

BULGARIA

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report author

Rozalina Engels-Kritidis

Associate Professor, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski,
Faculty of Primary and Pre-school Education

Citation suggestion:

Engels-Kritidis, R. 2017. "Bulgaria – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Workforce Profiles in Systems of Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. www.seeepro.eu/English/Country_Reports.htm

Funded by:



Federal Ministry for
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,
Women and Youth



State Institute of
Early Childhood Research



Contents

- 1. ECEC governance 3
- 2. Who belongs to the ECEC workforce?..... 3
 - 2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision..... 3
 - 2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity 5
- 3. Initial professional studies (IPS) 6
 - 3.1 Initial qualifying routes of main contact staff – higher education and vocational 6
 - 3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes for core practitioners 8
 - 3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability 11
- 4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners..... 11
- 5. Continuing professional development (CPD) 13
- 6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing 15
- 7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues 15
- 8. General workforce issues 17
 - 8.1 Remuneration..... 17
 - 8.2 Full-time and part-time employment..... 18
 - 8.3 Staff support measures 18
 - 8.4 Non-contact time 18
 - 8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies..... 18
- 9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment 19
- 10. References..... 20



1. ECEC governance

In Bulgaria, early childhood education and care is organised as a split system: Pre-primary education is regulated by the Ministry of Education and Science (*Ministerstvo na obrazovaniето i naukata*) and takes place in kindergartens where children aged 2/3 up to 7 years “receive care, upbringing, socialisation and education” (Law on Preschool and School Education 2015, Art. 24). Traditionally, ECEC settings for children under 3 years of age are regulated by the Ministry of Health. Regional and local authorities provide maintenance of the buildings and guarantee compliance with health and safety regulations.

2. Who belongs to the ECEC workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

Table 1 gives an overview of the staff working directly with children and categorises the core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 at end of this section).

Table 1

Bulgaria: 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><i>Detski uchitel</i> Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teacher</p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional or Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional</p>	<p><i>Detska gradina</i> Kindergarten (2)3- to 7-year olds</p> <p><i>Podgotvitelna grupa/klas</i> <i>5-6-godishni</i> Transition group in kindergarten or Transition class in primary school 5- to 6-year olds</p> <p><i>Podgotvitelna grupa/klas</i> <i>6-7-godishni</i> Transition group in kindergarten or Transition class in primary school 6- to 7-year olds</p>	<p>Core practitioner with group responsibility</p> <p>Centre head/ Kindergarten principal</p>	<p>0–7 years</p> <p>or</p> <p>3–11 years</p>	<p>Bachelor, 4 years</p> <p>ECTS points: 240 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p><i>Occasionally:</i> Professional Bachelor, 3 years</p> <p>ECTS points: 180 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6</p>
<p><i>Pomoshtnik-vazpitatel</i> Teacher’s Assistant</p>	<p><i>Detska gradina</i> Kindergarten (2)3- to 7-year olds</p> <p><i>Podgotvitelna grupa</i> <i>5-6-godishni</i></p>	<p>Non-qualified co-worker</p>	<p>n/a²</p>	<p>No required qualification</p>

¹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012, 2014.

² n/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
	Transition group in kindergarten 5- to 6-year olds <i>Podgotvitelna grupa</i> <i>6-7-godishni</i> Transition group in kindergarten 6- to 7-year olds			
<i>Muzikalen pedagog</i> Music Teacher	<i>Detska gradina,</i> Kindergarten (2)3- to 7-year olds <i>Podgotvitelna grupa</i> Transition group in kindergarten <i>5-6-godishni</i> 5- to 6-year olds <i>Podgotvitelna grupa</i> <i>6-7-godishni</i> Transition group in kindergarten 6- to 7-year olds	Directly interacts with children two or three times a week, organising activities and working towards goals in the educational area of music; often is attached as a concurrent member of the regular staff in two kindergartens.	3–19 years	Bachelor, 4 years ECTS points: 240 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0114 ISCED 2011: 6
<i>Pedagog na detska yasla</i> Nursery Teacher <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional	<i>Detska yasla</i> Crèche/nursery Infant/toddler group 3 months to 3 years	Appointed to several nursery groups; responsibilities include arranging, planning and managing the educational activities for the children.	0–7 years	Bachelor, 4 years ECTS points: 240 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6
<i>Medicinska sestra</i> Medical Nurse <i>Profile:</i> Social Care/Health Care Professional	<i>Detska yasla</i> Crèche/nursery Infant/toddler centre 3 months to 3 years <i>Yasleni grupi kym detska gradina</i> Infant-toddler groups in kindergarten 3 months to 3 years <i>Domove za medico-socialni grizhi za detsa</i> Health and social care home 3 months to 3 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility	All ages	Bachelor, 4 years ECTS points: 240 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0913 ISCED 2011: 6

In most **kindergartens** a children’s nurse is on the premises all day; a paediatrician and speech therapist pay weekly visits. The centre director only works directly with the children if staff members are absent for one reason or another. They have the same basic training as the group leaders, but are required to complete an additional course in management and leadership issues. Non-qualified assistants are present in the room; they do not usually work directly with the children, but are expected mainly to perform custodial tasks such as clearing up and cleaning the room or distributing meals (Oberhuemer, Schreyer, and Neuman 2010, 59).

Since budgets now come under the responsibility of the kindergarten principals, some, particularly those in larger cities, manage to fund a full-time position for specialist support staff, e.g.

speech therapists, psychologists, special pedagogues, even teachers in physical education (normally men), who work on site on a regular basis, and are on the kindergarten payroll.

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

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

Traditionally, Kindergarten Teachers in Bulgaria have always been highly qualified. For the past ten years, the percentage of teachers with Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in pre-primary education has increased significantly. According to Kusheva et al. (2006), looking at the entire teacher workforce in the education system for the 2003/2004 school year, teachers with higher education accounted for about 90%.

The data on gender ratios in pre-primary education show that the overwhelming majority of staff is female. Even though each year several men graduate as Pre-primary Teachers with Foreign Language or as Pre-primary and Primary School Teachers, most of them do not take up work in this job mainly because of the low remuneration. However, during recent years there have been a number of men working in kindergartens, mainly in private ones. There are also at least two male Music teachers in Sofia kindergartens.

According to data for 2015/2016 (see *Table 2*) as well as data from Kusheva et al. (2006), the age distribution of Pre-primary Teachers shows that more than half (52.1%) are over 50 years old. It is a worrying fact that a large percentage of graduating professionals do not wish to pursue a career working in kindergartens, most probably because of the low status of ECEC teachers in Bulgaria, despite the high qualification levels.

