

POLAND

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report authors

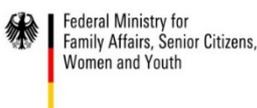
Małgorzata Żytko and Marta Pacholczyk-Sanfilippo

University of Warsaw, Faculty of Education

Citation suggestion:

Żytko, M. and M. Pacholczyk-Sanfilippo. 2017. "Poland – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Workforce Profiles in Systems of Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. www.seepro.eu/English/Country_Reports.htm

Funded by:



Contents

- 1. ECEC governance 3
- 2. Who belongs to the early years workforce? 3
 - 2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision..... 3
 - 2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity 5
- 3. Initial professional studies (IPS) 7
 - 3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational..... 7
 - 3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes for core practitioners 9
 - 3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability 10
- 4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners..... 11
- 5. Continuing professional development (CPD) 12
- 6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing 15
- 7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues 15
- 8. General workforce issues 17
 - 8.1 Remuneration..... 17
 - 8.2 Full-time and part-time employment..... 17
 - 8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace 18
 - 8.4 Non-contact time 18
 - 8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies..... 18
- 9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment 18
- 10. References..... 19



1. ECEC governance

Early childhood education and care in Poland is split into two stages and sectors. Responsibility for the first stage, covering provision for children aged 20 weeks up to 3¹ years, was transferred in 2011 from the Ministry of Health to the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy (*Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej*). The second stage, catering for 3- to 6-year olds, is officially recognised as the first phase in the education system and falls under the auspices of the Ministry of National Education (*Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej*). Thus, the ECEC system in Poland can be described as having a ‘childcare sector’ and an ‘education sector’. The management and administration of ECEC provision in both sectors is delegated to local authorities.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

In Poland, the qualification requirements relating to ECEC staff working with children in the two sectors differ considerably and are regulated through different sets of legislation.

Overall, there are two main categories of staff working in centre-based settings with young children up to statutory school age at 7.

Nursery Educators/Caregivers (*opiekun dziecięcy*)

‘Caregiver’ is the generic term chosen here for the different kinds of staff who work in day nurseries/infant-toddler centres (*żłobek*), kids clubs (*klub dziecięcy*), as family day care providers (*opiekun dzienny*) or as nannies (*opiekunki*) with children up to 3 (4)² years old. They may be Nurses, Midwives, Pre-primary Teachers, lower Primary School Teachers, Childminders, School Counsellors, or persons with no specialised qualifications for work in the ECEC field (see *Table 1*). According to the Act on the Care of Children under the Age of 3 (Article 16), they are called ‘Caregivers’ (*opiekun dziecięcy*) (Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy 2011a). In day nurseries attended by more than twenty children, at least one Nurse or Midwife must be employed (Article 15, §3). Until 2011, ECEC centres for children under 3 years came under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and this is why Nurses and Midwives also belong to the catalogue of staff qualified to work as Caregivers. The quality of Nursery Educators’ qualifications is monitored by the local governments.

Nurseries may also employ unpaid **volunteers**. They work as assistants in the group and, unless they happen to be fully qualified Caregivers, they are required to complete a 40-hour course of preparation. The tasks they are entrusted with depend on their qualifications. All personnel employed in nurseries are subject to mandatory sanitary-epidemiological assessments.

Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers

Kindergarten Teachers (*nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego*) work in three different types of institution: kindergartens for 2/3- to 6-year olds (*przedszkola*), preschool classes in primary schools for 5- to 7-year olds (*oddziały przedszkolne w szkołach podstawowych*), or pre-primary education hubs for children aged 3 to 6 years (*punkty przedszkolne*). Since 2012, a Bachelor’s degree is the minimum requirement for working as a core practitioner in kindergartens. Prospective Kindergarten Teachers follow the same basic studies at university as teachers who

¹ In Poland, children may attend settings until the end of the school year in which they turn 3 years of age.

² In some situations, children who are 4 years old can attend a nursery or kids club, for example if there is no available place for them in kindergarten or if they are considered not ready to attend kindergarten.

later work in the first three grades of primary school. There is no separate study route or specialisation for Kindergarten and Primary School Teachers. The quality of the initial professional studies of Pre-primary and Primary School Teachers is monitored by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (*Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego*).

Table 1 outlines the profiles and minimum qualification requirements of staff working directly with children and also categorises the core practitioners 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

Poland: ECEC staff in centre-based settings

Job title and profile	Main ECEC work-place settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ³ level
Childcare sector				
<p><i>Opiekun dziecięcy</i> Nursery Educator / Caregiver</p> <p><i>No distinct professional profile: Many differently qualified or non-qualified staff may work as core practitioners</i></p>	<p><i>Żłobek</i> Nursery, infant-toddler centre 20 weeks–3 years</p> <p><i>Klub dziecięcy</i> Kids' club 1–3 years</p>	Core practitioner with group responsibility	Varies according to the IPS specialisation	<p>Minimum requirement: 12 years schooling plus 2 years of work experience (0-3 years)</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a⁴ EQF: level 3 ISCED 2013-F: n/a ISCED 2011: 3</p> <p>Optional requirements: 3 years university, Bachelor's degree for qualification as Nurse or Midwife</p> <p>ECTS points: 180 EQF: level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0913 ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>or An upper secondary qualification as Caregiver (course of 280 hours for caregivers provided by institutions licensed by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy).</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a EQF: level 3 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 3</p> <p>or A full qualification as Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teacher (see details below)</p>
<p><i>Wolontariusz</i> Volunteer</p>	<p><i>Żłobek</i> Nursery, infant-toddler centre 20 weeks–3 years</p>	Co-worker with minimal specialist preparation	No IPS required; mandatory course focuses on 0–3 age-range	40-hour course provided by institutions licensed by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy.

³ UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2012, 2014

⁴ n/a = not applicable

Job title and profile	Main ECEC work-place settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ³ level
	<i>Klub dziecięcy</i> Kids' club 1–3 years			
Education sector				
<i>Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego</i> Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teacher <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional	<i>Przedszkole</i> Kindergarten 3–6 years <i>Oddział przedszkolny w szkole podstawowej</i> Preschool class in primary school 5–7 years <i>Punkt przedszkolny</i> Pre-primary education hub 3–6 years Primary school Grades 1–3	Core practitioner with group responsibility Centre head	3–6 years	3 years university, Bachelor's degree specialising in Early Childhood Education ECTS points: 180 EQF: level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6

Box 1

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

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

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

Unfortunately there is no research in Poland focusing specifically on the ECEC workforce. Nowadays this sector is expanding rapidly and regulations are constantly being adapted and changed. *Table 2* shows the relevant share of staff in day nurseries (*żłobek*), kids' clubs (*klub dziecięcy*), and home-based care facilities (*opiekun dzienny*).

Table 2

Poland: Structural composition of staff in ECEC centres for 0- to 3-year olds, 2014*

Staff categories	Proportion of workforce
Staff with Caregiver qualification (ISCED 3, see <i>Table 1</i>)	89%
Staff with non-specialist (ECEC) higher education qualification (ISCED 6) (Nurse, Midwife)	11%
Staff with specialist higher education degree	n/a

Staff categories	Proportion of workforce
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	n/a
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary)	n/a
Staff with non-specialist qualification	n/a
Staff with no formal IPS	Nurseries: 6.5% Kids' clubs: 97% Home-based care facilities: 96.5%
Specialist support staff (e.g. Speech Therapists)	n/a
Male staff	n/a
Staff with a background of migration	n/a

* Council of Ministers 2015 and Central Statistical Office 2014.

Table 3 shows the proportions of staff in kindergartens (*przedszkole*), preschool classes (*oddział przedszkolny w szkole podstawowej*) and pre-primary hubs (*punkt przedszkolny*). In 2014, the greater majority of Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers were university graduates holding a Master's degree (84% of teaching staff). Only a minority (11.8%) held a Bachelor-level qualification.

Table 3

Poland: Structural composition of staff in ECEC centres for 3- to 6-year olds, 2014/15*

Staff categories	Proportion of workforce
Staff with specialist higher education degree	84.0% Master's degree 11.8% Bachelor's degree 4% people employed according to the previous qualification standards (pre-2011)
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	n/a
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary)	n/a
Staff with non-specialist qualification	n/a
Staff with no formal IPS	Kindergarten: 15% Preschool classes: 85% Preprimary hubs: 95%
Specialist support staff (e.g. Speech Therapists)	No data available
Male staff	0.9 %
Staff with a background of migration	No data available

*Central Statistical Office 2015a.

Tables 4 and 5 give a breakdown of the qualified ECEC workforce according to their workplace settings (0-3 and 3-6).

Table 4

Poland: Fully qualified Caregivers in ECEC settings for children under 3 years, 2013/2014*

Type of ECEC setting	Proportion of teaching workforce, in %
Nurseries/Infant-toddler centres	93.5
Kids' clubs	3
Home-based day care	3.5

* Council of Ministers 2015.

Table 5

Poland: Fully qualified teachers in ECEC settings for children aged 3-6 years, 2014/2015*

Type of ECEC setting	Proportion of teaching workforce, in %
Kindergartens	85
Preschool classes	15
Pre-primary hubs	5

* Central Statistical Office 2015b.

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

In Poland there are big differences between the level of qualification required for Caregivers (working with children under 3 years old) and for Pre-primary Teachers (working with 3- to 6-year olds). These differences are also reflected in the respective salaries and working conditions.

Nursery Educator ('Caregiver') (*Opiekun dziecięcy*)

According to the Act on the Care of Children under the Age of 3 (Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy 2011a) there are four different ways to become a Caregiver:

- 1) Twelve years schooling plus two years of work experience with children aged 0-3 years. Legally, the kind of experience is not specified. This means that unqualified persons work in an ECEC setting to acquire their two years of work experience and officially start the job of Caregiver after completion. If there is a gap of more than six months between the two years and the beginning of the job, the candidate is required to attend an 80-hour course for Caregivers provided by an institution licensed by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy.
- 2) Twelve years of schooling plus a course of 280 hours for Caregivers provided by an institution licensed by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy. The course consists of 200 hours of theory and 80 hours of practice in an institution for children under 3 years of age.
- 3) Bachelor's degree qualifying as Nurse or Midwife.
- 4) Bachelor's degree qualifying as Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teacher.

Since there are currently no specific regulations regarding the Caregiver position in ECEC, all persons working as a core practitioner in settings for under 3-year olds are considered 'Caregivers', whether they have a Bachelor's degree in pedagogy or only two years of work experience but without a formal diploma. Some local governments and associations of public nurseries are trying to develop their own regulations with stricter requirements than the central ones.

