopvang / Kinderverzorger*)

For Childcare Workers in the Flemish Community, the required level of qualification is EQF level 4. Two programmes are relevant. One is a form of vocational education ('BSO') comprising a three-year training at the post-secondary level (18 plus 1). This IPS approach is embedded within a long history of occupational work with a focus on health/hygiene. On completion, students receive a diploma at EQF level 4.

The other option is a qualifying adult education course for Childcare Workers, which was introduced in 2003. This adult education programme at secondary level is very popular with non-qualified Childcare Workers and those completing the course are much in demand by employers. On completion, students receive a certificate at EQF level 5.

A new competence profile for the **Childcare Worker** has recently been developed and has had positive feedback from the advisory board of the Governmental organisation *Kind en Gezin* (2016). The competence profile consists of six clusters, as shown in *Box 2* below.

Box 2

Belgium, Flemish Community: Competence profile for Childcare Workers

Cluster 1: Being able to educate and care for individual children and for a group of children and support their development.

The Childcare Worker is able:

- to meet the basic needs of each child, to follow the rhythm of each child, to be sensitive and responsive towards children, with an approach tailored to each individual child;
- to give children appropriate holistic developmental opportunities based on the child's strengths, with attention and respect for the child's self-regulation and autonomy: to create a stimulating learning and living environment; to encourage children to improvise and express themselves creatively, stimulating well-being and involvement;
- to create an atmosphere of positive social relationships in the group, to be able to structure and set limits;
- to observe a group of children and individual children, to be able to reflect on the basis of the observations and to evaluate and, if necessary, adapt the pedagogical approach.

Cluster 2: Being able to cooperate with the child's family as partner in the educational process.

The Childcare Worker is able:

- to recognise and value the family as a partner in the education of the child, with an openness towards differing pedagogical values;
- to create a relation of trust with the family;
- to develop, together with the family, a coherent approach towards the child, starting from the idea that the family knows the child best;
- to actively ask the family for feedback about the childcare arrangements and to deal with responses in a constructive way;
- to stimulate mutual relationships with parents.

Cluster 3: Being able to cooperate with external persons and institutions on behalf of the wellbeing of the child.

The Childcare Worker is able:

- to participate with children and/or families in activities in the neighbourhood;
- to work with external persons or institutions at the request of the parents regarding the special needs of children.

Cluster 4: Being able to cooperate with colleagues and Pedagogical Coaches.

The Childcare Worker is able:

- to discuss pedagogical approaches towards working with individual children or a group of children and to deal with families, colleagues and external persons; to exchange information and to debate; to organise something together; to give feedback and to deal with feedback;
- to work according to the policy statement of the organisation.

Cluster 5: Being able to reflect on pedagogical practice and improving that practice accordingly.

The Childcare Worker is able:

- to reflect on one's own professional practice and to reflect with colleagues or under the guidance of the Pedagogical Coach within the four fields of action (child, family, team, community)
- To evaluate the reflection and, where necessary, make adaptations to professional practice.

Cluster 6: Being able to deal with the diversity of children, families, external persons and colleagues.

The childcare worker is able:

- to show respect for the identity and the diversity of others (children, families, external persons and colleagues) and to support children in developing respect for others;
- to deal with different values, to be conscious of one's own standards, values and attitudes towards children, families, external persons and colleagues.

Although the IPS programmes are expected to be based on this competence profile, this is not always fully visible in the programmes at the level of vocational secondary education (*7e jaar kinderzorg*).

French Community (FWB)

Pre-primary Teacher (*institutrice maternelle*)

The IPS of Pre-Primary Teachers in the French Community combines academic subjects, professional studies and social context studies. A common competence profile exists for pre-primary, primary and secondary teachers. The total course comprises 180 ECTS points (60 credits per year), with one credit representing a workload of 25 to 30 hours. Some forthcoming reforms could generate some changes (see *Section 6*).

Competence specifications for all teachers in the education system (Décret FI 2000 – MB 19/01/2001):

- Using knowledge of the human sciences for an accurate interpretation of situations encountered inside and outside the classroom and adapting school practices accordingly;
- Maintaining effective partnership relations with institutions, colleagues, and pupils' parents;
- Understanding their own role within the school and functioning in the profession as defined by the relevant laws;

- Internalising the disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge that underpins the work of teaching;
- Mastering the discipline's didactics which guide the teaching approach;
- Demonstrating a broad knowledge regarding general culture in order to awaken pupils' interest in the cultural world;
- Developing the relational skills commensurate with the profession's requirements;
- Understanding the ethical issues associated with day-to-day teaching practice;
- Working in teams;
- Developing, testing, evaluating and refining teaching aids;
- Maintaining critical and autonomous scientific reasoning;
- Planning, managing and evaluating learning situations;
- Reflecting on one's own practice and organising one's own professional development.

Each university college is required to organise the IPS for Pre-primary Teachers according to this official profile. Pedagogical methods and approaches are defined by members of the academic staff and presented in a pedagogical contract.

Childcare Worker (*puéricultrice*)

The *puéricultrices* in the French Community take a three-year upper secondary course, followed by one year of specialisation in working with infants and toddlers.

