

ROMANIA

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report authors

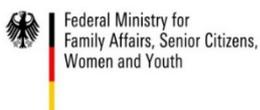
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1. ECEC governance

In Romania, the system of early childhood education and care (ECEC) can be described as multi-sectorial. Whereas **kindergartens** for 3- to 6-/7-year olds come under the remit of the Ministry of National Education (*Ministerul Educației Naționale - MEN*) and are part of the 'pre-university' education system, **nurseries/crèches** and infant-toddler centres for children up to age 3 belong both to the national system of social services and to the education system and come under the shared responsibility of three different ministries: the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice (*Ministerul Muncii și Justiției Sociale*), the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Public Health (*Ministerul Sănătății*).

Nurseries are organised either as independent settings located within childcare centres managed by local authorities, or as specific age groups within kindergartens. Staffing structures and types of personnel in nurseries/crèches are approved by all three ministries.

Settings for under-threes are regulated by two laws: the Law on Education, regulating Early Education Services (no. 1/2011) and the Law on Social Work – Care and Supervision Services (no. 292/2011). Accordingly, the governance of crèches and infant-toddler centres comes under the auspices of the General Directorate for Social Work and Child Protection (*Direcția Generală pentru Asistență Socială și Protecția Copilului*) and is administered through county-level local authorities. The governance of kindergartens comes under the auspices of the County School Inspectorate (*Inspectoratul Școlar Județean*), a decentralised unit of the Ministry of National Education, and local authorities are responsible for management and infrastructure.

A significant feature of the ECEC system in Romania is the fact that, due to the lack of a specific regulatory body for provision for 0- to 3-year olds, a number of nurseries and other settings have developed outside a regulated structure and without clearly defined educational/quality standards.

Both public kindergartens and nurseries are funded by local councils. Nurseries receive no central government funding, while kindergartens are still partly financed through the national education budget (i.e. salaries of qualified staff are paid by local authorities, but come as earmarked grants from the state budget, while salaries in nurseries/crèches or day care centres come exclusively from local council budgets). Private ECEC provision has expanded significantly during recent years, both as an alternative to public services and also as an answer to the insufficient provision mainly for the 0-3 age-group.

From a professional perspective, MEN is entitled to carry out the coordination and control of activities related to ECEC through County School Inspectorates. Inspections usually focus on kindergartens; inspection of nurseries does take place sometimes but it is not mandatory because of the uncertain legal status of the nursery as an institution.

Apart from the inspection and supervisory activities conducted and coordinated by the MEN, all other ministries involved in the process (see above) can conduct analyses, supervisory and counselling activities within the remit of their respective areas of responsibility.

In conclusion, Romania has a split system of ECEC services with different responsibilities and regulations for children under 3 years of age and those older than 3 years. This situation has led to a low level of overall coherency and sometimes also to a weak educational component in nurseries/crèches (Ciolan 2006, 35).

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

Staff in nurseries/infant-toddler centres

Staff in nurseries currently comprise the following categories:

- a) management staff: director / head of centre
- b) pedagogical staff: educator – early years (*educator-puericultor*)
- c) specialist staff, e.g. medical assistant
- d) non-specialist staff: administrator, caregiver, cook, etc.

Two main groups of staff work directly with the children on a daily basis:

- **Educatori–puericultori** (educators – early years) hold a professional qualification acquired at a Pedagogical High School. Pedagogical High Schools are vocational upper secondary education institutions offering qualifications at EQF level 4 and ISCED (2011) levels 3 and 4. Some staff in nurseries may also hold a higher education Bachelor's degree (three years) in educational sciences (Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-primary Education), mainly where services for the under 3-year olds are offered in groups affiliated to kindergartens. In recent years, Pedagogical High Schools have also organised a form of tertiary non-university qualification route for those already holding a high school graduation diploma from regular high schools.
- **Îngrijitori** (caregivers) complete a form of upper secondary education and a compulsory in-service training module of at least 30 hours focussing on early childhood education and care and parenting. Beyond that, there are no minimum requirements regarding initial professional studies for caregivers in nurseries. There is currently no formal obligation for nurseries/crèches organised as independent institutions to have staff holding a specialist higher education qualification, although employing staff with the appropriate qualifications should be a necessary prerequisite for quality in early education for children under 3 years of age.

In terms of the management of ECEC services, **Directors/Centre Heads** (*Director/șef de centru*) are trained professionals with educational and management responsibilities to ensure the continuous improvement of quality at the institutional level. Since 2012 (see Government Decision 1252/2012), new conditions have been in place for applicants for this position: they need to have a higher education award (Bachelor level) in one of the following areas: economics, law, administration, medicine, sociology, psychology or educational sciences, with a minimum of two years of work experience in the field of ECEC. This is a significant change in terms of formal requirements.

Although the staffing requirements for work in nurseries/infant-toddler centres are not formally regulated, some universities have started to offer specialist degrees in early childhood education. A relevant example here is the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, which has been offering a two-year Master's degree in Early Childhood Education since 2013.

Staff in kindergartens

At the level of pre-primary education/kindergartens (3- to 6-year olds), three main categories of staff may be working in direct contact with the children, each having followed a different qualification route.

- **Educatoare** (Educators) complete a specialist (early childhood education) qualification at a Pedagogical High School (upper secondary vocational). Persons with this qualification are still working in the system, although this specific route is not available anymore as a stand-

alone qualification. This route is now viewed only as a precursor to becoming a fully qualified Pre-primary Teacher, since in order to gain a permanent position in a kindergarten, the completion of a Bachelor study route in Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-primary Education is now the formal requirement.

- **Institutori** (Elementary Teachers) complete a short-term higher education degree (three years) awarded by the University College of Elementary Teachers (*Colegiul Universitar Pedagogic de Institutori*). This award originates from the pre-Bologna system (up to 2005), when regular higher education degrees took four to six years to complete. The title of *Institutor* could also be held by qualified educators (*educatoare*) who had completed a higher education diploma after their initial studies, regardless of the specialisation they had followed.

As from 2005 this qualification has been replaced by:

- **Profesori pentru învățământul Primar și Preșcolar** (Primary and Pre-primary Teachers) with a higher education degree and a dual specialism. The first graduates with this specialism completed their studies in 2008.

Although the minimum requirement for working in a kindergarten as a core practitioner is now a Bachelor's degree, the staff in kindergartens may have any one of the above-mentioned qualifications.

The **Director and/or Director adjunct** (director or deputy director) of a kindergarten is usually selected through a competition. Applicants are required to meet new formal requirements set out in the Education Act 1/2011 and subsequent regulations issued by the MEN: a higher education award (Bachelor's degree), a minimum of four years' professional experience in the field and membership in the National Registry of Management Specialists. To be registered as a management specialist, a person must have competencies in educational management and administration acquired through initial or continuing professional education.

