

Report on the National Policies of Inclusive ECEC in Partner Countries

Erasmus+ Project: Good Start for All (GSA)



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SCHOLA EMPIRICA

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Inclusive Methods in Work with Children from Socially Disadvantaged or Culturally Different Environments

The Report on the National Policies of Inclusive ECEC in Partner Countries represents the first output of the Erasmus+ project GSA (Good Start for All: Development of Inclusive Education Methods for Pre-school Children from Socially Disadvantaged or Culturally Different Environments) focused on the possibilities of cooperation among informal educational settings with pre-schools aiming to support the inclusion of children from socially disadvantaged or culturally different environments. The Report includes, among others, the policy approaches and regulations on the inclusive education applied in each country, methods and activities which were proved as effective and the current data on methods and good practices, which are used by teachers and educators in formal as well as informal preschool settings.

Within the survey outcomes, the main challenges in ECEC and pre-school education emerged. These topics which appeared to be insufficiently solved and would need more attention and support in the future pre-school education could be summarised as following:

- Better services of counseling centers
- Cooperation with experts
- Support of social and emotional competences
- Building good relationships within the institution
- Individual approach to the children

Despite the many challenges which need to be addressed, several good practice examples already exist, which stress the importance of cooperation between formal and informal pre-school settings.

The partnership between formal and informal educational settings has been shown as very beneficial in the Czech Republic, in the cities of Štětí and Krupka, where a large amount of people live in a risk of social exclusion. In 2016, the non-governmental educational organization, Schola Empirica, launched in these localities the project to support the collaboration between Štětí and Krupka kindergartens and non-governmental organization Romano Jasnica. Other goals of the project were the professional development of teachers, enhancement of parenting skills, and the development of support for pedagogical work with preschool children. Since its beginning, over 20 Roma families were supported by the project.

The Integrated Early Help Hubs in Wakefield in the North of England represent another good practice example. The goal of these Hubs is to provide an additional structure and governance to the provision of early help for families and to ensure that professionals offering early help are supported to deliver the right services to families at the right time.

The other example is from Poland and concerns collaboration between Municipal kindergarten (City Kindergarten no. 40) and Kindergarten therapeutic pre-school point (RECEPTOR-ek) where the most of the children were diagnosed with special educational needs. These two facilities organize joint meetings, workshops, carnival balls and many other events in order to create inclusive environment, to teach the children the sense of responsibility, acceptance of the otherness, empathy and willingness to help.

In Slovakia, the program called the Roma Parenting with Confidence (2013–2015) has proved to be successful. It was developed by the International Step by Step Association and implemented by the Wide Open School Foundation. The goal of the program was to improve the home learning environment of Roma families and increase children's participation in mainstream kindergarten settings. As a result, parents are more active in their interactions with the kindergarten teachers and have more trust in their own parenting skills perceiving themselves as the first teachers of their children.

There is a number of methods developed to address the needs of children from different cultural background or with different mother tongue in Sweden. The most successful practice turned out to be the employment of an adult from the migrant community at school as an assistant. These assistants help children feel better at school because the children can see that their native language holds equal importance and status as Swedish.

Inkluzivní metody práce s dětmi ze sociálně znevýhodněného nebo kulturně odlišného prostředí

Zpráva o národních politikách inkluzivní rané péče v partnerských zemích (*The Report on the National Policies of Inclusive ECEC in Partner Countries*) představuje první výstup v rámci Erasmus+ projektu s názvem Dobrý začátek pro všechny: Rozvoj inkluzivních vzdělávacích metod pro předškolní děti ze sociálně znevýhodněného nebo kulturně odlišného prostředí (*Good Start for All: Development of Inclusive Education Methods for Pre-school Children from Socially Disadvantaged or Culturally Different Environments*). Projekt se zaměřuje na možnosti spolupráce mezi neformálními vzdělávacími zařízeními a mateřskými školami tak, aby děti ze sociálně znevýhodněného nebo kulturně odlišného prostředí dosáhly větší podpory při začleňování do běžného vzdělávacího proudu. Zpráva popisuje přístupy k inkluzivnímu vzdělávání a nařízení aplikovaná v jednotlivých zemích, metody a aktivity, které se ukázaly být efektivní a které využívají učitelé a pedagogové jak ve formálních, tak v neformálních předškolních zařízeních.