Competence specifications: It is expected that future Childcare Workers will be able to demonstrate the following competencies:

- guaranteeing care, hygiene and health;
- organising meals;
- organising sleeping;
- guaranteeing the children's safety and take the right measures in cases of child abuse;
- planning and organising activities according to the individuality of each child;
- organising appropriate interventions towards children and parents;
- supporting children in toilet-training
- developing a warm relationship with the child;
- planning and documenting professional practice for parents or colleagues;
- working in teams;
- communicating and constructing a professional relationship with parents;
- respecting ethical values.

German-speaking Community (DG)

Pre-primary Teachers complete a Bachelor-level degree at the *Autonome Hochschule*, the only higher education institution in the German-speaking Community. Initial professional studies combine professional basic knowledge, scientific approaches, generic and subject-specific as well as didactic training, and links between theory and practice. The total course comprises 180 ECTS points (60 credits per year), with one credit representing a work load of 25 to 30 hours. The practical component accounts for 43 credits.

Competence specifications: Pre-primary Teachers should be able to...

- communicate clearly and correctly in the language of instruction, both orally and in writing;
- include both cultural/intellectual heritage as well as a critical examination and interpretation of facts and cultural assets in their professional approach and foster openness for cultural and linguistic diversity;
- listen to and observe the children and accept them as a person by consciously discerning their holistic educational needs as well as their socio-cultural needs in order to foster their search for identity, their independence and their sense of responsibility;

- consistently extend and deepen fundamental knowledge acquired within the subject areas, including the historical, scientific and health-promoting aspects;
- design the educational process as an active learning experience of discovery, while at the same time making clear decisions in relation to aims, fields of knowledge, learning and teaching methods, evaluation and certification within the framework of legal requirements;
- pursue one's own activities in close cooperation with the families, school authorities, education and cultural institutions as well as the community's interest groups within the framework of legal requirements;
- while respecting the individuality of the children, complete tasks related to the achievement and evaluation of developmental goals and competencies, both individually and together as a team;
- use information and communication technologies and integrate them into the preparation and managing of teaching and learning activities in the classroom as well as in their own professional development;
- develop a professional identity, handle complexity, uncertainty, conflicts, and setbacks professionally as well as understanding group dynamics and the functioning of organisations;
- reflect both individually and as a team on professional development needs both in terms of individual advancement and institutional innovation and assessing the ethical challenges related to the profession.

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

Flemish Community

The training for Pre-primary Teachers and the Bachelor study programme 'Pedagogy of the Young Child' are also organised as adult education in a format which enables the students to combine work and studying. Work experience with children and parents is taken into account in assessments and may lead to a shortening of course length.

French Community (FWB)

The system is characterised by little permeability and there are only a few alternative entry and qualification routes at the vocational qualification (upper secondary) level. The candidate's previously acquired competences are not taken into account when studying to become a *puéricultrice*. In terms of the higher education study programmes, some measures have been developed to relax the entry requirements of IPS (for example to become a Pre-primary Teacher). Staff at the IPS institutions can examine the former experiences of the student and in some cases give extra credits so that the student can follow a shorter track. This system of previously acquired competences (*VAE, Valorisation des Acquis de l'Expérience*) was implemented in universities at the end of 2009.

German speaking Community (DG)

The German-speaking Nursing Care Union in Belgium (*Deutschsprachige Krankenpflegevereinigung Belgiens*) offers one-year qualifying adult education courses for Childcare Workers. There are no formal entry requirements. Participants are selected on the basis of an interview.

4. Field-based component in the IPS of core practitioners

Flemish Community

Pre-primary Teacher (*Leraar Kleuteronderwijs*)

According to guidelines of the Flemish department of education, the field-based component in the IPS of prospective Pre-primary Teachers consists of at least 45 ECTS points. These 45 credits (usually more) are spread across the curriculum, and are progressive in volume and complexity. The work experience can be structured as a ribbon placement throughout the semesters (one day weekly) or in blocks of one, two or five weeks. University colleges are free to implement their own system. These placements are mentored and evaluated by an experienced teacher in the pre-primary setting and by tutors at the university college. This mentoring role is taken on by motivated Pre-primary Teachers who coach students voluntarily, i.e. without additional payment.

Recent debate in education has focused on the issue of reducing the gap between IPS and the daily work of teachers. Steps towards the creation of intensive partnerships between university colleges and pre-primary and primary schools are being taken, with the purpose of sharing knowledge, training future teachers with a common vision, co-creating ownership and maximising the efficiency of learning communities.

Pedagogical Coach (*Bachelor Pedagogie van het Jonge Kind*)

The situation is similar to the field-based component of the Pre-primary Teacher. The three university colleges which provide the Bachelor study programme 'Pedagogy of the young child' (Erasmus University College Afstandsonderwijs; Artevelde University College Switch; Karel De Grote University College Flex) all have a field-based component. University colleges are free to implement their own approach. In general, there is a study route for graduates with a Bachelor's or Master's degree in the same area (education or social work) who have no work experience in ECEC, a route for students with work experience and a similar Bachelor's or Master's degree, and a route for students with work experience and a diploma at the secondary vocational level. The university colleges also take into account previously acquired competences (Accreditation of Prior Learning, APL). In such cases the student has to provide a portfolio with documentary evidence of previously acquired learning experiences.

Childcare Worker (*Begeleider Kinderopvang/ Kinderverzorger*)

The field-based component in the IPS of Childcare Workers is organised by Centres of Adult Education.