Table 6

Poland: Nursery Educator ('Caregiver')

Job title in Polish: <i>Opiekun dziecięcy</i> Profile: No distinct profile
<p><i>Route 1</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: 12 years of schooling + 2 years of experience with children under 3 years of age</p> <p>Professional studies: none</p> <p>Award: none</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a</p> <p>EQF level: 3</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: n/a</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 3</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Nursery/Infant-toddler centre (<i>Żłobek</i>) 20 weeks–3 years; Kids' club (<i>Klub dziecięcy</i>) 1–3 years</p>
<p><i>Route 2</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: 12 years of schooling + 280-hour course</p> <p>Professional studies: none</p>

Job title in Polish: <i>Opiekun dziecięcy</i> Profile: No distinct profile
<p>Award: Certificate as Caregiver ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 3 ISCED 2013-F: n/a ISCED 2011: 3 Main ECEC workplaces: Nursery/Infant-toddler centre (<i>Żłobek</i>) 20 weeks–3 years; Kids' club (<i>Klub dziecięcy</i>) 1–3 years</p> <p><i>Route 3</i> Entry requirements: university entrance qualification Professional studies: 3 year university qualification as Nurse or Midwife Award: Bachelor's degree ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0913 ISCED 2011: 6 Main ECEC workplaces: Nursery/Infant-toddler centre (<i>Żłobek</i>) 20 weeks–3 years; Kids' club (<i>Klub dziecięcy</i>) 1–3 years</p> <p><i>Route 4</i> Entry requirements: university entrance qualification Professional studies: 3 year university as Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teacher Award: Bachelor's degree ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0913 ISCED 2011: 6 Main ECEC workplaces: Nursery/Infant-toddler centre (<i>Żłobek</i>) 20 weeks–3 years; Kids' club (<i>Klub dziecięcy</i>) 1–3 years; Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers: Preschool class in primary school (<i>Oddział przedszkolny w szkole podstawowej</i>) 5–7 years</p>

Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teacher (*Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego*)

According to the law, the minimum requirement for work with children over 3 years of age is a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education. Initial professional studies for prospective Kindergarten Teachers are organised and managed by both public and private universities and colleges. Public universities and colleges are free of charge, with the exception of external studies or post-graduate studies.

Table 7

Poland: Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teacher

Job title in Polish: <i>Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego</i> Profile: Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional
<p>Entry requirements: university entrance qualification Professional studies: 3 years university Award: Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6 Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (<i>Przedszkole</i>) 3–6 years; Pre-school class in primary school (<i>Oddział przedszkolny w szkole podstawowej</i>) 5–7 years; Pre-primary education hub (<i>Punkt przedszkolny</i>) 3–6 years; Primary school Grades 1–3</p>

3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes for core practitioners

Nursery Educators/'Caregivers' (*Opiekun dziecięcy*)

Route 2: 280-hour course

Competencies/curricular areas: During the 280-hour course (for persons having no experience of working with children under 3 years or if their experience dates back more than two years before starting a job as a Caregiver) participants acquire theoretical and practical knowledge in the field of infant and toddler care as well as knowledge of child development, basic nutrition, dietetics and emergency first aid. The programmes of study are organised around the following topics:

- learning how to arrange a care environment for very young children;
- learning psycho-pedagogical basics relating to children's development;
- providing first aid in life-threatening situations or temporary indisposition;
- observing, listening to and recording observations on the progress of the child;
- planning play activities for children;
- communicating with the child's parents/guardians;
- helping children to develop the 'right habits'
- ensuring a safe environment;
- helping children with personal care and responding to their physiological needs;
- complying with health and safety regulations, including ergonomics and fire protection;
- learning about methods of coping with stress and problem-solving;
- preparing meals according to the appropriate principles of nutrition according to the child's age.

Course content specifications must be approved by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy (2011b).

A small number of colleges and universities are trying to organise new programmes specialising in the education and care of children aged 5 months to 3 years old, but these are still in the experimental stage.

During the course caregivers learn about different pedagogical theories. The typical approach aims to find the right balance between care and education or between adult-led and children-initiated activities. Free play and children's individual needs are guidelines for caregivers. Most approaches are based on theories of Polish authors, e.g.: *Quality standards of care and support regarding the development of children under 3 years*, compiled by specialists from the Come-nius Foundation (Rościszewska-Woźniak 2012); Lucyna Telka's concept of *accompanying the child's development* (Telka 2007). Both approaches are recommendations only since there is no established educational framework for nurseries/infant-toddler centres.

Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers (*Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego*)

Competencies: Prospective Kindergarten Teachers acquire psychological, pedagogical, socio-logical and philosophical knowledge and develop teaching skills necessary to reflect on educational processes in kindergarten (theoretically based e.g. on the works of Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner). They learn about active methods of teaching, such as the project approach, and participate in community learning experiences (working in peer-groups or in teams with teachers). During the study programme they prepare individual portfolios using reflective methods.

Curricular areas: Since 2012, teacher education in Poland has been regulated by national standards prepared by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (2012). According to these regulations, teachers are to be prepared for work both in kindergartens, pre-primary classes and in lower primary education (age-range 3–9 years).

According to this document, teacher education is divided into three learning areas:

- subject-integrated topics,
- psychological and pedagogical training, and
- didactic training (teaching methods).