Výzkum prováděný mezi pedagogy z formálních a neformálních předškolních zařízení v partnerských zemích (České republice, Velké Británii, Polsku, Slovensku a Švédsku) upozornil na další výzvy týkající se rané péče a předškolního vzdělávání. K tématům, která se ukázala být nedostatečně řešena a která by z perspektivy pedagogů vyžadovala větší pozornost a systematickou podporu v budoucnosti, patří tato:

- Individuální přístup k dětem
- Podpora sociálních a emočních dovedností dětí předškolního věku
- Budování dobrých vztahů v rámci instituce
- Lepší služby poradenských pracovišť
- Spolupráce s odborníky

Navzdory mnoha výzvám, kterými je nutné se zabývat, přinášíme několik příkladů dobré praxe z partnerských zemí projektu, které ukazují, jak významnou roli v dosažení inkluzivní rané péče hraje spolupráce mezi formálním a neformálním předškolním zařízením.

V České republice se ukázalo jako velmi přínosné partnerství mezi formálními a neformálními vzdělávacími zařízeními ve městech Štětí a Krupka, kde je velká část obyvatel ohrožena sociální exkluzí. V roce 2016 začala nezisková vzdělávací organizace Schola Empirica pracovat v těchto lokalitách na projektu, jehož cílem je podpora spolupráce mezi mateřskými školami ve Štětí a Krupce a neziskovou organizací Romano Jasnica. Další cíle projektu zahrnují profesní rozvoj učitelů, podporu rodičovských dovedností a pedagogické práce s dětmi předškolního věku. Od zahájení projektu bylo podpořeno již přes dvacet romských rodin.

Centra integrované včasné pomoci (*The Integrated Early Help Hubs*) ve Wakefieldu na severu Anglie představují další příklad dobré praxe. Cílem těchto center je vytvořit doplňující strukturu k jiným zařízením tak, aby byla zajištěna včasná pomoc rodinám. Zároveň je cílem podpořit odborníky tak, aby byli schopni včas poskytnout služby podle individuálních potřeb rodiny.

Další příklad z Polska se týká spolupráce mezi běžnou mateřskou školou (Przedszkole Miejskie nr 40 w Łodzi) a terapeutickou mateřskou školou (RECEPTOR-ek), kde má většina dětí speciální vzdělávací potřeby. Tyto dvě školy organizují společná setkávání, workshopy, karnevaly a spoustu dalších akcí. Cílem je vytvářet inkluzivní prostředí, učit děti smyslu pro zodpovědnost, přijetí odlišnosti, empatii a ochotě pomoci.

Na Slovensku se osvědčil program nazvaný „Rodičovstvo s dôverou“ (2013–2015). Program byl vyvinut Mezinárodní asociací Step by Step a následně realizován Nadací Škola Dokorán. Cílem programu bylo zlepšit domácí výukové prostředí romských rodin a zvýšit počet dětí v běžných mateřských školách. Výsledkem bylo to, že rodiče získali důvěru ve vlastní rodičovské schopnosti a převzali větší zodpovědnost za vzdělávání svých dětí.

Ve Švédsku existuje spousta metod, které jsou zaměřeny na potřeby dětí z odlišného kulturního prostředí nebo mluvící odlišným jazykem. Velmi úspěšná se ukázala být praxe, kdy ve škole působí jako asistent pedagoga někdo z přistěhovalců. Tito asistenti pomáhají dětem cítit se ve škole lépe, jelikož mají děti možnost lépe komunikovat své potřeby učitelům a vnímají to, že ve škole je jejich rodný jazyk stejně důležitý jako švédština.

