

# LATVIA

## ECEC Workforce Profile

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**Note from the editors:** In official translations of government documents, ECEC settings in Latvia are invariably described as *Pre-school education institutions* and core practitioners as *Pre-school education teachers*. The preferred terms in the **seepr-o-r** reports for countries with an integrated ECEC system are *ECEC/ECE setting/institution* and *ECEC pedagogue/ECE teacher*. The distinction is made because the term ‘pre-school’ is often used internationally to mean ‘pre-primary’ education, referring to the two or three years prior to school entry only. Since there is an official trend in Latvia to move away from the term ‘pedagogue’ to the term ‘teacher’ (associated in Latvia with a higher level of IPS and higher societal status), the terms *Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher* or *ECEC Teacher* are used interchangeably throughout this report.

## Introductory note

The methods used for preparing the report on the early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce in Latvia are analyses of relevant statistical data, laws and regulations as well as interviews with field experts. The interviews were carried out with representatives of Riga City Council’s Education, Culture and Sports Department, with the Education and Information Services of Riga City – an education support institution established by Riga City Council –, with principals of ECEC settings (one in Riga, one in another city and one in a rural area), and with representatives of one higher education institution with study programmes for prospective Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers (eight experts in total).

## 1. ECEC governance

Latvia has a partially unitary system of early childhood education and care for children up to statutory school age at 7 years. At the national level the Ministry of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija*) has overall auspices of the age-integrated ECEC institutions for children aged 1½ - 7 years, including the development of regulatory and curricular guidance. At the local level the municipal authorities are responsible for providing public ECEC facilities. The Ministry of Social Affairs (*Labklājības ministrija*) is responsible for the inspection and monitoring of service providers in terms of compliance with national regulations. The small number of private ECEC centres is obliged to adhere to the same regulatory framework as the public institutions.

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

### 2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

The main staff categories working directly with children in Latvian ECEC institutions are:

- Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers;
- Teacher Assistants;
- Early Childhood Music and Sports Teachers;
- Speech Therapy Teachers;
- Special Needs Pedagogues.

Minority ECEC institutions, where the language of instruction is not Latvian, may also employ a Latvian language teacher. Administrative staff categories are: centre heads (responsible for management tasks), deputy centre heads (responsible for the educational programme), and

early childhood education methodologists<sup>1</sup>. Technical staff categories include: teacher assistant, cooks, cleaners. In some institutions a psychologist and/or a nurse may also be employed. Music, sports and special needs teachers/pedagogues may be employed as permanent staff members of an ECEC centre and work on a daily basis with the children, but in the case of small ECEC institutions they may work part time and move from centre to centre.

Table 1 gives a brief overview of the main staff categories and 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 the end of this section).

Table 1

Latvia: Staff in ECEC institutions

| Job title   | Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range  | Main position/s   | Main age-range focus of IPS | Qualification requirements <sup>2</sup> and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED <sup>3</sup> level  |
|---|---|---|-----------------------------|---|
| <p><i>Pirmsskolas izglītības skolotājs</i><br/> <b>Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher</b></p> <p><i>Profile:</i><br/>           Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p> | <p><i>Pirmsskolas izglītības iestāde</i><br/> <b>Early childhood education institution/kindergarten</b><br/>           1½–7 years</p> | Core practitioner with group responsibility   | 1½–7 years                  | Tertiary-level qualification in pedagogy and professional award as Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher<br><i>OR</i><br>Tertiary-level qualification in pedagogy and professional award as Primary School Teacher <i>PLUS</i> a 72-hour B-programme <sup>4</sup> on early childhood pedagogy<br><i>OR</i><br>Second level professional higher education (Bachelor) in pedagogy <i>PLUS</i> a 72-hour B-programme on early childhood pedagogy<br><i>OR</i><br>Higher education degree (Bachelor's or Master's or Doctoral degree) in early childhood pedagogy<br>ECTS points: 108–240<br>EQF Level: 5 and higher<br>ISCED 2013-F: 0112<br>ISCED 2011: 5 and higher |
| <p><i>Skolotāja palīgs</i><br/> <b>Teacher Assistant</b></p>  | <p><i>Pirmsskolas izglītības iestāde</i><br/> <b>Early childhood education institution/kindergarten</b><br/>           1½–7 years</p> | Responsible for children's care needs and supporting the teacher in educational and play activities | n/a <sup>5</sup>            | There are no official minimum requirements for education and qualification. It is recommended that candidates have first aid training and attend courses on children's rights protection. Some municipalities may organise a preparatory course on child psychology and development.  |

<sup>1</sup> 'Methodologists' in Latvia are senior Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers responsible for professional support in organising the educational work in ECEC institutions; one of his/her responsibilities is monitoring the staff needs for continuing professional development.

<sup>2</sup> Cabinet of Ministers 2014a.

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> See section 3 on IPS for a clarification of 'B-Programme'.

