

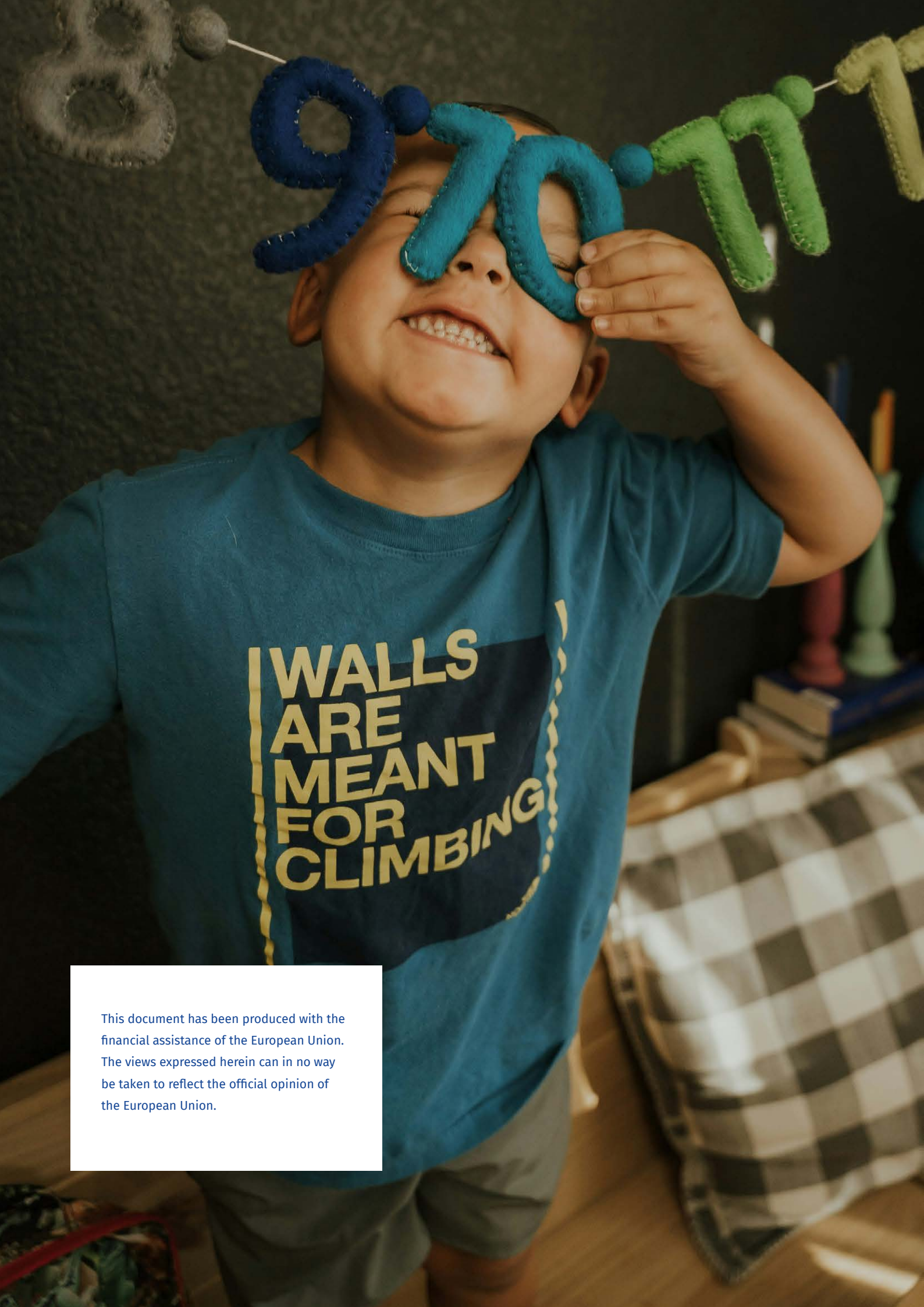


NATIONAL EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE QUALITY FRAMEWORK

For the project
Supporting the expansion and strategic
development of Early Childhood
Education and Care in Cyprus

2024

This Project is funded by the European Union via the Recovery and Resilience Fund. It is implemented by UNICEF in cooperation with the European Commission through the Technical Support Instrument.



This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union.

Contents

1. Introduction	3
1. Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Definition and Key concepts	4
2. The importance of high-quality ECEC for child development	6
3. European Quality Framework for ECEC	8
4. Current status quo of ECEC in Cyprus	10
5. The vision of the National Quality Framework for ECEC and its guiding principles	15
6. Quality statements and quality indicators of the National ECEC Quality Framework	16
6.1. Quality statements and quality indicators for Governance and Funding	18
6.2. Quality statements and quality indicators for Access	19
6.3. Quality statements and quality indicators for Curricula	20
6.4. Quality statements and quality indicators for Staff	21
6.5. Quality statements and quality indicators for Monitoring and Evaluation	23
7. Considerations on the application of the National ECEC Quality Framework and procedures of evaluation	25



Introduction

Cyprus acknowledges the provision of affordable high quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) as a condition for promoting children's early development and their subsequent school performance. It recognizes ECEC as an area that needs improvement and therefore has high policy priority. This is highlighted in the national Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP), adopted in 2021, which includes both investments and reforms in the area of ECEC to be financed through the EU's Recovery and Resilience Fund (RRF) in 2021-2026.

To support these activities, Cyprus requested from the European Commission to include funds in the RRP for additional technical support on the design and implementation of structural reforms in the area of ECEC. Implemented through the EU's Technical Support Instrument, by UNICEF in co-operation with the European Commission, this 2-year project is supporting the expansion and strategic development of ECEC in the Republic of Cyprus with the objective of raising its quality, affordability, accessibility and inclusiveness.

As one of the key measures of this project, a National Quality Framework for the sector of ECEC was developed by the Project's Working Group and is presented in the current document. The proposed National ECEC Quality Framework lays the foundations for the evaluation of the ECEC sector in terms of policy and structural, procedural and content-related factors, both at national and local level.

1. Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Definition and Key concepts

Quality in early childhood education and care has been the focus of scientific attention and discussion for decades. Although several definitions have been provided for the concept of quality in ECEC, there has not been a unanimous agreement on this issue (Ishimine, Tayler & Bennett, 2010¹). Instead, the international community has achieved a significant degree of consensus on important minimum standards for the quality in ECEC. Achieving commonly agreed standards for the quality in ECEC is paramount to strengthen, monitor and assess quality, as quality refers to compliance with specific requirements (OECD, 2012²). Nowadays it is widely accepted that quality standards may also include “quality beyond regulations” (OECD, 2018³), as for example the so-called process quality dimensions. Nevertheless, one should bear in mind that the notion of quality in ECEC also depends on the values and beliefs of each society in relation to childhood and the importance of early education and care for child development; thus, culture and context also influence the conceptualization of high-quality ECEC (Rosenthal, 2003⁴).

Current policy, research and practice accept that to define quality in ECEC, two key concepts have to be considered and addressed: structural quality and process quality. **Structural quality** refers to the planning and organization of early childhood education and care at national and local level; it is mostly defined and regulated by Laws, decrees, and other national documents; and for this reason, it is relatively stable across time. In the context of structural quality, dimensions of ECEC related to funding, staffing, registration and accreditation of ECEC settings, curriculum development, teacher-children ratio, health and safety requirements, opening and closing times of ECEC settings, and provisions to ensure that all children have access to services, are treated. Process quality is linked to the national pedagogical approach towards early education and care, as well as to the pedagogical and operating culture of each ECEC setting, both of which are directly linked to and strongly influential for everyday children’s experiences. Thus, **process quality** provisions and specifications define how the national objectives in relation to the ECEC curricular content, the provision of care, the learning process, the ensuring of safety, among others, are implemented in practice. Special attention in the context of process quality is given to interpersonal and group interactions in the ECEC settings, as all pedagogical activities are mediated and are strongly influenced by them. The quality of relationships and interactions between adults and children, children and other children, and the settings and community are a key aspect of process quality. As such, process quality provides a framework for the collaboration between the ECEC staff, families, and the community, and ensures child participation in all activities and decisions that concern them.