Both nurseries/crèches and kindergartens can benefit from the services of professional support staff, mostly hired from County Centres for Educational Assistance and Resources (*Centrul Județean de Asistență și Resurse Educaționale – CJRAE*). In rather exceptional cases, these support staff are employed directly by ECEC providers.

Profesor logoped (Logopaedic/Speech Therapy Teachers), with professional studies in special needs education, psychology or pedagogy, support the staff, as well as children and families.

Profesor consilier (Counselling and Guidance Teachers) with a professional higher education degree in educational sciences, psychology, sociology or social work may provide psychopedagogic support, counselling and guidance directly for children, but also for regular staff and families.

Table 1 provides a summary of the staff working in nurseries and kindergartens 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

Romania: Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

| 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 ¹ level |
|--|---|---|-----------------------------|---|
| Childcare sector | | | | |
| Îngrijitor Caregiver | <i>Creșă</i> Nurseries, infant-toddler centres 4 months–3 years | Low-qualified co-worker | 0–3 years | Upper-secondary or school leaving certificate No formal IPS required, but compulsory 30 hours CPD ECTS points: n/a ² EQF Level: 3 or 4 ISCED 2013-F: n/a ISCED 2011: 3 |
| <i>Educator-puericultor</i> Educator – early years <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional with infant-toddler focus | <i>Creșă</i> Nurseries, infant-toddler centres 4 months–3 years | Core practitioner with group responsibility | 0–3 years | Upper secondary vocational, Pedagogical High School (or post-secondary vocational for those who have completed a non-specialised high school) ECTS points: n/a EQF Level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0122 ISCED 2011: 3 or 4 |
| Education sector | | | | |
| <i>Educatoare</i> Educator <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary education professional | <i>Grădinițe</i> Kindergartens 3–6 years | Core practitioner with group responsibility | 3–6 years | (No longer the minimum requirement for work in kindergartens) Upper secondary vocational, Pedagogical High School ECTS points: n/a EQF Level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 3 or 4 |
| <i>Institutori (învățăământ preșcolar)</i> Pre-primary Teachers <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary Education Professional | <i>Grădinițe</i> Kindergartens 3–6 years | Core practitioner with group responsibility | 3–6 years | <i>Up to 2005:</i> 3 years University College for Elementary Teachers or Pedagogical High School and a higher education non-specialised award ECTS points: n/a |

¹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012, 2014.² n/a = not applicable

| Job title and profile | Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range | Main position/s | Main age-range focus of IPS | Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level |
|--|---|---|-----------------------------|--|
| | | | | EQF Level: 5 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 5 |
| <i>Profesori pentru învățământul preșcolar și primar</i> Primary and Pre-primary Teachers <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional | <i>Grădinițe</i> Kindergartens and primary schools 3–11 years | Core practitioner with group responsibility Director | 3–11 years | <i>Since 2005:</i> 3 years University, Bachelor's degree ECTS points: 180 EQF Level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0113 ISCED 2011: 6 |

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, Schreyer, and Neuman 2010)

| |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</i> (specialist focus, 0– 6/7 years) • <i>Pre-primary Education Professional</i> (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years) • <i>Pre-primary and Primary Education School Professional</i> (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years) • <i>Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional</i> (broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults) • <i>Social Care/Health Care Professional</i> (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus, including adults) |
|--|

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

Overall, there are no statistics available at the national level regarding the composition of the ECEC workforce. However, an estimated 99% of the personnel in nurseries and kindergartens in Romania are women. There are no national data available on minority ethnic groups. According to regional data at the local/county level – the case of Bucharest, 177 kindergarten principals (96.2%) have a higher education degree, and 7 (3.8%) have a Pedagogical High School upper secondary vocational qualification. The average age of staff working in kindergartens is 39 years 4 months. 91 posts in kindergartens are filled by non-qualified staff.

Table 2

Romania: Structural composition of ECEC workforce in kindergartens for 3- to 6-year olds: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

| Staff categories | Year / Proportion of workforce |
|---|---|
| Staff with specialist higher education degree | No systematically compiled national data for core practitioners Kindergarten heads only: 96.2%* (2016) |
| Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary / post-secondary) | No systematically compiled national data for core practitioners Kindergarten heads only, including those of kindergartens attached to schools: 3.8%* (2016) |
| Staff with non-specialist qualification / un-qualified staff | 2015 (kindergartens only): 8:4%* |

| Staff categories | Year / Proportion of workforce |
|--|--|
| Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists, counsellors) | Mostly off site, available at county level specialised centres |
| Male staff | 2016: 0:4% of total staff in nurseries/infant-toddler centres and kindergartens: (144 out of 35,084)* |
| Staff with a background of migration | No systematically compiled national data |

*Data for the local/county level (Bucharest) only.

Of all teaching staff in the pre-university education system, 14.8% work in nurseries and kindergartens.

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

Despite the fact that staff with a wide variety of qualifications are still working in the ECEC field, the current official requirements for initial professional studies for ECEC staff in Romania have been narrowed down to two main routes:

- For those working in nurseries/infant-toddler centres (*educator-puericultor*) this is the Pedagogical High School upper secondary vocational route **or** a post-secondary vocational study route for graduates of non-pedagogical high schools. After passing an entrance examination, graduates from these two routes can study for a Bachelor's degree (Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-primary Education).
- For those working in kindergartens (*profesor pentru învățământul primar și preșcolar*) this is the higher education route (Bachelor's degree) offering a double specialisation for work in kindergartens and primary schools; graduates are also eligible for a position as educator (*educator-puericultor*) in a nursery/infant-toddler centre. Support staff (speech therapists, counsellors), who are mostly employed by county administrations and provide services for ECEC provision in their area, are also required to have a higher education level qualification.

It is still possible to work as a Caregiver (*îngrijitor*) in settings for under-threes without having a formal qualification, and sometimes also as auxiliary support staff in kindergartens, mainly in those with an extended-day programme (7:30 to 16:00-18:00).

The main IPS programme for ECEC staff in kindergartens is the Bachelor's degree in Pedagogy for Primary and Pre-primary Education (three years, 180 ECTS points). The majority of kindergarten staff now has this level of qualification, since special pathways offered by universities attracted non-Bachelor professionals to complete their studies with a higher education diploma. Moreover, the management of ECEC settings has been offering staff with higher education qualifications a higher salary.