<sup>5</sup> n/a = not applicable

| Job title   | Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range  | Main position/s  | Main age-range focus of IPS | Qualification requirements <sup>2</sup> and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED <sup>3</sup> level  |
|---|---|--|-----------------------------|---|
| <p><i>Pirmsskolas izglītības mūzikas/ sporta skolotājs</i><br/> <b>Early Childhood Music/Sports** Teacher</b></p> <p><i>Profile depends on qualification route:</i><br/> <b>EITHER</b><br/>           Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional with Additional Specialist Qualification<br/> <b>OR</b><br/>           Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p> | <p><i>Pirmsskolas izglītības iestāde</i><br/> <b>Early childhood education institution/kindergarten</b><br/>           1½–7 years</p> | Main responsible person for children's music/sports activities       | 1½–7 years                  | Second level professional higher education degree in pedagogy with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• additional qualification as music teacher</li> </ul> <b>OR</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• additional qualification as sports teacher</li> </ul> <b>OR</b><br>Early Childhood Teacher qualification requirements ( <i>see above</i> )<br>ECTS points: 108–240<br>EQF Level: 5 and higher<br>ISCED 2013-F: 0114<br>ISCED 2011: 5 and higher |
| <p><i>Logopēds</i><br/> <b>Speech Therapy Teacher</b></p> <p><i>Profile:</i><br/>           Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional with specialist qualification</p>  | <p><i>Pirmsskolas izglītības iestāde</i><br/> <b>Early childhood education institution/kindergarten</b><br/>           1½–7 years</p> | Main responsible person who works with children with speech problems | 1½–7 years                  | Second level professional higher education degree in pedagogy <b>PLUS</b> a postgraduate qualification as Speech Therapy Teacher<br>ECTS points: 108–240<br>EQF Level: 7<br>ISCED 2013-F: 0114<br>ISCED 2011: 5 and higher  |
| <p><i>Speciālais pedagogs</i><br/> <b>Special Needs Pedagogue***</b></p>  | <p><i>Pirmsskolas izglītības iestāde</i><br/> <b>Early childhood education institution/kindergarten</b><br/>           1½–7 years</p> | Main responsible person who works with children with special needs   | 1½–7 years                  | Second level professional degree in special needs education (Bachelor's or Master's)<br><b>OR</b><br>ECEC Teacher or Primary School Teacher professional qualification <b>PLUS</b> a 72-hour B-programme on special education approaches in ECEC.<br>ECTS points: 240 and higher<br>EQF Level: 6 and higher<br>ISCED 2013-F: 0114<br>ISCED 2011: 6 and higher   |

\* There are no available data on whether these specialists work with children under age 3.

\*\* In some ECEC institutions there is not a designated post for a sports teacher. ECE teachers also prepare and lead sports activities for children.

\*\*\* Special Needs Pedagogues (sometimes called special needs teachers) work with children with complex needs both in regular ECEC institutions and in special kindergartens. This staff position is not common in all ECEC institutions.

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 Care/Health Care Professional* (sometimes focus on early childhood, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

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

In 2014/2015, 9,940 teachers were employed in ECEC institutions. 93.9% of these worked in municipal institutions and 6.1% in ECEC centres established by legal entities or individuals. There are no data available on the technical staff (assistants, cleaners, cooks) who work in ECEC institutions.

According to the 2014/2015 data, 7,650 (77%) of the pedagogical staff in ECEC institutions work directly with the children as Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers, 11% are engaged in management duties, 6.2% employed as centre heads, and 4.8% as education methodologists or deputy centre heads. 6.2% of teachers are employed as early childhood music education teachers, 3% as early childhood sports education teachers and 4% of staff are either speech therapists or psychologists. 1.4% of teachers work as special education teachers or special pedagogues.

90.5% of teachers working in ECEC institutions have a tertiary-level professional qualification and the greater majority (88.6%) a specialisation in pedagogy (there are no available data on whether these teachers have a specialisation in *early childhood* pedagogy). 1.8% had a tertiary-level award in another field. 14.5% of the staff with a specialised higher education degree have a Master’s degree in pedagogy. 9.5% of teachers working in ECEC institutions have a qualification below tertiary level. Of these, 0.9% had a secondary pedagogical education, 2.1% a secondary vocational education and 6.6% a general secondary education. 63.5% of this group of teachers with a secondary-level education (either pedagogical or vocational or general) are studying for a tertiary-level degree in early childhood pedagogy.

The available data show that 10.5% of staff working in ECEC institutions do not have a relevant qualification, either at the higher or secondary level. In this group there are staff with a general secondary education, a secondary vocational education and with other (non-pedagogical) higher education.

Table 2

**Latvia: Structural composition of ECEC\* workforce in Latvia**

| Staff categories  | Proportion of workforce/numbers - 2014 |
|---|--|
| Total staff with higher education degree (or tertiary-level professional qualification) (ISCED 5 and above) | <b>90.5% (8992)**</b>                  |
| Staff with a higher education qualification in pedagogy   | 88.6% (8809)                           |
| <i>of whom the following have a master's degree in pedagogy</i>   | 14.5% (1281)                           |
| Staff with higher education qualification in another field  | 1.8% (183)                             |
| Staff with upper secondary or post-secondary IPS:   | <b>9.5% (948)**</b>                    |
| – secondary pedagogical (ISCED 4)   | 0.9% (89)                              |
| – secondary vocational (ISCED 3)  | 2.1% (204)                             |
| – general secondary (ISCED 3)   | 6.6% (655)                             |

| Staff categories   | Proportion of workforce/numbers - 2014  |
|--|---|
| <i>the majority of whom are currently studying for a higher education degree in early childhood pedagogy</i> | 63.5% (602)   |
| Staff with non-specialist qualification (both higher and secondary)  | <b>10.5%</b> (1042)**   |
| Unqualified staff  | No data available   |
| Specialist support staff (speech therapists, educational psychologists)                                      | <b>4.0%</b> (401)**   |
| Male staff   | <b>0.4%</b> (39)**<br>No data available about male staff in different job positions |
| Staff with a background of migration   | No data available   |

\* The data include only the pedagogical staff in ECEC institutions

\*\* Ministry of Education and Science 2015.

In Latvia, the personnel working in ECEC institutions are mainly women. Of all teachers working in ECEC institutions, only 0.4% or 39 persons are male. There are no available data on the main tasks performed by men in ECEC institutions.