In 2019, the Council of the European Union made a significant contribution towards achieving a European consensus on a set of important minimum standards for the quality in ECEC through the publication of its document entitled “*Recommendations on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems*”⁵. The document includes a set of guiding principles for the development of high-quality ECEC systems and services and provides quality statements for five important dimensions of ECEC: access, staffing, curriculum, monitoring and evaluation, and governance and funding. This European Quality Framework has already inspired and supported many national developments in the ECEC sector in a number of European countries. A more detailed presentation of the European Quality Framework is provided in section 3 of the present document.

1 Ishimine, K., Tayler, C. & Bennett, J. Quality and Early Childhood Education and Care: A Policy Initiative for the 21st Century. ICEP 4, 67–80 (2010). <https://doi.org/10.1007/2288-6729-4-2-67>

2 OECD (2012). *Starting Strong III - A Quality Toolbox for Early Childhood Education and Care*. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/startingstrongiii-aqualitytoolboxforearlychildhoodeducationandcare.htm>

3 OECD (2018), *Engaging Young Children: Lessons from Research about Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care, Starting Strong*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264085145-en>.

4 Rosenthal, M.K. (2003). Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: A cultural context. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 11(2), 101-116. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13502930385209191>

5 Council of the European Union (2019). *Council Recommendation on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems*. (2019/C 189/02). Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32019H0605%2801%29>

2. The importance of high-quality ECEC for child development

Developmental science has shown that early years' experiences shape future development. Early relationships that are sensitive and centered to child's needs (e.g., Osher et al., 2021⁶); a developmentally well-fitted and safe environment that provides adequate and sufficient stimuli for the child's age (e.g., Piccolo & Noble, 2018⁷); and people and services that ensure good health and growth, constitute important preconditions for child's optimal development (e.g., Moore et al., 2015⁸). On the other hand, insensitive, emotionally disengaged and/or violent relationships (e.g., Jonson-Reid, Kohl, & Drake, 2012⁹); environments deprived from basic goods, good hygiene and safety, which do not proportionate opportunities to the child to explore the world and grow through interacting with it (e.g., Sheridan & McLaughlin, 2014¹⁰); and lack of access to services supportive to the child and family, pose children at risk for adverse developmental outcomes (Moore et al., 2015).

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings constitute the first community space that young children systematically attend, outside home. Thus, ECEC services have attracted the attention of researchers and policy-makers alike due to their potential in contributing to healthy child development and wellbeing, and in decreasing the effect of risks that children may face in their home environments.

Research has shown that high-quality ECEC is beneficial to child social, cognitive, and motor development, and academic achievement, and is associated with less behavioral and socioemotional problems (von Suchodoletz et al., 2023¹¹), especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Melhuish, et al., 2015¹²). The positive effects are both, short and long term (van Huizen & Plantenga, 2018¹³). Furthermore, Heckman (2012) has argued that investment in quality ECEC for disadvantaged children should be prioritized, and that *"the highest rate of return in early childhood development comes from investing as early as possible, from birth through age five, in disadvantaged families. Starting at age three or four is too little too late, as it fails to recognize that skills beget skills in a complementary and dynamic way"* (cited in Heckman Equation, n.d., para. 1¹⁴).

On the other hand, poor quality ECEC has been found to bear no positive effects on preschool children from well and healthy families, while it may increase the risk for negative developmental outcomes for children from disadvantaged backgrounds especially during their first three years of life (Melhuish, et al., 2015).

-
- 6 Osher, D., Cantor, P., Berg, J., Steyer, L. & Rose, T. (2021). Drivers of Human Development: How Relationships and Context Shape Learning and Development. In: P. Cantor & D. Osher (Eds.). *The Science of Learning and Development - Enhancing the Lives of All Young People*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003038016>
- 7 Piccolo, L.R. & Noble, K.G. (2018). Poverty, early experience, and brain development. In: C.H. Zeanah (ed.). *Handbook of infant mental health* (p. 157-171). The Guilford Press. ISBN 9781462537105
- 8 Moore, T.G., McDonald, M., Carlon, L. & O'Rourke, K. (2015). Early childhood development and the social determinants of health inequities, *Health Promotion International*, Vol.30, Issue suppl_2, Pages ii102–ii115, <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/dav031>
- 9 Jonson-Reid, M., Kohl, P.L. & Drake, B. (2012). Child and Adult Outcomes of Chronic Child Maltreatment. *Pediatrics*, 129 (5), 839–845. 10.1542/peds.2011-2529
- 10 Sheridan, M.A. & McLaughlin, K.A. (2014). Dimensions of Early Experience and Neural Development: Deprivation and Threat. *Trends in Cognitive Science*, 18(11), 580-585. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2014.09.001>
- 11 von Suchodoletz A, Lee DS, Henry J, Tamang S, Premachandra B, et al. (2023). Early childhood education and care quality and associations with child outcomes: A meta-analysis. *PLOS ONE* 18(10): e0293056. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0293056>
- 12 Melhuish, E., Ereky-Stevens, K., Petrogiannis, K., Ariescu, A., Pender, E., Rentzou, K., Tawell, A., Slot, P., Broekhuizen, M., & Leserman, P. (2015). A review of research on the effects of early childhood education and care (ECEC) on child development. In *Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European Early Childhood Education and Care* (CARE - European Early Childhood Education and Care Publications). CARE - European Early Childhood Education and Care. Available at: <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:bb919f6f-cd43-42d8-89ff-da525dc63554>
- 13 van Huizen, T. & Plantenga, J. (2018). Do children benefit from universal early childhood education and care? A meta-analysis of evidence from natural experiments. *Economics of Education Review*, 66, 206-222. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2018.08.001>
- 14 Heckman Equation (n.d.). *Invest in early childhood development: Reduce deficits, strengthen the economy*. Available at: https://heckmanequation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/F_HeckmanDeficitPieceCUSTOM-Generi_052714-3-1.pdf

3. European Quality Framework for ECEC

The European Commission's work on promoting systematically the provision of high-quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) started with the publication of the report on ECEC in 2014, produced by a Working Group (WG) comprised of European ECEC experts under the auspices of the European Commission¹⁵. In 2017, the same WG started developing specific quality indicators to monitor the quality of ECEC services in the European countries. In 2019, the European Quality Framework for ECEC was published (Council of the European Union, 2019)¹⁶, and it is supported by a number of other documents and toolkits such as a toolkit for inclusion¹⁷, and guidelines on how to recruit, train and motivate well-qualified staff¹⁸. The European Quality Framework for ECEC identified five important areas that should be systematically monitored and evaluated to achieve high-quality ECEC services (Figures 1 and 2): access; staff; curriculum; evaluation and monitoring; and governance and funding. Figure 2 summarizes the aspects of quality treated by each of those five areas.