These comprise different sub-groups which account for a total of 180 ECTS points:

1. Pedagogical theories (15 ECTS points)
2. Biomedical and psychological basics of education (15 ECTS points)
3. Fundamentals of ethics (10 ECTS points)
4. Foundations of social education (12 ECTS points)
5. Humanistic bases of pedagogy (15 ECTS points)
6. The basics of work in kindergarten and school (12 ECTS points)
7. Specialisation in kindergarten and school (15 ECTS points)
8. Supporting development of a child in kindergarten and school (10 ECTS points)
9. Didactic training (10 ECTS points)
10. Theory of didactics (2 ECTS points)
11. Voice emission (2 ECTS points)
12. First aid (1 ECTS point)
13. Health education (1 ECTS point)
14. Diploma seminar (16 ECTS points)
15. Other courses (44 or more ECTS points)

The curriculum for the IPS of Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers comprises the following topics/subjects:

- psychological, pedagogical and sociological basis of child development;
- various curricular dimensions related to the national curriculum for pre-schools such as language, maths, science, art, physical education;
- alternative models of pre-school education (the most popular alternative models are Montessori pre-schools, bilingual pre-schools or, increasingly, the Reggio Emilia approach);
- play in education;
- parents and local communities in the educational process;
- activity methods in education;
- methods of monitoring children's development;
- children with special needs and individual programmes of development;
- solving educational problems;
- legal aspects of pre-school education;
- field-based studies in preschool work placements.

The pedagogic-didactic approach is based on constructivism and social learning as foundations of educational processes. The role of the teacher in kindergarten is viewed as that of an observer of the child's development and provider of a stimulating environment which enables children to participate in exploratory learning.

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teacher

Graduates with a non-specialist degree can work in kindergartens once they obtain pedagogical qualifications through postgraduate studies or two years of higher education in the field of ECEC.

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

Nursery Educators/'Caregivers' (*Opiekun dziecięcy*)

The requirements regarding workplace-based learning for Nurses, Midwives and Family Day Carers are regulated by the Act on the Care of Children under the Age of 3 (Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy 2011a).

One of the four options for persons applying for a post in a nursery/infant-toddler centre (see *Section 3.1*) is to complete a 280-hour course of training. At least 80 hours are field-based placements in an institution for under 3-year olds. The field-based practicum must take place under the supervision of a fully qualified Nursery Educator.

Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers (*Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego*)

The Regulation of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education regarding Standards of Education preparing for the Profession of Teacher (2012) requires 330 hours of field-based placements in kindergartens and lower primary schools. The time spent in kindergartens amounts to only 150 hours, i.e. is less than that spent in primary schools. In general, the workplace-based learning component in the teacher education curriculum has been strengthened since 2012.

Students take part in long-term and short-term practical placements. The workplace-based component focuses on learning about the organisation and characteristics of different types of kindergarten, e.g. public, non-public, varying educational programmes and approaches. Students complete topic work aimed at learning about the kindergarten as a social institution, about the different roles of the teacher, the principal, the children and the parents, including the range of their autonomy, applying innovative educational methods, the communication processes and forms of cooperation between teachers, parents and the local community. They also hold lessons with children of various age groups and take part in meetings with parents.

During the students' time in the work placements, the university cooperates closely with the kindergartens. Students are split into small groups and are supervised by the university tutor as well as by the mentoring teacher/s in the kindergarten. The students consult with both about the planning of lessons and observations. They are obliged to keep daily reflective diaries which provide a basis for evaluations of their activities. University tutors, along with the kindergarten teachers, assist in the students' teaching activities and discuss and reflect on them afterwards.

During the field-based studies, students learn how to apply acquired knowledge, and how to develop both pedagogical and social skills. They are expected to:

- develop skills related to the observation of educational processes in the kindergarten; these include the relationships between teacher, children and parents, the children's adaptation to kindergarten rules, monitoring the children's development, group interactions, educational successes and failures, types of activities undertaken;
- analyse the kindergarten's educational programme and compare different educational approaches;
- design, prepare and provide learning activities in kindergarten, including critical reflection with staff members and self-evaluation;
- plan their own professional development.

The number of ECTS points allocated to workplace based learning in graduate or postgraduate courses for Pre-primary and Primary Teachers amounts to 60 ECTS points.

University and higher education tutors are responsible for the students' workplace-based learning experiences in pre-primary settings. Usually they are experienced Kindergarten Teachers, but this is not a requirement. Universities sign bilateral agreements with kindergartens to receive students for practica. The Kindergarten Teachers (mentors) responsible for supporting students' practice receive extra payment from the partner university and various EU projects.

Recently debated issues include:

- strengthening the quality of students' placements in educational institutions;
- implementing innovative approaches;
- emphasising reflective approaches in workplace-based learning;
- formative assessment of students' achievements;
- closer cooperation between the early childhood education institutions and teacher training centres: exchange of experience, common seminars and courses;
- inviting innovative Kindergarten Teachers to present good practice at the universities and in ECEC centres for children from 0 to 6 years.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

Nursery Educators/'Caregivers' (*Opiekun dziecięcy*)

In Poland, there are few courses designed specifically for the continuing professional development of Nursery Educators and no regulations at the national level regarding the funding of CPD activities. Caregivers in public settings are subject to the *Municipality Employees Act* (Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland 2008), which does not specify regulations regarding CPD. In the private sector, providing CPD options is the decision of the provider or Centre Head.

Currently there are no reviews or research studies relating to the professional development of Nursery Educators or to the overall quality of nurseries. Participation in additional forms of professional training mostly depends on a decision by the employer. In large cities, public nurseries work in groups and together the network organises some forms of CPD. Introducing mandatory higher education standards for employees in ECEC settings for children under 3 years of age is a matter currently under debate. There are a few courses offered at an academic level for those working in nurseries, but these are still very much at the experimental stage.

Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers (*Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego*)

The situation for Kindergarten Teachers is quite different, and CPD activities are very popular. Teachers who work in pre-primary and primary education are generally very motivated to update their knowledge and skills. There are numerous courses on offer, and public institutions (for example, some kindergartens) are also obliged to organise CPD activities.

For public kindergartens CPD is legally regulated (*Teacher's Charter*, Ministry of National Education 1982). At the municipality level funding must be equal to 1% of the planned annual expenditure earmarked for teachers' salaries. These funds are distributed following consultation with the Teacher's Union at the regional level and regulations of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education is obliged to provide funding equal to the amount of 5,000 average trainee salaries and distribute these funds for professional training.

CPD in Poland is not obligatory, apart from the newly qualified teacher's duty to prepare an Individual Programme of Professional Development. They may receive support from kindergarten career counsellors or colleagues.

There is no CPD entitlement in terms of a certain number of annual leave days. CPD participation is included in the non-contact hours of 15 hours/week for Kindergarten Teachers working with 3- to 5-year olds and 18 hours for teachers working with 6-year olds. Each kindergarten head has to ensure opportunities for teachers to develop their skills and knowledge. Moreover, kindergartens may organise on-site CPD activities in cooperation with external institutions which are related to the centre's specific expectations and needs.

However, CPD is usually organised as a one- or two-day course by various centres or institutions for teacher training at the regional or local level. Reimbursement of costs for participation in CPD courses depends on the employer.

There are about 400 public and private institutions around the country providing in-service training for teachers who work in different levels of education. There are diverse, specifically designed programmes for Kindergarten Teachers on offer. Universities, the Centre of Development of Education of the Ministry of Education (ORE – *Ośrodek Rozwoju Edukacji MEN*) or ECEC centres at the local level (*voivodship, community, city*) also provide CPD courses. In Poland, there are also many possibilities to take part in professional training courses for teachers financed by the European Union.

According to Karwowska-Struczyk and Wysłowska (2015, 115), the content of CPD courses is largely unregulated and tends to be aligned to the needs of the kindergarten providers' organisations rather than to the teachers' needs.

Whereas participation in CPD is not *formally* recognised in terms of career advancement, it can contribute favourably towards promotion.

The promotion of teachers is regulated by the Teacher's Charter (*Karta Nauczyciela*; Ministry of National Education 1982). The Teacher's Charter specifies four categories in the teaching career: (1) trainee teacher, (2) contract teacher, (3) appointed teacher, and (4) chartered teacher. All promotions are regulated by law.

This process aims to motivate teachers in their personal and professional development and thus, additionally, to improve the quality of educational institutions. A teacher's salary also depends on the level of the teaching category. After nine months of supervised internship and a successful interview, a candidate becomes a 'trainee teacher'. In order to become a 'contract teacher', the candidate has to successfully complete an interview in front of an examination board. After two years and nine months of employment and following an evaluation of his/her professional achievements, in order to be promoted to the category of 'appointed teacher' the candidate has to successfully complete an interview in front of a selection committee. To achieve the title of 'chartered teacher', very specific requirements have to be met. Chartered teachers who are considered to have outstanding professional achievements may be awarded the honorary title of professor of education.

In order to be promoted to a higher grade, a teacher needs to:

- hold the required qualifications;
- complete a 'probationary period' (the period preceding an application for promotion) and receive a positive assessment of his/her professional achievements during this period (the teacher follows an individual professional development plan during the probation period);
- have his/her application for promotion approved by a so-called qualifying board or, in the case of a contract teacher, pass an oral examination before an examination board.

Table 8 shows that almost one third of teachers in pre-primary settings are located in the highest career category.

Table 8

Poland: Teacher categories in centre-based settings for children aged 3-6 years, 2014/2015*

Teacher categories	Proportion of teaching workforce, in %
No specific title ⁵	7.1
Trainee teacher	9.3
Contract teacher	26.3
Appointed teacher	25.5
Chartered teacher	31.8

*Central Statistical Office 2015a.

There are no designated posts of responsibility within ECEC settings other than that of Centre Head.

Qualification requirements for Centre Heads in nurseries

The heads of nurseries must hold a university degree and have at least three years of experience working with children or a secondary education diploma and at least five years of experience in working with children. The director of a group of public nurseries (*zespół żłobków*) must have at least one year of experience in managing a nursery or a children's club.

Qualification requirements for Centre Heads in kindergartens

The principal or head of a kindergarten can be either an 'appointed teacher' or a 'chartered teacher' (*nauczyciel mianowany* or *nauczyciel dyplomowany*), but this is not a requirement. Persons who are not teachers can also be appointed as heads. In the first case, in accordance with Article 5 of the Teacher's Charter (Ministry of National Education 1982), the teacher must be a Polish or European Union citizen and have full legal capacity and use of public rights. The candidate must have at least five years of teaching experience. In the second case, the Centre Head must be backed by an appointed manager. The manager must have a teaching degree in pedagogical studies and have completed a postgraduate course in management or management education.

Beyond the above-mentioned conditions, a candidate for the post of Kindergarten Director must have been awarded (a) a good assessment score during the previous five years of being a teacher or (b) a positive assessment of professional achievements over the last year from a local government authority or, in the case of a university teacher, (c) a positive assessment of the work in the last four years in college or university. In addition, since December 2011, each candidate must provide documents proving that: she/he meets the health requirements necessary to perform the work in a managerial position; has not been subject to disciplinary action or disciplinary proceedings; has not been convicted of an intentional crime or an intentional tax crime; has not been subject to proceedings for a criminal offence involving indictment.