Table 3

Romania: Educator – early years

| Job title in Romanian: <i>Educator-puericultor</i> |
|---|
| Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional with infant-toddler focus |
| Entry requirements: completion of compulsory education and a successful "eligibility exam" |
| Professional studies: 4 years Pedagogical High School, specialisation as <i>educator-puericultor</i> |
| Award: upper secondary school leaving certificate (<i>Baccalaureate</i>) plus certification as an <i>educator-puericultor</i> |
| ECTS points: n/a |
| EQF level: 4 |

| |
|---|
| Job title in Romanian: <i>Educator-puericultor</i> |
| Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional with infant-toddler focus |
| <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 3 or 4</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: nurseries/crèches, infant-toddler centres, kindergartens organising crèche groups for infants/toddlers</p> <p>Note: Also eligible for this job are higher education graduates (Bachelor, Pedagogy in Primary and Pre-primary Education)</p> |

Table 4

Romania: Educator

| |
|---|
| Job title in Romanian: <i>Educatoare</i> |
| Profile: Pre-primary Education Professional |
| <p>Entry requirements: completion of compulsory education and an 'eligibility exam'</p> <p>Professional studies: 4/5 years of study at a Pedagogical High School (5 years up to 2005, 4 years after 2005)</p> <p>Award: upper secondary school leaving certificate (<i>Bacalaureate</i>) plus certification as an <i>educatoare</i></p> <p>ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 3, 4</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Kindergartens (3-6 years)</p> <p>The above route still exists, but there is no possibility to become a tenured teacher working full time without completing the following step:</p> <p><i>Since 2005: (see also Table 6 below)</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: <i>Bacalaureate</i>, university entrance examination</p> <p>Professional studies: 3-year university study route in educational sciences, specialising in Pedagogy for Primary and Pre-primary Education</p> <p>Award: Bachelor's degree and teaching licence in Pedagogy for Primary and Pre-primary Education (double specialisation)</p> <p>ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0211 ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: kindergartens and primary schools (3-11 years old) and sometimes in crèches</p> |

Table 5

Romania: Elementary Teachers

| |
|---|
| Job title in Romanian: <i>Institutori</i> |
| Profile: Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional |
| <p>Entry requirements: upper secondary school leaving certification: <i>Bacalaureate</i> and higher education entrance examination</p> <p>Professional studies: 3 years of study at a <i>Colegiul Universitar Pedagogic de Institutori</i> (University Pedagogical College for Elementary Teachers) – short-term university degree (pre-Bologna system)</p> <p>Award: Certificate as an Elementary Teacher (Preschool and/or Primary)</p> <p>ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 5 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 5</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: kindergartens (3-6 years) and primary schools (6-11 years).</p> <p>Note: An alternative route to obtain this qualification used to be successful graduation from a Pedagogical High School (<i>Bacalaureate</i> + professional certificate) and a course of studies at any type of higher education institution (Bachelor level). This route was closed in 2005, when the Bachelor's degree for Pre-primary and Primary Teachers was established.</p> |

Table 6

Romania: Primary and Pre-primary teachers

| |
|--|
| Job title in Romanian: <i>Profesor pentru învățământul primar și preșcolar</i> Profile: Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional |
| Entry requirements: upper secondary school leaving certificate (<i>Baccalaureate</i>) and university entrance examination |
| Professional studies: 3 years of study in Educational Sciences (Pedagogy for Primary and Pre-primary Education) |
| Award: Bachelor's degree and teaching licence in Pedagogy for Primary and Pre-primary Education (double specialisation) |
| ECTS points: 180 |
| EQF level: 6 |
| ISCED 2013-F: 0113 |
| ISCED 2011: 6 |
| Main ECEC workplace: Kindergartens (3-6 years) and primary schools (6-11 years). Graduates are also eligible to work in nurseries / infant-toddler centres. |
| Note: Since 2005 this is now the main route of professional qualification for kindergartens and primary schools. |

3.2 Competencies and curricula in the IPS programmes for core practitioners

Educator – early ages (*educator-puericultor*)

This upper secondary vocational qualification was strengthened by the Government Decision (1252/2012) on the organisation and functioning of crèches and other early childhood education institutions, which specifically required that this should be the minimum requirement for pedagogical staff. The duration of vocational high school studies is four years and the leaving certificate has two components: the *Baccalaureate* (final exam at the end of high school and prerequisite for accessing higher education) and the professional certificate (professional examination granting access to qualified jobs in nurseries/crèches, day-care centres). The main responsibilities expected to be carried out by these professionals are:

- a) caregiving and stimulating activities to increase the child's autonomy;
- b) activities focused on the social-emotional development of the child;
- c) training and development of oral expression;
- d) activities focussing on enhancing the child's attention span and receptivity;
- e) monitoring and documenting the developmental progress of the children;
- f) active cooperation with parents/legal representatives of the children.

Curricular areas: This IPS route comprises a combination of classic general subjects, allowing graduates to take their *Baccalaureate* exam and eventually go on to higher education studies, and also professional subjects and professional practice in ECEC institutions. The first two years of study comprise curricular areas such as language and communication, mathematics and sciences, but also social-humanistic disciplines, including General Psychology, Child and Family Psychology, Pedagogy, Early Childhood Education, Professional Practice. More specialised professional subjects are included in the last two years of study: Hygiene and child growth/care, Child pathology (0-3 years), Play and learning, Special Needs Education, Psychology of education, Child protection and Children's rights etc. All these are complemented with practice-oriented educational/learning activities in different areas: Language, Sciences, Technology, Arts, Music and Drama. Field-based placements take place for at least three to four hours per week and can also be organised as compact week(s) during the semester.

Primary and Pre-primary Teacher (*Profesor pentru învățământul primar și preșcolar*)

In Romania, all teachers in the pre-university education system have to have a higher education qualification. The profession of Pre-primary (and Primary) Teacher is regulated by law and preceded by a three-year Bachelor's degree in Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-primary Education, which is part of the Educational Sciences domain. The degree can be offered by public and private higher education institutions if they have been accredited by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, according to the official standards approved in 2016 (see ARACIS 2016). The agency has stringent compulsory criteria and quality indicators for these degree programmes in terms of curriculum, human resources, facilities etc.