Figure 1. The European Quality Framework for ECEC



The Member-States have taken advantage of the European Quality Framework for ECEC in different manners and degrees. Some Member-States considered extensively the European ECEC Quality Framework in recent reforms of their ECEC system (e.g., Belgium, Bulgaria), others used the quality framework to guide reforms in specific areas of the ECEC system, while others reportedly did not use the European Quality Framework as the basis of recent reforms (e.g., Denmark). The Network of Experts on Social Aspects of Education and Training (NESET II, 2017¹⁹) found that the majority of European countries that did use the ECEC QF as a point of reference, demonstrated special interest in three ECEC areas: access, staff, and curriculum. Less impact had the areas of monitoring and evaluation, and governance and funding. The European Quality Framework for ECEC has also been used by individual countries as a "methodological tool" for the evaluation of their already established ECEC systems. Finally, the framework has been used as a starting point for dialogue with local stakeholders, as well as an advocacy tool to promote specific ECEC policies.

¹⁵ European Commission, 2014. Proposal for key principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care. Report of the Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care under the auspices of the European Commission. Available at https://www.value-ecce.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/eccec-quality-framework_en.pdf

¹⁶ Council of the European Union (2019). Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems. ST/9014/2019/INIT. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32019H0605%2801%29&qid=1627470989089>

¹⁷ European Commission (2020) 'Toolkit for inclusive early childhood education and care: providing high quality education and care to all young children'. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/4c526047-6f3c-11eb-aeb5-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-search>

¹⁸ European Commission (2020) 'ET2020 Working Group early childhood education and care: how to recruit, train and motivate well-qualified staff'. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/47ba3c3a-6789-11eb-aeb5-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-190311791%22>

¹⁹ Lazzari, A. (2017) 'The current state of national ECEC quality frameworks or equivalent strategic policy documents, governing ECEC quality in EU Member States', NESET II, ad hoc questions No 04/2017. Available at: <https://nesetweb.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/AHQ4.pdf>

Figure 2. Aspects of quality treated by each of the five areas of the European Quality Framework for ECEC

1 ACCESSIBILITY	1. Available and affordable for everyone
	2. Participation, social cohesion, and diversity
2 STAFF AND WORKING CONDITIONS	3. Training and permanent learning
	4. Supporting working conditions
3 CURRICULUM	5. Holistic development of the child
	6. Collaboration and reflection
4 MONITORING AND EVALUATION	7. Information to support the improvement of quality
	8. In the child's best interest
5 POLICY AND FINANCING	9. Responsibility and collaboration
	10. Right to access

Source: ISSA-International Step by Step Association (n.d.). 5 steps to quality: Training package for early childhood training providers: European Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care²⁰.

²⁰ The document is available here: <https://www.issa.nl/sites/default/files/pdf/Publications/by%20members/5%20Steps%20to%20Quality%20-%20Training%20Package%20-%20final%20version.pdf>



4. Current status quo of ECEC in Cyprus

Cyprus acknowledges the importance of providing affordable high-quality ECEC as a condition for promoting children's early development and their subsequent school performance. It recognizes ECEC as an area that needs improvement and therefore has high policy priority. This is highlighted in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) adopted in 2021. Thus, Cyprus requested technical support from the EU through the Technical Support Instrument (TSI) to enhance the quality, affordability, accessibility, and inclusiveness of ECEC for children aged zero to six years old. The two-year TSI project is fully financed through the Recovery and Resilience Fund and implemented by UNICEF in co-operation with the European Commission. The Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare (Social Welfare Services) and the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MOESY) lead this initiative.

In this context, a series of five (05) workshops was organized for the purpose of analyzing the current status quo of the ECEC sector in Cyprus. The participants of the workshop were high-level representatives from the two leading authorities in the ECEC sector in Cyprus, Ministry of Education, Sport, and Youth (MOESY) and the Social Welfare Services (SWS) of the Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare (DMSW); technical officers /Project leaders from the two competent authorities; inspectors from both competent authorities working at the field of ECEC; health professionals; academics working on the ECEC sector; representatives from the private ECEC sector; Representatives of Parents' Associations and the civil society; UNICEF; and the European Commission. The workshops were carried out across a 5-month period.

The European Quality Framework for ECEC²¹ was used as a reference point for the evaluation of the current status quo of the ECEC sector. An adapted version of the UNICEF's Built to Last Framework's Sector Analysis Tool²² was used to guide the diagnostic workshops and the analysis. The main findings from this analysis are presented in Table 1.

Tabel 1. Summary of ECEC sector analysis findings

CHALLENGES	SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION
Enabling environment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → There is not a coordination mechanism between the two competent authorities on issues related to the ECEC sector. → There is limited financial and operational support to the mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of the ECEC sector. → Due to the split system, the existing legislative framework on ECEC is fragmented and different Laws treat different ECEC age bands (in particular, for children aged 3 to 4 8/12). → There is the need for further cooperation between competent State authorities, and the private ECEC providers for the ages from 0 to preprimary compulsory school age. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Establishment of institutionalized coordination between competent authorities. ✓ Developmental of a single Legislative Framework for the whole ECEC sector (0-6 years). ✓ Strengthen funding for the ECEC sector, especially for services offered to children from zero to four years old, with extra focus on monitoring and evaluation, and for additional staff training. ✓ Increase accessibility and affordability of ECEC for vulnerable groups. ✓ Promote and develop further specialization of ECEC professionals. ✓ Creation of a repository of ECEC good practices.

21 Council of the European Union (2019). Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems. ST/9014/2019/INIT. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32019H0605%2801%29&qid=1627470989089>

22 United Nations Children's Fund, Build to Last: A framework in support of universal quality pre-primary education, UNICEF, New York, February 2020.

CHALLENGES

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION

Planning and Budgeting	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → There is no single national strategy for the whole ECEC sector, that is, for children from 0 to 6 years old. → Both competent authorities have minimum standards for the operation and licensing of ECEC settings (e.g., public, community, private), which, however, vary considerably among them. → There are accessibility and affordability restrictions for children from vulnerable groups (e.g., disability, refugee background, etc.), especially for ages 0 to 3 years. → There is not a database to register ECEC enrolment and attendance for children from 0 to 3 years, and for children from 3 to 4.8/12 years attending ECEC settings registered and inspected by the DMSW. → There is not a mechanism to systematically collect ECEC supply and demand data for the whole sector, based on which the funding could be decided. → There is the need for further financial support to monitor and evaluate the ECEC settings. → There is the need to decrease the bureaucracy for the use of ECEC funds, especially in what concerns ECEC services for children from 3- to 6-year-olds, through local school boards (scholikes efories). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Creation of a unified and holistic National Strategy for the whole spectrum of ECEC (0-6 years). ✓ Investigate the feasibility of developing universal policies for ECEC, applicable to different types of ECEC settings, including home-based services. ✓ Increase funding for monitoring and evaluation of ECEC settings, including increased number of inspectors, education and training of inspectors for the whole spectrum of ECEC (0-6 years), development and institutionalization of common monitoring and evaluation tools known to ECEC providers and all other stakeholders. ✓ Increase funding to cover educational needs, as reduction of child/teacher ratio, increase in the number of supportive staff in ECEC settings. ✓ Expand the indicators in the database for ages 3-6 years and create a database for ages 0-4.8/12 years in what concerns ECEC settings registered and inspected by the DMSW. Establish mechanisms to exploit and make use of data and foresee its publication. ✓ Ensuring accessibility and affordability of ECEC for all children (e.g., by expanding funding schemes, establishing ECEC settings in areas of high demand and low supply). ✓ Reduction of bureaucracy in the utilization of funds by the directorates of school units.
Curriculum development and implementation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → There is not a single pedagogical framework for the whole ECEC sector (0-6 years). → There is not a curriculum for the ages 0-3 years attending nurseries, as well as for the ages 3-4 8/12 that attend facilities registered and inspected by the SWS. → The private sector demonstrates low participation in the trainings on the MoESY's curriculum. → Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the curriculum takes place as part of the wider inspection of school operations; there is the need to establish specific procedures towards this end. → There is not an institutionalized mechanism for the development, monitoring, evaluation, and review of the curriculum. → There is not specialized university training in the provision of ECEC for children from 0 to 3 years of age. → There is the need to promote pedagogical approaches that support children with different educational needs (e.g., different age groups, children with disabilities and special educational needs, bilingual children, etc.) in the ECEC, such as the approach of differentiated pedagogy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Development of a unified pedagogical framework for the whole ECEC sector, by a special committee of experts from universities, the DMSW (SWS) and the MOESY. ✓ Development of pedagogical guidelines/ curriculum for children from zero to three years (which can be based on the 2010 proposal). ✓ Establishment of a mechanism for the development, monitoring, evaluation and revision of pedagogical framework and curricula (0-3 and 3-6 years old). ✓ Establishment of a single body for the ECEC sector (e.g., Deputy Ministry of ECEC, inter-departmental/inter-ministerial committee, and other solutions). ✓ Collaboration with Universities to provide specialized training in the provision of ECEC services for 0-3-year-olds. ✓ Institutionalized regular training in the pedagogical framework and curricula for all staff, including in the private sector. ✓ Flexibility of the curriculum for children of different "speeds".