- The course itself encompasses in total 1,280 hours, 640 hours of which are dedicated to working in a childcare centre as an intern. The learning pathways are personalised for each student. A standard learning trajectory lasts two years or four semesters. In each semester the student attends course lectures for 160 hours and works in a childcare centre for 160 hours. They can do this at the organisation where they previously worked.
- The training institutions are autonomous in deciding how to organize the link between practice and theory. Some institutions decide to intertwine both, others require the completion of the theoretical part before starting the internship.

Schools for vocational secondary education (*Kinderzorg route*) also organise practical courses for those who already work in childcare. In a recent circular (Vlaamse Regering, 2015), the Flemish Minister of Education stated that the schools themselves and the umbrella organisations of the educational networks are fully responsible for the development of pedagogical plans, including the organisation of internships. There are no formal requirements regarding the field-based component. The field based component makes up 30% of the different curricula of the educational networks.

French Community (FWB)

Pre-primary Teacher (*Institutrice maternelle*)

A third of the ECTS points in the IPS of Pre-primary Teachers are dedicated to field-based studies and analyses of practice. At least 26 ECTS points throughout the IPS are dedicated to placements in pre-primary settings: two weeks in the first year (2 ECTS points each), four weeks in the second year (3 ECTS points each) and ten weeks in the final year (10 ECTS points). Students must be accompanied by tutors employed by the university college: at least one visit per week during placement periods from the second year onwards. They also have a mentoring teacher (*maître de stage*) who signs a covenant with the IPS institution that sets out a variety of partnerships in a range of professional settings.

The university colleges also organise professional workshops (10 ECTS points) to strengthen the link between practice and theory. These workshops are guided not only by university college tutors, but also by tutors who spend at least half of their working time in a pre-primary setting. Each university college can organise the field-based component of IPS according to specified guidelines (Decree focused on IPS of teachers, MB 19-01-2001). Forthcoming reforms could generate some organisational changes (see *Section 6*).

Childcare Worker (*Puéricultrice*)

According to the relevant legislation (*Arrêté du Gouvernement de la Communauté française du 6 septembre 2001*), 1,000 periods of 50 minutes (approx. 833 hours) must be dedicated to practical training in the field and focused on working with young children (up to 6 years). A further 1,000 periods should be dedicated to general teaching and 1,700 periods (approx. 1,416 hours) to technical and professional practice training at school - organised within three years. The law specifies different workplaces: childcare services, preschools, also maternity hospitals. At least 500 periods (approx. 416 hours) must be spent in a childcare service (*crèche, crèche parentale, préguardiennat, MCAE – Maison Communale d'accueil de l'Enfance, pouponnière*).

According to an official guideline (*Circulaire n° 5038 du 22/10/2014*), the head of the IPS institution appoints a tutor (*maître de stage*) for each student. This tutor is responsible for the preparation, pedagogical coaching and assessment of the practical training in the field. The tutor cooperates with a mentor (specified practitioner) in the ECEC services where the student is doing internship. External evaluation is conducted both by the tutor and the supervising practitioner; and there is a self-evaluation of the student. The mentoring practitioner is qualified, but is not trained specifically to accompany students. A contract must be signed by the IPS institution, the ECEC service and the student; this specifies the competencies and skills to be acquired. The student is required to maintain a regular written journal/portfolio (*cahier de stage*) with information and observations collected in the field (for example, observations about the learning environment, activities with children, children's behaviour). Since 2014, some projects have been financed by APEF (*Association Paritaire pour l'Emploi et la Formation*) to provide a framework for sustained cooperation between initial training institutes and ECEC services in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, with a view to improving tutoring and mentoring practices (François and Noël 2015a). An analysis of the tutoring practices resulted in the preparation of some guidelines (François, Noël, and Pirard 2015b). Students are accompanied by researchers (University of Liège) to conduct specific projects and to analyse the effect of these on the student's learning, the pedagogical coaching of the mentor and the tutor, and on the collaboration between initial training institutions and ECEC services. Research through video documentation shows how difficult it is for the tutor to support the reflective competencies of students in the field (Alonso Vilches and Pirard 2016; Alonso Vilches and Pirard forthcoming).

German-speaking Community (DG)

Pre-primary Teacher (*Kindergärtnerin*)

In the German-speaking Community, the field-based component in the IPS of prospective Pre-primary Teachers consists of at least 43 ECTS points. These 43 credits are spread across the curriculum, and are progressive in volume and complexity. The work experience is structured in blocks. These placements are mentored and evaluated by an experienced teacher in the ECE setting and by tutors at the university college. This mentoring role is taken on by motivated Pre-primary Teachers who coach students voluntarily, i.e. without additional payment.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

In Belgium there is an established tradition of pedagogical coaching to raise the level of professionalism in low qualified Childcare Workers. Such experimental approaches started in the 1980s and were supported by grants from the Bernard van Leer Foundation. In Flanders, the first coaching projects were set up in the 1990s in Ghent (Peeters 1993). These pedagogical counselling projects focus on practitioners as active actors in their own professionalisation process, which has a motivating effect on the learners (Peeters and Vandenbroeck 2011).

Across the country, Childcare Workers have many opportunities to participate in CPD activities. Specialised training centres offer a broad range of courses. The regional governments view the provision of professional development activities as part of their quality policy.

