

# CYPRUS

## ECEC Workforce Profile

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## 1. ECEC governance

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Cyprus is organised as a split-sector and partly parallel system divided between two ministries: the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (*Ypurgeio Ergasias, Pronoias kai Koinonikon Asphaliseon*) and the Ministry of Education and Culture (*Ypurgeiu Paideias kai Politismu*). Specifically, the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance has sole responsibility for provision for children under 3 years of age, whereas the Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for state-maintained, community and private kindergartens for 3- to under 6-year olds. Children aged 3 to 5 years 8 months may fall under the jurisdiction of either ministry, depending on whether they attend a kindergarten or a childcare centre.

## 2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

### 2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

A number of adults work directly with children in childcare and pre-primary settings for 0- to 6-year olds. Alongside the regular Nursery and Childcare Teachers for younger children (0–3) and the Kindergarten Teachers and centre heads/principals for older children (3–5), there is a Teacher’s Assistant and there may also be special education staff who, according to the children’s needs, can be a speech therapist, an occupational therapist, a psychologist, as well as a child’s ‘accompanier’ (an adult who accompanies and supports children with special needs in the classroom). Teachers’ Assistants are responsible for cleaning the classrooms, tidying materials and toys, helping with the preparation of activities, being responsible for the children’s safety when the teacher is out of the room, and other similar activities.

Table 1 provides details of each staff category working in the two sectors of ECEC. It also 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

Cyprus: ECEC staff in centre-based settings

Job title and profile	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 level <sup>1</sup>
<b>Childcare sector</b>				
<i>Vrefokomos/Vrefonipiagogos</i> <b>Nursery and Childcare Teacher</b>	<i>Vrefikos stathmos</i> <b>Infant-toddler centres</b> 3 months–3 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility	n/a	Minimum requirement when working with under-threes: Compulsory school leaving certificate  ECTS points: n/a <sup>2</sup> EQF level: 3

<sup>1</sup> In Cyprus, there is no National Qualifications Framework and no reference to EQF or ISCED levels in official ministry or university documents. The classifications are therefore personal ratings made by the author. UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2012, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> n/a = not applicable

Job title and profile	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 level <sup>1</sup>
<i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional	<i>Vrefokomi-koi/paidokomikoi stathmoi</i> <b>Childcare centres</b> 3 months– 4 years 8 months			ISCED 2013-F: n/a ISCED 2011: 3 (344/354)
		Core practitioner with group responsibility  Centre head	4 months– 5 years 8 months	Minimum requirement when working with older children: 4-year degree at a higher Technological Educational Institute (TEI)  ECTS points: 240 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6 (645/655)
<i>Sxoliki Voithos</i> <b>Teacher's Assistant</b>	<i>Vrefikos stathmos</i> <b>Infant-toddler centres</b> 3 months–3 years  <i>Vrefokomi-koi/paidokomikoi stathmoi</i> <b>Childcare centres</b> 3 months– 4 years 8 months  <i>Nipiagogeio</i> <b>Kindergarten</b> 3–5 years 8 months  <i>Prodimotiki</i> <b>Pre-primary class</b> 4 years 8 months– 5 years 8 months	Co-worker with no formal IPS	n/a	Compulsory school leaving certificate  ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 3 ISCED 2013-F: n/a ISCED 2011: 3 (344/354)
<b>Education sector</b>				
<i>Nipiagogos</i> <b>Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teacher</b>  <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary Education Professional	<i>Nipiagogeio</i> <b>Kindergarten/Preschool</b> 3–5 years 8 months  <i>Prodimotiki</i> <b>Pre-primary class in kindergarten</b> 4 years 8 months– 5 years 8 months	Core practitioner with group responsibility	3–5 years 8 months	4-year degree at university  ECTS: 240 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6
<i>Voithos Diefthintria</i> <b>Assistant Principal Diefthintria Principal</b>  <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary Education Professional	<i>Nipiagogeio</i> <b>Kindergarten/Preschool</b> 3–5 years 8 months  <i>Prodimotiki</i> <b>Pre-primary class in kindergarten</b> 4 years 8 months– 5 years 8 months	Centre head	3–5 years 8 months	4-year degree at university  ECTS points: 240 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112/0111 ISCED 2011: 6  <b>plus</b> a Master's degree in Education