Competences/didactic approaches: The key competences to be acquired are described in the table below. They are based on a national framework, but we use the example of the University of Bucharest. The objectives of the Bachelor programme for prospective Primary and Pre-primary Teachers comply with identified professional needs and with the roles and specific competences that define the activity of educational science specialists (see also the pedagogical perspective underlined by Stan 2014). Since the academic year 2013–2014, the study programme has focused on professional and transversal competences, in accordance with the standards defined at national level by the Romanian National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

Table 7

Romania: Primary and Pre-primary Teacher - Competence specifications (University of Bucharest, based on NQF)

| General competences |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and developing educational programmes adapted to the primary and pre-primary education levels and to the target group; • Assessing educational programmes for primary and pre-primary education; • Group / classroom management and capacity to manage educational projects specific for primary and pre-primary education; • Offering counselling, guidance, psychological and pedagogical assistance to different stakeholder groups (children, families, teachers, employees, etc.); • Self-assessment and continuous improvement of professional practices and career evolution. |
| Instrumental competences |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilising pedagogical knowledge appropriately in designing educational and instructional activities: concepts, models, methods, techniques, scenarios and educational alternatives; • Identifying and using educational concepts, models and strategies for appropriate pedagogical methods; • Identifying and comparing theories, models and specific techniques and instruments necessary in educational assessment; • Analysing specific concepts, theories, models and techniques for designing targeted interventions in counselling, guidance and psychological and pedagogical assistance of various target groups; • Conducting pedagogical research to inform theory and practice and reflecting on professional practices aiming at continuing improvement; • Interpreting and explaining various pedagogical theories, models and contexts from an educational manager's perspective; • Promoting reflective practice based on students/children's learning and on one's own professional development; • Creating educational projects/programmes regarding the efficient organisation of the learning environment and of the resources used, in accordance with the principles and specific functions of the educational management. |
| Interpersonal competences |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting educational programmes through the appropriate use of specific concepts, theories and methodologies, adapted for different age-groups; • Applying standard methods of assessment in educational activities with children / adults and using these to improve process quality; |

- Analysing, interpreting and explaining evaluation data both at the individual and institutional levels;
- Designing educational programmes in order to identify, analyse and respond to specific educational needs;
- Developing good professional practices and being involved in the process of drafting research projects, taking into account specific methodological norms and principles.

Systemic competences

- Analysing, interpreting and correlating intra-/interdisciplinary practices and applying pedagogic knowledge in the designing of educational activities and didactic resources on different levels (macro, meso, micro);
- Explaining and interpreting educational contexts/situations and converting the knowledge, abilities and skills into pedagogical planning;
- Analysing and interpreting various educational contexts through the use of scientific concepts, paradigms and theories regarding persons with special educational needs;
- Carrying out educational activities in a methodologically appropriate way in accordance with the National Curriculum framework;
- Designing and applying evaluation tools, analysing and interpreting the results; providing arguments for the choice of methods, techniques and the instruments employed;
- Transferring the results of an evaluation into practice to support institutional or individual development;
- Creating alternative evaluation strategies for specific teaching and learning processes.

The following competences can be seen as the expected synthesis of the learning processes at the B.A. programme level:

- Designing, carrying out and assessing teaching and learning activities;
- Designing, carrying out and assessing extracurricular activities and educational partnerships;
- Psychological and pedagogical assistance for the pupils in a situation regarded as at risk, single parent families, parents who work abroad, parents with very low wages etc.);
- Accomplishing the optimal collaboration between the school and the families of the children, as well as with the local community;
- Performing management and resource management at class level;
- Institutional management and marketing;
- Design and evaluation of social and educational projects;
- Expertise in designing and implementing the curriculum and the initial and continuous training programmes.

Curricular areas: The curriculum of this programme is strongly regulated by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education through a set of specific standards. The most recent standards, approved in 2016 and covering around 75% of the total study programme, create a common national curriculum framework. Approximately 25% of the programme content is decided on by each university. The standards state some basic/fundamental subjects, valid for all degrees in educational sciences, but also a large number of study areas/disciplines specific to this particular degree. Practical training should cover at least 15% of the total duration of the study programme.

Table 8

Romania: IPS curriculum for prospective Primary and Pre-primary Teachers – first year of studies (University of Bucharest, Department for Teacher Education, Study programme in Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-primary Education)

| Name of subject | ECTS points |
|--|-------------|
| I. BASIC DISCIPLINES (SUBJECTS) | |
| Fundamentals of Psychology | 5 |
| Fundamentals of Pedagogy | 5 |

| Name of subject | ECTS points |
|---|-------------|
| Fundamentals of Special Psycho-Pedagogy | 5 |
| Information and Communication Technologies | 4 |
| Curriculum Theory and Practice | 5 |
| Early Childhood Education | 4 |
| II. DOMAIN DISCIPLINES (SUBJECTS) | |
| Psychology of Personality | 4 |
| Developmental Psychology | 4 |
| Romanian Literature | 4 |
| Psychology of Education | 5 |
| Mathematics | 5 |
| Psycho-Pedagogy of Learning Difficulties | 4 |
| Professional Practicum (Pre-School and Primary Education) | 2 |
| III. COMPLEMENTARY DISCIPLINES (SUBJECTS) | |
| Foreign Languages | 4 |
| TOTAL ECTS POINTS | 60 |
| OPTIONAL (elective) | |
| Physical Education | 4 |

Table 9

Romania: IPS curriculum for prospective Primary and Pre-primary Teachers – second year of studies (University of Bucharest, Department for Teacher Education, Study programme on Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-primary Education)

| Name of subject | ECTS points |
|--|-------------|
| I. BASIC DISCIPLINES (SUBJECTS) | |
| Instruction: theory, research and practice | 4 |
| Evaluation: theory and methodology | 4 |
| Methodology of Educational Research | 4 |
| Educational Theories | 3 |
| II. SPECIALISM DISCIPLINES (SUBJECTS) | |
| Computer Based Learning | 4 |
| Class/Group Management | 4 |
| Primary School Education | 4 |
| Contemporary Romanian Language | 5 |
| Didactics of Languages and Communication (Preschool Education) | 4 |
| Children's Literature | 4 |
| Mathematics | 4 |
| Didactics of Mathematics and Sciences. Mathematics (Preschool Education) | 3 |
| Didactics of Mathematics and Sciences. Sciences (Preschool Education) | 3 |
| Professional Practicum (Preschool Education) | 4 |
| Professional Practicum (Primary School) | 4 |
| III. COMPLEMENTARY DISCIPLINES (SUBJECTS) | |
| ONE OPTIONAL- PACKAGE A | |
| Sociology of Education (elective) | 2 |
| Educational Management (elective) | |
| TOTAL ECTS POINTS | 60 |
| OPTIONAL (elective) | |
| Theory, Solfeggio, Dictation (elective) | 4 |
| Foreign Languages (elective) | 4 |