CHALLENGES

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION

Workforce development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → There are ECEC staff shortages in the private sector. → Wide deviations are observed in the salaries of ECEC staff in the public and in the private sector, for equivalent positions. → There are not sufficient data on the composition of the ECEC staff (discipline, level of specialization, etc.). → Career development procedures for teaching assistants in the public sector and for professionals working at the ECEC private sector are not clearly defined. → There is a low level of education and training among ECEC support staff, particularly in the 0-3 age group. → There is a need to expand the availability of ECEC Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programs (mandatory and non-mandatory) that are offered by the Pedagogical Institute to both, ECEC supportive and non-teaching staff and to private sector employees. → There is the need to revise the evaluation procedures concerning the civil servants (according to previous EU reports). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Investigate ways to improve working conditions in the ECEC sector, especially in the private sector (e.g., working hours, compensation, career development), to make the sector more attractive to qualified personnel. ✓ Improve and expand CPD programmes. Create incentives for the professional development of ECEC professionals, particularly for those working with children from 0 to 3 years and those working with children from 3 to 4.8/12 years at ECEC settings registered and inspected by the DMSW. ✓ Establishment of a feedback channel from professionals to the Pedagogical Institute to contribute to the strategic planning of the CPD programmes. ✓ Improvement of the staff evaluation and supervision system, and recruitment of staff as inspectors/ educational consultants. ✓ Revision of the institution of school chaperones. Establishment of duties, qualifications, working conditions, recruitment procedure and provision of training on childcare and safety. Selection of chaperones according to individual needs of children. ✓ Strengthening the staffing of Social Welfare Services, the Pedagogical Institute, the Directorate of Primary Education, and other competent services of the latter.
Family and community engagement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → There is the need to further support the implementation of Ministerial provisions that foresee the development of meaningful and participatory relationships between the ECEC settings and families and communities. → Parental participation in ECEC is limited for the whole sector (0-6 years), and especially for ages 0-3 years. → There is the need for the seminars and experiential workshops for parents that are provided by the Pedagogical Institute and the Cyprus School for Parents through the parent and guardian associations, to focus more on parents of children from 0 to 6 years, and to be made available in all provinces of Cyprus. → There is not a specific spending budget for initiatives focusing on improving and expanding participatory collaboration between the ECEC settings and parents and the wider community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Identify channels of communication with parents, especially those from socially vulnerable groups, and particularly the intensification of the use of modern technologies towards this end. ✓ Review the role of Parents and Guardians Associations and Community Volunteering Councils for a more systematic and effective collaboration with ECEC settings. ✓ Develop guidelines for parents and ECEC providers setting out standards and expectations for cooperation between them. ✓ Strengthen the training of educational staff in managing a collaborative relationship with parents. ✓ Explore further cooperation of the ECEC settings with other community and municipal structures. ✓ Encourage and incentivize parents' associations to involve their members in information and awareness raising seminars and experiential workshops. ✓ Investigate the feasibility of establishing a mechanism for the decentralization of the ECEC settings' supervision to the municipalities in view of the new role of local authorities.

CHALLENGES

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION

Quality assurance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → There is not a unified quality assurance system for the whole ECEC sector (to overcome the two-ministry split system). → Existing ECEC quality standards have not been developed through a participatory process with relevant stakeholders or based on specific ECEC quality indicators. They are derived from relevant legislations. → The standards, tools and procedures of the quality assurance system prioritize the diagnosis of providers' non-compliance with the ECEC Laws, focusing on requirements related to structural quality indicators (e.g., facilities, safety), and not so much on process quality and the educational process (e.g., interactions between children, child participation). → The results obtained through existing evaluation processes need to be standardized to support the organization and analysis of ECEC national data. → The number of trained inspectors to apply both structural and process quality evaluations (e.g., pedagogical evaluation) is limited, especially for children from 0 to 3 years old. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Establishment of a common body for quality assurance in the whole ECEC sector. ✓ Creation of a single quality framework for the ECEC sector, including indicators for structural and process quality. ✓ Creation of a national quality assurance database for the entire ECEC sector (0-6 years), with the contribution and guidance of the Pedagogical Institute. ✓ Recruitment (and/or transfer of existing staff) and training of inspectors to staff the joint body on quality assurance for the entire ECEC sector (0-6 years). ✓ Expansion of the institution of the health worker to the entire ECEC sector, creation of a health and safety service/ department for zero- to 3-year-olds in consultation with the Ministry of Health, and institutionalization of the cooperation between the ECEC sector and the Ministry of Health. ✓ Improvement of ECEC services for children with special educational needs (e.g., special funding programmes, specialized quality standards, training of ECEC professionals) ✓ Training of people working in settings under the supervision of the SWS in the provision of first aid, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health.

5. The vision of the National Quality Framework for ECEC and its guiding principles

The vision of the National Quality Framework (NQF) for ECEC is for it to inspire, guide and support the development of education and care at all regulated services for children from birth to six years of age in Cyprus. It aims at:

Ensuring inclusive access to high quality ECEC for all children. Supporting the child's development holistically, from birth to 6 years of age, including psychomotor, socio-emotional and cognitive development, with equal emphasis on child-centered education and care, and child participation, with the best interests and rights of the child as a primary consideration. Encouraging and strengthening interaction with the family and the wider community and promoting cooperation between all stakeholders.

In accordance with the relevant legislative frameworks, regulated early childhood education and care services in Cyprus are provided by home based childminders, private for profit and private not for profit (run by NGOs and local authorities), and state nurseries, as well as state and private kindergartens.

It is expected that a common vision for the ECEC will in turn create a common understanding among all stakeholders in what concerns the development of the sector and the minimum national standards of quality in early education and care. In order to support the understanding and the establishment of a common vision about the provision of high-quality early education and care services, key principles that specify the vision have been developed:

- High quality ECEC is crucial to promote healthy development in all developmental fields and the well-being of children.
- Appropriately trained workforce, good working conditions and opportunities for continuous professional development are particularly important for the provision of high-quality ECEC services.
- The involvement of parents/guardians in the ECEC as partners is crucial to ensure the best possible environment for the development and progress of children.
- Ensuring that all children have access to ECEC is essential, considering the child's right to education and care, and to participation in decision-making.
- The systematic and documented evaluation of ECEC services is a key mechanism for improving the quality and effectiveness of the education and care provided.