Table 2

Bulgaria: Age distribution of teachers in kindergartens during 2015/2016 school year*

Age group	Number of teachers	Totals/age groups	Percentage
Under 25 years	293	4,941	24.2
25-29 years	1,058		
30-34 years	1,372		
35-39 years	2,218	4,843	23.7
40-44 years	2,213		
45-49 years	2,630		
50-54 years	3,121	10,636	52.1
55-59 years	5,092		
60 years and older	2,423		
Total number of teachers	20,420		

*National Statistical Institute 2016.

There are no recent national statistics about the overall composition of the ECEC workforce in Bulgaria that show the proportion of qualifications, gender or ethnicity.

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes of main contact staff – higher education and vocational

The teaching positions in **pre-primary education** in Bulgaria are usually held by personnel who have completed the traditional university degree of *Pre-school Pedagogy* (a four-year university programme, started in 1984 and available until 1996), as well as one of the comparatively newer four-year degree programmes of *Pre-school Pedagogy with a Foreign Language* and *Pre-school and Primary School Pedagogy* (available since 1996). The first of the new degrees reflects the current need for qualified Pre-primary Teachers who, in addition to the mainstream pedagogical work, are proficient in early foreign language teaching. Graduates of this programme are eligible to teach pre-school children in state, private, specialised and profiled children's institutions, as well as to conduct foreign language teaching in English, German, French, Spanish, Italian or Russian (currently only English and German).

The basic premise of the second degree, the 'hybrid' specialisation in *Pre-school and Primary School Pedagogy*, is the idea of facilitating the transition of children from kindergarten to primary school by providing teaching professionals with a broad spectrum of competence and who are well-acquainted with the specifics of working with children of both preschool and primary school age. Graduates of the programme can organise and conduct instructional, educational, methodological, organisational-managerial, expert, advising, diagnostic-prognostic and cultural activities in the educational system, in administrative-managerial and cultural institutions, as well as in social and sport organisations for children of pre-school and primary school age.

According to the entry requirements for prospective Pre-primary and Primary School Teachers in the Candidate Student's Handbook of the Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski for 2016/2017 (Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski 2016a), there is an entrance exam in one of the following subjects, chosen by the candidate student: Bulgarian Language and Literature, Bulgarian History, Geography, Philosophy, English, German, French, Spanish, Italian or Russian Language. For enrolling in a programme of Pre-Primary Education with a Foreign Language, the entrance exam is in English, German, French, Spanish, Italian or Russian language. For both specialisms, the Bulgarian Language and Literature marks from the high school diploma also count towards each candidate's overall score.

The university study programme ends with written state exams. Students of Pre-school Pedagogy with a Foreign Language are additionally tested on the respective foreign language, while the students of the hybrid Pre-school and Primary School Pedagogy specialisation are tested in a state exam on a pooled questionnaire.

After completing the four-year Bachelor's degree, students can continue for two full-time semesters (one year) or three part-time semesters for a Master's degree programme in the field of pre-primary education or in another area. Furthermore, a three-year course of doctoral studies for a PhD degree in pre-primary education is available.

It is important to note that there are still two Pedagogical Colleges in Bulgaria where, after three years (six semesters) of study, students can be awarded the acknowledged educational degree of Professional Bachelor in Pre-school Education with a Foreign Language (only English).

One is the Pedagogical College in Dobrich, affiliated to the University of Shumen; the other one is the Pedagogical College in Pleven, affiliated to the University of Veliko Turnovo. According to a recent ministerial decision (Decision № 328 dd. 03 May 2016), 74 students will be accepted in 2016/2017 for the Professional Bachelor degree in the field of Pedagogy of the Pedagogical College in Dobrich and 90 students in Pleven; however, the numbers for both colleges include students from three pedagogical specialties, so it can be assumed that around one third of them will be enrolled in Pre-school Pedagogy with English Language. Almost all graduates of these colleges continue in a Master's degree programme specifically created for these cases. In several Bulgarian universities there are special curriculum plans for the Master's degree programme in preschool education (four semesters) for those who have graduated from a college and have a "Professional Bachelor" degree and the qualification of Pre-school Pedagogy. An admission score is assessed, comprising average results from state examinations and average results from semester examinations (Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski 2016b). One of the beneficial ideas supporting the existence of such colleges is that they allow the respective universities to reach people from smaller towns and also increase their enrolment quotas.

The low percentage of Professional Bachelor degree holders among the teachers in the general field of pedagogy in Bulgaria can be seen in the data on tertiary education graduates in 2015. For the general sector "Teacher training and education science", 107 people graduated with a Professional Bachelor degree; 2634 with a Bachelor's degree; 2241 with a Master's degree and 113 with a Doctoral degree.

Teachers' Assistants who work in kindergartens graduate from high school (ISCED 3). They do not receive specific training. There is one exception: graduates of the 135th High School 'Jan Amos Comenius' in Sofia gain a special qualification. This is due to the vocational education/training with a 'pedagogical profile' that its students have been receiving since the 1980s during the four years following their eighth class; since 2012, those leaving school receive a certificate as *Assistant Educator in Children's Upbringing and Education*.

There are also various courses offered specifically for Teachers' Assistants. Some of the public and private centres for vocational education organise qualification courses in this area.

Table 3

Bulgaria: Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teacher

<p>Job title in Bulgarian: <i>Detski uchitel</i></p> <p>Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional (specialist focus 0–7 years) <i>or</i> Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional</p>
<p>Entry requirements: Higher school leaving certificate, university entrance exam</p> <p>Professional studies until 1996: 4 years university (Pre-school Pedagogy) or 3 years Pedagogical College; Since 1996: 4-year degree programme Pre-school Pedagogy with a Foreign Language or Pre-primary and Primary School Pedagogy; a subsequent 1-year Master's study is possible.</p> <p>Award: State exam, Bachelor (= official requirement for core practitioners in kindergarten); although optional, it is common for Kindergarten Teachers to have a Master's degree (ISCED/EQF level 7).</p> <p>ECTS points: 240</p> <p>EQF level: 6</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0112</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), transitions groups in kindergarten or primary schools (5–6 and 6–7 years), crèche, nursery, infant/toddler centre (3 months to 3 years)</p>

Table 4

Bulgaria: Nursery Teacher

Job title in Bulgarian: <i>Pedagog na detska yasla</i> Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional (specialist focus 0–7 years) <i>or</i> Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional
<p>Entry requirements: Higher school leaving certificate, university entrance exam</p> <p>Professional studies until 1996: 4 years university (Preschool Pedagogy) or 3 years Pedagogical College. Since 1996: 4-year degree programme Preschool Pedagogy with a Foreign Language or Pre-primary and Primary School Pedagogy; a subsequent 1-year Master’s study is possible.</p> <p>Award: State exam, Bachelor (=official requirement for core practitioners in kindergarten); although optional, it is common for Nursery Teachers to have a Master’s degree (ISCED/EQF level 7).</p> <p>ECTS points: 240 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), transitions groups in kindergarten or primary schools (5–6 and 6–7 years), crèche, nursery, infant/toddler centre (3 months to 3 years)</p>