Table 10

Romania: IPS curriculum for prospective Primary and Pre-primary Teachers – third year of studies (University of Bucharest, Department for Teacher Education, Study programme on Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-primary Education)

| Name of subject | ECTS points |
|--|-------------|
| I. SPECIALISM DISCIPLINES (SUBJECTS) | |
| Contemporary Romanian Language | 3 |
| Psycho-pedagogy of Play | 4 |
| Didactics of Romanian Language and Literature | 4 |
| Didactics of Arithmetic | 4 |
| History and Didactics of History | 4 |
| Geography and Didactics of Geography | 4 |
| Didactics of the Arts: Musical Education | 4 |
| Didactics of Physical and Psychomotor Education | 4 |
| Didactics of Civic Educational Activities | 4 |
| Didactics of the Arts: Creative Education | 4 |
| Environmental Education/ Didactics of Natural Sciences | 4 |
| Didactics of Practical Abilities | 4 |
| Professional Practicum (Preschool Education) | 5 |
| Professional Practicum (Primary Education) | 5 |
| II. COMPLEMENTARY DISCIPLINES (SUBJECTS) | |
| ONE OPTIONAL – PACKAGE B | 3 |
| Intercultural Education | |
| Educational management | |
| TOTAL ECTS POINTS | 60 |

Students are awarded an additional 10 ECTS points for the Bachelor of Arts Degree Examination. For successful finalisation of studies, they need to pass a written exam on fundamental knowledge of primary and pre-primary education (curriculum, instructional design, assessment, communication and group management), and to defend a research based Bachelor dissertation paper in front of a committee.

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

From the moment in which the profession of **teacher for primary and pre-primary education** was regulated, the flexibility of the routes decreased.

Regarding the **educator-puericultor** in crèches/infant-toddler centres, persons who have not completed the classical route of four years Pedagogical High School but have graduated from a different kind of high school and have a *Baccalaureate* diploma can enrol for two years at a 'post-high school' offering the same specialisation. These post-high schools are not permanent, but are organised on demand, when employers are in need of professionals. The main issue in Romania is that service provision for the under-threes is extremely low, and kindergartens, although they can form infant-toddler groups since 2012, are reluctant to do so, as local authorities are hardly financing this cycle of education. So this particular position, if available in crèches, is open also to other higher education graduates in educational sciences; however, the take-up is low, mainly because of the very low salary level.

In terms of the **Primary and Pre-primary Teachers**, some flexibility is offered through open and distance learning programmes, which also have to be accredited by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, and also through professional reconversion programmes. The latter can be organised by universities for professionals working in kindergartens (or primary schools) who have a teaching certification in a different domain (i.e. teacher of Biology, Geography, Languages, etc.) and therefore work as unqualified staff in a kindergarten.

ten or primary school. These studies take two years to complete and are awarded 120 ECTS points. They are organised as modules, in a blended learning approach.

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

Educator – early years (*educator-puericultor*)

The IPS programme for Educators includes three to four hours per week compulsory workplace-based learning/professional practice in the field (three hours in the first two years and four hours in the last two years of study). The structure and content of this field-based practicum relates to the progressive stages of professional development: first observational practice, then practising professional skills under supervision, and finally designing and delivering educational activities under supervision. There are no clear standards regarding workplace-based learning in IPS for this level. The weekly hour allocations can also be organised as compact modules.

Primary and Pre-primary Teacher (*Profesor pentru învățământul primar și preșcolar*)

For Primary and Pre-primary Teachers, national standards require a minimum of 15% professional practice in the IPS curriculum and the ECTS points allocated. This means that in order to meet the standard requirement, every study programme should have at least 27 ECTS points allocated to professional practice. It is common for kindergarten placements to take place in specified institutions selected jointly by the university as the training provider, and the local school inspectorate as the main beneficiary of qualified staff. Professional practice periods are coordinated by an academic from the university side, who assists students in all stages and evaluates them at the end, but also by a mentor teacher from the kindergarten, who has a contract with the university and is remunerated for his/her work with the prospective kindergarten teachers. All universities providing the Bachelor's degree have their own network of placement kindergartens with experienced mentors. Nevertheless, the students do not have a sufficient number of sustained periods of time during their studies for working in these placement kindergartens. Workplace-based learning at IPS level tends to be fragmented and thus lacking in impact in the long run.

Key skills and competences to be acquired during professional practice include (but are not necessarily limited to) the following:

- understanding group dynamics and developing strategies for high quality interactions with children;
- designing and adapting learning experiences according to specifications in the curriculum, delivering and assessing them;
- developing reflective practice skills in order to improve one's own professional practices.

In general, students are asked to maintain a portfolio to document both their observational and research skills, but also their capacity to take responsibility for working professionally with children. The teacher mentor in the kindergarten assesses the student's performance and informs the academic supervisor at the university. The university tutor then undertakes the final evaluation of the student based on the mentor's evaluation, the quality of the portfolio and the progress made over the course of the semester (professional practice is assessed each semester).

There are two significant current debates and prospective reforms in Romania. The first is related to the qualification and role of teacher mentors in the kindergartens. An occupational standard was developed at national level with multiple roles for mentors and there was even an attempt to build a national registry of mentor teachers. But the initiative is not being followed up because of the lack of financial resources at the MEN. However, some effects can be seen, despite the fact that the formal status of mentors has not yet been clarified. One example is at the University of Bucharest where a new Master's programme in *Mentoring in education* has been offered since 2015, preparing interested teachers from schools and kindergartens.

The second debate has just recently started at the policy level, refocusing attention on a provision in the Education Act 1/2011 which called for a change in the institutional model for teacher education by introducing *didactic Master programmes*. One of the key ideas of these programmes is to spend the final semester as a compulsory internship in an educational institution. One reason for this could be the current procedures for newly qualified teachers, who have to wait for two years in order to take a final qualifying exam which confers teacher certification and makes them eligible for taking up a permanent teaching position.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

Continuing professional development for educational professionals working in services for the under-threes is not regulated at the national level, but remains the decision of each institution and local authority. Taking into account the very low coverage of this service and the limited number of staff hired, a broader framework is possibly not yet needed. However, the various CPD opportunities available for Pre-primary Teachers do not apply to the pedagogical staff in nurseries/infant-toddler centres, where CPD is mostly offered in form of various projects and not as a coherent system. Moreover, the participation in CPD is unequal and there are still some professionals who just avoid it (see Lucian Ciolan 2014, 57).

Primary and Pre-primary Teacher

(Profesor pentru învățământul primar și preșcolar)

The CPD of Primary and Pre-primary Teachers (university route specialism) is located within a broad and comprehensive system organised and coordinated at the national level by MEN.