Three issues are currently being debated in terms of improving the system of continuing professional development of ECEC staff:

- Developing supervision strategies and improving the system of certification/accreditation for CDP institutions working outside universities and in the private sector.
- Increasing the quality and number of courses dedicated to Nursery Educators and Kindergarten Teachers.
- Supporting ECEC staff in evaluating intra-institutional processes and strengthening inter-institutional cooperation.

There is no research or monitoring practice investigating the effectiveness of CPD and its impact on the daily work in ECEC settings.

⁵ A person who was trained under former qualification requirements – without a professional promotion or during a process of achieving one.

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

During recent years there have been many changes in the care and education system for young children in Poland. The constant changes issued by education directives have resulted in regulatory unsustainability. Moreover, the lack of a uniform education policy for the early years has created an unstable situation for the early childhood education and care system.

Three relevant reforms affecting the staffing of ECEC provision are described below.

- (1) Up until 2011, nurseries functioned as health care institutions and were subject to the same sanitary rigours as hospitals. The *Act on the Care for Children under the Age of 3* (Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy 2011a) established that institutions for children under 3 years of age should be transferred from the Ministry of Health to the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy. This change was accompanied by many changes in legislation regarding the role of nurseries. Nurseries are now committed to provide for the care, upbringing and also education of under 3-year olds. These new requirements have led to a considerable expansion in the number of settings and in the number of available places - in 2011 there were 32,053 places compared to 71,386 places in 2014 (Council of Ministers 2015). This expansion is ongoing. Some improvements have taken place in terms of quality of services but, despite the growth in places, there still is a drastic shortage of places for children up to age 3. The challenge of providing qualified staff for this expansion has not yet been fully realised.
- (2) In 2012, the teaching of a foreign language in kindergartens became a mandatory requirement. There was a change in the National Curriculum Framework for primary schools and also a change in the requirements for teachers. All preschool teachers must broaden their professional competencies regarding the teaching of an additional language (mainly English) to young learners before the year 2020. For that purpose, specialised training courses are starting up at universities.
- (3) In recent years, due to constant political changes, confusion has arisen regarding the obligatory starting age for primary schooling, which also affects the work of Kindergarten Teachers. During the year 2012–2013 parents could decide if their 6-year old child should stay in kindergarten for an extra year or attend school. In 2014, attendance became compulsory only for children born in the first half of 2008, and in September 2015 all 6-year olds were obliged to attend school. Since January 2016, parents can again decide whether their child will remain in kindergarten or attend a pre-primary class in school. Nowadays most parents tend to decide that their child will start school at the age of 7.

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

Research studies carried out over the last five years in Poland have focused mainly on structural reforms in the early childhood education sector, in particular on lowering the age limit of compulsory education at school.

Social agreements with children in kindergartens

Sources: Olczak, A. 2010; Olczak, A. 2015 (see *References* for full details).

Aims: The aim of the research is related to Kindergarten Teachers' views on the implementation of a specific approach towards making social agreements with children in pre-school settings.

Procedures: The research was carried out with a group of 316 Kindergarten Teachers from Zielona Góra city in the south-western part of Poland. A questionnaire was designed for this purpose.

Findings: The Kindergartens Teachers were generally in favour of the use of the social agreement approach in preschool education, presenting arguments for and against. Arguments for included: developing educational processes, improving safety in the kindergarten environment and developing children's social skills and interaction in the peer group. Arguments against included: doubts as to whether some children were sufficiently mature to participate in this method in terms of not yet being able to create agreements and respect rules and principles, and safety issues. Kindergartens Teachers demonstrated personality traits that are helpful in the process of implementing a social agreement method. These included: openness, responsibility, empathy, and tolerance.

Implications: The study suggests a need to focus on the following aspects in the education and teacher education systems:

- Emphasising the development of students' social and emotional skills in relationship with children in workplace based learning in IPS;
- Developing children's activity, courage, resourcefulness, their ability to defend their individual convictions, and to express their thoughts and ideas;
- Focusing on education for democracy and on creating a balance between individual and social rules.

Teachers' pre-school styles and perceptions of professional work

Source: Parczewska, T. 2013 (see *References* for full details).

Aims: The research study conducted in Poland between 2008 and 2010 aimed to investigate pre-school teachers' perceptions of their professional role.

Procedures: The study utilised questionnaires for teachers and observations of 255 teachers' communicative processes with 1,744 5-year old children in 118 kindergartens across Poland located in both rural and urban areas. The observations were categorised according to three educational situations related to interpersonal relationships: problem solving tasks, choice of children's art work for the classroom exhibition, discussion concerning the name of the exhibition.

Findings: Two distinct styles in the professional work of teachers could be identified:

- Activating ('trigger') style (listening, accepting children's ideas and suggestions, participating in their decision processes, full focus on the children),
- Restrictive style (teachers as decision makers, fully focused on the programme, no attention to children's needs).

Implications: Teachers need to be able to reflect their role more effectively and to develop competences in supporting the children and in communicating with them using child-oriented approaches. This should be a key element in initial and in-service professional studies.

Quality of care and education in nurseries

Source: Telka, L. 2007 (see *References* for full details).