Table 5

Bulgaria: Medical Nurse

Job title in Bulgarian: <i>Medicinska sestra</i> Profile: Social/Health Care Professional
<p>Entry requirements: Higher school leaving certificate, university entrance exam</p> <p>Professional studies: 4 years at a university/faculty specialising in medical studies</p> <p>Award: Bachelor</p> <p>ECTS points: 240 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0913 ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Crèche, nursery, infant/toddler centre (3 month to 3 years), nursery groups in kindergarten (3 month to 3 years), health and social care homes (3 month to 3 years)</p>

3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes for core practitioners

Kindergarten Teachers (*Detski uchitel*)

Competence specifications

According to the Sofia University Study Curriculum for Pre-school Pedagogy with a Foreign Language specialty (Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski 2014b), effective as of the 2014/2015 academic year, the students are required to attain the following professional competences:

- Application of acquired knowledge and abilities in pedagogical practice;
- Utilisation of creative approaches during the realisation of the educational aspects in the curricula for each respective age;
- Utilisation of modern and innovative formats and methods for interaction and education;
- Ability to transfer knowledge and techniques, to integrate current theoretical achievements in practice;
- Ability to communicate, to manage and overcome conflict, and to develop and manage pedagogically-relevant projects;
- Ability to create conditions and prerequisites for learning (definition of goals, process organisation, execution, self-control and self-assessment);

- Ability to select approaches, forms of organisation, methods, equipment and pedagogical activities for educational work as appropriate for specific circumstances;
- Ability to stimulate and assist children with cognitive activities, intellectual creativity, a positive attitude to learning, research, discovery and self-knowledge of the world;
- Ability to help children develop their national, social, ethnic, religious, etc. identity, their self-esteem, their self-respect and respect towards others, tolerance;
- Development of individual qualities such as tolerance, outgoing character, self-control, empathy, ability for taking initiative, creativity, etc. which are necessary for the conduct of effective educational and social interactions.

Curricular areas

The basic requirements for attaining the professional qualification of ‘Teacher’ (including ‘Pre-primary/Kindergarten Teacher’) are defined in the government Directive dated 11.11.2016, which is applicable as of the 2017/2018 academic year.

The directive stipulates that the theoretical preparation should include mandatory, elective mandatory and elective courses (art. 5), and defines the minimum of mandatory academic courses and their minimum duration in academic hours (art. 6), as follows:

Table 6

Bulgaria: Mandatory courses for qualifying as a Teacher (including Pre-primary/Kindergarten Teacher)

	Academic course	Minimum duration in academic hours:
1	Pedagogy	60 hours
2	Psychology	60 hours
3	Didactics/tuition methodology	90 hours
4	Inclusive education	15 hours
5	Information and communication technology in education; working in a digital environment	30 hours

According to the Directive (articles 9-12), “the practical preparation is conducted in kindergartens and schools that are part of the system for pre-school and school education and is realized in the following formats of tuition with a minimum duration in academic hours”:

1. Observational lesson (observing and analysing pedagogical situations in kindergartens and schools, conducted under the direct supervision of a university lecturer): 30 hours;
2. Ongoing pedagogical practice (practicum preparation through observing and conducting pedagogical situations in kindergartens and schools in collaboration with a mentor-teacher under the supervision of a university lecturer): 60 hours;
3. Internship practice (“independent participation of the students in the educational process via realisation of pedagogical situations or classes, as well as in other organisational formats in kindergartens and schools, conducted under the supervision of a mentor-teacher and an educator from the higher-education institution”): 90 hours.

Each Bulgarian university which has a pedagogical faculty and is accredited to train students in the field of Pre-school Pedagogy develops its own curriculum, based on the aforementioned minimum requirements.

As an example, according to the 2014/2015 curriculum of the Faculty of Primary and Pre-school Education of Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, the study programme *Pre-school and Primary School Pedagogy*, which qualifies for work with 3- to 11-year olds in kindergartens and primary schools, comprises 3000 hours of study in 58 curricular areas and students are awarded 240 ECTS points on completion (Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski 2014a). In the same university, the other study programme for work in kindergartens – *Pre-school Pedagogy with a Foreign Language* – comprises 2,610 hours of study, 44 curricular areas and 240 ECTS points.

Both study programmes include subjects such as Basics of Education; Didactics; History of Pedagogy and Bulgarian Education; Pedagogical Psychology; Pre-school Pedagogy; Pedagogy of Early Childhood (0-3 years); Pedagogy of Playing Games in Early Childhood; Pedagogical Diagnosis; Basics of Primary School Education; Children's Literature; Pedagogy of Language Use and Speech Development; Pedagogy of Child-Environment Interaction; Pedagogy of Mathematics; Pedagogy of Music; Pedagogy of Art; Pedagogy of Movement. The theoretical studies end with written state exams. Both study routes lead to a Bachelor's award.

The curriculum of the study route *Pre-school Education with a Foreign Language* is organised into four content areas: (1) theoretical foundations; (2) psychology and pedagogy; (3) practical application/methods; (4) optional subjects. Students are additionally tested on the respective foreign language (only English and German currently; French, Spanish, Italian, and Russian used to be options in the past); the foreign language component comprises 360 hours of study (29 ECTS points).

Most of the curricular areas mentioned above include separate hours for practical training, but parallel to this there is a main workplace-based cycle, focusing on the development of kindergarten teachers' practical skills (see *Section 4*). For the aforementioned courses, especially for the specific methodological ones, a common theoretical background has been created that enables students to gain a more holistic understanding of the interconnections between theoretical knowledge and didactic strategies, thus helping them to develop professional competences (Engels-Kritidis, Kikušová, and Osađan 2013).

Nursery Teachers (*Pedagog na detska yasla*)

Competence specifications and curricular areas required for prospective Nursery Teachers are exactly the same as those for Kindergarten Teachers. Graduates of the two previously mentioned Bachelor's degree programmes can also work as Nursery Teachers.

Medical Nurses (*Medicinska sestra*)

Competence specifications

According to the Directive for Unified State Requirements for the Attainment of Higher Education in the specialisms of 'Medical Nurse' and 'Midwife Nurse' at Bachelor level (introduced in 2005, with amendments and additions in 2006 and 2010), the study programme provides: (1) Appropriate knowledge of disciplines that are the basis of nursing, including adequate knowledge of the human organism, the psychological functions and the behaviour of healthy and diseased people, as well as the human social environment; (2) Adequate knowledge of the essence and the ethics of the profession and the general principles connected with health and nursing; (3) Appropriate practical clinical experience; (4) Ability to participate in the practical tuition of health personnel and work experience with this personnel; (5) Experience in collaboration with other medical specialists.