According to the Education Act 1/2001, CPD is both a right and an obligation for teachers, and can be realised in the following ways:

- a) programmes and activities for the continuous improvement of scientific, pedagogical and didactic skills;
- b) training programmes in the area of management, leadership and evaluation of education;
- c) training courses and exams for teaching awards II and I (see below);
- d) professional reconversion programmes for persons with a non-specialist background;
- e) studies corresponding to a degree specialisation.

Both pedagogical and management staff in pre-university education are required to participate in credit-awarding training programmes every five years after passing the final qualifying exam (*definitivat*) which confers teacher certification.

Accumulating credits has an impact both on salaries and career advancement. For instance, participation in CPD and credit accumulation is one of the key criteria for awarding teachers a salary supplement, called 'merit award' (*gradație de merit*). This is obtained through an open

competition and is based on the teacher's professional achievements over the last five years. The stipend adds around 25% to the salary for a duration of five years.

In order to accumulate credits, teachers have to participate in accredited training courses. At the national level, MEN has a specialised accreditation body for teacher and management training courses in pre-university education: This *Specialised Commission for Accreditation* is composed of twenty independent experts appointed through an open call for a duration of five years, with the possibility of two mandates. These experts work closely with the permanent staff in the Ministry of National Education responsible for CPD (Directorate for Continuing Training). The Commission is asked to evaluate the course proposals submitted by different providers. Once accredited, these courses are included in the register of accredited training providers and are assigned a specific number of professional transferable credits.

Graduates of the study programme *Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-primary Education* can benefit from CPD activities in public institutions, primary and pre-primary education units, County Teachers' Centres (regional CPD provider), professional associations and trade unions. According to the regulations in force, the continuing training provider can be an educational institution, public or private, a non-governmental organisation or even a private company specialising in CPD. The training courses they submit for accreditation to the national responsible body should comply with the professional standards for the teaching profession and with the regulatory framework for accreditation of training providers, provided by Ministerial Order no. 5564/2011: *Methodology for accreditation and periodical evaluation of CPD providers and their programmes*.

Teachers' Centres (known as 'Teacher Training Houses' - *Casa Corpului Didactic*) are important CPD providers at the local/county level and are part of a national network financed by Ministry of National Education.

In synthesis, the offer of accredited CPD should fall under one of the categories of programmes described in the table below.

Table 11

Romania: Structure of accredited CPD programmes and envisaged competences (compiled from Education Act 1/2011 and Ministerial Order no. 5564/2011)

| Programme types | Envisaged competences |
|---|--|
| <i>Category 1:</i> Professional development programmes for specific competency areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Improving and developing competences in the specific teaching domain (pre-primary, primary...) and in the area of educational psychology, pedagogy and didactics; b) Developing competences needed for career progression/ advancement; c) Acquiring or developing management and leadership competences. |
| <i>Category 2:</i> Professional development programmes related to Ministry of National Education policies and strategies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Developing complementary competences to extend the professional's knowledge and area of activity, such as: computer-assisted teaching, teaching in a foreign language, counselling and guidance, adult education. b) Developing and extending overarching competences regarding interaction and communication in social and pedagogical milieus: organising, leading and improving performance of professional groups, reflective practice, etc. |
| <i>Category 3:</i> Non-profession-related modular programmes | CPD programmes initiated by training providers which cover competence areas other than those specified above. |
| <i>Category 4:</i> Special programmes | CPD programmes designed by training providers according to needs-based assessments. |

Note: Category 1 programmes are offered only by universities known for their research competence in these areas (Category A universities), and Category 2 programmes by those known for their competence in teacher education and research (Category B universities, according to the national system of classification of universities).

A special form of CPD is directly related to **career advancement and promotion**, namely courses in Category 1b) in the above table. After they have passed their *definitivat* exam and have made the first step in their professional career, pedagogical staff follow special training courses to target the next two formal steps: 2nd teaching award and 1st teaching award³. Both the training courses and the examination for obtaining these further qualifications are organised by selected universities. Both courses cover the didactics of specific subject areas (mathematic and sciences, language, arts, etc.), and also a component of psycho-pedagogical knowledge and skills.

To obtain the 1st teaching award, teachers have to pass a practical examination based on classroom inspections conducted by specialists in the school inspectorate. They also have to follow a one-year period assigned for practitioner's research in a specific area, coordinated by an academic at the university and finalised with a paper that has to be defended in front of a committee including a specialist inspector and a university representative in the area of educational sciences. Career advancement leads to a salary increase and possible changes in the professional responsibilities (getting involved in mentoring, CPD of colleagues, etc.).

CPD as continuing skills development and upgrading is organised by the Methodology Commission⁴. This commission is a kind of community of practitioners who meet at least once a week and debate, reflect, exchange experiences and perform analyses of needs and improvement plans. Their activity is based on peer learning and deals with professional issues at the institutional level. From time to time, they may be asked by the school inspectorate to host a Pedagogical Circle (*Cercul Pedagogic*) in their kindergarten, a regular meeting of professionals from a designated area (i.e. Bucharest sector), coordinated by the local school inspectorate. CPD activities may include: demonstrating new materials or approaches in learning; encouraging inter-institutional collaboration and exchange of experiences; presenting papers and scientific research topics; debating legislative requirements; providing counselling support for newly qualified staff.

In addition to the nationally regulated framework for CPD in pre-primary education in Romania, a considerable amount of CPD activities also take place at the institutional/local level, but mostly these are non-credit based activities. Some examples are: sessions for learning about new research and educational approaches; symposia on current issues; workshops on psychological and pedagogical issues relating to ECEC, conferences, etc.

Box 2

Romania: CPD course content (examples for Bucharest)

Examples of the content of CPD courses provided by the Teacher Training House in Bucharest include: Educational management and leadership (60 credits); mentoring (60 credits); classroom management; career development in teaching (25 credits); quality management, institutional self-evaluation (11 credits); non-formal management activities (15 credits); education for human and children's rights (11 credits); creative approaches to the early childhood curriculum (12 credits); 'better parents, better children' (30 credits).

There are also other providers, such as the University of Titu Maiorescu, the University of Applied Sciences Bu-

³ 2nd and 1st teaching awards are part of the career advancement system in Romania, established by law. They are professional development steps on the career ladder, obtained through a specific process and after passing an examination. The 1st teaching award is the highest professional degree/step on the career ladder for qualified teachers. Both are available only for qualified, full-time teachers.

⁴ Methodology Commissions are organised at each educational institution level and comprise teachers from the same area of specialisation (e.g. pre-primary education). For example, in kindergartens, the Methodology Commission includes all kindergarten teachers and is chaired by an experienced and pedagogically competent teacher.

charest, the Ministry of Labour, Family and Equal Opportunities and various foundations. Their programmes include: Resource management in educational institutions; ethics in education through communication, training and responsibility (15 credits); educational management (25 credits); reshaping professional development in the pre-university education system (25 credits).