6. Quality statements and quality indicators of the National ECEC Quality Framework

The quality statements and the quality indicators of the National Quality Framework for early childhood education and care (ECEC) have been organized under the five priority fields for the development, monitoring and evaluation of the sector, which are described and specified in the European Quality Framework for ECEC²³, namely, Governance and Funding, Access, Curricula, Staff, Monitoring and Evaluation.

The envisioned standards of quality for each ECEC priority field are defined by a number of **quality statements**. The implementation of the National Quality Framework aims to support the achievement of these quality statements for each ECEC priority field.

Each quality statement is further specified by a number of **quality indicators**. Each quality indicator is characterized either as an indicator of structural or of process quality²⁴. Also, each quality indicator is expected to be applied, monitored and evaluated either at central (Ministerial) level, and/or at the level of the ECEC settings.

In order for the ECEC settings to respond to the quality indicators applied at ECEC setting level, the National Authorities responsible for the provision of ECEC services should develop and provide to the ECEC settings **self-evaluation tools** accompanied by a detailed Manual. The self-evaluation of the ECEC settings should be carried out annually, in accordance with the instructions provided by the National Authorities. Table 2 details quality statements for all the five priority fields of ECEC included in the National ECEC Quality Framework.

Table 2. Quality Statements of the National ECEC Quality Framework

ECEC priority fields	Quality Statements
<i>Governance and Funding</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The legislative and policy framework promotes the provision of high quality, accessible, affordable, and inclusive ECEC with the necessary funding.2. The legal framework defines the roles and responsibilities of all the individuals and entities involved in working together towards the achievement of the common vision of the ECEC.
<i>Access</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. ECEC structures and services are sufficient in number, affordable and accessible to all children and their families.2. ECEC is inclusive, respectful and accepting of diversity, for example in terms of gender, race, religion and ethnic origin.3. ECEC supports the equal and active participation of all children and their families in the processes and activities developed in the framework of ECEC programmes.4. ECEC policies and ECEC programmes take into account and respond appropriately to the developmental, learning and care needs of all children aged 0-6 years, with particular emphasis on quality relationships (e.g. between adults and children, between children) in the context of ECEC service provision.

²³ Council of the European Union (2019). Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems. ST/9014/2019/INIT. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32019H0605%2801%29&qid=1627470989089>

²⁴ For the definition of structural and process quality, see Section 1 of the current document.

ECEC priority fields	Quality Statements
<i>Curricula</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The curriculum is based on pedagogical principles that cultivate skills, attitudes, and values, and aims at the all-round development (personal, social, emotional, cognitive, motor) and well-being of the child, with the ultimate goal of optimizing the child's potential. 2. The curriculum promotes collaboration between children, ECEC staff, and parents/guardians and supports reflection by all involved in the implementation of the curriculum. 3. The ECEC curriculum takes into account the changing needs of society and is revised accordingly at regular intervals.
<i>Staff</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All public and private ECEC settings employ staff, with the required academic and other qualifications, who are offered opportunities through continuous professional development and empowerment to fulfil their professional role and provide high quality ECEC services. 2. The legislative framework and policies for ECEC ensure a supportive working environment and appropriate working conditions in public and private ECEC settings, which foster professional development, prevent burnout, and ensure the provision of high quality ECEC services. 3. The ECEC setting develops guidelines and implements actions in order to promote cooperative, respectful and accepting relationships between professionals and the setting, and between professionals and the family and the community.
<i>Monitoring and Evaluation</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The ECEC is monitored and evaluated on the basis of data systematically collected at the level of central administration and at the level of ECEC structures. Data are collected at national level and used in such a way as to support the continuous improvement of the legislative framework and the quality of ECEC policies, strategies and services. 2. The data collected covers five important aspects of ECEC. All stakeholders, i.e. ECEC service providers, ECEC staff, children and their families, and the local community, are involved in data collection. 3. The assessment and monitoring system should ensure the best interests of the child by contributing to the provision of high quality ECEC. Any decisions concerning the assessment and monitoring of ECEC should consider the rights of the child, aiming at the development, learning, health and well-being of all children.

Three quality indicators that refer to all five different ECEC fields have been developed, and expected to be monitored and responded to by the National Authorities responsible for the ECEC services:

- **The percentage of GDP invested in the ECEC.**
- **The percentage of children 0-6 participating in ECEC programs.**
- **Each ECEC facility has a plan for working with the family and with agencies that provide services to the child and family.**

6.1. Quality statements and quality indicators for Governance and Funding

Governance and Funding are crucial to enable the development and provision of high-quality early childhood education and care services that effectively support children's personal development and learning, decrease social disparities, and promote social cohesion.

The quality statements and quality indicators for the ECEC field of Governance and Funding are the following:

Quality Statements

1. The legislative and policy framework promotes the provision of high quality, accessible, affordable and inclusive ECEC with the necessary funding.
2. The legal framework defines the roles and responsibilities of all the individuals and entities involved in working together towards the achievement of the common vision of the ECEC.



Structural quality indicators to be evaluated at central level:

1. The legislative and policy framework sets out clear objectives, roles and obligations for the responsible and involved individuals and bodies across the whole area of ECEC.
2. The required qualifications of the staff (e.g. academic, experience, etc.) of the ECEC are defined within the legislative framework.
3. The legislative framework sets out the minimum standards for the building and other physical premises of the ECEC, and the materials provided for the implementation of the ECEC programmes.
4. The annual state funding for the ECEC sector shall take into account the needs for maintenance, improvement, and/or increase of the ECEC buildings and other physical facilities, and of the material provided for the implementation of the ECEC programmes.

6.2 Quality statements and quality indicators for Access

Access to early childhood education and care services for all children reduces social inequalities and promotes a healthy early start to children's healthy development and educational success.

The quality statements and quality indicators for the ECEC field of Access are the following:

Quality Statements

1. ECEC structures and services are sufficient in number, affordable and accessible to all children and their families.
2. ECEC is inclusive, respectful and accepting of diversity, for example in terms of gender, race, religion and place of origin.
3. The ECEC supports the equal and active participation of all children and their families in the processes and activities developed in the framework of ECEC programmes.
4. ECEC policies and ECEC programmes consider and respond appropriately to the developmental, learning and care needs of all children aged 0-6 years, with particular emphasis on quality relationships (e.g. between adults and children, between children) in the context of ECEC service provision.





Structural quality indicators to be evaluated at central level:

1. The legal and policy framework ensures the right of every child to ECEC.
2. The percentage of children aged 0 to 3 years who regularly participate in an ECEC programme.
3. The percentage of children aged 3 1/2 to 6 years who regularly participate in an ECEC programme.
4. The percentage of children aged 0 to 4.8 years who are subsidized for attending an ECEC program.
5. The percentage of children from 0 to 6 years old with disabilities who attend a regular ECEC programme.
6. The percentage of children from 0 to 6 years old with a migration background who systematically attend an ECEC programme.



Structural indicators to be evaluated at ECEC setting level:

1. Annual number of children with special educational needs attending a regular ECEC programme.
2. Annual number of children with a migrant background, refugees and asylum seekers attending a regular ECEC programme.
3. The structure cooperates with institutions that support children and families and ensures that children and families are connected to them.
4. The facility ensures sufficient staffing levels as required by law so that each child is safe and benefits from interaction with stable reference persons in ECEC settings.



Process quality indicators to be evaluated at ECEC setting level:

1. The staff of the facility ensures that all children are equally participating in the programme.
2. Interactions between staff and children are characterized by caring, positive attitudes, and encouragement of the child.
3. Staff interact in developmentally appropriate ways with each child individually and with the group of children to promote health, development, and learning.
4. Staff actively support children's initiatives and their participation in all stages of the process of providing ECEC services.