Job title and profile	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 level <sup>1</sup>
				<b>plus</b> a specified number of years working in the field
<i>Sxoliki Voithos</i> <b>Teacher's Assistant</b>	<i>Vrefikos stathmos</i> <b>Infant-toddler centres</b> 3 months–3 years  <i>Vrefokomi-koi/paidokomikoi stathmoi</i> <b>Childcare centres</b> 3 months–4 years 8 months  <i>Nipiagogeio</i> <b>Kindergarten</b> 3–5 years 8 months  <i>Prodimotiki</i> <b>Pre-primary class</b> 4 years 8 months–5 years 8 months	Co-worker with no formal IPS	n/a	Compulsory school leaving certificate  ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 3 ISCED 2013-F: n/a ISCED 2011: 3 (344/354)
<i>Synodos</i> <b>Child Support Practitioner</b>	<i>Nipiagogeio</i> <b>Kindergarten</b> 3–5 years 8 months  <i>Prodimotiki</i> <b>Pre-primary class in kindergarten</b> 4 years 8 months–5 years 8 months	Co-worker with no formal IPS  Supports practitioner for individual children with special needs	n/a	Compulsory school leaving certificate  ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 3 ISCED 2013-F: n/a ISCED 2011: 3 (344/354)
<b>Offsite Professionals</b>				
<i>Epitheoritria</i> <b>Pre-primary Education Supervisor</b>	<i>Nipiagogeio</i> <b>Kindergarten</b> 3–5 years 8 months  <i>Prodimotiki</i> <b>Pre-primary class in kindergarten</b> 4 years 8 months–5 years 8 months	Visits schools to assess the work of the kindergarten teachers	3–5 years 8 months	Bachelor's Degree in ECEC <b>or</b> Master's degree in Education  ECTS points: 210 EQF level: 6/7 ISCED 2013-F: 0112/0111 ISCED 2011: 6/7  <b>plus</b> a specified number of years working in the field and a specified number of years working in the positions of Assistant Principal and Principal.
<i>Ekpaideytikos psychologos</i> <b>Educational Psychologist</b> (for children with spe-	<i>Nipiagogeio</i> <b>Kindergarten/Pre-primary education</b> 3–5 years 8 months	Responds to referrals for psychological assessment and recommenda-	3–5 years 8 months	Bachelor's degree in Psychology  ECTS points: 240 EQF level: 6/7

Job title and profile	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 level <sup>1</sup>
cial learning needs – cognitive, auditory, visual impairments)	<i>Prodimotiki</i> <b>Pre-primary class</b> 4 years 8 months– 5 years 8 months	tions, but not a member of daily contact staff		ISCED 2013-F: 0313 ISCED 2011: 6/7 (645/655/747)
<i>Eidikos Ekpaideytikos / Paidogogos</i> <b>Special Education Teacher</b>	<i>Nipiagogeio</i> <b>Kindergarten/Preschool</b> 3–5 years 8 months  <i>Prodimotiki</i> <b>Pre-primary class in kindergarten</b> 4 years 8 months– 5 years 8 months	Responds to referrals for special education based on a diagnostic evaluation of child's special needs, but not a member of daily contact staff	3–5 years 8 months	Bachelor's degree in the specific specialisation (speech pathology, occupational therapy)  ECTS points: 240 EQF level: 6/7 ISCED 2013-F: 0114 ISCED 2011: 6/7 (645/655/747)

#### 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* (mainly broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social/Health Care Professional* (sometimes focus on early childhood, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

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

There are no systematically compiled national data in general regarding the proportion of different staff categories in the workforce. Statistics do not differentiate between qualification categories of staff working with children of several age-groups. It is also important to note that in terms of teaching personnel and type of ECEC institution, the data do not necessarily describe the age of children served. This is because a kindergarten can be approved by the Ministry of Education and Culture because it runs a classroom for children aged from 4 years 8 months to 5 years 8 months (*prodimotiki*). However, such settings can also serve children from 1 year old upwards if they have the necessary licence from the Social Welfare Services of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance.

### Education sector (3 years to 5 years 8 months)

Data suggest that ECEC personnel in all types of kindergartens/preschools are mainly women. *Table 2* shows the number of kindergartens, children and teachers from 2012 to 2016. It is important to note that even though the number of children in kindergartens/preschools has increased in the public sector, the number of teachers decreased in the year 2013/2014. This can be explained by teachers choosing to take early retirement (MOEC 2017).

Table 2

## Cyprus: Number of kindergartens, children, teachers, and type of provision, 2012/13 to 2016/17

		2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Public kindergartens	Number of settings	264	268	268	271	271
	Number of children	11,769	11,920	12,064	12,233	12,254
	Number of teachers	752	734	741	761	774
Community kindergartens	Number of settings	75	81	83	83	80
	Number of children	2,113	2,170	2,190	2,056	1,999
	Number of teachers	108	115	115	111	110

Table 3 shows the teaching personnel (teachers and principals), full-time and part-time, as well as the gender of the personnel working in different types of kindergartens/preschools in 2013/14 (Statistical Service 2016, 89).

In 2013/14, only 0.6% of the workforce in kindergartens and only 1.7% of centre heads (kindergartens) were men. The majority of teaching staff (95.2%) and principals/centre heads (92.7%) worked full-time.

Table 3

## Cyprus: Full- and part-time teaching and management personnel in kindergartens/preschools, 2013-2014

Provider type	Teaching personnel			
	full-time		part-time	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Public	3	694	0	0
Community	0	115	1	10
Private	6	570	2	56
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1,379</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>66</b>
	Kindergarten principals/centre heads			
	full-time		part-time	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Public	0	72	0	0
Community	0	7	0	3
Private	4	134	3	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>14</b>

### Childcare sector (6 weeks to 4 years 8 months)

Table 4 shows the teaching personnel (teachers and principals), full-time and part-time, as well as the gender of the personnel working in different types of childcare settings during the year 2013/14 (Statistical Service 2016). In comparison with Table 3 it can be seen that childcare services for infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers (6 weeks to 4 years 8 months) are mainly provided by the community and private sector.