5.7% of teachers are younger than 24 years, 18.7% are in the age group 25-34 years and 27.6% are in the age group 35-44 years. Almost half (48%) the teachers working in ECEC institutions are over 45 years of age. 29.1% are aged 45-54 years, and 18.9% are 55 years of age or older. In general, 5.1% of teachers working in ECEC institutions have reached retirement age, which means that they are 62 or older.

Data on ethnic background or nationality within the ECEC workforce are not collected in Latvia. In 2014/2015, of all ECEC institutions registered in Latvia 70.9% were with Latvian as the language of instruction, 12.5% with Russian, 16.3% with Latvian and Russian and 0.3% with Polish or Russian and Polish as the language of instruction. Teachers can work in any ECEC institution regardless of their ethnic background or nationality.

### 3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

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

In Latvia, tertiary education programmes are provided by different types of higher education institutions, of which there are three types: colleges, universities and non-university higher education institutions. Colleges provide first-level higher professional education considered as the first phase of the second-level professional higher education programmes offered by a higher education institution. The non-university institutions offer professional qualifications, and universities offer both academic and professional qualifications. The criteria for university status are: implementation of bachelor's, master's and doctoral study programmes; annual procedures for defending doctoral theses; at least half of persons in academic posts hold a doctoral degree; the institution issues research publications and establishes research institutions or units in the main scientific disciplines corresponding to the implemented study programmes.

The higher education programme 'Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher' is offered by four higher education institutions in Latvia: Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy (*Rīgas Pedagoģijas un izglītības vadības akadēmija*; a non-university institution); University of Latvia (*Latvijas Universitāte*); University of Liepāja (*Liepājas Universitāte*) and Daugavpils University (*Daugavpils Universitāte*). First-level higher professional education in early childhood education is provided only at the Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy. A master's degree programme 'Early Childhood Education and Care

Teacher' (ISCED 7) is provided by two higher education institutions (Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy and University of Latvia).

Primary School Teachers (grades 1-4) wishing to work in an early childhood institution, or Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers wishing to work in a special ECEC institution are obliged to follow a requalification course known as a 'B-programme'. These programmes are 72 hours in length and they cover issues of early childhood pedagogy, particularly didactics. They are developed and conducted by the higher education institutions which offer study programmes in pedagogy.

Table 3

**Latvia: Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher**

| <b>Job title in Latvian: Pirmsskolas izglītības skolotājs</b><br><b>Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</b>  |
|---|
| <p><i>Route 1:</i><br/>           First level higher education IPS programme 'Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher' (two-year degree)</p> <p><b>Entry requirements:</b> Certificate of general secondary education or vocational secondary education (ISCED 34 and 35)</p> <p><b>Professional studies:</b> 2 years (2 years and 3 months for external studies) of professional higher education (provided at Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy)</p> <p><b>Award:</b> Professional status (diploma) as Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher</p> <p><b>ECTS points:</b> 120<br/> <b>EQF level:</b> 5<br/> <b>ISCED 2013-F:</b> 0112<br/> <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 55</p> <p><b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> ECEC institutions/kindergartens (1½ – 7 years)</p> <p>Holders of the professional qualification can study further to gain a Bachelor's/second level professional higher education degree.</p>  |
| <p><i>Route 2:</i><br/>           Professional Bachelor programme 'Teacher' (four-year degree)<br/>           – sub-programme 'Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher' or<br/>           – sub-programme 'Early Childhood Education and Primary School Teacher'</p> <p><b>Entry requirements:</b> Certificate of general secondary education or vocational secondary education</p> <p><b>Professional studies:</b> 4 years (4 years and 3 months for external studies)</p> <p><b>Award:</b> Professional Bachelor's degree in educational sciences/professional qualification as Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher</p> <p><b>ECTS points:</b> 240<br/> <b>EQF level:</b> 6<br/> <b>ISCED 2013-F:</b> 0112<br/> <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 65</p> <p><b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> Early childhood education institutions/kindergartens (1½ – 7 years)</p> <p><b>N.B.</b> Graduates with a Bachelor's degree can continue their studies in Master's programmes and professional education programmes. There are also professional Master's programmes specialising in pre-school pedagogy and Master's and Doctoral programmes specialising in pedagogy in general.</p> |
| <p><i>Route 3:</i><br/>           Second level (post-graduate) short professional higher education programme 'Teacher'<br/>           – sub-programme 'Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher'</p> <p><b>Entry requirements:</b> Higher education degree in pedagogy/Bachelor of educational sciences</p> <p><b>Professional studies:</b> 2 years of part-time studies affiliated to a higher education institution</p> <p><b>Award:</b> Professional qualification as Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher</p> <p><b>ECTS points:</b> 108<br/> <b>EQF level:</b> 7<br/> <b>ISCED 2013-F:</b> 0112<br/> <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 65</p> <p><b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> Early childhood education institutions/kindergartens (1½ – 7 years)</p> <p><b>N.B.</b> Holders of the professional post-graduate qualification can follow further studies to gain a Master's degree.</p>   |

**Note:** Since the required qualification routes of Early Childhood Music Education Teachers and sports teachers are similar to those of Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers (2<sup>nd</sup> level professional higher pedagogic education plus additional qualification as music teacher/sports teacher) and since Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers are eligible to fulfil the duties of music and sports teachers, these IPS programmes are not described in more detail.