6.3 Quality statements and quality indicators for Curricula

The ECEC curricula are the tools to achieve the well-being, development and learning of children.

The quality statements and quality indicators for the ECEC field of Curricula are the following:

Quality Statements

1. The curriculum is based on pedagogical principles that cultivate skills, attitudes, and values, and aims at the all-round development (personal, social, emotional, cognitive, motor) and well-being of the child, with the ultimate goal of optimizing the child's potential.
2. The curriculum promotes collaboration between children, ECEC staff, and parents/guardians and supports reflection by all involved in the implementation of the curriculum.
3. The ECEC curriculum considers the changing needs of society and is revised accordingly at regular intervals.



Structural quality indicators to be evaluated at central level:

1. ECEC structures follow an approved curriculum that identifies and responds appropriately to the developmental and learning needs and interests and takes into account the abilities of each child.
2. The legislative framework and the national strategy for ECEC provide for procedures for documentation and systematic and repeated assessment of children's developmental and learning outcomes based on the ECEC curriculum.
3. Tools and guidelines are provided to the ECEC structures for the assessment of children's developmental and learning outcomes based on the ECEC curriculum.
4. The ECEC curriculum is reviewed on a regular basis considering the changing needs of society.
5. Existence of a mechanism and procedures for the control of the ECEC structures in terms of the adaptation of the implemented ECEC programmes to the national ECEC curriculum and its revisions.



Structural quality indicators to be evaluated at ECEC setting level:

1. The ECEC settings follows an approved curriculum that identifies and responds appropriately to the developmental and learning needs, care needs, experiences, and interests, and takes into account the abilities of each child.
2. The staff of the ECEC setting plans and implements the daily program based on the curriculum with the main goal of supporting the learning, development, well-being, safety and health of each child.
3. The ECEC structure implements procedures for documentation and systematic and repeated assessment of the child's developmental and learning outcomes based on the ECEC curriculum.
4. The ECEC setting has developed a policy in line with the relevant legislative frameworks and guidelines, which outlines the objectives and actions to achieve collaboration between children, staff, and parents/carers to support the effective implementation of the curriculum.
5. The ECEC structure responds in a timely manner to revisions to the pedagogical framework and/or the ECEC curriculum.



Process quality indicators to be evaluated at ECEC setting level:

1. The pedagogical approaches and practical applications of the ECEC setting aim at the all-round development of children, considering the rate of development and learning and the individual characteristics of each child.

6.4 Quality statements and quality indicators for Staff

Staff play a paramount role for children's well-being, learning and developmental outcomes. For this reason, good working conditions and the continuous provision of opportunities for training and professional development in the ECEC sector should be considered as prerequisites of high quality ECEC services.

The quality statements and quality indicators for the ECEC field of Staff are the following:

Quality Statements

1. All public and private ECEC settings employ staff, with the required academic and other qualifications, who are offered opportunities through continuous professional development and empowerment to fulfil their professional role and provide high quality ECEC services.
2. The legislative framework and policies for ECEC ensure a supportive working environment and appropriate working conditions in public and private ECEC settings, which foster professional development, prevent burnout, and ensure the provision of high quality ECEC services.
3. The ECEC setting develops guidelines and implements actions in order to promote cooperative, respectful, and accepting relationships between professionals and the setting, and between professionals and the family and the community.



Structural quality indicators to be evaluated at central level:

1. Percentage of private and public sector ECEC's staff participation in professional development and learning programmes.
2. Incentives are provided for staff to participate in professional learning and development opportunities (e.g., credit-based training, possibility to diversify professional role/qualifications).
3. Professional support and training programmes for new staff are provided (e.g. supervision, monitoring, mentoring)
4. Continuing professional development opportunities are provided for all staff to meet the individualized needs and interests of the child and the ECEC curriculum.
5. The child-staff ratio is sufficient to promote the care, development and learning of children and to ensure the protection of children in ECEC settings.
6. The ECEC staff is involved in the development and evaluation of the ECEC curricula to ensure their professional empowerment and the combination of theory and practical applications with reference to each ECEC age group.
7. There is an ECEC collective labour agreement setting out the terms and conditions of employment and salaries in the private ECEC sector.

8. Ratio of the average salary of private sector ECEC staff to the average salary of public sector ECEC staff.
9. Existence of a career model for professionals in the public and private sector, including the support staff of the ECEC.
10. Sufficient time for individual and group planning and reflection is foreseen in the duty roster and working hours of the ECEC staff, with the aim of empowering them and improving the pedagogical practice.
11. The national policies promote an organizational culture in the ECEC sector, in public and private structures, based on respect, trust, and fairness.



Structural quality indicators to be evaluated at ECEC setting level:

1. Number and percentage of staff who have participated or will participate in professional development activities each school year.
2. Existence of defined measures to encourage staff to participate in professional learning and development programmes based on the individual specific needs of the ECEC structure.
3. The child-staff ratio is sufficient for the number and ages of children and the implementation of the pedagogical programme, in order to promote the care, development and learning of children.
4. The ECEC setting follows the provisions of the collective agreement of the ECEC sector as regards the terms and conditions of employment.
5. Average working time per week allocated for individual and group planning and reflection, aiming at empowering the ECEC staff and preventing burnout, as well as improving pedagogical practice.
6. The ECEC setting provides measures to encourage and support the cooperation of the ECEC staff with all stakeholders (e.g. family, community, etc.).



Process quality indicators to be evaluated at ECEC setting level:

1. The staff seeks the participation of each child considering the uniqueness, individual learning mechanisms and developmental rhythms, individual needs and interests of each child.
2. The organizational culture of the structure promotes respect, trust and fairness between all parties involved.

6.5 Quality statements and quality indicators for Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are key for maintaining and further enhancing high ECEC quality levels. They allow policy makers and stakeholders to plan, develop and implement policies and practices that address the needs of children, parents, and local communities in what concerns the provision of high-quality early childhood education and care.

The quality statements and quality indicators for the ECEC field of Monitoring and Evaluation are the following:

Quality Statements

1. The ECEC is monitored and evaluated on the basis of data systematically collected at the level of central administration and at the level of ECEC structures. Data are collected at national level and used in such a way as to support the continuous improvement of the legislative framework and the quality of ECEC policies, strategies and services.
2. The data collected covers five important aspects of ECEC. All stakeholders, i.e. ECEC service providers, ECEC staff, children and their families, and the local community, are involved in data collection.
3. The assessment and monitoring system should ensure the best interests of the child by contributing to the provision of high quality ECEC. Any decisions concerning the assessment and monitoring of ECEC should consider the rights of the child, aiming at the development, learning, health and well-being of all children.



Structural quality indicators to be evaluated at central level:

1. The existence of a single body responsible for the collection and processing of quantitative and qualitative data regarding the monitoring and evaluation of all areas of the ECEC (governance and funding, accessibility, staff development, curriculum development and implementation, monitoring and evaluation).
2. The competent body for monitoring and evaluation of the ECEC develops and implements tools for the collection, processing and use of quantitative and qualitative data for all areas of the ECEC.
3. Existence of uniform tools for the collection, processing and use of quantitative and qualitative data applied in all ECEC facilities of the public and private sector.
4. Systematic provision of training at central and ECEC facility level on the application of the monitoring and evaluation tools of the ECEC, and the use of the data generated by these tools, in order to support the continuous improvement of ECEC policies, strategies and services.
5. Develop policies, actions and training to promote a culture of self-evaluation at the level of ECEC structures, at the public and private sector.
6. Percentage of public and private sector ECEC facilities conducting self-assessment exercises.
7. Collect, process and use data regarding the area of Governance and Financing of the ECEC.
8. Collect, process and use data regarding the field of Accessibility in the ECEC.
9. Collect, process and use data regarding the area of Staff Development of the ECEC.
10. Collect, process and use data regarding the area of Development and Implementation of ECEC curriculum.
11. Collect, process and use data relating to the Monitoring and Evaluation area of the ECEC.
12. Percentage of ECEC providers that collect and use quantitative and qualitative data to improve the quality of the ECEC provided.
13. Existence of mechanisms, tools, and participatory assessment procedures in the ECEC that ensure the best interests of the child (e.g. accessibility, safety, environment for development and well-being, participation)
14. Internal and external mechanisms for evaluating and monitoring the ECEC are in place.