The distributions in the childcare sector regarding gender and working time are very similar to the pre-primary education sector: In 2013/14, 2.6% of childcare principals were men while there were no men working as teaching personnel. The greater majority of both teaching staff (91.7%) and principals (90.5%) worked full-time.

Table 4:

## Cyprus: Full-time and part-time teaching and management personnel in childcare sector provision, 2013-14

Provider type	Teaching personnel			
	full-time		part-time	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Public	0	41	0	0
Community	0	152	0	9
Private	0	236	0	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>39</b>
	Centre heads/Management personnel			
	full-time		part-time	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Public	0	2	0	0
Community	0	32	0	6
Private	2	68	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>

### 3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

#### 3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

In Cyprus there are four higher education institutions which offer courses of study for work in kindergartens (3 years to 5 years 8 months). These are the public University of Cyprus and three private universities: European University, Nicosia University and Frederick University. The University of Cyprus offers two degrees: a Bachelor's Degree in Primary School Teaching and a Bachelor's Degree in Pre-Primary School Teaching. The European University offers a BA in Early Childhood Education and a BA in Primary Education. Nicosia University offers a BA in Pre-Primary Education and a BA in Primary Education. Finally, Frederick University offers a BEd in Pre-Primary Education and a BEd in Primary Education.

Prospective Childcare Teachers (4 months to 5 years 8 months) have to attend one of the three Departments of Early Childhood Education at a Higher Technological Educational Institute (TEI) in Greece in order to obtain a degree. The TEIs offer four-year degrees in early childhood education. But in order to work with children between 3 months and 3 years they only need to have a compulsory school leaving certificate, like the Teacher's Assistants. *Table 5* provides details of the IPS requirements of Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers, and *Table 6* details of the IPS requirements for Childcare Teachers.

Table 5

## Cyprus: Kindergarten Teacher (IPS)

<b>Job title in Greek: <i>Nipiagogos</i></b> <b>Profile: Pre-primary Education Professional</b>
<b>Entry requirements:</b> General university entrance certificate (for the University of Cyprus and private universities in Cyprus and Greek universities) and success at the Pan-Cyprian Examination organised by the MOEC (only for the University of Cyprus)
<b>Professional studies:</b> 4 years university
<b>Award:</b> Bachelor's Degree in Pre-Primary School Teaching
<b>ECTS points:</b> 240
<b>EQF level:</b> 6



<b>Job title in Greek: <i>Nipiagogos</i></b> <b>Profile: Pre-primary Education Professional</b>
ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 645/655 <b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> Kindergarten/pre-primary education (3 years to 5 years 8 months)

Table 6

**Cyprus: Nursery and Childcare Teacher**

<b>Job title in Greek: <i>Vrefonipiagogos</i></b> <b>Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</b>
<b>Entry requirements:</b> General higher education entrance certificate and success at the Pan-Cyprian Examination organised by the MOEC <b>Professional studies:</b> 4 years university of applied sciences; degrees only provided by Greek public Technological Educational Institutes (T.E.I.) (Athens, Thessaloniki, Ioannina) <b>Award:</b> Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Studies <b>ECTS points:</b> 240 <b>EQF level:</b> 6 (EQF 3 for work with children under 3 years of age) ISCED 2013-F: 0112 (ISCED 2013-F: n/a for work with children under 3 years of age) <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 645/655 (ISCED 2011: 3 (344/354) for work with children under 3 years of age) <b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> childcare centre (3 months to 5 years 8 months)

Table 7

**Cyprus: Special Education Teacher**

<b>Job title in Greek: <i>Eidikos Paidagogos Eidikos Ekpaideytikos</i></b> <b>Profile: Pre-primary and Primary Special Education Professional</b>
<b>Entry requirements:</b> General higher education entrance certificate <b>Professional studies:</b> 4 years university of applied sciences; degrees only provided by Greek public Technological Educational Institutes (T.E.I.) (Athens, Thessaloniki, Ioannina); general higher education entrance certificate and success at the Pan-Cyprian Examination organised by the MOEC <b>Award:</b> Bachelor's degree in Special Education <b>ECTS points:</b> 240 <b>EQF level:</b> 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0114 <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 645/655 <b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> They work mostly offsite for kindergartens/pre-primary education (3 years to 5 years 8 months) and in primary schools.

Table 8

**Cyprus: Educational Psychologist (IPS)**

<b>Job title in Greek: <i>Ekpaideytikos Psychologos</i></b>
<b>Entry requirements:</b> General university entrance certificate (for the University of Cyprus and private universities in Cyprus and Greek universities) and success at the Pan-Cyprian Examination organized by the MOEC. <b>Professional studies:</b> 4 years university <b>Award:</b> Bachelor's Degree in special education <b>ECTS points:</b> 240 <b>EQF level:</b> 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0313 <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 645/655 <b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> They work mostly offsite for kindergartens/pre-primary education (3 years to 5 years 8 months) and in primary schools.