Curricular areas

Candidate students are required to have completed secondary education and to pass a written examination, determined by the higher education institute. The study programme for a Bachelor's degree in Medical Nursing takes four academic years (eight semesters) to complete and comprises 4,600 academic hours. Tuition includes theoretical and practical preparation. The theoretical preparation is conducted via mandatory, elective mandatory and elective courses delivered as lectures, seminars and practical exercises with a total duration of at least six semesters. The practical component of IPS takes place through educational (clinical) practice and internship. The mandatory courses (and their minimum duration in academic hours) more

closely associated with the nurses' work in nurseries and infant-toddler centres include the following: Practical Basis of Nursing (660 hours); Nursing in Pediatrics (45 hours); Nursing of Women in Labour and Newborns (30 hours); Nursing of Children and Adults with Disabilities (60 hours); Hygiene and Ecology (30 hours); Therapeutic Feeding and Nutrition (15 hours); Pathology – Knowledge of Diseases (405 hours); Infectious Diseases and Epidemiology (30 hours); Pediatrics and Neonatology (45 hours); Ear, Nose and Throat Diseases (15 hours); Health Promotion (15 hours); Children's Pedagogy and Children's Psychology (30 hours); Medical Safety in Emergency Situations (30 hours); Principles and Methodology of Teaching (45 hours), etc. The ratio between theory-based and practice-based IPS is determined by the higher education institution, but the proportion of academic hours allocated to practical experience in work placements should be no less than 50% of the total hours.

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

The study route *Pre-school and Primary School Pedagogy* is available on a full-time and a part-time basis. Part-time studies are for those in employment while studying. Having in mind the low salaries in the educational sector, some students work in completely different areas, but a large number work as Teachers' Assistants in kindergartens or as part-time Pre-primary Teachers until they take their final exams.

Candidates who have completed a Bachelor programme in another humanitarian discipline are also given the opportunity to take an extended two-year (four semesters) Master's programme in order to acquire the qualification for working as a Pre-primary Teacher (see Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski 2016b). An admission score is assessed, comprising average results from state examinations and average results from semester examinations during their Bachelor's degree course; the overall entry requirement is a score of at least 7.00. The interest in this Master's programme is very high – during recent years, each autumn more than a hundred people apply and enter this programme. Since the 2015/2016 academic year, a new curriculum has been approved by Sofia University; for candidates with a Bachelor's degree with a pedagogical qualification (regardless of the specific area), a shorter two-semester (instead of four) course of study has been launched. In order to put into perspective the scale of interest in these programmes, it should be mentioned that in the 2015/2016 academic year, 97 people enrolled for the regular four-semester programme, while 85 entered the Master's degree programme for candidates with a pedagogical qualification (Sofia University Master Degree Candidate Campaign 2015/2016).

On the other hand, Bachelor's degree students who graduated with the *Pre-school and Primary School* or the *Pre-school Education with a Foreign Language* specialisms can continue their Master's degree in a different area, giving them an additional pedagogical qualification in order to expand their expertise and field of competence, e.g. a Master's degree in Speech Therapy, in Special Education, in the Pedagogy of the Aesthetics of Mass Communication. Graduates of *Preschool Education with a Foreign Language* can also apply for Master's degree programmes in the Faculty of Classical and New Philology of Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski.

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teachers (*Detski uchitel*)

The practical element of the study route *Pre-school and Primary School* also entails work placements of 750 hours out of a total of 3,000 hours, i.e. comprises 25% of the overall study

programme. The number of hours spent in kindergarten or school increases per semester, and the final, eighth semester comprises a practical placement only (240 of the total 750 hours), split equally between a kindergarten and a primary school. Each part ends with a state exam, and the final mark is an average of both separate marks – one for the kindergarten and another for the primary school. In the study route *Pre-school Education with a Foreign Language* the curriculum comprises 780 hours in practical placements out of a total of 2,610 hours (26 ECTS points), i.e. approx. 30%. The eighth semester (240 of the total 780 hours) is spent entirely in a kindergarten placement.

Students need to be able to transfer their acquired theoretical knowledge into the kindergarten's educational context. The whole system of field-based studies ensures that students gradually move from observation and analysis of teaching situations e.g. by carrying out small projects and research studies (during the first several semesters of their study), to enacting pedagogical situations (during the following semesters, usually in pairs) and finally, during the seventh and eighth semesters, to independent performance in everyday pedagogical conditions (Roussinova and Angelov 2008).

The practical element of initial professional studies is not regulated by national, regional and/or provider guidelines. For the placements in a real-life educational environment, universities have contractual agreements with specially selected nurseries, kindergartens and teachers/mentors. Most of the mentoring/supervising staff in partnership institutions do not receive any monetary compensation but may be rewarded in symbolic terms (e.g. through promotion). There are also kindergartens and supervisors who work in placement settings on a voluntary basis.

The contracted teacher trainers/mentors are highly-qualified pedagogues with experience in activities related to the development, application and evaluation of innovative practices. Most of them also have a qualification in Mentoring (according to the Bulgarian national five-level qualification scale – see also *Section 5*), most often acquired through courses at the Department of Information and In-Service Training of Teachers of Sofia University, or at other universities. Some of the teacher trainers/mentors have attained the highest professional qualification level, which involves the presentation of innovations introduced by the teacher through publications.

The organisation, realisation and evaluation of field-based studies is part of the overall evaluation of each study programme by the relevant university tutor. These depend on conditions defined by each particular university tutor for his/her subject.

The overall aim for all types of field-based studies is for the student to obtain a comprehensive view of the educational process, to gain professional and organisational competences connected with the role of the teacher, as well as competencies related to the realisation of educational activities in kindergartens.

The student has the chance to understand and verify the realisation of modern didactic strategies in a real-life educational context and thus to acquire key competencies such as: implementing educational projects at the level of kindergarten; orienting himself/herself in the programme systems for pedagogical interaction of kindergartens; realising general methods of education and general didactic of teaching in kindergarten; diagnosing the reasons for children's problems and preparing appropriate pedagogical intervention to resolve them; communicating his/her knowledge with specialist educational and psychological services; preparing methodically educational sessions related to particular educational content (Engels-Kritidis, Kikušová, and Osad'án 2013).

As a form of student self-evaluation and also external evaluation, students are required to prepare a portfolio – a summary of necessary documents which give evidence of their educational activities. At Sofia University, this is called a *pedagogical diary*. This diary (or *portfolio*) has to contain all proposed and realised curricular projects, didactical approaches and other documents, including self-assessment by the student. The content of each project and the

relevant preparations have to be discussed with the tutors responsible for the teaching of didactics in the relevant courses.