Overall, however, the number of courses specifically targeting ECEC staff is not extensive, particularly courses funded by the national or local authorities. Public investment in CPD in recent years mostly took the form of Structural Funds projects, but this situation created considerable disparities in terms of access, which was much easier for professionals working in large cities than for those in rural environments. The financing of CPD is currently a critical issue. Investment at the national level is restricted to projects and the modest funding of the Teacher Training Houses. Investment at the local/institutional investment is very limited and staff participation in CPD is compromised by the very low level of their income.

Two recent national projects had a significant component dedicated to human resource development in ECEC:

PRET (2007-2016), *Programme for Early Childhood Education Reform*, was mainly an infrastructure development project, addressing 750 kindergartens around the country, but also had a training component, comprising specific modules for educators (approx. 35,000), staff in child-care centres and crèches: caregivers, medical assistants (approx. 13,000), managers (approx. 2,500) and also parents.

PETI (2007-2011), *Programme for Inclusive Early Childhood Education*, aimed to increase participation in early childhood education for vulnerable groups, especially the Roma population, and also included a CPD component focussing on inclusive education, special needs, equity and working with vulnerable groups and communities. More than 4,000 professionals were involved in these training modules.

Important support materials were developed for the professionals working in the field, as is the case with the Good Practices Handbook (MEN 2008b), but also the newly revised curriculum for the early childhood education of children aged 3-6/7 (MEN 2008a).

An important benefit of CPD is that the credits acquired are useful for international professional mobility (i.e. Erasmus) or when enrolling in further education, such as a Master's study programme, post-university courses or even a PhD. There are plenty of Master's degrees relevant for ECEC practitioners and the level of interest and attendance rates for this type of education are currently increasing. In public universities, ECEC professionals (as well as any other candidates) are eligible for subsidised places (free of charge). The numbers of allocated subsidised places for a specific Master programme are determined by the higher education institution. Examples of Master programmes/domains with relevance for ECEC staff are: Early Childhood Education; School counselling and guidance; Learning, innovation and coaching in education; Educational management; Speech therapy; Inclusive education; Mentoring in education.

As previously stated, CPD is a legal entitlement for Pre-primary Teachers, but also an obligation. Participation in CPD activities is permitted during working hours, but only outside the direct contact hours. Nevertheless, some contact hours may also be used for CPD if a kindergarten is hosting a Pedagogical Circle or organises internal CPD activities involving demonstration activities.

In conclusion, the CPD system is quite diverse, even eclectic, but there is still a mismatch between the regulatory framework and formal provisions and effective implementation on the ground. Unfortunately, no large-scale research projects on CPD in ECEC provision were funded during recent years to document the key issues and challenges of the domain.

One of the significant debates about CPD in ECEC is related to the financing of this activity through public funds. This debate is not necessarily just an issue for early education teachers, but for pre-university education staff in general. What is needed is an improved correlation

between the formal requirements for participation in CPD, and the availability of funding resources for the providers of CPD.

Another area currently under scrutiny is the system for career progression/advancement, with the *definitivat* exam and the two subsequent teaching awards. A second issue, which is part of the national strategy on early childhood education, is to really contribute to an integrated system of ECEC, also from the perspective of professionals working with all age groups from 0 to 6 years.

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

Professionalisation of ECEC management positions

In 2016, MEN undertook the assessment of principals' positions. This represents an important step towards the professionalization of ECEC management activities and towards a more transparent process for the selection of Centre/Kindergarten Heads, based on explicit criteria, with the direct involvement of major stakeholders.

A National Assessment Procedure for those applying for the position is carried out in all pre-university educational institutions, i.e. in schools and kindergartens. In order to participate in this assessment process, candidates have to

- complete a standardised written test focusing on cognitive and management abilities;
- participate in an assessment interview held by a selection board comprising representatives of the County School Inspectorate, regional/local public authorities, the ECEC/school setting, and trade unions representing employees in education. Interviews focus on a management project related to institutional development of the ECEC/school setting in question;
- present a professional portfolio to the selection board in which his/her management experiences and expertise are assessed, including specialist management training courses undertaken.

The first round of this national assessment has already taken place and according to the policy message and the final results it was a success.

Pilot project for developing innovative nursery settings

In 2012, a significant pilot institution was founded in Bucharest: the Romanian-Danish Centre for Integrated Education. This nursery setting, which welcomes socially disadvantaged children between 0 and 4 years of age from vulnerable environments in Bucharest, resulted from a project financed by The Velux Foundation in Denmark and by the General Directorate for Social Work and Child Protection (DGASPC) in District 1 of Bucharest. The project was implemented by DGASPC in collaboration with the VIA University College in Denmark, the University of Bucharest (Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences) and the "Pro Vocatie" Centre for Resources and Training in Social Professions. Beneficial for the implementation of this initiative were the previously established and stable partnerships between local authorities, university representatives and the non-profit sector organisations involved in early childhood education and care.

The know-how gained from this 'good practice' project has been incorporated into a new programme extending the programme to all crèches in Sector 1, with 'lessons learned' and disseminated on a broader level in Bucharest and beyond. Currently, DGASPC Sector 1 has managed to secure funding (more than 250,000 EUR) from local authorities (no further external funding involved) to support CPD, and successful educational interventions were consolidated in the first part of the project.

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

There has been little large-scale funding of research on early childhood education and care in Romania. UNICEF Romania continues to support reports and studies about this age level which are very much needed and appreciated; however, they tend to be mostly policy-focused rather than practice-focused.

Effects of a Teacher-Focused Educational Intervention on Children's Well-Being

Source: Rodawell – Romanian-Danish Centre for Children's Well-Being (an ongoing research and development project coordinated by the University of Bucharest, 2016-2019).

Aims and background: The aim of this ongoing investigation is to devise, implement and measure the effects of a multi-component educational intervention targeted at 4- to 10-year old children recruited from two kindergartens and two primary schools located in areas of Bucharest that are lower-than-average in terms of socioeconomic living conditions. This is a longitudinal research study that compares the well-being and academic performance of children enrolled in two state education settings. In the first group the children are exposed to enhanced educational intervention; in the second (control group) the age-matched children do not experience the intervention programme. The intervention builds on the success of the RODACIE program that was developed by Romanian and Danish education experts and piloted during 2011-2015 with economically-disadvantaged preschoolers. The project is conducted by members of the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences at the University of Bucharest in collaboration with a team of educational researchers and trainers from VIA University College in Denmark.