### 3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes for core practitioners

All universities in Cyprus offering early childhood studies, both public and private, have the same course framework. In April 2016, the University of Cyprus, Frederick University, European and Nicosia University stated on their websites that the framework for these studies includes compulsory, compulsory optional and general education courses covering the following areas: educational science (e.g. early childhood pedagogy), teaching methodology (e.g. creative drama), content area courses (e.g. pre-mathematical concepts), foreign language instruction and field experience courses.

Some of the universities give students the option to replace two courses (e.g. compulsory or optional courses) with a course titled 'Independent study' that involves the writing of a dissertation in the field of education (e.g. University of Cyprus, Frederick University).

The goal of these studies is to prepare prospective Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers for work in private/community or public pre-primary settings. There are no specified competence requirements but students are prepared to be able to implement the national curricula.

The Greek TEIs providing Early Childhood Education and Care studies have a similar framework with compulsory and optional compulsory courses. For example, as of April 11, 2016, the Technological Educational Institute of Athens mentions psychology and other theoretical courses as well as field-based experiences in different childcare settings in their program of studies. Also, during their final semester, students are required to complete an undergraduate dissertation as a means of specialising in a topic/subject of their interest. The goal of these studies includes the scientific exploration and knowledge of the field of early childhood and the development of specific skills for working in an ECEC environment

### 3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

There are no alternative entry routes for working in public and community settings. Regarding the private sector for both childcare and pre-primary settings, the owners of provision can employ people from other disciplines, for example a psychologist to work with under-threes or a biologist to work with pre-schoolers. Also, in the case of childcare provision, the official requirement, as explained earlier, is a high school diploma, thus service providers tend not to employ people with higher education degrees.

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

During their studies early childhood students participate in different levels of academic and field-based studies. These include lectures at the higher education institution as well as participation in an ECEC setting, which varies according to the specific degree course they are pursuing and based on the requirements of the higher education institute they are studying at.

For the degree in Early Childhood Studies at the TEIs (higher education institutions) in Greece, the practicum involves 10 to 20 ECTS for one semester during which the prospective Nursery and Childcare Teachers attend a private or public childcare setting daily. They participate in the regular activities of the centre and demonstrate their skills and specialised knowledge. They are guided and assessed by the head of the childcare centre, who receives payment for the services the setting provides.

For the degree in Pre-Primary School teaching (Greek-Cypriot higher education institutions), field-based studies are allocated 30 ECTS and are spread over three semesters. During each semester the prospective teachers are entrusted with a progressive workload; for example, they start by playing with a group of children and then go on to organising play activities for

the whole class; or they implement one lesson plan for mathematics and then go on to implement a series of lessons. During their final practicum course they have to attend a kindergarten/preschool daily throughout one semester (approximately four months). During their daily interaction with the children, the expectation of the 'School Experience Programme' course is to conduct a number of lesson plans in different content areas (e.g. language, mathematics, science). For example, the students of the University of Cyprus have to plan a project with the children and are also expected to prepare 68 lesson plans within the different content areas. Some of these lesson plans can be related to the project approach.

## 5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

Continuing professional development for staff in ECEC provision in the public and private sector is undertaken mainly by the Ministry of Education and Culture through the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus (C.P.I.). In addition, all higher education institutions in Cyprus offer professional development seminars, workshops and conferences. These are optional for all staff in ECEC provision and take place during their own time and at their own cost.

The C.P.I. is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Culture and is responsible, among other services, for providing professional development activities for serving teachers in all sectors and at all levels of education by offering compulsory and optional seminars.

1. The compulsory number of optional seminars may include general pedagogical or specific themes for every level of education and/or content area. The seminars are free of charge and take place in the afternoons (i.e. after kindergartens/schools have closed) and comprise five sessions lasting 2½ hours once a year.
2. The C.P.I. also offers seminars which take place in kindergartens/schools. Groups of teachers within the same or nearby public kindergartens who are interested in participating in such seminars meet together in one institution to attend such seminars.
3. The C.P.I. also offers seminars for newly appointed teachers and their mentors. Mentors are the in-service teachers who are trained to support newly appointed teachers.
4. Finally, the C.P.I. offers seminars for kindergarten/school heads which aim to improve management strategies and to help them cope with current challenges focusing on modernising the Cypriot system in relation to EU policies. (Source: C.P.I. 2016a)

Regarding the *private* sector, the kindergarten owners are responsible for providing their staff with professional development but they can also participate in the optional seminars offered by the C.P.I.

The only obligatory professional development for teachers in *public* kindergartens/schools takes place during the first week of September before school starts. Teachers attend one-day seminars either at their kindergarten/school or in large teams based on themes that the Ministry of Education and Culture considers necessary. For example, during 2015-2016, teachers attended professional development seminars on the new Early Childhood Curriculum which was revised during the recent Educational Reform. In addition, two periods weekly (80 minutes altogether) are dedicated to professional development during which the principal/centre head organises planning activities, or teachers who have participated in other types of professional development share their experience, knowledge and skills with their colleagues.