In most universities in Bulgaria, some of the students win competitions for participation in student exchange programmes such as Erasmus+, DAAD, etc. They spend various periods of time (usually a semester) in another European country mainly for improvement and exchange of knowledge and skills in the field of practical training.

The project *Student internship* (2014-2015 – see link below) realised with the financial support of the Operative Programme ‘Human Resources Development’ and co-financed by the European Social Fund of the European Union) offered an opportunity to students specialising in pedagogy/education to conduct their field-based studies (paid internship – one-time payment of 246 EUR (480 BGN) for 240 hours in kindergartens, schools, etc. in another country. The project was realised in partnership with all 51 higher education institutions in Bulgaria. The practical education was attended by over 60,000 students in total, including a large number of students placed in preschool institutions. The project budget included funding for the compensation of academic mentors from the universities, as well as mentors assigned by the employers. Another phase of the same project is currently underway across the country (www.praktiki.mon.bg).

Nursery Teachers (*Pedagog na detska yasla*)

Prospective Nursery Teachers undergo the same format of workplace-based learning as prospective Kindergarten Teachers.

Medical Nurses (*Medicinska sestra*)

As already mentioned, the ratio between theoretical and practical preparation in the curriculum for Medical Nurses is determined by the higher education institution, but the academic hours allocated to practical preparation should be no less than 50% of the total hours. The practical preparation during IPS is realised via educational (clinical) practice and internship; this is organised and conducted in faculties and/or affiliates of higher education institutions, as well as clinical settings that have been accredited for student education.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

According to the national system for in-service training, all Bulgarian teachers (including Kindergarten Teachers) can develop their qualifications on a five-level qualification scale. The first two levels involve education on contextual and technological innovation, as well as the sharing of the teachers’ individual experiences and pedagogical practices, while the latter three levels focus on activities related to the practical application of innovations and the creation and practical testing of individual innovative practices. The highest professional qualification level represents the dissemination of innovations introduced by the teacher through publications (Kusheva et al. 2006).

In the new Law on Preschool and School Education of 2015, there is a separate Section 4, titled ‘Career development of pedagogical specialists’, which defines different teaching levels – Teacher, Senior Teacher, and Head Teacher – also applicable for young children’s teachers. As

foundations for the career development of pedagogical specialists, the document mentions acquired qualification credits, acquired professional qualification level, as well as results of performance appraisals; a larger number of qualification credits and a higher professional qualification level are bases for a faster career development of pedagogical specialists, regardless of their years of service. The requirements and the procedure for acquiring teaching levels are defined by the State Educational Standard for the Status and Development of Teachers, Head Teachers and other Pedagogical Specialists, which is currently in development.

The Collective Labour Agreement applicable for the public education system (Art. 33, 2014) states that the budget for educational staff qualifications is defined at the start of each calendar year and should amount to no less than 0.8% of the annual salary of pedagogical staff. The budget is used for the enrolment of pedagogical staff in qualification courses after discussion in the educational committee and approval by the Centre Head. Some of the courses are optional, while others may be obligatory. Therefore, ECEC employers cover the costs of attending continuing professional development activities in the size of the expenditures according to the mentioned budget, divided between members of the pedagogical team. If the cost of qualification is higher, the teachers have to cover the difference themselves.

The main providers of continuing professional development across the country are university departments of information and in-service training of teachers; the National Institute for Education and Qualification in the Educational System; some pedagogical faculties; educational inspectorates; non-governmental organisations; foundations, and other public and private providers at national, regional and local level.

The options for paid absence for education of full-time employees in Bulgaria (including Pre-primary Teachers and Teachers' Assistants) are defined in the Labour Codex (last amended in January 2016). According to the codex, Teachers and Teachers' Assistants who are studying at university while in employment can be granted 25 days of paid leave per year; additionally, they can request 30 days of paid leave for preparing and taking matriculation or state exams, or the preparation and defence of a thesis, graduation project or dissertation. For preparation of a PhD thesis, the students can request six months of paid leave. For taking an entrance exam for a university or PhD course, students can request 12 days of paid leave.

The Collective Labour Agreement (Art. 45, 2014) states that the employer "can approve paid leave for qualification development, acquisition of new and/or additional qualifications of pedagogical staff, as long as the qualification form is related to improvement of the quality of the educational activity, the strategy of development of the educational unit and the National Strategy for Development of Educational Staff" (2016). Usually, there are no problems regarding access opportunities to CPD – Centre Heads approve and generally encourage such leaves and they organise internal staff substitutes for the period of the paid leave (substitute teachers working overtime are compensated accordingly).

Participation in specific forms of CPD is formally recognised in terms of career advancement.

According to the Rules for organising calls for candidates for the post of Principal/Centre Head in public kindergartens in the Municipality of Sofia (2015), candidates for kindergartens (with or without nursery groups) have to meet the following main criteria: to have a Bachelor's or Master's degree with a professional qualification as Pre-primary Teacher and at least five years of full-time pedagogical experience, to not have a criminal record, and to have not been stripped of the right to work as a teacher. The call for candidates is published and the assessment is performed in two stages: part one comprises a 25-question test with questions related to application of the legal framework relevant to the educational system; the second part is an interview.

For the qualification of school or kindergarten heads/principals and teachers, the National Institute for Education and Qualification in the Educational System was founded in 2006. The aims of the National Institute are to organise educational activities for administrative staff of Bulgarian schools and kindergartens, to develop educational programmes and to participate in international projects. So far, 11,438 head teachers and 35,077 teachers have participated in

different educational activities. Topics include Kindergarten Management – a basic programme for newly-appointed Head Teachers, Financial Management of Kindergartens – management of delegated budgets, Project Management, Management of Educational Processes, Human Resources Management in Schools, Control and Assessment of Teachers’ Work, Assessment and Self-assessment of School Management, Working with Interested Parties – models of interaction between school/kindergarten and parents, Leadership Programmes – education of national or regional leaders, Mentorship Education, Development and Improvement of Specific Professional Competences for Teachers – entrepreneurship, application of information technologies in the educational process, integration of pupils with special educational needs.

Some (relatively few) private kindergartens cover tuition costs for the university studies of their Teachers’ Assistants or part-time substitute teachers to become qualified teachers, or for their teachers to be awarded a Master’s Degree.