Procedure: One of the main goals is to provide teachers with intensive training sessions in key areas which address both the content taught in class and the learning and relational environment. During the 12 months of intervention teachers are offered opportunities for "formative evaluation" while the intervention team offers on-going and direct support for transferring new skills to students in class.

Design: Two groups: control and intervention; Pre- (baseline), mid-term (six months into the intervention) and post-intervention measurement (at the end of the programme).

Sample: 247 children in the intervention group (89 in kindergartens; 158 in primary schools); 191 children in the control group (93 in kindergartens; 98 in primary schools).

Instruments: Well-validated and widely-implemented instruments are used to assess the children's emotional, behavioural and social functioning.

Findings and implications: It can be assumed that this research will produce a comprehensive final report on the well-being of children at risk in kindergartens and primary schools. The preliminary findings (May 2017) especially underlined a high level of vulnerability within the emotional and social indicators. Finally, it is intended to translate the findings of the study into a "Well-Being Barometer" to be used as a self-assessment and diagnostic tool in kindergartens and primary schools across Romania.

Evaluation of early childhood education environments

Source: Early Change project: 517999-LLP-1-2011-1-GR-COMENIUS-CMP; Gregoriadis et al. 2014 (see *References* for full details)

Aims and background: This was a project funded by the European Commission, in which Romania was a partner. Besides having a professional development component, a research component had the following objectives:

- (a) collecting empirical data for the assessment of the structural quality and process quality of educational care and pre-primary settings for toddlers and pre-schoolers;
- (b) comparing the quality of early childhood education environments across six different educational systems by processing the selected data using advanced statistical analyses;
- (c) recording a wide range of ‘best practices’ implemented in early childhood classrooms in the participating countries. These data were compiled by the early educators during the second training phase, using an observation tool.

Procedure: The research was implemented in six countries: Greece, Finland, Denmark, Portugal, Romania, Cyprus, and from Romania a total number of 16 kindergartens, 128 groups of children and 120 ECEC educators were involved. The educators were trained to use the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-R (ECERS-R) that evaluates the quality of early childhood environments with different subscales: interaction, activities, language and reasoning, personal care routines, programme structure, space and furnishings. The standardised ECERS-R, which was translated and adapted to Romanian circumstances, was the main tool implemented both by the academic staff involved (the core team comprised the authors of the current report), and by the ECEC professionals in kindergartens who had been trained to use it. ECERS-R (Harms, Clifford, and Cryer 2005) was selected because it is a widely accepted and tested scale and has already been implemented in many developed countries (e.g. USA, UK, Germany, Sweden, Japan).

Findings: In all six participating countries the “interaction” subscale was rated the highest. In Romania “space and furnishings” was placed on second position, followed by “personal care”, “activities”, “language and reasoning” and “programme structure” (for details see Gregoriadis et.al. 2014, 18-19). Key findings in terms of research and examples of good practice were compiled in an e-book available at <http://earlychange.teithe.gr>.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

The salaries in **nurseries/crèches** and infant-toddler centres are the responsibility of local authorities, and there are no public data available.

The salaries of professional staff in **kindergartens** are regulated at the national level by law. Since 2016, many changes are underway regarding the legislation which regulates salaries in the public sector. One of the issues under debate is an increase in the salaries of teachers in kindergartens. The calculation of salaries will take into account many factors such as: level of studies, years of experience on the job, level of professional qualification gained through career advancement courses, etc. What the outcome will be remains unclear at the present time. The salaries are higher for professionals holding a higher education degree, and generally higher in kindergartens than in crèches.

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

The majority of professional staff employed in ECEC works on a full-time basis, since there is little flexibility in terms of employment regulations. The regular working week comprises 40 hours, whereas the time for direct interaction with children varies according to the type of institution and the way the service is regulated. For instance, both short programme (around four hours per day) and extended programme (around eight hours per day) kindergartens exist. In the latter case, professional staff may work in shifts if the opening hours exceed the regular working hours of the staff.

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

In the light of new policy initiatives related to the teaching profession, the induction of newly qualified teachers/educators is under debate again. After taking up their first job, teachers usually have a probationary period of two years (see end of *Section 4*), after which they take an examination called *definitivat*, which is both the final certification as a professional, and also the first step in career development. However, because of the lack of investment in this area, the amount of support they receive in the workplace varies considerably.

8.4 Non-contact time

The contractual obligations of both professional staff working in nurseries/crèches and in kindergartens include responsibilities which are not necessarily related to direct contact with children, such as participation in training and professional development activities, mentoring for other newly employed professionals, etc. In fact, staff responsibilities, mostly in kindergartens, diversified considerably in recent years, creating an increasing workload and pressure for the profession. There are no compiled national data available, but it can be estimated that a kindergarten teacher spends an average of two hours per day on this type of activity.

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

In terms of services for children under 3 years of age there is both a shortage of available provision and a shortage of qualified staff. The main reasons for the latter are the low salaries and the challenging work conditions.

In kindergartens/pre-primary education, the share of qualified staff is rather high, giving the system a certain level of stability. Basically, there is no shortage of qualified staff at the national level, particularly if the large number of study programmes in Pedagogy for Primary and Pre-primary Education accredited over the last few years are taken into account. However, the staffing situation in small urban and more isolated rural areas is a different matter, where providers have difficulties to recruit qualified staff. The main problem is twofold: one is related to the low level of income, and the other one is the inequality of qualified staff supplies in different areas.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

The main challenge for the early childhood system in general and the ECEC workforce in particular is that there are **no formal employment conditions** and **no specialist qualification requirements** for staff working in **nursery settings** in Romania. Although universities have started to qualify appropriate specialists through Bachelor's and Master's degrees, the infant-toddler centres are nowhere near to being staffed with such specialists. Unfortunately there are no clear prospects for improving this situation in the near future. Debates on which authority should be responsible for regulating and funding such settings remain located at the administrative level and have failed to have an effective impact on the ground.

In terms of **kindergarten attendance**, although the official and formal attendance rates are high, many children attend only sporadically, creating significant challenges for the staff regarding appropriate support for the children's transition to school. Moreover, these irregular attendance patterns complicate a coherent and integrated educational approach with the whole group.

A third challenge relates to a significant **pressure on staff** in kindergartens/early childhood education to acquire as many formal certificates as possible through participation in training and professional development activities. Although the idea is not in itself negative, it creates a real run for formal certificates and tends to diminish interest in taking time for self-reflection, peer learning and cooperative action-research projects. The bureaucratic burdens and the high level of pressure emanating from both authorities and families regarding the safety and well-being of the children seriously limit the professional freedom of the staff and their possibilities of designing motivating learning activities.

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