Background: One of the few Polish research studies on nurseries was based at the University of Łódź (conducted by Professor Lucyna Telka, University of Łódź). Between 1996 and 2000 a team from the university collaborated with public nurseries.

Aims: In 2000, an in-depth study was initiated in eight nurseries, aiming to find ways of improving the quality of care and education in nurseries. Between 2001 and 2003, various kinds of education programmes were implemented in all public nurseries registered in the city of Łódź. The guiding intention of the researchers was to transform the nursery as a social institution.

Procedures: Representatives of the university and management of nurseries of Łódź agreed on a mutual collaboration to improve the quality of education. The academic staff and the staff of 31 nurseries prepared an institutional diary which was later analysed by the joint group. A pedagogical project was developed by each participant in the research.

Findings: The sustained cooperation between staff in universities and nurseries influenced and facilitated the conditions for the exchange of theoretical/methodical and practical knowledge. Through this long-term cooperation, processes of transformation in the management and organisation of these nurseries could be initiated. It is worth mentioning that through this research, Telka drew considerable attention to ways of shaping and supporting the autonomy of very young children in the nursery setting (Telka 2007).

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

The salaries of Nursery Educators/Caregivers and Kindergarten Teachers vary considerably according to (1) whether they work in cities or small towns or rural areas – earnings are much higher in the cities; (2) whether they work in the private or the public sector – earnings are higher in the private sector; (3) whether they have only minimal vocational qualifications (as is the case for Nursery Educators) or high-level university qualifications (as is the case for most Kindergarten Teachers) – earnings are higher for higher qualifications.

Staff in nurseries

Salaries for staff working in nurseries depend on local government regulations or the specific conditions of private service providers. There is no information available in the public domain about these differences, and there are no research studies which provide evidence.

Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers:

Public sector: All decisions are made at the central level and only additional compensations are made by local government authorities. The annual gross salary of full-time, fully qualified teachers is on average 49,631 PLN (11,615€). Salaries depend on the Teacher's Charter document (Ministry of National Education 1982), plus certain executive regulations which can be, for example, a positive teaching performance appraisal or children's results in tests. Motivational incentives depend on local government policies. Teachers may also receive extra payment for additional responsibilities, e.g. teaching children with special educational needs, or relating to the geographical location of their workplace (high cost of living, disadvantaged or remote areas, etc.). According to the Teacher's Charter some extra payment is granted for working overtime. For the Centre Head of a public kindergarten the current average salary is 72,860 PLN (17,050€) per annum. Moreover, salaries also depend on the achieved level within the teaching career (trainee, contract, appointed or chartered teacher, see *Section 5*).

Private sector: Teachers' salaries are paid in accordance with the Labour Code. A kindergarten or primary school head's salary may vary and depends on arrangements between the school and the head (European Commission 2015).

Usually teachers in the private sector earn more than in the public sector; however, they also generally work more hours per week. Teachers in kindergartens and primary school have the same basic salary. The only difference is related to the 'motivation allowance', extra money granted by the local government or the Centre Head/School Principal.

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

There is no information about **Nursery Educators** working with children under 3 years of age. It is assumed that most work full-time for eight hours per day (40 hours per week).

The Teacher’s Charter (Ministry of National Education 1982) specifies the working conditions of **Kindergarten Teachers**, their duties and rights, and clarifies the levels of career advancement and remuneration. Private school teachers are employed under the generally applicable labour laws or the Civil Code. National statistics show that nearly all staff in kindergartens work 40 hours/week (92.5%); only 7.5% hold a part-time job (Central Statistical Office 2015a).

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

There are no national guidelines for staff support in the workplace. Each institution organises its own staff support measures. Therefore quality and availability vary greatly.

8.4 Non-contact time

There are no official regulations about contact and non-contact time for caregivers who work in settings for children under 3 years of age.

According to the Teacher’s Charter (Ministry of National Education 1982) teachers working in public kindergartens have 15 to 22 hours per week non-contact time, depending on age-groups or needs of the children. Private settings establish their own regulations.

Table 9

Poland: Non-contact time of staff working in public kindergartens, Ministry of National Education 1982

	Contact time	Non-contact time
Teachers working with 3-,4-, and 5-year olds	25	15
Teachers working with 6-year olds	22	18
Teachers working with children with special needs	18	22

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

The current expansion in the childcare sector (see *Section 6.1*) is likely to lead to a shortage of available staff, but there are no official data on this. It seems that currently there are no staff shortages in the kindergarten sector. There are many graduates available on the job market.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

Staff qualifications in nurseries

The Act on the Care of Children under the Age of 3 (Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy 2011a) was the first comprehensive document regulating centre-based settings for children under 3 years of age. The Act also regulated the staffing of new alternative forms of child care (kids’ club, home-based day care provision). The Act stipulates that anyone with a minimum of two years of work experience as an assistant in a setting for under 3-year olds can work as a Caregiver, i.e. as a core practitioner with group responsibility. The research of Lucyna Telka has shown that the professionalism of the staff is a key factor in guaranteeing the quality of educational processes (Telka 2007). This minimum requirement of only two years of work experience, combined with a lack of compulsory training courses, means that the quality in nurseries varies greatly.

The situation in kindergartens is different because there the supply of teachers seeking employment is higher than the demand (Karwowska-Struczyk M. and O. Wysłowska 2015). If Kindergarten Teachers cannot find a job they have the opportunity to seek work in primary schools or in nurseries.