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

A comprehensive policy initiative introduced in 2016 is the National Programme titled *Development of Pedagogical Specialists*. It is planned to invest in the professional development activities of pedagogical staff, their quality and effectiveness. For the ECEC sector, priority areas for competence development include the following:

- Developing methodical guidelines for the application of new curricula and standards introduced by the 2015 Law on Preschool and School Education;
- Developing practical skills for assessment of educational handbooks for teachers and children;
- Improving the effectiveness of educational processes in an intercultural context;
- Educating teachers and head teachers in creating attractive, supportive and motivational environments for young members of staff in the educational institutions;
- Preventing problematic behaviour in kindergartens and schools;
- Improving co-operation between educational institutions and families;
- Educating head teachers for effective work with young teachers;
- Enhancing teachers’ basic therapeutic skills and techniques for working with children with special educational needs – e.g. children with autism, hyperactivity, dyslexia;
- Enhancing teachers’ basic therapeutic skills and techniques for working with children with aggressive or challenging behaviour and with children who have been victims of emotional neglect, exploitation, violence, etc.
- Enhancing teachers’ practical skills and techniques for working with children from different minorities and immigrant children.

As an indicative parameter, the Programme aims to provide approx. 4,000 pedagogical specialists with continuing professional development in these areas.

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

Students’ views of a ‘good kindergarten teacher’

Source: Engels-Kritidis, R. 2015b (see *References* for full details).

Aims: Bearing in mind the importance of interactions during the initial seven years of a child’s life, as well as the wide gamut of qualification requirements for preschool pedagogues

throughout Europe (see Oberhuemer, Schreyer, and Neuman 2010), the understanding of the essence of the notion of a ‘good children’s teacher’ becomes much more interesting and worthy of qualitative analysis. Specifically, the study aimed to mark some of the most important differences in the relevant viewpoints of first-year students in comparison to the opinion of graduate students.

Procedure: Research was carried out on the views of 72 students of the Faculty of Primary and Pre-school Education of the Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, enrolled in the 4-year Bachelor’s degree programme “Pre-school and Primary School Education”. Half of the participating students (36) were approached at the beginning of their university education; the other half (36) participated during their last year. The main method used was analysis of the students’ individual written essays on the subject ‘My idea of a good/quality kindergarten teacher’. All students provided informed consent for the use of their essays in analysis; however, in order to avoid bias, the students were not informed of the specifics of the research procedure. All students were educated using the same curriculum, which was not altered during their entire time in the university. The collected essays were subjected to qualitative analysis aimed at distribution of the contained opinions into an unlimited number of semantic categories, provisionally divided into two main groups:

- General personal qualities: mainly qualities, but also some skills, attitudes, etc. which are mainly inherent qualities of the person (60 in number);
- Specific professional qualities, skills, attitudes, etc. (76 in number).

Findings:

A hierarchical list of the most frequently-mentioned categories was presented;

- First-year students are more actively concerned with concepts related to the general personal qualities group, as opposed to graduating students, who predominantly tend toward more specific pedagogical specifications. This makes sense, bearing in mind the specialised education in their professional field which graduating students have received during their time in the university;
- With regard to general personal qualities, in the eyes of first-year students a ‘good children’s teacher’ is someone who is patient; loves children, smiling, friendly; a friend and confidant; with broad general knowledge; a good person; is kind; responsible; balanced and calm; creative, imaginative; discerning; selfless; with a sense of humour; attentive; optimist; incentivising; etc. Comparing the results of both groups, it can be summarised that, for graduating students, the larger part of the qualities mentioned is repeated, with some of them being closely correlated: loves children; with broad general knowledge; etc. Regarding general personal qualities, students ending their university studies reassert with even more conviction the importance of creativity, selflessness, and tolerance, while from the specialised professional qualities, skills, attitudes, etc., graduating students quite categorically value the teacher’s role as a factor and an inspiration in the child’s development. Also, graduating students categorically define the importance of innovativeness of the Kindergarten Teacher, who sets realistic goals and aims at discerning each child’s talent(s), always seeking collaboration with parents;
- With regard to specific professional qualities, skills, attitudes, etc., the first-year students view a ‘good children’s teacher’ as a person who understands the children, is empathetic; improves his/her qualifications; loves his/her job; follows appropriate individual approaches; is a role-model; supportive, ready to help the children; is a factor in the child’s development; explains in a fun way; etc. Once again there is a similarity to the opinions of graduating students, but the correlations are different and deserve a deeper analysis. Also, it is interesting that graduating students add mentions of a wide array of specialised skills, most of them not mentioned by first-year students - always explains why; has fine art skills; has skills in the field of physical education; uses illustrative methods and tools; develops children’s thinking; focuses on insight; sets realistic goals; discusses issues from several viewpoints; balances personal qualities and modern technology skills; ensures feedback; dis-

cerns each child's talent(s); is open to learning from children; provides clear and precise instructions; ensures learning experiences; organizes pedagogical interaction as per regulations; does not raise his/her voice. The analysis of all these specialised professional qualities, skills, attitudes, etc. mentioned here could yield very useful information on the adequacy of study plans, curriculums, etc.;

- Special attention needs to be focused on the fact that both first-year (36.1%) and graduating students (25%) regard the profession of children's teacher as a vocation;
- While the difference of concepts between first-year students and graduating students as to what makes a 'good/quality kindergarten teacher' can be examined through the information present in their essays, valuable conclusions can also be drawn from the apparent lack of mention of certain skills, qualities, etc. in the essays, particularly in those of the graduating students. For example, none of the participating students indicated the specific skills that teachers need in relation to interacting with children with special educational needs. The lack of mandatory tuition in this area had been noted even before the start of this research; as of the 2014/2015 academic year, along with the aforementioned elective module, students' tuition on this issue is at least partially covered by the newly-introduced mandatory module on 'Special pedagogy', whose study plan contains a section dedicated to inclusive education.

Another absence from the researched categories which deserves attention is an understanding of the importance of the children's teacher's intercultural competence. Only a single student (interestingly enough, a first-year foreign student) touched upon the "Displays intercultural competence in pedagogy" category. This clearly shows that even though these issues are covered in the study curriculum in elective modules such as "Playing and intercultural competence", the students still understand intercultural education as separate and partially-applicable, related to individual pupils, not as a pedagogical method in education which is valid for all.

Implications:

- Updating and restructuring the academic curricula related to Pre-primary/Kindergarten Teachers' initial education: the results could be used for researching projections of the acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes of students during the time of their university education by interpretation of the difference between the more general idea of the essence of the 'good/quality kindergarten teacher' in first-year students, compared to the presumably more specific and more 'professional' understanding of the graduate students. This was also a way to evaluate and analyse the quality of the current university curriculum and to try to find any gaps in it;
- The 136 categories presented in the publication above are being used by the author as the basis for creating a questionnaire, to be used as a tool for objective and detailed assessment of the quality of the work of in-service Kindergarten Teachers.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

Staff in kindergartens and primary schools receive the same salaries and have a similar professional status. In both cases they are not civil servants. The average net salary of a Kindergarten Teacher in Bulgaria (regardless of whether they are beginners, experienced or work in a city or rural area) is roughly 350€ per month (after taxes). *Table 7* shows the minimum starting salary (before taxes) according to Directive № 1 from 04.01.2010 regarding the salaries of employees in the public education sector. It is very hard to live on this salary without additional support,

especially if the teacher is a single parent with one or more children and lives in a major city. In comparison: a rented apartment in Sofia costs on average between 150 and 300€ per month.