Table 4

**Latvia: Speech Therapy Teacher**

| <b>Job title in Latvian: <i>Logopēds</i></b>  |
|---|
| <p><i>Route 1:</i><br/> Professional Bachelor programme ‘Special Education and Speech Therapy Teacher’ or ‘Speech Therapy Teacher’<br/> <b>Entry requirements:</b> Certificate of general secondary education or vocational secondary education (ISCED 3 and 4)<br/> <b>Professional studies:</b> 4 or 4½ years of professional higher education<br/> <b>Award:</b> Bachelor’s professional degree in Education/professional status as Special Education Teacher and Speech Therapy Teacher.<br/> <b>ECTS points:</b> 240<br/> <b>EQF level:</b> 6<br/> <b>ISCED 2013-F:</b> 0114<br/> <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 65<br/> <b>Main ECEC workplaces:</b> Early childhood education institutions/kindergartens (1½ – 7 years)<br/> <i>Additional workplaces include:</i> primary schools, special education institutions, art schools, school management institutions, study centres<br/> N.B. Graduates with a Bachelor’s degree can continue studies in Master’s programmes and 2nd level professional higher education programmes.</p> <p><i>Route 2:</i><br/> Second level (post-graduate) short professional higher education programme ‘Teacher’ – sub-programme ‘Speech Therapy Teacher’<br/> <b>Entry requirements:</b> Higher pedagogic education or Bachelor of educational sciences<br/> <b>Professional studies:</b> 2 years part-time studies affiliated to a higher education institution<br/> <b>Award:</b> Professional status as Speech Therapy Teacher<br/> <b>ECTS points:</b> 108<br/> <b>EQF level:</b> 7<br/> <b>ISCED 2013-F:</b> 0114<br/> <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 65<br/> <b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> Early childhood education institutions/kindergartens (1½ – 7 years)<br/> <i>Additional workplace:</i> Primary schools<br/> Graduates with a Bachelor’s degree can continue studies in Master’s programmes.</p> |

Table 5

**Latvia: Special Needs Pedagogue**

| <b>Job title in Latvian: <i>Speciālais pedagogs</i></b>  |
|--|
| <p><i>Route 1:</i><br/> Professional Bachelor programme ‘Special Education Teacher and Speech Therapy Teacher’ or ‘Special Education Teacher’<br/> <b>Entry requirements:</b> secondary education<br/> <b>Professional studies:</b> 4 or 4½ years of professional higher education<br/> <b>Award:</b> Bachelor’s professional degree in Education/professional status as Special Education Teacher and Speech Therapy Teacher<br/> <b>ECTS points:</b> 240<br/> <b>EQF level:</b> 6<br/> <b>ISCED 2013-F:</b> 0114</p> |

**Job title in Latvian: *Speciālais pedagogs***

**ISCED 2011:** 65

**Main ECEC workplace:** Early childhood education institutions/kindergartens (1½ – 7 years)

Additional workplaces: schools, special education institutions, art schools, school management institutions, study centres,

N.B. Graduates with a Bachelor's degree may continue studies in Master's programmes and 2nd level professional higher education programmes

*Route 2:*

*Second level professional higher education programme 'Teacher'*

*– sub-programme 'Special Education Teacher'*

**Entry requirements:** Higher education depending on the length of programme

**Professional studies:** 1½, 2 or 2½ years studies of professional higher education

**Award:** Professional status as Special Education Teacher

**ECTS points:** 72, 90 or 120 (depending on previous initial professional studies)

**EQF level:** 7

**ISCED 2013-F:** 0114

**ISCED 2011:** 65

**Main ECEC workplace:** Pre-school institutions/kindergartens (1½ – 7 years)

Additional workplaces: primary schools and special education institutions

### 3.2 Competence specifications and curricula in IPS programmes

As there are different study programmes for different staff categories, the main focus here is on the IPS programmes for Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers<sup>6</sup>. For pedagogic-didactic approaches and a short assessment of the preparation of students see a comment at the end of the chapter.

#### Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher (*Pirmsskolas izglītības skolotājs*)

##### *Route 1: First level professional higher education programme*

##### **Competency specifications:**

- Implementing theoretical knowledge of pedagogy, psychology and early childhood education methods in ECEC settings
- Setting goals for pedagogic work
- Planning how to achieve the goals for pedagogic work
- Choosing appropriate educational methods
- Feeling responsible for his/her professional work
- Being motivated to follow the latest trends of early childhood pedagogy in Latvia and abroad.

##### *Intellectual competencies*

- Having skills to describe and define pedagogic problems
- Analysing problems through scientific methods.

##### *Professional competencies*

- Understanding theories and concepts of early childhood pedagogy
- Evaluating and choosing appropriate methods for his/her field of research.

<sup>6</sup> The information is gathered from descriptions of study programmes of different higher education institutions.

### *Practical competencies*

- Being able to analyse comprehensive practical issues in the context of early childhood pedagogy
- Making practical and reasonable decisions in areas of learning

### **Curricular areas:**

- General education courses (for example, early childhood pedagogy)
- Specialisation courses (in pedagogy, psychology, physiology, study methods)
- Developing and presenting field work
- Preparing and presenting qualification thesis

### ***Route 2: Second level short professional higher education programme***

#### **Competency specifications:**

- Being able to practically use knowledge of early childhood pedagogy and study methods taking into account his/her previous pedagogic education and work experience
- Being able to plan and organise pedagogic processes with certain goals.

#### **Curricular areas:**

- theoretical courses of the field (for example, early childhood pedagogy, playing in theory and practice)
- courses of professional specialisation (for example, bilingual education in ECEC settings, sports in ECEC settings, music in early childhood pedagogy and others)
- freely chosen courses
- practical use of theory
- state examination

### ***Route 3: Professional Bachelor's degree programme***

#### **Competency specifications:**

- Being able to purposefully use knowledge of early childhood and family pedagogy, psychology and study methods in implementation of an integrated approach towards early childhood pedagogic processes
- Being able to successfully carry out individual activities with a child and his/her family by using knowledge of home tutor professional procedures<sup>7</sup>
- Having a tolerant, interested attitude towards children as individuals
- Understanding the cognitive and socio-emotional development of children, teens and youth
- Understanding the relation between different cognitive processes (conception, memory, attention, logical thinking) and the study process
- Being able to recognise possible delay in children's development and offer ways to prevent it
- Understanding and promoting children's curiosity, motivation, creativity, active involvement in the learning process
- Having communication skills and skills to include different children in group activities
- Being able to discuss new trends in education
- Being able to promote positive mutual communication, cooperation and tolerance between colleagues and parents
- Having knowledge of social skills and emotional intelligence
- Being able to evaluate his or her own professional work and improve his or her professional skills without assistance

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<sup>7</sup> If a child is not able to attend the compulsory classes of pre-primary education, for example, due to illness, pre-primary education institution provides the home tutor service or support family to prepare a child for school themselves.