15. Monitoring and evaluation of ECEC services includes procedures and tools to ensure the protection of children during their participation in ECEC programmes.

16. The personal data of children and their families are safeguarded in accordance with national and international legislation.



Structural quality indicators to be evaluated at ECEC setting level:

1. Systematic implementation of quantitative and qualitative data collection tools for the provision of ECEC services.
2. Number of staff participating in trainings related to the procedures and tools of the evaluation in the ECEC sector and the collection and use of data.
3. The ECEC structure collects data for all areas of the ECEC, and systematically sends these data to the competent body for data collection, processing and utilization.
4. Percentage of the ECEC staff that implements self-evaluation, by professional group (Management, Teachers, Support staff).
5. Percentage of children and families participating in the evaluation of the ECEC carried out by the ECEC structure.
6. The ECEC setting ensures the active participation of children in the evaluation of the ECEC services through the use of developmentally appropriate tools for children.
7. The ECEC setting uses evaluation data, including children's evaluation, to develop its pedagogical design.
8. The personal data of children and their families are safeguarded in accordance with national and international legislation.



7. Considerations on the application of the National ECEC Quality Framework and procedures of evaluation

This section provides more detailed information on the procedures of applying the National ECEC Quality Framework.

The application of the structural quality indicators to be monitored to at central level should be based on official statistics as well as data collected by the National Authorities from each ECEC setting. To support the generation of these quantitative data and to ensure comparability and consistency, additional guidance should be prepared for the ECEC settings on how to measure each indicator.

Concerning the structural quality indicators to be monitored at ECEC setting level, by an agreed date each year, each ECEC setting should send the results gathered to the responsible National Authority, or otherwise specified. The data from the ECEC providers would be combined with data held by the National Authorities responsible for the ECEC sector to produce the final national results of the evaluation for each ECEC priority field. The National Authorities publish annually the achievements against the five ECEC priority fields. The National Authorities should inspect systematically procedures of data collection and data from a sample of ECEC settings in order to verify their accuracy and to identify areas that further guidance and training are needed.

In relation to the process quality indicators to be evaluated at ECEC setting level, the ECEC settings will apply annually a self-evaluation procedure. The data collected through the self-evaluation procedure remain with the providers and are sent to the National Authorities only when this is explicitly communicated. The data would support internal processes and improvement, and each provider would decide how to share their information with parents, staff, and other stakeholders. Parents, staff, children and other community stakeholders should have an opportunity to provide inputs into the self-assessment.

The implementation of the National Quality Framework is expected to support strategic policy considerations in the expansion and reform of the ECEC sector; to support the development and the implementation of the National ECEC Strategy; and to support the ECEC settings to develop further the quality of their ECEC services. It is also expected to improve the cooperation and coordination between ECEC settings, the National Authorities, the parents/guardians, and the local communities. Its implementation is planned to be supported through the establishment of coordinating mechanisms between all National Authorities that hold responsibility for the provision of ECEC services. The implementation of the National Quality Framework is planned to take place gradually, and the National Authorities are going to specify the pathway towards its full implementation.

Summary of ECEC Quality Framework

ECEC areas of priority	Quality Statements	Quality indicators	
		Central level	ECEC level
Governance & Funding	The legislative and policy framework promotes the provision of high quality, accessible, affordable and inclusive ECEC with the necessary funding.	STRUCTURAL QUALITY INDICATORS <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The legislative and policy framework sets out clear objectives, roles and obligations for the responsible and involved individuals and bodies across the whole area of ECEC. 2. The required qualifications of the staff (e.g. academic, experience, etc.) of the ECEC are defined within the legislative framework. 3. The legislative framework sets out the minimum standards for the building and other physical premises of the ECEC, and the materials provided for the implementation of the ECEC programmes. 4. The annual state funding for the ECEC sector shall consider the needs for maintenance, improvement, and/or increase of the ECEC buildings and other physical facilities, and of the material provided for the implementation of the ECEC programmes. 	STRUCTURAL QUALITY INDICATORS <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Annual number of children with special educational needs attending a regular ECEC programme. 2. Annual number of children with a migrant background, refugees and asylum seekers attending a regular ECEC programme. 3. The structure cooperates with institutions that support children and families and ensures that children and families are connected to them. 4. The facility ensures sufficient staffing levels as required by law so that each child is safe and benefits from interaction with stable reference persons in ECEC settings. PROCESS QUALITY INDICATORS <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The staff of the facility ensures that all children are equally participating in the programme. 2. Interactions between staff and children are characterized by caring, positive attitudes, and encouragement of the child. 3. Staff interact in developmentally appropriate ways with each child individually and with the group of children to promote health, development, and learning. 4. Staff actively support children's initiatives and their participation in all stages of the process of providing ECEC services
	The legal framework defines the roles and responsibilities of all the individuals and entities involved in working together towards the achievement of the common vision of the ECEC.		
Access	ECEC structures and services are sufficient in number, affordable and accessible to all children and their families.	STRUCTURAL QUALITY INDICATORS <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The legal and policy framework ensures the right of every child to ECEC. 2. The percentage of children aged 0 to 3 years who regularly participate in an ECEC programme. 3. The percentage of children aged 3 1/12 to 6 years who regularly participate in an ECEC programme. 4. The percentage of children aged 0 to 4.8 years who are subsidized for attending an ECEC program. 5. The percentage of children from 0 to 6 years old with disabilities who attend a regular ECEC programme. 6. The percentage of children from 0 to 6 years old with a migration background who systematically attend an ECEC programme. 	
	ECEC is inclusive, respectful and accepting of diversity, for example in terms of gender, race, religion and place of origin.		
	The ECEC supports the equal and active participation of all children and their families in the processes and activities developed in the framework of ECEC programmes.		
	ECEC policies and ECEC programmes consider and respond appropriately to the developmental, learning and care needs of all children aged 0-6 years, with particular emphasis on quality relationships (e.g. between adults and children, between children) in the context of ECEC service provision.		