Moreover, during the academic year the Early Childhood Supervisors (*Epitheoritries*) organise seminars or conferences according to what they consider is important for the field. During these seminars, teacher representatives from the larger kindergartens (e.g. with two and more classrooms) attend and they are then obliged to share the information of the seminar with the other teachers in their team. These seminars take place during working hours.

The C.P.I. offers an in-service programme for newly appointed principals. During the year in which they take up their position, principals attend a weekly professional development session during their working hours. They are supported in developing leadership, managerial/ administrative and organisational abilities and skills. In addition there are several optional seminars offered by the C.P.I. over the course of each year and other conferences organised by higher education institutions which they can attend during their own free time and at their own cost.

Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers may participate in optional workshops during their own time, sometimes covering the costs in order to have these documented in their assessment file. Attendance is taken into account for a teacher's annual assessment but there is no direct impact on remuneration. Career advancement is mainly accomplished through years of experience and post-graduate degrees.

Being part of the European Union provides early childhood teachers opportunities to participate in different programmes and seminars. For example, the optional seminars organised and provided by the C.P.I. are co-funded by the European Social Fund of the EU. In addition, early childhood teachers have the opportunity to participate and visit other European countries to enrich their own professional development. One example is the Pestalozzi programme which accommodates a number of teachers to participate, for example, in the 2016 programme titled "Knowledge, construction and epistemology in a diverse changing society: developing reflective practices across the curriculum" which aims at enhancing their research-based knowledge of different areas of the curriculum. Once attending the specific programme, which is free of charge, participating teachers are obliged to share their experiences, knowledge and skills with their schools.

There are no specific professional development options for *Teachers' Assistants*, and employers do not expect them to participate in CPD activities. The *Child Accompaniers* decide for themselves whether to participate in different optional seminars or conferences to enrich their knowledge and skills. Finally, the *Special Educators* (e.g. Speech Pathologist) who visit the schools to provide special assistance to the children who need it follow the same scheme of professional development provided by the C.P.I. or their department at the Ministry of Education and Culture.

## 6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

### Programme for newly appointed teachers and mentors

The support of newly appointed teachers was one of the issues discussed by the European Union Ministers of Education at their meeting in 2009. The C.P.I. designed a programme for the professional development of teachers and mentors in order to develop a culture of collaboration within the kindergarten units. The goal is to provide new teachers with the skills and competencies needed in their new position but also to develop a mentoring relationship with experienced teachers in order to be able to critically reflect on their practice. Tables 9 and 10 describe the details of the programmes (C.P.I. 2012).

Table 9

Cyprus: Professional development programme for newly appointed teachers

Phases	Expected work		Duration	Content	Time schedule
Phase A		Meetings in the whole group of teachers	3 afternoon meetings which cover 5 periods (45 minutes)	Effective teaching Classroom management	October

Phases	Expected work		Duration	Content	Time schedule
Phase B	Activities within school for six months	Meeting in the whole group of teachers	1 afternoon meeting of 5 periods	Enactment of teaching practices based on outcomes of Phase A	October –May
	Develop own action plan			Sharing of appropriate and effective practices	February
	Implement 10 lessons during which they will be observed by the mentor				
	Co-teach 6 lessons with mentor or other teacher in the school				
Phase C		Meeting in the whole group of teachers	1 afternoon meeting of 5 periods	Presentation of practices and assessment of the programme	May

Teachers who participate in this professional development programme for the 25 periods receive a stipend of €250.

Table 10

**Cyprus: Professional development programme for mentors**

Phases	Expected work		Duration	Content	Time schedule
Phase A		Meetings in the whole group of mentors	4 afternoon meetings which cover 5 periods (45 minutes)	Mentoring relationship Effective teaching Counselling psychology (e.g. self-awareness, stress management) Classroom management	October
Phase B	Activities within school for six months	Meeting in the whole group of mentors	2 afternoon meetings of 5 periods	Reflection and sharing of appropriate and effective practices and counselling issues	October –May
	Observe and give feedback on 10 lessons				February
	Document teacher needs - develop an action plan				
	Co-teach with teacher in the school				
Phase C		Meeting in the whole group of mentors	2 afternoon meetings of 5 periods	Presentation of practices within the school setting and assessment of the programme	May

The teachers who will successfully complete the professional development programme for mentors for the duration of 20 periods will receive a stipend of €200 (C.P.I. 2012).

### **Action research as a form of professional development for teachers**

The C.P.I. has been employing action research as a professional development strategy for several years, and in 2014-2015 it was officially implemented as a method of in-service professional development within kindergartens/schools. This new professional development practice considers teachers to be active participants in the learning process, within which they develop their specific teaching perspectives based on pedagogical theories and praxis analysis. Moreover, the idea is to decentralise the professional development programmes and provide kindergartens and teachers with the power to define their own needs and explore their potential as professionals. The goals of the programme are to help teachers understand their beliefs and practices, to reflect on teaching issues and their causes, to consider how they can resolve those issues, to develop action plans and to collect data to assess the outcomes of their actions and accordingly adjust continuing planning.