Metody inkluzywne w pracy z dziećmi pochodzącymi ze środowisk upośledzonych społecznie lub odmiennych kulturowo

Raport na temat krajowych zasad ECEC w krajach partnerskich jest pierwszym rezultatem projektu Erasmus+ pod nazwą GSA (*Dobry start dla wszystkich: rozwój inkluzywnych metod edukacji dla dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym ze środowisk upośledzonych społecznie lub odmiennych kulturowo*), który koncentruje się na możliwościach współpracy między nieformalnymi środowiskami edukacyjnymi a przedszkolami w celu wspierania integracji dzieci ze środowisk upośledzonych społecznie lub odmiennych kulturowo. Raport obejmuje między innymi koncepcje i przepisy dotyczące edukacji inkluzywnej stosowane w każdym kraju, metody i działania, które okazały się skuteczne, oraz aktualne dane na temat metod i dobrych praktyk, z których korzystają nauczyciele i wychowawcy zarówno w formalnej, jak i nieformalnej edukacji przedszkolnej.

W ramach wyników ankiety, ujawniły się główne wyzwania związane z ECEC oraz edukacją przedszkolną. Tematy, które okazały się niewystarczająco omówione oraz wymagały większej uwagi i wsparcia w przyszłej edukacji przedszkolnej, można podsumować w następujący sposób:

- Lepsze usługi poradni
- Współpraca z ekspertami
- Wsparcie kompetencji społecznych i emocjonalnych
- Budowanie dobrych relacji w ramach instytucji
- Indywidualne podejście do dzieci

Pomimo wielu wyzwań, które należy jeszcze podjąć, istnieje już kilka przykładów dobrych praktyk, które podkreślają znaczenie współpracy między formalnym i nieformalnym środowiskiem przedszkolnym.

Partnerstwo między formalnymi i nieformalnymi środowiskami edukacyjnymi okazało się bardzo korzystne w Republice Czeskiej, w miastach Štětí i Krupka, gdzie żyje duża liczba ludzi zagrożonych wykluczeniem społecznym. W 2016 r. pozarządowa organizacja edukacyjna Schola Empirica uruchomiła w tych miejscowościach projekt wspierający współpracę między przedszkolami w Štětí a przedszkolami w Krupka oraz pozarządową organizacją Romano Jasnica. Innymi celami projektu był rozwój zawodowy nauczycieli, poprawa umiejętności rodzicielskich oraz rozwój wsparcia dla pracy pedagogicznej z dziećmi w wieku przedszkolnym. Od samego początku w projekcie uzyskało wsparcie ponad 20 rodzin romskich.

Zintegrowane Centra Wczesnej Pomocy w Wakefield na północy Anglii stanowią kolejny przykład dobrej praktyki. Celem tych ośrodków jest zapewnienie dodatkowej struktury oraz zarządzania, by zapewnić wczesną pomoc dla rodzin oraz zagwarantować, że profesjonaliści oferujący pomoc we wczesnej fazie rozwoju są odpowiednio wspierani w zapewnianiu odpowiednich usług rodzinom we właściwym czasie.

Drugi przykład pochodzi z Polski i dotyczy współpracy między przedszkolem miejskim (Przedszkola Miejskie nr 40) a przedszkolnym punktem terapeutycznym (RECEPTOR-ek), w którym u większości dzieci zdiagnozowano szczególne potrzeby edukacyjne. Te dwie instytucje organizują wspólne spotkania, warsztaty, bale karnawałowe i wiele innych wydarzeń, aby stworzyć integracyjne środowisko, uczyć dzieci poczucia odpowiedzialności, akceptacji inności, empatii i chęci pomocy.

Na Słowacji program o nazwie Pewne Siebie Rodzicielstwo (2013-2015) także okazał się sukcesem. Został on opracowany przez Międzynarodowe Stowarzyszenie Krok po Kroku i wdrożony przez Fundację Szkoła Szeroko Otwarta. Celem programu była poprawa domowego środowiska nauki w rodzinach romskich i zwiększenie udziału dzieci w głównych placówkach przedszkolnych. W rezultacie rodzice stali się bardziej aktywni w kontaktach z nauczycielami przedszkolnymi i mają więcej zaufania do swoich umiejętności rodzicielskich, postrzegając siebie jako pierwszych nauczycieli swoich dzieci.