10. References

- [Central Statistical Office] Główny Urząd Statystyczny. 2014. Departament Badań Społecznych i Warunków Życia. 2014. Department of Social Research and Conditions of Life *Żłobki i kluby dziecięce w 2013 roku* [Nurseries and Children's Clubs in 2013]. Warszawa: Zakład Wydawnictw Statystycznych. http://www.e-zlobek24.waw.pl/wp-content/uploads/zos_zlobki_i_kluby_dzieciece_w_2013_2.pdf.
- [Central Statistical Office] Główny Urząd Statystyczny. 2015a. *Edukacja w 2014/2015 roku* [Education in 2014/2015 School Year]. Warszawa: Zakład Wydawnictw Statystycznych.
- [Central Statistical Office] Główny Urząd Statystyczny. 2015b. *Prognoza ludności na lata 2014-2050* [Population Forecast for the Years 2014-2050]. Warszawa: Zakład Wydawnictw Statystycznych <http://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/ludnosc/prognoza-ludnosci/prognoza-ludnosci-na-lata-2014-2050-opracowana-2014-r-,1,5.html>
- [Council of Ministers] Rada Ministrów. 2015. *Sprawozdanie rzeczowo-finansowe z wykonywania zadań z zakresu opieki nad dziećmi w wieku do lat 3 w 2015*, [Report on Material and Financial Tasks Related to the Care of Children under the Age of 3] http://www.zlobki.mpips.gov.pl/gfx/zlobki-mpips/userfiles/_public/informacja_dotyczaca_realizacji_ustawy_o_opiece_nad_dziecmi_w_wieku_do_lat_3_i_polowa_2015_popr.pdf
- European Commission. 2015. *Teachers' and School Heads' Salaries and Allowances in Europe*, Eurydice – Facts and Figures, Education. Brussels: Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency.
- Karwowska-Struczyk M. and O. Wysłowska. 2015. "Comparative Review of Professional Development Approaches – Poland". *CARE – Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European ECEC*. <http://ecec-care.org/resources/publications/>
- [Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland] Marszałek Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej. 2008. *Ustawa o pracownikach gminy z dnia 21 stycznia 2008 r* [Municipality Employees Act of 21st January 2008] <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/Download?id=WDU20082231458&type=3>.
- [Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy] Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej. 2011a. *Ustawa z dnia 4 lutego 2011 roku o opiece nad dziećmi w wieku do lat 3*, [The Act of 4 February 2011 on the Care of Children under the Age of 3] <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU20160000157>
- [Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy] Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej. 2011b. „Rozporządzenie Ministra Pracy i Polityki Społecznej z dnia 25 marca 2011 r. w sprawie zakresu programów szkoleń dla opiekuna w żłobku lub klubie dziecięcym, wolontariusza oraz dziennego opiekuna” *Dziennik Ustaw Nr 69 Poz. 368*, [Act of Minister of Labour and Social Policy - 25 March 2011. On the Scope of the Program Training for Caregivers in a Nursery or Children's Club, for Volunteers and Family Daycare Journal of Laws No. 69 pos. 368] http://www.zlobki.mpips.gov.pl/gfx/zlobkimpips/userfiles/_public/akty_prawne/d2011069036801_2.pdf
- [Ministry of National Education] Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej. 1982. *Karta Nauczyciela*, [Teacher's Charter, Act of the 26th of January, 1982] <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/Download?id=WDU19820030019&type=3>
- [Ministry of Science and Higher Education] Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego. 2012. *Standardy kształcenia przygotowujące do zawodu nauczyciela* [Standards of Education Preparing for the Profession of a Teacher, The Act of 17th of January]. <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU20120000131>
- Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman. 2010. *Professionals in Early Childhood Education and Care Systems. European Profiles and Perspectives*. Opladen/Farmington Hills MI: Barbara Budrich.
- Olczak, A. 2010. *Umowa społeczna z dzieckiem jako droga ku demokracji w wychowaniu* [Social Agreements with Children to Facilitate Democracy in Kindergarten Education], Uniwersytet Zielonogórski,
- Olczak, A. 2015. *Umowa z dzieckiem w przedszkolu* {Agreement with a Child in a Kindergarten}, Zielona Góra
- Parczewska, T. 2013. „Strategie stosowane przez przedszkole w realizacji jego funkcji i zadań edukacyjnych” [Teachers' Preschool Styles and Perceptions of Professional Work and the Purpose of Kindergarten Education], in: *Dziecko w szkolnej rzeczywistości. Założony a rzeczywisty obraz edukacji*

- elementarnej* [Children in the School Reality. Assumptions and Actuality], edited by H. Sowinska, 397-420, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM.
- Rościszewska–Woźniak, M. 2012. *Standardy jakości opieki i wspierania rozwoju dzieci do lat 3*, [Quality Standards for the Care and Support of Children under the Age of 3], Warszawa: Instytut rozwoju dzieci im. Jana Amosa Komeńskiego. www.frd.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Standardy-jakosci_zlobek.pdf
- Telka, L. 2007. *Przekształcenie przestrzeni społecznej placówki. Studium społeczno-pedagogiczne na przykładzie żłobków* [Transformation of Social Institutions. A Socio-pedagogical Case Study of Nurseries.] Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego.
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2012. *International Standard Classification of Education 2011*. <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/isced-2011-en.pdf>
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2014. *ISCED Fields of Education and Training 2013 (ISCED-F 2013). Manual to accompany ISCED 2011*. <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/isced-fields-of-education-and-training-2013-en.pdf>