Flemish Community

Childcare sector

The recommendations of the CoRe project (Urban et al. 2011; Vandenbroeck, Urban, and Peeters 2016) have influenced new legislation on childcare. The new law (*Decreet Opvang van Baby's en Peuters*; Vlaamse Regering 2014) states that every person who works with young children (from birth to 3 years) must be supported by a Pedagogical Coach. To implement this new law, a large-scale project on coaching was set up within independent childcare centres (Vlaamse Regering 2014). Nearly 50 Pedagogical Coaches, most of them graduates from the new Bachelor study programme (Pedagogy of the Young Child), started to conduct pedagogical coaching from 2015 onwards.

These coaches are employed in newly developed 'Pedagogical Support Centres' that receive funds for providing coaching to independent childcare centres and small scale services. This project will end in December 2017. Currently the governmental organisation *Kind en Gezin* is working on concrete plans for new formal regulations on the organisation of Pedagogical Coaching.

Currently, the sector is in a process of transition: a large scale research project (MEMOQ *Meten en Monitoren van de pedagogische kwaliteit van de kinderopvang* - Measuring and Monitoring the Pedagogical Quality of Childcare) developed a pedagogical framework for the 0-3 sector and investigated the pedagogical quality of the current Flemish childcare centres. Starting from these results, instruments for self-evaluation and inspection are now being developed and aligned with one another. During the coming years these instruments will be disseminated in the sector with the aim of quality improvement. Another important issue is the qualification requirement. Still a large part of the ECEC staff does not have the required qualification level and it remains unclear how they can update their qualification by 2024.

Apart from the above mentioned project on pedagogical coaching, individual child care centres can make use of a wide offer of training and coaching possibilities. Some of these are organised within their own umbrella organisation and therefore easily accessible for the services.

Others are organised by external training centres that are subsidised by the Flemish Government (FCUD) or by training centres that operate with private resources. Three organisations (Unizo, Voorzet, 't Opzet) offer specialised support for social entrepreneurs in childcare. *Kind en Gezin* is working on an ambitious plan to link all those different coaching projects to each other, in order to develop a policy on coaching for the whole childcare sector (0 to 3 and out of school).

Before the new Decree on Childcare, Childcare Workers were legally obliged to follow 12 hours per year of training. This regulation no longer exists, because providing pedagogical support for the staff is now the full responsibility of the management of the childcare centres.

Educational sector

Each pre-primary and primary school has to develop a training plan for the teachers. Schools need to follow-up on this plan otherwise they may lose their CPD budget. Notwithstanding, schools decide autonomously how to organise the plan. Consequently no minimum CPD hours are specified for the Pre-primary Teachers or Auxiliary Workers (Vlaamse Regering 2009). Only one collective pedagogical training day for all the teachers is obligatory (Vlaamse Regering 1991).

In Flanders, continuing professional development courses for Pre-primary Teachers (*Kleuteronderwijzers*) are provided mostly by the Community department of education, but also private organisations provide specialised courses in pedagogy, didactics, arts education, and so on. On-site professional development for teachers and teams in pre-primary schools is provided by educational guidance services (PBD – *Pedagogische begeleidingsdienst*) who coach individual persons or organisations. Each of the three educational umbrella organisations (private Catholic education, Flemish governmental education (go!) and municipal education) has its own educational guidance service, which ensures professional on-site support to schools and centres. Schools can call on them for educational and methodological advisory services (innovation projects, self-evaluation projects, support initiatives in the classroom) (Vlaamse Regering 2009). In recent years, increased pedagogical guidance has focused on teaching the Dutch language to children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

French Community (FWB)

In the French Community, continuing professional development is mandatory (six half days per year) for all teachers, including **Pre-primary Teachers**. CPD is also compulsory for Childcare Workers, but not according to a specified period of time, and there are no measures in place for providing substitute staff while a colleague is engaged in CPD.

Since 2003, two public offices have been responsible for the regulating and funding of CPD provision: one is the governmental organisation *ONE (Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance)*, which provides an annual continuing development plan for all childcare practitioners according to an official three year programme approved by the government; the other is the IFC (*Institut de Formation encours de Carrière Inter-réseaux*), which offers an annual programme for all teachers, including Pre-primary Teachers. IFC has a contract of collaboration with ONE. As in the Flemish Community, each of the three educational umbrella organisations (service provider organisations) has its own educational guidance service for providing on-site CPD activities.

The IFC gives priority to providing CPD support to Pre-primary Teachers conducting specific projects. One of these titled '*Décollage*' aims at supporting the children's current level of development rather than expecting them to repeat the school year. It proposes observation and assessment tools and provides opportunities for sharing experiences and discussing appropriate ways of supporting children's progress (for the age-group 2½ to 8 years). Another project focuses on reading skills (*Plan lecture*). It aims to assign a key person in each *école maternelle* who is responsible for children's reading activities, including emergent literacy support through children's literature. A further project focuses on the identification and analysis of

learning problems at the beginning of preschool. It questions and underlines the learning opportunities in the activities organised by Pre-primary Teachers. It shows how these activities can combine playing and learning goals.

In 2003, *ONE* subsidised 739 CPD days (654,000€) for **Childcare Workers**. By 2015, the budget had doubled: 1,483 days were subsidised with 1,363,778.75€. Funding was used for different kinds of in-service training: specified sessions (from one to six days focused on a predefined topic); nomadic sessions (from one to six days focused on a topic and organised in a space negotiated with the participants); and pedagogical coaching in teams (in childcare services or a network of services, at least eight participants) where both the topic and the organisation can be negotiated with the training organisation.