ECEC areas of priority	Quality Statements	Quality indicators	ECEC level
Curricula	The curriculum is based on pedagogical principles that cultivate skills, attitudes, and values, and aims at the all-round development (personal, social, emotional, cognitive, motor) and well-being of the child, with the ultimate goal of optimizing the child's potential.	STRUCTURAL QUALITY INDICATORS <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ECEC structures follow an approved curriculum that identifies and responds appropriately to the developmental and learning needs and interests and considers the abilities of each child. 2. The legislative framework and the national strategy for ECEC provide for procedures for documentation and systematic and repeated assessment of children's developmental and learning outcomes based on the ECEC curriculum. 3. Tools and guidelines are provided to the ECEC structures for the assessment of children's developmental and learning outcomes based on the ECEC curriculum. 4. The ECEC curriculum is reviewed on a regular basis considering the changing needs of society. 5. Existence of a mechanism and procedures for the control of the ECEC structures in terms of the adaptation of the implemented ECEC programmes to the national ECEC curriculum and its revisions. 	STRUCTURAL QUALITY INDICATORS <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The ECEC settings follows an approved curriculum that identifies and responds appropriately to the developmental and learning needs, care needs, experiences, and interests, and considers the abilities of each child. 2. The staff of the ECEC setting plans and implements the daily program based on the curriculum with the main goal of supporting the learning, development, well-being, safety and health of each child. 3. The ECEC structure implements procedures for documentation and systematic and repeated assessment of the child's developmental and learning outcomes based on the ECEC curriculum. 4. The ECEC setting has developed a policy in line with the relevant legislative frameworks and guidelines, which outlines the objectives and actions to achieve collaboration between children, staff, and parents/carers to support the effective implementation of the curriculum. 5. The ECEC structure responds in a timely manner to revisions to the pedagogical framework and/or the ECEC curriculum.
	The curriculum promotes collaboration between children, ECEC staff, and parents/guardians and supports reflection by all involved in the implementation of the curriculum.		PROCESS QUALITY INDICATORS <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The pedagogical approaches and practical applications of the ECEC setting aim at the all-round development of children, considering the rate of development and learning and the individual characteristics of each child.
	The ECEC curriculum considers the changing needs of society and is revised accordingly at regular intervals.		

ECEC areas of priority	Quality Statements	Quality indicators	
		Central level	ECEC level
Monitoring & Evaluation	<p>The ECEC is monitored and evaluated on the basis of data systematically collected at the level of central administration and at the level of ECEC structures. Data are collected at national level and used in such a way as to support the continuous improvement of the legislative framework and the quality of ECEC policies, strategies and services.</p> <p>The data collected covers five important aspects of ECEC. All stakeholders, i.e. ECEC service providers, ECEC staff, children and their families, and the local community, are involved in data collection.</p> <p>The assessment and monitoring system should ensure the best interests of the child by contributing to the provision of high quality ECEC. Any decisions concerning the assessment and monitoring of ECEC should consider the rights of the child, aiming at the development, learning, health and well-being of all children.</p>	<p>STRUCTURAL QUALITY INDICATORS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The existence of a single body responsible for the collection and processing of quantitative and qualitative data regarding the monitoring and evaluation of all areas of the ECEC (governance and funding, accessibility, staff development, curriculum development and implementation, monitoring and evaluation). 2. The competent body for monitoring and evaluation of the ECEC develops and implements tools for the collection, processing and use of quantitative and qualitative data for all areas of the ECEC. 3. Existence of uniform tools for the collection, processing and use of quantitative and qualitative data applied in all ECEC facilities of the public and private sector. 4. Systematic provision of training at central and ECEC facility level on the application of the monitoring and evaluation tools of the ECEC, and the use of the data generated by these tools, in order to support the continuous improvement of ECEC policies, strategies and services. 5. Develop policies, actions and training to promote a culture of self-evaluation at the level of ECEC structures, at the public and private sector. 6. Percentage of public and private sector ECEC facilities conducting self-assessment exercises. 7. Collect, process and use data regarding the area of Governance and Financing of the ECEC. 8. Collect, process and use data regarding the field of Accessibility in the ECEC. 	<p>STRUCTURAL QUALITY INDICATORS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Systematic implementation of quantitative and qualitative data collection tools for the provision of ECEC services. 2. Number of staff participating in trainings related to the procedures and tools of the evaluation in the ECEC sector and the collection and use of data. 3. The ECEC structure collects data for all areas of the ECEC, and systematically sends these data to the competent body for data collection, processing and utilization. 4. Percentage of the ECEC staff that implements self-evaluation, by professional group (Management, Teachers, Support staff). 5. Percentage of children and families participating in the evaluation of the ECEC carried out by the ECEC structure. 6. The ECEC setting ensures the active participation of children in the evaluation of the ECEC services through the use of developmentally appropriate tools for children. 7. The ECEC setting uses evaluation data, including children's evaluation, to develop its pedagogical design. 8. The personal data of children and their families are safeguarded in accordance with national and international legislation.

ECEC areas of priority	Quality Statements	Quality indicators	
		Central level	ECEC level
Staff	All public and private ECEC settings employ staff, with the required academic and other qualifications, who are offered opportunities through continuous professional development and empowerment to fulfil their professional role and provide high quality ECEC services.	STRUCTURAL QUALITY INDICATORS <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Percentage of private and public sector ECEC's staff participation in professional development and learning programmes. 2. Incentives are provided for staff to participate in professional learning and development opportunities (e.g., credit-based training, possibility to diversify professional role/qualifications). 3. Professional support and training programmes for new staff are provided (e.g. supervision, monitoring, mentoring) 4. Continuing professional development opportunities are provided for all staff to meet the individualized needs and interests of the child and the ECEC curriculum. 5. The child-staff ratio is sufficient to promote the care, development and learning of children and to ensure the protection of children in ECEC settings. 6. The ECEC staff is involved in the development and evaluation of the ECEC curricula to ensure their professional empowerment and the combination of theory and practical applications with reference to each ECEC age group. 7. There is an ECEC collective labour agreement setting out the terms and conditions of employment and salaries in the private ECEC sector. 8. Ratio of the average salary of private sector ECEC staff to the average salary of public sector ECEC staff. 9. Existence of a career model for professionals in the public and private sector, including the support staff of the ECEC. 10. Sufficient time for individual and group planning and reflection is foreseen in the duty roster and working hours of the ECEC staff, with the aim of empowering them and improving the pedagogical practice. 11. The national policies promote an organizational culture in the ECEC sector, in public and private structures, based on respect, trust, and fairness. 	STRUCTURAL QUALITY INDICATORS <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number and percentage of staff who have participated or will participate in professional development activities each school year. 2. Existence of defined measures to encourage staff to participate in professional learning and development programmes based on the individual specific needs of the ECEC structure. 3. The child-staff ratio is sufficient for the number and ages of children and the implementation of the pedagogical programme, in order to promote the care, development and learning of children. 4. The ECEC setting follows the provisions of the collective agreement of the ECEC sector as regards the terms and conditions of employment. 5. Average working time per week allocated for individual and group planning and reflection, aiming at empowering the ECEC staff and preventing burnout, as well as improving pedagogical practice. 6. The ECEC setting provides measures to encourage and support the cooperation of the ECEC staff with all stakeholders (e.g. family, community, etc.).
	The ECEC setting develops guidelines and implements actions in order to promote cooperative, respectful, and accepting relationships between professionals and the setting, and between professionals and the family and the community.		PROCESS QUALITY INDICATORS <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The staff seeks the participation of each child considering the uniqueness, individual learning mechanisms and developmental rhythms, individual needs and interests of each child. 2. The organizational culture of the structure promotes respect, trust and fairness between all parties involved

ECEC areas of priority	Quality Statements	Quality indicators	
		Central level	ECEC level
Monitoring & Evaluation continued		<p>9. Collect, process and use data regarding the area of Staff Development of the ECEC</p> <p>10. Collect, process and use data regarding the area of Development and Implementation of ECEC curriculum.</p> <p>11. Collect, process and use data relating to the Monitoring and Evaluation area of the ECEC.</p> <p>12. Percentage of ECEC providers that collect and use quantitative and qualitative data to improve the quality of the ECEC provided.</p> <p>13. Existence of mechanisms, tools, and participatory assessment procedures in the ECEC that ensure the best interests of the child (e.g. accessibility, safety, environment for development and well-being, participation)</p> <p>14. Internal and external mechanisms for evaluating and monitoring the ECEC are in place.</p> <p>15. Monitoring and evaluation of ECEC services includes procedures and tools to ensure the protection of children during their participation in ECEC programmes.</p> <p>16. The personal data of children and their families are safeguarded in accordance with national and international legislation.</p>	

Notes

[illegible]