- Being able to analyse concepts of education, theories, education policy
- Being able to work in multicultural environments.

#### Curricular areas:

- theoretical courses of pedagogy and psychology
- courses of specific psychological development features of young children, methods of promotion of children's creativity, specific tasks of home tutors;
- pedagogical field work in ECEC institutions
- preparation of thesis

The interviewed experts from higher education institutions who teach prospective Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers state that their institutions train students according to a holistic and child oriented approach. However, in their view most ECEC institutions implement a subject oriented approach. In response to this, the interviewed representatives of ECEC institutions argue that they support the organisation of learning processes through play. However, they are obliged to follow the official curricular guidelines, and if they take into account the requirements of the education programme, then they are not able to implement a play-based approach to learning in all areas. The representatives of ECEC settings criticise higher education institutions for not taking the guidelines into account when developing study programmes for prospective Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers. Moreover, they critically evaluate the knowledge and skills of newly prepared teachers. In their opinion, newly-qualified teachers lack knowledge of different subject methods (including play) and understanding of age-appropriate skills. However, they also remark positively that newly-qualified teachers are competent in integrating different tasks and activities. It should also be noted that there are several higher education institutions, which prepare Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers, and this assessment does not refer to all of them.

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

The minimum requirement for working as an **Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher** in an ECEC institution is a higher pedagogic education and a specific qualification. According to the relevant legislation, the only possibility for working without having these specific requirements is for students who are undertaking initial professional studies in pedagogy (Cabinet of Ministers 2014, Article 6). Experts admit that it is common practice for students to start working during their studies and it has become one of the options to solve staff shortage problems in ECEC institutions.

Almost anyone can work as an **Early Childhood Teacher Assistant** regardless of their education and qualification. For example, interviewed representatives of ECEC institutions report cases where unemployed shop assistants and accountants apply for vacant positions as a teacher's assistant. In these cases the ECEC institution or the municipality defines the necessary requirements for employees. However according to legislation, when hiring a person, the ECEC setting provider is obliged to request information from the Punishment Register to make sure that a person has not been convicted of criminal offences that are related to violence or threats of violence, of criminal offences against morals and sexual inviolability (Latvijas Republikas Seima 1998a, Section 72) or of other crimes that are not permitted for those working with children.

An Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher has both vertical and horizontal career opportunities in ECEC institutions. A teacher can participate in the application process for vacant positions and become the centre head of an ECEC institution, a deputy centre head for education work or a methodologist. An ECEC Teacher can also make horizontal career moves. He/she can gain a specialist qualification and work as a speech therapist or a Special Needs Pedagogue. Teacher Assistants can only become an ECEC Teacher by following the required education and qualification routes.

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

According to those working in the field, *field practice* (workplace-based learning) during the IPS programmes is very important for the preparation of future Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers. It is an opportunity for students to test their theoretical knowledge and to improve their pedagogical skills. However, both representatives of higher education institutions (HEIs) and ECEC institutions state that at the moment opportunities for workplace-based learning during IPS are not sufficient to ensure that a student is able to become fully involved in the work of ECEC institution after graduation.

The relevant legislation states that during second level professional higher education studies there should be a field practice of at least 30 ECTS (Cabinet of Ministers 2014b, Article 6). Experts report that the length and distribution of the field practice component of IPS across semesters varies according to the higher education institution.

A field practice is implemented according to an agreement signed by both the higher education institution and the service provider/employer offering the work placement. The agreement includes the goals and tasks of the field practice, as well as its planning, evaluation procedures and the duties and responsibilities of both co-operating institutions (Cabinet of Ministers 2014c, Articles 15). However, in most cases students currently have to find a suitable placement themselves – frequently it is an ECEC institution close to the student's home or the ECEC institution where the student already works alongside his/her studies.

The relevant legislation states that the content of field practice has to correspond to the professional degree and qualification followed, and the standards of the profession (Cabinet of Ministers 2014h, Article 13). Field experts report that during their field practice students need to develop and improve their skills of observation, to note and evaluate the individual development of each child, to develop skills for the independent planning of learning processes (including goal-setting and tasks), and to learn to choose appropriate pedagogic-didactic and organisational approaches in order to promote the individual development of each child.

During field-based studies, students make regular notes of observations of daily practices in a field practice journal. The journal content is included in the overall evaluation of the practicum. The representative of the co-operating ECEC institution (centre head, deputy centre head for education work or methodologist) and the HEI supervisor of a field practice assess the student's performance together. Evaluation also includes a presentation by the student in his/her higher education institution.

In terms of a centre-based mentor or support person for the students, this role can be fulfilled by an ECEC Teacher as well as by a centre head, a deputy centre head for education work or a methodologist. Each ECEC institution makes this decision according to the tasks a student has to fulfil during the field practice.

According to field experts, a mentor or support person in the ECEC institution should be specially prepared in order to support students during the field practice. Several higher education institutions in Latvia offer relevant courses in their professional development programmes for teachers. As a preparatory course for this role has not been set as a requirement, some experts report that a centre head or deputy centre head for education work who has 20 or more years of work experience can perform the duties of mentors without special preparation.