Teachers' Assistants in kindergartens receive at least the national minimum wage, which is currently 215€ (420 BGN) per month.

Table 7

Bulgaria: Minimum starting salary (before taxes) of employees in the public education sector

Group	Position	Minimum salary/month (01.10.2015)
I. Pedagogical staff with management functions	Head Teacher (principal)	385€ (750 BGN)
	Assistant Head Teacher	359€ (700 BGN)
II. Pedagogical staff	Teacher	308€ (600 BGN)
	Senior Teacher	321€ (625 BGN)
	Mentor	338€ (660 BGN)

According to the relevant Collective Labour Agreement for the public education system (Art. 33 of 2014), for attained professional qualification levels teachers are entitled to a minimum additional payment of between 6€/12 BGN (for the 5th level) and 33€/65 BGN (for the 1st level). For those with a PhD, the amount is 44€/85 BGN.

Regarding remuneration of Medical Nurses who work in ECE, as of April 2016, the average salary in Bulgaria is 260€/520 BGN; however, professional associations are campaigning to raise the starting salary to at least 3 times the minimum wage, i.e. a little over 500€/1,000 BGN (Lazarova 2016).

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

All staff in kindergartens are employed on a full-time basis (40 hours per week).

8.3 Staff support measures

In terms of staff support measures in the workplace, Centre Heads usually arrange pairs of teachers so that a newly qualified teacher is paired with a Senior Teacher, the second acting as a mentor for the first one. Kindergartens from the same municipality often exchange observational sessions, aiming at exchange of good practices.

8.4 Non-contact time

Six hours daily are spent in direct contact with the children, so two hours a day are non-contact time (preparation work, staff meetings, cooperation with parents, networking in the community and other activities). The working times of the two members of staff responsible for any one group overlap during the midday break for one hour. Teaching staff in both kindergartens and primary schools are entitled to 48 days of paid annual leave.

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

It is often the case that Centre Heads recruit retired Kindergarten Teachers (as well as Teachers' Assistants), especially when someone from the staff is temporarily absent from work (maternity leave, illness, etc.). An example of good practice is when kindergartens with a partnership contract with a university recruit students in their final year and attract them for a future full-time employment contract.

A successful measure for ensuring an additional number of qualified Kindergarten and Primary School Teachers who wish to work in the area was the project titled *Qualification of Pedagogical Specialists 2013-2014* (2014), realised with the financial support of the Operative Programme 'Human Resources Development' (2007-2014) and co-financed by the European Social

Fund of the European Union. The project offered the opportunity for completing a one-year specialised training in a higher education setting in order to gain an additional qualification/prequalification as *Pre-school or Primary School Teacher* as a way of improving the qualifications of young educational specialists (up to 35 years old) who had been awarded a different Bachelor's degree. The project was conducted by the Faculty of Primary and Pre-school Education of Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski in cooperation with the Pedagogical Faculty of St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Turnovo. The training was attended by 310 graduate teachers with other teaching specialties throughout the country. Tuition took place on a part-time basis. The course comprised 270 hours over 37 study days, spread over three semesters, and included lectures, seminars, practical preparation, as well as days for exams and the final practical state exam taken in the final semester.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

It is currently a worrying fact that a large percentage of graduates from pre-primary study routes do not pursue a career working in kindergartens, which is most probably a result of the low status and low pay of Kindergarten Teachers in Bulgaria. In addition, as mentioned previously, the age distribution of Kindergarten Teachers shows that the overwhelming majority of them are older professionals. On the other hand, the fact that many people with different Bachelor degree backgrounds apply for a Master's degree in *Pre-primary Education* has been a hopeful sign during recent years. These candidates are highly motivated to stay in the profession and to pursue continuing professional development.

The field-based studies component of IPS accentuates a form of training that allows educators to adapt to the constantly changing educational needs of children. In this respect, increasing the number and quality of exchange programmes for students and teachers-as-mentors will be essential for ensuring that they are always up-to-date with good pedagogical practices developed by other European countries and worldwide.

In the context of national and global developments, priorities for the continuing professional development of Kindergarten Teachers in Bulgaria are related to:

- enhancing their practical skills and techniques for working with children from different minorities and migrant children;
- updating the existing pedagogical policy and technology for equal tuition opportunities for children with special educational needs;
- providing training opportunities to develop a differentiated and an individualised approach to working with each child (not only with those with a background of migration or SEN/D) during the organised group activities, even in large classes (see also Engels-Kritidis 2015a);
- enhancing the training of Centre Heads in effective kindergarten management and promoting educational entrepreneurship in a competitive context;
- raising the social status of pre-school teachers via national initiatives for improving their qualifications and creating models for career development, including a new remuneration system.

These challenges are connected mainly to the quality of the workforce profiles in systems of early childhood education and care but also define the scope and potential of improving and enhancing theory and practice for ECEC in its entirety.

While incorporating a desire for learning from relevant European practices and legislation in the ECEC field, the Bulgarian educational system constantly looks for way of preserving and promoting positive national traditions in education (Engels-Kritidis 2012). Building upon a solid historical and theoretical basis and encompassing the overall transformation of social life in

the country, early childhood education and care in Bulgaria is now being further reformed in order to adapt to the constantly changing educational needs of children and demands of the educational system. The child and her/his needs are firmly established as the core focus of contemporary early childhood pedagogy. With the new Law on Preschool and School Education 2015, in which pre-school education is seen on an equal footing with school education, a significant success has been achieved for the sector. On the other hand, Bulgarian Kindergarten Teachers should be aware of possible negative effects which could occur: to counter the early onset of strictly didactical methodologies which may develop through the compulsory attendance for 5- and 6-year olds, and to be able to keep the idea of the ‘preciousness’ of childhood at the core of their practice.