W Szwecji istnieje szereg metod opracowanych w celu zaspokojenia potrzeb dzieci z różnych środowisk kulturowych lub z innym językiem ojczystym. Najbardziej udaną praktyką okazało się zatrudnienie w szkole jako asystenta osoby dorosłej ze społeczności migrantów. Asystenci ci pomagają dzieciom czuć się lepiej w szkole, ponieważ dzieci widzą, że ich ojczysty język ma takie samo znaczenie, jak status języka szwedzkiego.

Inkluzívne metódy v práci s deťmi zo sociálne znevýhodnených alebo kultúrne odlišných prostredí

Správa o národných politikách, zameraných na inkluzívne služby výchovy a vzdelávania detí v ranom veku v partnerských krajinách, predstavuje prvý výstup projektu Erasmus+ GSA (Dobrý štart pre všetkých: Rozvoj metód inkluzívnej výučby pre deti v predškolskom veku zo sociálne znevýhodnených alebo kultúrne odlišných prostredí), zameraných na možnosti spolupráce medzi neformálnymi vzdelávacími zariadeniami a predškolskými zariadeniami, zameranými na podporu začleňovania detí zo sociálne znevýhodnených alebo kultúrne odlišných prostredí. Správa zahŕňa okrem iného politické prístupy a regulácie v inkluzívnom vzdelávaní, uplatňované v každej zapojenej krajine, metódy a aktivity, ktoré sa osvedčili ako účinné, a aktuálne údaje o metódach a osvedčených postupoch, ktoré používajú učitelia a vychovávatelia vo formálnych ako aj neformálnych predškolských zariadeniach.

Výsledky prieskumu odhalili hlavné výzvy v oblasti služieb výchovy a vzdelávania detí v ranom veku a v predškolskom vzdelávaní. Tieto témy, ktoré sa zdajú byť nedostatočne riešené a vyžadujú väčšiu pozornosť a podporu v predškolskom vzdelávaní v budúcich obdobiach, by sme mohli zhrnúť nasledovne:

- Efektívnejšie služby poradenských centier
- Spolupráca s odborníkmi
- Podpora sociálnych a emocionálnych kompetencií
- Budovanie dobrých vzťahov v rámci inštitúcií
- Individuálny prístup k deťom

Napriek mnohým výzvam a problémom, ktoré je potrebné riešiť, existuje niekoľko príkladov osvedčených postupov, ktoré kladú dôraz na spoluprácu medzi formálnymi a neformálnymi predškolskými zariadeniami.

Partnerstvo medzi formálnymi a neformálnymi vzdelávacími inštitúciami sa v Českej republike ukázalo ako veľmi prospešné. V mestách Štětí a Krupka žije veľké množstvo osôb v riziku sociálneho vylúčenia. V roku 2016 spustila mimovládna vzdelávacia organizácia Schola Empirica v týchto lokalitách projekt na podporu spolupráce medzi materskými škôlkami Štětí a Krupka a mimovládnu organizáciu Romano Jasnica. Cieľom projektu bol profesionálny rozvoj učiteľov, posilnenie rodičovských zručností a rozvoj podpory pedagogickej práce s deťmi predškolského veku. Od svojho začiatku bolo prostredníctvom projektu podporených viac ako 20 rómskych rodín.

Integrované centrá ranej pomoci vo Wakefelde na severe Anglicka, predstavujú ďalší príklad dobrej praxe. Cieľom týchto centier je poskytnúť dodatočnú kapacitu a podporu poskytovania ranej pomoci rodinám a zabezpečiť, aby odborníci, ktorí ponúkajú ranú pomoc, boli podporovaní a poskytovali vhodné a efektívne služby rodinám v správny čas.