Field experts report that in most cases, ECEC staff do not receive additional payment for fulfilling the tasks of a mentor or support person. In their opinion, this work can be considered as voluntary work. Experts state that not all higher education institutions make a contribution to ECEC institutions for providing the opportunity of a field practice for students.

## 5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

According to state legislation, professional development is mandatory for all teachers, including those working in ECEC institutions. Each teacher is responsible for his/her professional development of not less than 36 hours within a period of three years (Cabinet of Ministers 2014f, Article 7). The Education Law (1998) states that a teacher has the right to 30 days over three years for his/her professional development and that this can take place during his/her working hours, maintaining the salary (Latvijas Republikas Seima 1998b).

The professional development of technical staff (for example, Teacher Assistants) working in ECEC institutions is not regulated at the state level. It is up to the municipality or the specific ECEC institution to decide whether these employees need professional development. For example, Riga municipality has recommended that Teacher Assistants attend professional development training designed especially for this target group.

Professional development for Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers includes participation in workshops and conferences, and can include in-service training in another country. However, mainly it is conducted in the form of training programmes and study courses. Legislation states that teachers can improve their professional skills by attending an A-programme (further education) or a B- programme (requalification). The choice of programme depends on the teacher's previous form of IPS.

The target groups of A-programmes are ECE teachers, speech therapist teachers, education psychologists and special pedagogues who already work in ECEC institutions. These programmes are of up to 36 hours' duration. The courses are developed and offered by higher education institutions, state and municipal institutions, non-governmental organisations and private institutions. Some examples: the 'Latvian Language Agency', the 'Education and Information Services of Riga City (RIIMC)' which are education support institutions established by Riga municipality, the organisation 'Early Childhood Education Association', the 'Education Development Centre', the 'Latvian Early Childhood Music Education Association' and many more, as well as higher education institutions such as Daugavpils University, the Latvian Academy of Sports Education, the University of Latvia, Liepaja University, Rezekne Higher Education Institution and the Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy. The development and implementation of training courses has to be coordinated with the municipality in which they take place. Higher education institutions and subordinate institutions of ministries implement A-programmes without coordination, since their statutes define the implementation of educational activities.

The topics of further education or A-programmes are diverse and broad. For example, in 2015 the Education and Information Services of Riga City were authorised to hold 55 different professional development programmes (Riga City 2015) for the staff of ECEC institutions in Riga. Of these, three programmes are specifically developed for ECEC institution managers (centre heads) and vice managers (deputy centre heads for education). These include topics such as ECEC institution management, cooperation with parents, or the development and improvement of life skills in the ECEC setting. For ECEC Teachers there are courses for the development of professional skills to successfully implement the early childhood curricular framework in the fields of first language and additional language learning, maths, the arts, crafts, physical health and music. There are also courses for teachers on ways to improve pedagogical processes, on work with children from different target groups, on the protection of children's rights, on the processing of personal data and on the recognition and prevention of child abuse.

The relevant legislation states that teachers are responsible for planning their own professional development in cooperation with the manager of the ECEC institution in which they work (Cabinet of Ministers 2014f, Article 7). The experts interviewed report that it is usually a deputy centre head or a methodologist who supervises the centre personnel and gives information about courses to those teachers who need to improve their qualifications. At the same time,

ECEC Teachers can choose their preferred professional development options – the centre manager or deputy centre head or a methodologist do not have the right to sanction these choices.

There is not an agreed system of teacher professional development programmes in terms of covering the costs. For example, employees of Riga municipality ECEC institutions have an option to attend courses developed and implemented by the Riga municipality institution 'Education and Information Services of Riga City' without having to pay a fee. The ECEC institution or employee pays for courses developed and implemented by other institutions. Also in other places in Latvia, municipalities or education management boards attempt to ensure that professional development opportunities are available free of charge. The interviewed experts reported that if a teacher wishes to choose a specific course out of personal interest, then in most cases he/she also has to cover the costs. However, there are cases whereby the ECEC institution finds an opportunity to pay for such courses from the institution's budget – for example, if a teacher has previously made an agreement with the centre head to attend a certain course, or if a teacher has not already attended the required 36 hours of CPD.

In general, opportunities for professional development are relatively widely available to ECEC Teachers. However, there are specific problems in terms of access. Firstly, further education courses provided free of charge by the municipalities are not available to all interested teachers. For example, in Riga the groups for professional development courses organised by the Education and Information Services of Riga City are full up after one or two days of being advertised. Such courses are available for only 3 to 4 groups per year. In other words, the demand for courses far exceeds what the centre can offer. Limited financial resources prevent the organisation of more groups. At the same time the centre does not control who attends. The interviewed experts report on teachers who have become 'professional students' and appear to attend all available courses without assessing what is really necessary for their professional development. This prevents other interested teachers from being able to access the courses.

Secondly, the requalification courses (B-programmes) mostly cost money which, in the opinion of some experts, is not commensurable to teachers' salaries. Experts state that teachers cannot afford to pay 300€ or more for participation in such a course.

If a teacher wishes to continue his/her studies by working towards a Master's degree, there are enough opportunities, since higher education institutions offer both full-time, part-time and external study routes. However, in most cases the teachers have to meet the costs themselves. The interviewed experts affirm that in general teachers are motivated to acquire a Master's degree, seeing it as an opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills.

According to experts, professional development tends to be rather formally evaluated in the context of career progression. Professional development is taken into account if qualification levels (Cabinet of Ministers 2014g)<sup>8</sup> are assigned, although it is only one of many criteria which are taken into account. When qualification levels are assigned, the teacher's work with children, the achievements of children, the teacher's involvement in the development of the education institution, his or her education level and many more criteria are evaluated. Teachers can get one of five qualification levels – the last three correspond also to an increase of salary. An education institution assigns the first three levels, but the next are awarded by a municipality or the state administration. The assessment takes the form of filling in forms and collecting points.