10. References

- Engels-Kritidis, R. 2010. “Practical Training of Students Preparing to be Kindergarten Teachers: The Experience of the Faculty of Primary and Pre-school Education of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski.” In *Quality Education for All Through Improving Teacher Training. Book of Proceedings from UNESCO Sub-regional Conference of the Countries from South-East Europe “Quality Education For All Through Improving Teacher Training”, 2010, April 22 - 24, Sofia, Bulgaria*, 173-176.
- Engels-Kritidis, R. 2012. “Developments in Pre-school Education in Bulgaria: Achievements and Challenges”. In *Debates on Early Childhood Policies and Practices: Global Snapshots of Pedagogical Thinking and Encounters*, edited by T. Papatheodorou, 39-51. London: Routledge.
- Engels-Kritidis, R. 2015a. “Individualization and Differentiation for Achieving Educational Progress in Children in Kindergarten”. *Journal of Preschool and Elementary School Education*, 2/2015(8): 13-27. Special issue on “Inclusiveness in Pre-school and Elementary School Education as a Space for Diversity”. <http://journaledu.ignatianum.edu.pl/12015-8/individualization-and-differentiation-for-achieving-educational-progress-in-children-in.htm>
- Engels-Kritidis, R. 2015b. “The Concept of ‘Good/Quality Kindergarten Teacher’: Comparative Points of View of First-year University Students Versus Graduating Students”. *Journal of Preschool and Elementary School Education*, 1/2015(7): 69-93. Special issue on: The Quality of Elementary School Education: Teachers’ Qualifications and Competences. <http://journaledu.ignatianum.edu.pl/12015-7/the-concept-of-goodquality-kindergarten-teacher-comparative-points-of-view-of-first-year.htm>
- Engels-Kritidis, R., S. Kikušová, and R. Osadaň. 2013. “Practical Training of Students Preparing to be Kindergarten Teachers in Comenius University in Bratislava and in Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski: Converging Points and Differences.” In *Book of Proceedings from the Conference “Child in the Focus of Pedagogical Interaction and Social Work”, Organised by the Faculty of Education, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, 2013*, 484-490.
- Kusheva, R., Z. Zahariev, D. Pillev, and P. Krumova. 2006. *National Report on International Research Project “Raising the Professional Qualification of Teachers and Development of Pedagogical Practice in the Countries of South-Eastern Europe”*. http://www.see-educoop.net/education_in/pdf/workshop/tesee/dokumenti/tesee-report-bulgaria_bg.pdf
- Lazarova, M. 2016. *Salaries of Medical Nurses in Bulgaria and Around the World*. Available in Bulgarian at: <http://www.economynews.bg/заплати-на-мед-сестри-в-българия--света-news70061.html>
- National Institute for Education and Qualification in the Educational System. 2017. *About Us*. Available in Bulgarian at: <http://www.niokso.bg/za-nas>
- National Statistical Institute. 2015. Tertiary Education Graduates by Educational-Qualification Degree and Narrow Field of Education in 2015. Available in Bulgarian at: <http://www.nsi.bg/en/content/4910/graduates-tertiary-education-educational-qualification-degree-and-narrow-field>
- National Statistical Institute. 2016. Age Distribution of Teachers in Kindergartens During 2015/2016 School Year Available in Bulgarian at: <http://www.nsi.bg>
- Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman. 2010. *Professionals in Early Education and Care Systems – European Profiles and Perspectives*. Opladen & Farmington Hills, MI: Barbara Budrich.

- Roussinova, E. and B. Angelov. 2008. *System of Early Education/Care and Professionalisation in Bulgaria*. Report Commissioned by the State Institute of Early Childhood Research (IFP) Munich, Germany. http://www.ifp.bayern.de/imperia/md/content/stmas/ifp/commissioned_report_bulgaria.pdf
- Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. 2014a. *Study Curriculum for Preschool and Primary Education*. 2013, in Action as of 2014/2015 Academic Year (in Bulgarian; unpublished).
- Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. 2014b. *Study Curriculum for Preschool Pedagogy with Foreign Language Specialty*. 2014, in Action as of 2014/2015 Academic Year (in Bulgarian; unpublished).
- Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. 2016a. *Candidate Student's Handbook of the Sofia University 2016/2017*. 2016. Sofia: Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" Publishing House.
- Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. 2016b. *Sofia University Master Degree Candidate Campaign. 2015/2016*. Available in Bulgarian: https://www.uni-sofia.bg/index.php/bul/priem/priem_za_obrazovatelno_kvalifikacionna_stepen_magist_r_sled_visshe_obrazovanie/minali_kampanii/kandidatmagist_rska_kampaniya_2015_2016
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2012. *International Standard Classification of Education 2011*. <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/isced-2011-en.pdf>
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2014. *ISCED Fields of Education and Training 2013 (ISCED-F 2013). Manual to Accompany ISCED 2011*. <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/isced-fields-of-education-and-training-2013-en.pdf>

Legislation and regulatory documents – available in Bulgarian

- Collective Labour Agreement. 2014. <http://www.google.bg/url?url=http://www.mon.bg/%3Fh%3DdownloadFile%26fileId%3D6167&rct=j&frm=1&q=&esrc=s&sa=U&ved=0ahUKEwi87aXTzuvNAhWFwBQKHWJpDEIQFggHMAA&usg=AFQjCNELplmvWFDkTDV1THV1k1rstoOqNCQ>
- Decision № 328 dd. 03 May 2016. *For Approval of the Number of University Students Enrolled in the Higher Education Institutions and Scientific Organisations of the Republic of Bulgaria During the 2016-2017 Acad. Year*. 2016. <http://minedu.government.bg/?go=page&pagelId=7&subpagelId=58> Directive for State Requirements for Attainment of the Professional Qualification of "Teacher", dated 11.11.2016. 2016. <http://www.minedu.government.bg/?go=page&pagelId=7&subpagelId=59>
- Directive № 1 from 04.01.2010 *Regarding the Salaries of Employees in the Public Education Sector*. 2010. <http://lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2135657866>
- Directive for State Requirements for Attainment of the Professional Qualification of "Teacher". 2016. <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pagelId=7&subpagelId=59>
- Labour Codex (last amended in January 2016). 2016. <http://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/1594373121>
- Law on Higher Education. 2015. <http://mon.bg/?go=page&pagelId=7&subpagelId=57>
- Law on Preschool and School Education. 2015. <http://www.mon.bg/?h=downloadFile&fileId=8245>
- National Program *Development of Pedagogical Specialists*. 2016. <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pagelId=13&subpagelId=1375>
- Project *Qualification of Pedagogical Specialists 2013-2014*. <http://web.q-project.fnpp.info/>
- Project *Student Internship 2014-2015*. <http://www.praktiki.mon.bg/sp/>
- Rules for Organising Calls for Candidates for Headmasters for Public Kindergartens in the Municipality of Sofia*. 2015. http://www.sofia-obrazovanie.bg/files/20150115_a8d6d.doc&rct=j&frm=1&q=&esrc=s&sa=U&ved=0ahUKEwjHOLPyvNAhVBVRQKHTbCASEQFggTMAA&usg=AFQjCNHSiDL1_EGm2nKORBE2RNCz-FgiqA
- Unified State Requirements for Attainment of Higher Education in the Specialties of 'Medical Nurse' and 'Midwife Nurse' for the Bachelor Qualification Level from 2005, with Amendments and Additions in 2006 and 2010*. <http://www.minedu.government.bg/?go=page&pagelId=7&subpagelId=59>