Ďalší príklad je z Poľska, a týka sa spolupráce medzi obecnou materskou školou (číslo 40) a terapeutickou materskou školou (RECEPTOR-ek), kde väčšina detí bola diagnostikovaná ako deti so špeciálnymi výchovno-vzdelávacími potrebami. Tieto dve zariadenia organizujú spoločné stretnutia, workshopy, karnevaly a množstvo ďalších podujatí, s cieľom vytvorenia inkluzívneho prostredia, ako aj vzdelávania detí k zodpovednosti, akceptovaniu inakosti, empatii a ochote pomôcť.

Na Slovensku sa program s názvom Rodičovstvo s dôverou (2013-2015) ukázal ako úspešný. Bol vytvorený medzinárodnou asociáciou Step by Step a realizovala ho nezisková organizácia Škola dokorán – Wide Open School n. o. Cieľom programu bolo zlepšiť domáce vzdelávacie prostredie v rómskych rodinách a zvýšiť účasť detí na výchove a vzdelávaní v materských školách. Výsledkom je, že sa rodičia aktívnejšie zúčastňujú spolupráce s materskými školami, majú väčšiu dôveru vo svoje vlastné rodičovské zručnosti a seriózne vnímajú svoju úlohu prvých učiteľov svojich detí.

Existuje niekoľko metód vyvinutých na riešenie potrieb detí s rôznym kultúrnym zázemím alebo s iným materinským jazykom vo Švédsku. Najúspešnejšou praxou sa ukázala byť zamestnávanie osoby z komunity migrantov v škole na pozíciu asistenta. Títo asistenti pomáhajú deťom cítiť sa v škole príjemne, pretože smôžu vidieť, že ich rodný jazyk má rovnakú dôležitosť a postavenie ako švédčina.

Inkluderande metoder i arbete med barn från Socialt missgynnade eller kulturellt olika miljöer

Denna rapport om den nationella politiken för inkluderande FÖRSKOLEPEDAGOGIK i partner länderna representerar den första resultatet i Erasmus + -projektet GSA (Good Start for All/Bra start för alla: utveckling av inkluderande utbildningsmetoder för förskolebarn från socialt missgynnade eller kulturellt olika miljöer) och fokuserar på möjligheterna till samarbete mellan informella utbildningsmiljöer med förskolor som syftar till inkluderande av barn från socialt missgynnade eller kulturellt, från samhället avvikande miljöer. Rapporten innehåller, bland annat de policystrategier och regler om hur inkluderande utbildning tillämpas i varje land, metoder och aktiviteter som visar sig vara effektiva och de aktuella uppgifterna om metoder och god praxis, som används av lärare och pedagoger i såväl formella som informella förskolemiljöer.

I undersökningsresultaten har utmaningar i FÖRSKOLEPEDAGOGIK och för skolans utbildning noterats. De utmaningar som verkade vara otillräckligt lösta och som skulle behöva mer uppmärksamhet och stöd i framtidens förskoleutbildning kan sammanfattas enligt följande:

- Bättre stöd och rådgivning
- Samverkan med experter inom området
- Stöd för sociala och kulturella kompetenser
- Att verka för goda relationer mellan familjer och personal inom förskolan
- Ökad individualisering vad gäller förskolepedagogiken

Trots de många utmaningar som noterats finns det flera exempel på god praxis, vilket betonar vikten av samarbete mellan den formella och informella utbildningsmiljöer.

Partnerskapet mellan formell och informell utbildningsmiljö har visat sig vara mycket gynnsamt i Tjeckien, i städerna Štětí och Krupka där en stor mängd människor lever i risk för social utslagning. Under 2016, under ledning av den icke-statliga utbildningsorganisationen, Schola Empirica, lanserades på dessa orter ett utvecklingsprojekt för att stödja samarbetet mellan Štětí Och Krupka's förskolor och den icke-statliga organisationen Romano Jasnica. Andra mål för projektet var att utveckla lärarnas professionella utveckling, förbättra föräldrarnas kompetens och utveckla stöd för pedagogiskt arbete med förskolebarn. Sedan starten har över 20 romska familjer fått stöd av projektet.