In the opinion of some experts, a Master's degree is important only in cases when teachers want to do administrative duties in the ECEC institution – work as an institution leader, a deputy leader or a methodologist. One of the experts notes that teachers can grow professionally

<sup>8</sup> The 2014 Regulations No 350 set up five qualification levels of teachers' professional activities assessment. Theoretically the five qualification levels of teachers' professional activities assessment are connected with the teachers' remuneration system and are also applied to ECEC Teachers. In practice this system is very much criticised, because there are no real differences in remuneration.

through additional qualifications – for example, by becoming a Speech Therapy Teacher or a special pedagogue. They give the teacher new work options, leading to opportunities to earn more money.

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

Since the end of 2014, the Ministry of Education and Science in Latvia has been working to establish a new remuneration model for teachers. The goal of the reform is to gradually develop a system that would ensure that teachers are paid at least the average salary in the country for normal working hours (for detailed information about current remuneration in ECEC institutions see section 8.1). However, during the development and approbation of the model, the social partners have been critical, saying that for some general education (school) teachers the proposals will result not in an increase but in a decrease in remuneration. At the time of writing these debates are ongoing.

Several interviewed representatives of ECEC institutions report that Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers do not have a clear position on this reform since they do not have enough information about it. In their view, it is a matter of the political will of the government which will determine the results of the reform and its impact on teacher remuneration.

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

During the last five years no research has been conducted in Latvia directly focusing on ECEC staffing issues. However, the professional education/training of personnel and their work has been analysed in research on other issues relating to ECEC institutions. For example, in 2013 the 'Baltic Institute of Social Sciences' foundation conducted a research study on „Ethnic Heterogeneity in Pre-primary Education Institutions in Latvia: A Study of Linguistic Situation and Readiness for the Implementation of Bilingual Education” (Kļave et al. 2013). During the research the motivation and ability of ECEC Teachers to implement a bilingual approach was analysed using the following methods: a survey of ECEC institution staff and expert interviews, and an analysis of observation journals filled in during ECEC institution self-investigation.

It was concluded in the research that the ECEC Teachers lack both relevant theoretical and practical knowledge, and also lack methodological support in implementing a bilingual approach in their work with young children. The other conclusion was that it is important to improve the content of professional development courses in the field of integrative studies and skills to work simultaneously with children who have different levels of language skills. Researchers concluded that the majority of ECEC Teachers in the sample had difficulties in organising their education work flexibly in order to react to the different levels of knowledge and needs of children, for example, through integrating language learning activities into the daily programme and everyday routines.

In order to successfully implement a bilingual approach, ECEC institutions also need the modern technical equipment (regular and interactive boards, video and audio centres, etc.) that current information technologies can offer. The study concluded that the technical/digital equipment in Latvian ECEC institutions is not satisfactory and that the municipalities lack the financial resources to provide it (Kļave et al. 2013).

## 8. General workforce issues

### 8.1 Remuneration

Employees of early childhood education institutions - unlike teachers in schools – are not remunerated through the state budget. Relevant legislation states that this is the duty of municipalities.

According to the legislation, the lowest monthly gross rate is 405€ (Cabinet of Ministers 2009a, Article 6) for general education (school) teachers, and for ECEC Teachers with less than 5 years' work experience, but 420€ per month (minimum gross rate) if they have more than 10 years' work experience. The final salary of teachers is calculated according to their work load and the number of years they have worked in the profession. There are five different levels in the teaching profession, with levels 3-5 corresponding to an increase in pay (31.87€, 79.68€ or 99.60€ monthly respectively (Cabinet of Ministers 2009b, Article 28). A range of criteria are included in the assessment of teachers' qualification levels, such as their work with children, the children's achievements, their involvement in the development of the ECEC setting, or their formal level of IPS.

A wage survey carried out by the personnel recruitment company *CV-Online* shows that at the beginning of 2016 the average net pay for ECEC Teachers was 380€ per month (CV-Online 2016). By way of comparison, according to the data of Central Statistical Bureau of the Republic of Latvia, the average net pay in the country in 2015 was 603€ per month (CSB 2016). The interviewed experts stated that the remuneration of ECEC Teachers is low – and it is not possible to live on this salary without additional support.

In general ECEC Teachers get lower remuneration than primary school teachers. For posts of responsibility, ECEC employees receive a higher salary. However, as the interviewees noted, remuneration does not increase proportionally with the job requirements and responsibilities. For example, in one of the ECEC institutions, for the position of teacher assistant, which does not request a specific professional qualification or work experience, the gross salary was 400-450€ a month, whereas for an ECEC Teacher in the same institution, which requires a specific form of IPS and which involves far more responsibility, the gross salary was 500-600€ a month. Also, for holders of an administrative post in an ECEC institution there is no substantial increase in remuneration. For example, in one early childhood education institution the gross salary of the centre head was 700€ a month, whereas the gross salary of the deputy centre head in the field of education was 590€ a month.

The field experts stated that the remuneration of ECEC staff differs from municipality to municipality. For example, the municipal authorities in large cities frequently pay additional money to employees in ECEC institutions. Remuneration also differs between public and private ECEC institutions – one of the experts noted that in private ECEC institutions the remuneration of teachers can be twice as much as that in public institutions.

### 8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

Relevant legislation states that a teacher's work load is 40 hours per week, not taking into account supply teachers who stand in for an absent colleague (Cabinet of Ministers 2009c, Article 36). There is no data available about the relative proportion of the full-time and part-time working patterns of Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers and Teacher Assistants and other technical staff in ECEC settings.