The C.P.I. has prepared guidance for teachers based on a year-long project conducted in public kindergartens and aims to encourage settings and teachers to experiment freely with an action research approach as a means of independent professional development. The guidance includes a literature review of the principles, processes and ways of supporting teachers' professional development through action research and includes a five-step analysis procedure: (1) Understanding and recording needs; (2) Exploring the issues; (3) Action planning; (4) Formative evaluation of the actions; and (5) Re-planning. Specific questionnaires and tools are provided to support teachers in each step. In other words, this is a strategy for self-evaluation (C.P.I. 2016b).

### **New Teacher Appointment System**

The Educational Service Commission of the Ministry of Education and Culture considers the appointment of new teachers in public kindergartens/schools to be one of the main problems facing the public education system since most teacher candidates are appointed for the first time many years after they graduate. Because of the fact that there is no immediate need to employ teachers in the public school system, whoever graduates with a BA in Education is signed up on the public school system list of educators. Thus, a graduate may not be employed in the public system until five to ten years after completing initial professional studies since this is the time it can take for a position to become available in public kindergartens or schools. In the meantime this person may have been teaching in the private sector or may have been engaged in an entirely different profession all these years.

Therefore, following the guidelines of UNESCO 1997 and those of the committee for Educational Reform in Cyprus, the Ministry of Education and Culture prepared a proposal in 2014 for a new process of appointing new teachers in the public education sector. In 2015, the Greek-Cypriot Parliament passed a specific bill in accordance with the Ministry's proposal and a new teacher appointment system will take place as from 2017

The criteria taken into consideration for including teacher candidates in the Appointments List include the following:

1. Written examination (45 points)
2. Additional academic qualifications (up to 20 points - 15 for a Master's degree and 20 for a Doctorate)
3. Educational experience (25 points)
4. Year of graduation (first degree) (5 points)
5. Average grade of first degree (3 points for Excellent, 2 points for Very Good and 1 point for Good or when there is no grade on the degree)
6. Service with the National Guard (2 points)



The written examination will take place every two years and is open to new applicants and those already on the Appointments List wishing to improve their overall score. The examination score of each candidate is valid for ten years. To stay on the list they have to take the exam again within two years before the end of the tenth year.

Candidates who fulfil all the requirements and are on the Appointments List will have to follow an assessment programme during which their pedagogical and methodological abilities are assessed. If they are assessed as inadequate they will be obliged to participate in a special course offered by the C.P.I. with the aim of enhancing the necessary skills to be effective in their teaching. If the teachers who participated in the special programme are still assessed as inadequate when they return to their teaching position, they will be removed from the list (MOEC 2015).

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

There are limited current research projects which focus on ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues. Some studies were conducted in the 1990s, when the University of Cyprus replaced the Pedagogical Academy (formerly responsible for the professional education/training of teachers in the field). Nevertheless, the following research examples provide a general picture of professionalisation issues in the field, focusing on the role of the practicum/work placement in initial professional studies and on continuing professional development.

### Mentor-student relationships

**Source:** Loizou, E. 2011. "The diverse facets of power in early childhood mentor–student teacher relationships". *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 34 (4), 373-386.

**Aims:** The study looked into the experiences of students studying for a Pre-Primary Teaching degree during their practicum in public kindergartens over a period of one semester, analysing the relationship with their on-site mentors.

**Procedures:** This was a qualitative study which used reflective journals as the main data source. Both students and mentors were asked to complete a journal with specific guiding questions focusing on their relationship and how it developed.

**Findings:** Findings suggest that the students not only experienced this relationship in different ways, but that there was a pattern of relationships which included a 'powerful' mentor and an 'empowered' student. Constructive discussions contributed to the implementation of their respective teaching ideas.

**Implications:** 'Power', in terms of imbalance in the relationship between student teacher and mentor during the teaching practicum and mentoring programme, is an issue which needs to be explicitly discussed.

### Teacher education on inclusion

**Source:** Symeonidou, S. and E. Phtiaka. 2014. "My colleagues wear blinkers ... If they were trained, they would understand better. Reflections on teacher education on inclusion in Cyprus". *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs* 14 (2): 110–119.

**Aims:** This study examines vital issues in reference to inclusion. Specifically, it examines teachers' knowledge, attitudes and skills in relation to inclusion as a way to develop specific in-service programs to meet teachers' needs.

**Procedures:** This study used a mixed methodology, with a survey that produced quantitative data, and semi-structured interviews with in-service Greek-Cypriot teachers, focusing on 13

factors (e.g. beliefs about special schooling) drawn from the survey. Then a focus group interview was used to assess the teachers' reflections on the implementation of the training programme.

**Findings:** Some of the findings suggest that teachers are not satisfied with their initial teacher education on integration; they have not received any training since the implementation of the Education of Children with Special Needs Law (N. 113(I)/1999 law) in 1999; and that their choices (voluntary mainly) of in-service training are limited and sometimes inappropriate in terms of the philosophy of inclusion.

**Implications:** The authors discuss these findings in terms of initial teacher education and in-service training. They suggest that in-service teacher education programmes need to address theoretical and practical aspects of inclusion considerably more effectively than has been the case up till now.