Not all practitioners and centre heads in private childcare services, particularly those who are older than 50, attend CPD activities. Several reasons have been highlighted: small teams, low level of qualification and shortcomings of resources in the private childcare services (Fiasse, Bribosia, and Thirion 2015). Pedagogical coaching for a team in childcare services seems a better way of involving all practitioners than individual CPD sessions. Currently there are various coaching sessions offered by *ONE* which focus on curriculum issues and recent legislation (Code de Qualité de l'Accueil, 1999, revised in 2004), aiming to enhance quality development in childcare settings.

Since 2001, the inspectorate role of *ONE* has been significantly expanded and broadened. Beyond its traditional controlling/monitoring and supervisory functions it now includes an advisory approach towards staff development and mentoring. The 'inspectors' (*inspecteurs*) were renamed 'coordinators' (*coordinateurs*) and a new function has been created: 'pedagogical advisers' (*conseillers pédagogiques*) who collaborate with the coordinators in pedagogical coaching. This historical shift raises new issues, such as how to combine monitoring, evaluation and guidance. The newer focus on the educational function of child care, along with the new emphasis on pedagogical counselling, marks a decrease in bureaucratic control systems. According to one of the leading administrators of *ONE*, the emphasis on pedagogical coaching does not imply that standards or basic quality criteria will matter less. The assumption is that if supervision and pedagogical coaching are combined, appreciation for these standards will increase (Sommer and Vanvarembeghe 2002). This evolution underlines the emergence of a culture of professionalisation that views competence as the central theme in educational work, based on the hypothesis that action and actors can be jointly and simultaneously transformed (Pirard and Barbier 2012; Pirard, Camus, and Barbier, forthcoming).

German-speaking Community (DG)

In the German-speaking Community, it is stipulated by law that regular participation in continuous training is part of a teachers' job. In-service courses for Pre-primary Teachers are held by the Education Unit of the Community's Department of Education (Eurydice/Eurostat 2009), and they also have the possibility to take part in CPD sessions offered by other organisations.

During the career entry phase (three school years), Pre-primary Teachers (*Kindergärtnerinnen*) take part in eight meetings per school year with staff of the *Autonome Hochschule*, experienced Pre-primary Teachers, and other young professionals. The topics discussed in these meetings are chosen by the young professionals. They can bring forward specific cases they struggle with or ask more general questions on teaching and education.

In ECEC, childcare services are legally bound to offer at least 10 hours per year of complimentary further training to their staff (*Erlass der Regierung vom 22. Mai 2014 über die Dienste und andere Formen der Kinderbetreuung*).

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

Flemish and French Community (FWB)

It is well known that the workforce professionalisation in Belgium is falling behind according to European or OECD standards (OECD 2006; UNICEF 2008). Two major problems are common to the Flemish and French Communities: the low qualification requirements for Childcare Workers, and the fact that the training for managing child care centres hardly prepares them for this job. In addition, more specifically for the Flemish Community, a third and growing concern is the number of unqualified workers in the childcare sector.

Qualification of Childcare Workers

Childcare Workers in the **Flemish Community** receive a post-secondary training (18 plus 1) after completing seven years of secondary vocational school. This particular form of IPS is embedded in a long history of paramedical and technical professionalism and is poorly adapted to considerations on the educational and social functions of child care (OECD 2006). Moreover, until very recently, Belgium was among the dwindling number of European countries where no Bachelor's degree exists for preparing the workforce to work with families and children below 3 years of age.

A study on professionalism in Flemish childcare and some international reports (Peeters 2008b; OECD 2006; UNICEF, 2008; Oberhuemer, Schreyer, and Neuman 2010) made the case for a Bachelor's degree to break the cycle of deprofessionalisation. Examples of interesting practice in France, Denmark, Italy and Ghent (Peeters 2008a; Vandebroek et al. 2016) have shown that professionals with a Bachelor's degree seem to be able to pass on the 'reflective practitioner' attitude to colleagues with only a secondary-level education. Therefore *Kind en Gezin* – in collaboration with experts – drafted a profile for a new Bachelor's degree. In September 2011, the initial training course 'Bachelor for the pedagogy of the young child', with more than 200 students in the first year, was established in Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent and in 2014 the first graduates took up a post as Pedagogical Coach. Graduates of this 'Pedagogy for the Young Child' course can not only fill staff positions in childcare facilities, but also collaborate with colleagues who have lower qualifications in order to refine the pedagogical programme of the ECEC setting. Another important task for these new Bachelor graduates will be to provide pedagogical support for family day carers and to supervise those who are in the process of obtaining a qualification.

In April 2014, a new law on childcare for the 0- to 3-year olds came into force (*Decreet Opvang van Baby's en Peuters*), requiring everyone working in childcare to be qualified by 2024. Another important aspect of this new law is the attention it gives to pedagogical guidance as a tool to increase individual competencies, particularly in the case of non-qualified workers. According to the new law every provider of childcare is required to guarantee pedagogical guidance for all the employed childcare workers.

In 2013, two resource centres in the Flemish Community (*VBJK, Vernieuwing in de Basisvoorzieningen voor Jonge Kinderen* (Centre for Innovation in the Early Years) and *CEGO, Centrum voor Ervaringsgericht Onderwijs* (Centre for Experiential Education) developed instruments for the childcare sector, training centres and pedagogical research centres that will be useful for pedagogical counsellors or coaches, including a 40-hour training module for family day carers.