According to the interviewed field experts, most ECEC Teachers and Teacher Assistants work full-time. If there is a post available for part-time employment, then ECEC centre heads sometimes make their own decisions on what to do – for example, they divide the work load be-

tween teachers, or involve an additional teacher or students of pedagogy who are able to work alongside their studies.

The experts observed that there are difficulties in ensuring full-time employment for early childhood music and sports teachers and speech therapists, as well as for Latvian language teachers in ECEC institutions where the language of instruction is, for example, Russian. The workload for these posts is directly related to the number of children in the setting; a small number of children means that there is less work available for these specialists. In order to work full-time and earn more, these teachers have to work in several ECEC institutions simultaneously, or fulfil duties associated with another post. For example, those with the necessary qualification can work both as an ECE teacher and a Speech Therapy Teacher.

Working in several ECEC institutions is more common in cities where there are several settings located in a specific part of the city. The experts reported cases in small towns or rural areas where it is difficult to permanently attract specific specialists. The job offer is not appealing to them because of the small work load and the travel expenses.

### 8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

Induction measures for newly-qualified staff are the responsibility of each ECEC institution. Experts report that these inexperienced teachers almost always work together with a more experienced colleague, who fulfils the duties of a mentor. The work of a new teacher is also supervised by the deputy centre head or a methodologist, who observes the teacher at work and judges whether he/she can organise the learning environment and educational processes independently.

Support measures for improving the quality of the staff's professional work may also differ from setting to setting. One of the experts mentioned that teachers have opportunities to attend classes prepared by other colleagues. Cooperation between ECEC institutions in one municipality or across a broader region also leads to enhanced competence. This kind of cooperation is sometimes initiated informally through personal contacts between representatives of the administration of institutions or formally encouraged by the municipality. For example, Riga Municipality organises conferences for ECEC Teachers once every three years. In the period between conferences there are activities for creative target groups that involve 5-6 ECEC institutions – teachers work together on specific issues of concern. Conference materials are available to teachers electronically.

### 8.4 Non-contact time

According to legislation, teachers in ECEC institutions with a 30 hour remuneration rate have up to four hours a week for preparation of classes (Cabinet of Ministers 2009d, Article 40). Field experts reported that only teachers who work in the compulsory preschool groups for 5- and 6-year olds receive payment for these four hours of preparation; teachers working with younger children get paid for only one hour of preparation per week. When teachers do preparation work, they do not have to do this at the workplace.

In Latvia, there is no available data on the amount of time ECEC Teachers and Teacher Assistants are allocated for staff meetings, cooperation with parents, networking in the community and other activities.

### 8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

According to the field experts interviewed, there is a shortage of staff in early childhood education institutions – both of Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers and of specialist staff such as early childhood music and sports teachers and Speech Therapy Teachers. There is also

a shortage of technical staff (Teacher Assistants, cooks, secretaries and others). These shortages are similar in both urban and rural regions.

Experts attribute the main reason for staff shortages in ECEC centres to the low remuneration for the work, which has consequences for the societal prestige of the ECEC Teacher profession. Although higher education institutions prepare the specialists for this work, only a small proportion of them choose to work in ECEC institutions at the end of their studies. The interviewed experts have observed that young people prefer, for example, to choose a job in administrative work or a job in the field of human resources.

ECEC institutions go about solving staff shortages in a variety of ways. Firstly, the administrative-level staff in ECEC institutions offer those already in the setting the opportunity of taking on more than one work load (one work load is 30 contact hours per week; teachers are permitted to work 40 hours per week in one institution). This option is used when there is a shortage either of teachers or of technical staff. Secondly, administrative-level staff in ECEC institutions may encourage current teachers to acquire additional qualifications in order to occupy posts reserved for various specialists, such as a Speech Therapy Teacher. Thirdly, it can happen that ECEC Teachers take on the duties of the specialists who are lacking. For example, if there is no sports teacher, ECEC Teachers may organise sports classes for their group of children. The fourth option is that ECEC institutions may recruit students of pedagogy programmes to take on a post as an ECEC Teacher.

Solving issues of staff shortages is also a municipal responsibility. Since April 2011, the municipality of Riga has been implementing a pilot project focusing on the continued functioning of ECEC institutions in conditions of ECEC Teacher shortages. Within the framework of this project one ECEC Teacher and two Teacher Assistants work in a group instead of two teachers and one teacher assistant, which is regular practice. If Teacher Assistants are involved in the project, they are required to attend professional development courses paid for by the municipality. The courses take place in the municipal institution “Education and Information Services of Riga City”, where newly-qualified teachers are trained for the organisation of education processes. This involves both allocating certain tasks to Teacher Assistants as well as taking on a mentoring role. This model ensures full-time employment for ECEC Teachers and Teacher Assistants and also opportunities for additional payment. At the moment at least 70 groups in ECEC institutions are involved in this project.

## 9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

If no improvements are made to the remuneration level of ECEC staff, the shortages of both pedagogical and technical staff will continue. The interviewed experts drew attention to the overall ageing of the workforce and the low proportion of young employees. Even if young people are motivated to work in ECEC institutions, after a while, when they face difficulties to survive because of the low payment, they are likely to look for better paid jobs.

In the face of current staff shortages, the network of ECEC institutions will not be able to work at full capacity in the future. Even now the municipalities of large cities face the dual problem of staff shortages and long waiting lists of children whose parents wish to secure a place in an ECEC institution. For example, in Riga there are municipal ECEC institutions that do not work at full capacity. Although the premises and other resources for enrolling more children are available, the lack of teachers makes this impossible.

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