### Action research as a professional development strategy

**Source:** Hatzitheodoulou-Loizidou, P., M. Eracleous, and P. Kouratou. 2015. "In-service teacher training by the C.P.I.: Reflective observations of the implementation of action research as the context of school level seminars." *Newsletter of C.P.I.*, Vol.17., 4-11 [in Greek]

**Aims:** This recent project refers to the critical reflection of the implementation of action research (AR) as an instrument of professional development. The Pedagogical Institute attempted to expand its professional development perspective since its administrators often suggested CPD seminars without really knowing the needs of teachers.

**Procedures:** The use of AR was implemented in some schools in order to encourage teachers to reflect on their own learning processes through a different type of professional development. The AR steps were followed within each school setting and a co-ordinator from the Pedagogical Institute supported each school and classroom teacher.

**Findings/Implications:** The research team reflects on the potential of using this methodology within the entire educational system. The specific methodology responds to previously unsuccessful approaches where knowledge, information and suggestions were usually provided to teachers through seminars, before they even investigated their thinking and actions. Thus respecting, supporting and empowering the teacher was one of the advantages of the specific methodology. In addition, collaborations, meaningful interactions, focusing on specific themes and actions were noted by the staff developers and the teachers, making the experience more productive for all.

## 8. General workforce issues

### 8.1 Remuneration

In the **childcare sector**, Nursery and Childcare Teachers work full-time and are paid as little as 600-750€, lower than the minimum wage. Also, they are often laid off at the end of the year so that they do not have to be paid during the summer holidays and the providers do not have to raise their salary. There is no set regulation in terms of working and salary conditions in the private sector and regardless of the teachers' qualifications, the providers offer the same salary.

In the **education sector**, all teachers working in the public sector, regardless of the level of education or specialisation, earn the same amount. Therefore Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers earn as much as elementary school teachers. The public sector has a yearly average increase based on inflation and tax index.



The Ministry of Education and Culture has issued regulations in terms of the functioning of (non-profit) community kindergartens along with the remuneration of the Kindergarten Teachers in these settings. An EC Teacher working in a community kindergarten earns less than one working in the public sector but it is still considered to be a fair/good wage.

In the private sector, remuneration is the lowest and working hours are the longest. There have been cases where someone is forced to be absent from work and as a result their employer deducts a certain amount from their salary. There is no agency to control what the private sector offers in terms of working conditions and salaries. People working in the private sector do not earn enough to support themselves (e.g. to rent their own apartment) or a family because they usually earn the minimum wage or close to that. *Table 11* shows the remuneration of ECEC teachers according to the setting they work in.

Table 11

Cyprus: Remuneration of Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers, 2016

Type of ECEC provision	Remuneration
Public kindergartens	A8-A11 or combined (based on years of service) A8: 17,946€ - 27,593€ per annum A10: 25,112€ - 34,720€ per annum A11: 29,684€ - 39,292€ per annum
Community kindergartens	1,042€ per month
Private kindergartens	Depends on the owner of the setting. Usually they offer the lowest average wage. The lowest average wage per month in Cyprus is currently 870€ and after six months of work 924€.

The Teachers' Assistants in public and community schools, who do not have a higher education degree, earn 870€ monthly and within six months their wage is raised to 924€ through the regulations applying to the public school system.

## 8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

The working hours in community kindergartens differ from those in public kindergartens and the private sector. Staff in community kindergartens work 36 hours per week with a daily schedule between 7:45 and 14:45 and they do not have as much annual leave or as many sick leave days as staff in the public school system. Teachers who work in the private sector always work one or two afternoons (until 18:00) and have no sick leave days.

### Staff in kindergartens/pre-primary settings

In the public sector, Kindergarten Teachers usually work on a full-time basis. In general, only those who substitute for other teachers due to health issues or maternity leave work part time. In the private sector, however, there tend to be more teachers working on a part-time basis, since the wages are then lower – a benefit for the owner of the setting only – and the practitioners have fewer benefits.

As already shown in *Table 4* for the academic year of 2013/2014, full-time work is predominant among teaching and management personnel in kindergartens. Overall, only 4.7% of teaching staff and 7.3% of management staff work part-time, with above-average shares of teaching staff (9.1%) and management staff (9.2%) working part-time in the private sector.

### Staff in the childcare sector

*Table 12* provides information which refers to the number of full-time and part-time teaching and management personnel (teachers and principals respectively) working at the different types of childcare centres during the academic year 2013/2014 (Statistical Service 2016)

Overall, 8.2% of the teaching staff and 9.5% of the management staff work part-time. Management staff in community services comprise the highest proportion of part-time workers (15.8%), followed by teaching staff in the private sector (11.3%).