In the **French Community**, reforms are forthcoming both in the education and childcare sector. Relevant research recommendations are under examination, and task forces have been organised to propose specific strategies for change in the future. In 2017, the Minister for Higher Education declared a reform of the IPS for of teachers (including Pre-primary Teachers) in the school sector: the duration should be longer (four instead of three years) and the collaboration

between university colleges and universities should be reinforced. No decision has been made for the childcare sector.

German-speaking Community (DG)

In the German-speaking Community, the Decree of 14th March 2014 on Childcare implements the EU-directive 2006/123/EG in services in the internal market. On 22nd May 2014, a new Government Decree on services for childcare was implemented (*Erlass der Regierung über die Dienste und andere Formen der Kinderbetreuung*) based on needs arising from demographical and societal changes. This new decree provides, for example, a legal basis for establishing day nurseries for children under age 3 and provides a framework for the implementation of a shared conceptual orientation of all childcare services.

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

The Belgian communities have been influenced in particular by two European studies: one commissioned by the European Commission on the competence requirements to work in ECEC (Urban, et al. 2011; Vandebroek, Urban, and Peeters 2016) and another commissioned by Eurofound - a systematic review on the effect of continuous professional development on quality and children's outcomes (Peeters et al. 2015).

Investing in continuous professional development

Flemish Community

Source: Peeters, J. and C. De Kimpe. 2017 (see *References* for full details)

Aims: Development of a research-based system of continuous professional development and development of a group reflection tool ('Wanda')

Procedure: Since 2008 several Flemish (case) studies have been conducted on professionalism in ECEC as a part of European research projects (Peeters 2008; CoRe 2011; Peeters et al. 2015; Vandebroek, Urban, and Peeters 2016). One of the main findings was that practitioners are in need of a method for critical reflection in groups. Inspired by '*analyse de pratique*' and 'appreciative inquiry', and the Italian approach towards 'documentation' (Malavasi and Zoccatelli 2013), a reflection method was developed and successfully validated together with staff in the ECEC sector (Sharmahd et al. 2013, 2016).

Recently, a case study of ECEC centres in Flanders operating as learning communities was conducted (Peeters and De Kimpe 2017). This research is integrating former results of research on professionalism and CPD and formulates five characteristics of ECEC centres that are open for improving quality.

Outcomes: The research on coaching and the development of Wanda and also the project-related book on documentation (Malavasi and Zoccatelli 2013) had an important impact on the 2014 Decree on Childcare, which included pedagogical coaching as a guaranteed right for childcare practitioners. The results of the recent study on professional learning communities will be the starting point for projects around CPD in ECEC centres.

Analysing the quality of the ECEC workforce

Flemish Community

Sources: Van Laere, K. 2017 (see *References* for full details).

Aims: Strengthening competences to work in educare in a context of superdiversity

Procedure: In this PhD study, researchers focused alternately on European and Flemish fields of preschool education as compelling cases in relation to the alleged equalising potential of preschool education. By taking three different perspectives (parents, policies, preschool staff), they examined how care and education were conceptualised. In order to examine the policy perspectives, an analysis of policy documents in 15 European countries from 2010 and 2011 was conducted. In a subsequent study, ten focus groups were organised in the autumn of 2014 and spring of 2015 with parents with migrant backgrounds (n=66) in Ghent, Brussels, and Antwerp. In addition, six video-elicited focus groups (n=69) with diverse preschool staff in the cities of Ghent and Brussels were organised. In adopting a participatory approach, it was discovered how our study demonstrates the heterogeneity of possible meaning-making in preschool education by parents and staff. The stories resulting from the research show a continuum in which some participants, especially parents and teacher's assistants problematised the lack of care in preschool education - building on a conceptual coexistence of caring and learning, while at the other side of the continuum participants understood care as a burden for preschool education - building on a conceptual hierarchy between learning and caring. This conceptual hierarchy could also be identified in the policy documents of several European countries with regard to the workforce profiles of preschool teachers and teacher's assistants. Irrespective of whether or not teachers engaged in care, there was a clear consensus that care in preschool education did not fundamentally belong in the professional repertoire of teachers. This could also be related to the fact that care signifies a devaluation of the preschool teacher profession, historically associated with lower qualified women assumed to 'naturally care' for child.

Outcomes: This study encompasses many recommendations for international and Belgian ECEC policies and practices on different levels. It should be noted that Ghent University and VBJK, Centre for Innovation in the Early Years, have been working on putting these recommendations in practice. Throughout different action research projects, further research, organising conferences³ and consultancy, a continuous dialogue has been established with several actors in the field of ECEC as well as civil society and social policy makers, to discuss the results of this study and rethink preschool pedagogy and ECEC professionalism. The commission of education of the Flemish Parliament will visit Denmark to study the pedagogue training and visit educare settings in which practitioners do integrate caring and learning. Moreover, the Flemish departments of education, welfare and integration are developing actions to smooth the transition to preschool and establish dialogue between the childcare sector and the preschool sector to discuss quality and professionalism in ECEC.

French Community (FWB)

From 2011 to 2015, three participative research programmes were funded to analyse the quality of the workforce: one in school (preschool included, De Graef et al. 2012) and two others in childcare and out-of-school services (Cesar et al. 2012; Pirard et al. 2015).