Table 12

**Cyprus: Full-time and part-time teaching and management personnel in childcare centres, 2013-2014**

Type of school	Teaching personnel		Management personnel		Total
	full-time	part-time	full-time	part-time	
Public	41	0	3	0	44
Community	152	9	32	6	199
Private	236	30	70	5	341
<b>Total</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>584</b>

### 8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

The C.P.I., as described earlier, offers seminars for newly appointed teachers and their mentors. Mentors are the in-service teachers who are trained to support newly appointed teachers to get acquainted with their new position in the most positive way. The goal is to develop a culture of collaboration within the school team and to enhance the personal and professional development of both novice teachers and mentors. The seminars provide guidance in developing their effectiveness in the classroom and their mentoring relationship. More specifically, such seminars focus on the development of the knowledge and skills of planning, organising and assessing effective teaching and learning within groups of students of different abilities.

The programme takes place in three phases. Phase 1 takes place in October, during which the teachers participate in seminars in groups; Phase 2 lasts from October to May and takes place within the school, during which mentors observe a number of the teacher's lessons and provide feedback; in February there is another group meeting for all teachers and mentors to reflect on the experience and exchange good practices. Finally, Phase 3 takes place in May during which all teachers and mentors meet to share their experiences and evaluate the programme (see also section 6) (C.P.I. 2012)

### 8.4 Non-contact time

Table 13 illustrates the number of teaching periods (40 minutes) and non-teaching activities undertaken by each type of personnel in the public sector (MOEC 2016).

Table 13:

**Cyprus: Number of weekly working hours and activities undertaken by personnel in the public sector**

Personnel	Teaching time periods (40 minutes)	Non-teaching activities within the school	Staff meeting	Educational Seminars
<b>Principals in schools</b> depending on the number of teachers in the school	11 to 21	14 to 24	1	2
<b>Assistant Principals</b>	23	12	1	2
<b>Primary school, Pre-primary and Special Teachers</b> depending on the years of teaching	25 to 29	6 to 10	1	2

Principals teach fewer hours than assistant principals and teachers; the higher the number of teachers in a setting, the lower the number of hours the principal has to teach. With increasing years of teaching experience, teachers have to spend less time teaching. Regarding the private and community sectors it is up to the providers and principals of the school to arrange non-contact time but it is generally uncommon.

All teachers, regardless of the number of their teaching periods, are obliged to stay at school for the whole day. After teaching they have time to cooperate with parents and attend staff

meetings that usually start at 13:15 after the school day ends. Finally, all teachers have two periods a week to attend educational seminars/conferences.

## 8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

In the field of ECEC there are more teachers than required since there is no direct correspondence between the number of people studying and graduating as ECE teachers and the actual number of teachers needed in the public, community and private sector. As a result often overqualified people work with age groups for which they were not trained, and are poorly paid.

## 9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

There are specific issues within the EC field in Cyprus which are directly related to quality and have an impact on the educational system and specifically on the effectiveness of the experiences we provide for children and thus their learning and development.

### Quality issue 1: salaries in the ECEC field

The field of early childhood education has always been underestimated by society and the government in terms of the importance of early education and care. This is reflected in the fact that people working with children aged 3 months to 3 years do not need to have a degree; a school leaving certificate is considered sufficient. In addition, in the private sector, which is the largest provider of places for children from birth up to 4 years 8 months, Nursery and Childcare Teachers are rarely acknowledged by their employers and are mostly underpaid (see 8.1). Since there are a lot of early childhood teachers with a degree in ECEC the providers are always in the safe position to find someone when the need arises. This affects the quality of education and care offered to children and will continue to do so in the near future. Teachers will be less and less motivated to work with children and this will definitely have an impact on children, their development and learning and finally an impact on society.

### Quality issue 2: professional development in ECE

With reference to professional development there are two issues: (1) There is no real motivation for participating in the different seminars and programmes offered since these are not taken into account for someone's career advancement or salary increase; and (2) a lot of the CPD programmes are not carefully planned and implemented. So ECEC teachers who do attend different professional development seminars, obligatory and/or optional, experience them in a superficial way since there is no reflection of their practice. This is partly because these seminars take place out of the school context, and the activities involve lectures or theoretical discussions; or because the teachers are not truly interested in making a change but just want to get a certificate of participation and add it to their portfolio. This lack of in-depth quality of their CPD experience creates a group of teachers who receive different certificates without truly enhancing their professional learning. So teachers will look good on paper but not necessarily in the classrooms, which also can have a negative effect on the quality of early education.

### Quality issue 3: initial teacher education

In recent years, fewer people are showing interest in studying to become EC teachers. Due to the economic crisis and the high unemployment rate, more young people do not seem to consider their interests when studying but rather take into account what could provide them with the best job opportunities. Therefore, in Cyprus most people tend to earn a Bachelor's degree

in whatever field they can in order to have a degree and to be competitive in the workforce. Thus, the choice of becoming an EC teacher is just another option in their list of choices when applying for the Pan-Cyprian examination in order to study at the University of Cyprus or in Greece for free, or when choosing to study at a private university. This of course creates a group of EC teachers who do not have the necessary passion for the field, do not necessarily consider innovative practices, do not focus on the quality of their teaching and do not fight for their working rights, teaching hours and salaries. This is a cycle that creates a sense of negativity within the field which then affects the quality of education provided and the teachers' teaching effectiveness.

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