Improving the initial professional studies of (Pre-primary) Teachers

Source: De Graef, V., A. Franssen and L. Van Campenhout. 2012 (see *References* for full details).

Aims: The study aimed to improve the initial professional studies of teachers in general, including Pre-primary Teachers.

Procedure: The method of group analysis was used, involving 600 stakeholders and more than 100 interviews with students, trainers, assistants, mentors, managers of school, inspectors. The resulting stories of concrete experience were then co-analysed by 112 people. 300 additional persons were included in the discussion of the findings of this participative research

³ 22nd September 2017 – *School ready children or child ready preschools?* – Conference in Ghent for Flemish policy makers and ECEC practitioners

programme. In total, a thousand actors took part in the research process that required diverse profiles of participants and developed an inductive analysis.

Findings: While participants are asked how to improve the initial training of teachers, they underline the importance of defining first a new job profile for teachers, one which relates to the purpose of the teaching profession, the working conditions and societal developments. Despite the existence of a job profile (see *Section 3.2*) and the availability of a lot of texts on this subjects, there is no consensus on what a teacher should be at the end of the initial training: practitioners ready to teach or with a theoretical and practical basis which can be reinforced?

Conclusions/implications: The need for a broader perspective on professional development is emphasised, one that takes an integrative perspective on initial professional studies, the induction period and continuing professional development. Teachers cannot be expected to be ready to cope with all the challenges of their job when they have just finished their initial training programme. It is suggested that IPS could be improved through supporting students to gradually become reflexive practitioners and social actors in the society. This has implications for both the theoretical and field-based components of IPS. Improving the IPS of prospective teachers also requires improving the training of their trainers. Finally, links between action and research as well as collaboration between initial training institutes and universities need to be reinforced. It is suggested that the duration of teachers' initial education/training (including that of Pre-primary Teachers) should be extended from three years to four, and be open for new perspectives.

Improving the initial professional studies of Childcare Workers

Source: César A., A. Dethier, N. François, A. Legrand and F. Pirard. 2012 (see *References* for full details).

Aims: The study aimed to provide evidence for the improvement of the initial professional studies of Childcare Workers in both early childhood and leisure-time centres, and for the managers of childcare services, and to analyse the main training curricula in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation.

Procedure: The research procedures included documentary analysis of the curricula, two workshops for 150 participants focused on the core professional competences expected in Wallonia Brussels Federation and in Europe generally (drawing on the CoRe study), and consultation through questionnaires and focus groups with stakeholders (practitioners, trainers, representatives of trade unions and other experts).

Findings: Analysis of the data shows a gap between the curricular requirements and the expectations of stakeholders in the light of social change. Too many short training courses have been set up without effective professional development perspectives and without a consistent approach regarding the aims of childhood pedagogy. Both the level and orientation of current IPS programmes are not fit for purpose. A psycho-educational approach needs to be developed beyond the traditional social and hygienic goals. Opportunities for flexible qualification pathways and for career progression need to be developed. Working conditions need to provide opportunities for sustained reflection on practice with children, parents, other professionals and stakeholders within a systemic view of professionalisation.

Defining core competences of Childcare Workers and Childcare Managers

Source: Pirard, F., A. Dethier, N. François, and E. Pools. 2015 (see *References* for full details).

Aims: The aim of this study was to define core competences of Childcare Workers in early childhood and leisure time centres, as well as of those in a management position.

Procedure: Analyses of the educational and training systems in France, Flanders, England and Sweden were conducted in collaboration with experts from these countries. Four workshops and conferences with a focus on each country were organised and 150 participants (practitioners, trainers, representatives of trade unions and other experts) received questionnaires and took part in focus groups. Most of these persons had already been involved in the first

research programme (see above), but some new participants from university colleges were also included.

Findings: The analyses of the data confirmed the results of the first research programme. The final research report proposed six principles to reform initial professional studies and continuing professional development in WBF:

- (1) identifying a professional position that can be understood from the parental position;
- (2) promoting a holistic approach that respects the children's needs and rights and takes into account their relationships;
- (3) identifying different work tasks which need developing (not only in the work with children, but also with families, with other professionals and the community);
- (4) taking care of all children and their families with respect to diversity;
- (5) considering and promoting relational/interpersonal and reflective attitudes beyond technical skills and
- (6) viewing taking care of children and working with their parents as a non-gender-specific competence.

Three interconnected competences were identified both in childcare (0-3 years) and out-of-school (0-12 years) services: relational, organisational and reflective competencies of practitioners. The competences of managers are based on a multidisciplinary approach and are related to those of the practitioners. The research report concludes with 12 recommendations for reforming the initial professional studies system. One of them is the creation of a Bachelor's degree focusing on childcare education for children from 0 to 12 that could be followed by a Master's degree dedicated to the management of childcare services. In 2015, ONE approved the research report and made it accessible on its website. Although several activities have since taken place with the aim of disseminating and reflecting on the recommendations (conferences) and considering implementation possibilities (informal meetings with administration representatives), as of May 2017 no official decisions had been reached regarding the childcare sector.

8. General workforce issues

The following information applies to all three Communities unless otherwise stated.

8.1 Remuneration

Pre-primary Teachers in Belgium receive salaries equivalent to those of primary and lower secondary teachers (OECD 2012). The salaries are comparable to other jobs that require a Bachelor's degree and are sufficient for living as a single parent in a major city. The salaries of Childcare Workers are lower but still enough for living on as a single parent.

The salary of staff in childcare centres with a Bachelor-level qualification is comparable to that of a Pre-primary Teacher.

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

A full-time job in pre-primary settings comprises 26 hours per week of teaching, including six hours non-contact time, whereas in childcare services a full-time week comprises 38 hours, with no specified non-contact time.

69% of teachers in pre-primary settings across Belgium work full-time; there are no recent data on the proportion of full-time or part-time jobs in childcare services.

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

Flemish Community

The city of Ghent has a tradition of organising courses for new staff in childcare settings and also group trainings for staff in new childcare centres (Peeters, De Kimpe, and Brants 2016), but this is not the case for the whole of Flanders.

In contrast to the tradition of the 'lone teacher' approach, in recent years pre-primary and primary schools have been increasingly investing in new collaborative forms of teaching such as co-teaching, professionals visiting each other's classes, or learning networks with teachers of other pre-primary settings (Sharmahd et al. 2017)

French Community (FWB)

There are no official support measures, neither in the pre-primary nor in the childcare sector - they depend on the individual setting and its management.

German-speaking Community (DG)

Rapid societal change is confronting the pre-primary institutions and schools with challenges. The qualification and motivation of the staff are essential pillars of the educational system. In May 2015, the government of the German-speaking Community therefore launched the concept of 'Good staff for good education' (*Gutes Personal für gute Schulen*) in order to create an optimal framework that allows schools to respond best to those challenges. The concept focuses on strengthening the school's autonomy, fostering teamwork within the educational system, supporting young professionals, and developing new ways of career development.

In childcare services there are no official support measures - they depend on the service and its management.

8.4 Non-contact time

Flemish Community

In some Flemish cities there is a regulation of paid non-contact hours in childcare centres, but no general national regulations exist and there is no detailed information available. In pre-primary education, teachers have labour contracts of 26 hours. They need to teach at least 1,200 minutes per week (24 'lesson hours' of 50 minutes). That means they have 360 minutes left or approx. six hours per week for non-contact time. The school decides how this time will be spent.

French Community (FWB)

In the *écoles maternelles*, a required 26 periods per week are dedicated to teaching and 60 periods of 50 minutes per year (50 hours) to staff meetings (Decree about organisation of pre-school and primary school 1998, revised in 2008). There are no regulations for time allocated to preparation work: it depends on the personal organisation of the practitioner.

Puéricultrices who work in pre-primary settings work as auxiliary staff, partly with teachers and children in the classroom (1,400 minutes max.), partly alone with the children to help them eating or to supervise their free time (100 minutes) and partly without children to take part in meetings with teachers, parents and specialised centres (*centre psycho medico social*) (100 minutes) (Circulaire 2251).

Time allocated for preparation work, staff meetings, cooperation with parents, networking in the community and other activities in childcare services is unpaid.

German-speaking Community (DG)

In the German-speaking Community, there is no regulation of paid non-contact hours in either pre-primary education or in childcare centres.

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

Flemish Community

There are currently no staff shortages in the Flemish Community for the childcare sector. However, in big cities like Antwerp and Brussels, a significant shortage of pre-primary staff is expected in the near future. Some local governments such as Antwerp have developed plans to attract more teachers in the future.

French Community (FWB)

There are currently no staff shortages in the French community, neither in the pre-primary nor in the childcare sector.

German-speaking Community (DG)

In the DG, minor staff shortages in both in the pre-primary and the childcare sectors may occur if staff resign in the near future.

However, the after-school care services for 3- to 12-year olds faces major staff shortages. This has resulted in almost one third of the staff working in after-school care being unqualified.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

Flemish Community

Up-skilling unqualified staff

Although the new Law on Childcare in Flanders stipulates that every Childcare Worker should be qualified, three years after the Law came into force, a specific plan for providing all unqualified persons with a pathway towards qualification is still missing. On another level, the university colleges that have started with the new Bachelor study programmes have expressed disappointment that no requirements were included in the law regarding hiring persons with a Bachelor's degree to work with very young children. This is problematic for the employment of the graduates of this new initial education/training and indicates a number of related challenges for the future.

Diversity of staff

Regarding the Pre-primary Teachers, there is an ongoing discussion about the lack of diversity in the workforce (e.g. local municipality of Antwerp). There are few women from ethnic minorities and also very few male teachers. This is a problem especially in major cities, where sometimes the majority of children have a migration background but there are almost no teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds. An ongoing study on the transition of poor and ethnic minority children (2.5 years old) between home and pre-primary settings shows that the communication between teachers and minority ethnic parents is complicated, partially due to this lack of diversity in the workforce (Van Laere 2017). Findings also show that measures are needed to strengthen the caring role of the pre-primary settings for the youngest children and to integrate care and education into a more holistic 'educare' approach.

French Community (FWB)

Similarly, in the French Community, a move towards a more holistic ‘educare’ approach for the ECEC system remains a challenge. Whereas some research programmes on quality and qualifications have been funded and reforms on how to improve the qualifications of all practitioners in the ECEC field are under discussion, there is no guarantee that investments will be made in this sector. Debate on the qualification of Pre-primary Teachers has been included in reform discussions of initial education/training programmes, but not in relation to the initial professional studies required for Childcare Workers and their managers.

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