Det "Tidig hjälp" - navet i Wakefield i norra England är ett annat exempel på god praxis. Målet för dessa nav är att tillhandahålla ytterligare en struktur och styrning av tidig hjälp för familjer och för att se till att yrkesverksamma som erbjuder tidig hjälp får stöd dvs "Leverera rätt tjänster till familjer vid rätt tidpunkt".

Det andra exemplet är från Polen och är ett samarbete mellan kommunala förskolor/daghem och de särskilda förskolor/daghem som erbjöds familjer där de barnen diagnostiserades med särskilda utbildningsbehov. Dessa två anläggningar organiserar nu gemensamma möten, workshops och många andra evenemang för att skapa inkluderande miljöer, att lära barnen ansvarskänsla, acceptans av den andra, empati och vilja att hjälpa till.

I Slovakien, har det program med fokus på Romernas föräldraskap (2013–2015) visat sig vara framgångsrikt. Målet med programmet är att förbättra den romska familjens heminlärningsmiljö och öka barns deltagande i förskola och barnomsorg. Som ett resultat har föräldraaktiviteten ökat vad gäller deras samverkan med förskolan.

Det finns ett antal metoder som utvecklats för att tillgodose behoven hos barn från olika kulturella bakgrunder eller med olika modersmål i Sverige. Ett framgångsrikt projekt visade sig vara ett där en vuxen med egen invandrarbakgrund anställdes i förskolan som assistent. Dessa assistenter hjälper barn att må bättre i skolan eftersom barnen kan se att deras modersmål har samma värde som det svenska språket.

This paper represents the first output of the Erasmus+ project GSA: Good Start for All: Development of Inclusive Education Methods for Pre-school Children from Socially Disadvantaged or Culturally Different Environments (2017-1-CZ01-KA201-035409) focused on the possibilities of cooperation in informal educational institutions with pre-schools aiming to support the inclusion of children from socially disadvantaged or culturally different environments. During the course of the project implemented in 2014-2016 (Erasmus + Project Supporting Social and Emotional Competences of Pre-school Children from Disadvantaged or Culturally Different Environments; 2014-1-CZ01-KA201-001988), the weak cooperation between pre-schools and informal educators was identified. This should help parents and children overcome cultural, social and emotional barriers during their formal education.

The leading partner of the project Schola Empirica (Czech Republic) teamed up with partners from Tiny Signer (England/Great Britain), Spoleczna Akademia Nauk (Poland), Wide Open School (Slovakia) and CFL (Sweden) to achieve the project targets. The goal of the GSA project is to draw out innovative recommendations based on the best practices of work with families and children from socioeconomically disadvantaged or culturally different environments such as migrant and Roma families, in order to prepare children for their future study in formal educational institutions. The project is intended to prevent early school leaving (ESL) through engaging with socially and economically disadvantaged children at an early stage.

The first aim of the project, which is covered by this report, was to identify the main activities, methods, programs and strategies that are currently used to support pre-school children at risk and their families. In the next steps, the best practices will be identified which will equip organizations and professionals with new methodologies and a larger toolbox to tackle issues surrounding education of socially disadvantaged children. A strengthened cooperation and coordination among stakeholders such as families, pre-schools and informal educators is paramount to achieve a higher quality of Early Child Education and Care (ECEC) and to identify and support vulnerable cases at an early stage. Therefore strengthening the cooperation between formal and informal educators is a major emphasis of the project.

The Report on the National Policies of Inclusive ECEC in Partner Countries consists of two parts: Secondary Data on Inclusive Policies in Partner Countries and Survey outcomes. Secondary data includes: information about how each country defines formal and informal preschool education, which policy approaches and regulations on the inclusive education are applied in each country, statistical data about children from socially disadvantaged or culturally different environments, and methods and activities which were proved as effective. The second part, Survey Outcomes, presents the current data on methods and good practices, which are used by teachers and educators in formal as well as informal preschool institutions. Both parts, Secondary Data analysis as well as Survey Outcomes, will constitute the basis for the training curriculum developed with the project.

2. Secondary Data on National Policies of Inclusive ECEC

Each project partner was responsible for gathering information about the National Policies of inclusive pre-school education. The guidelines for this part of the report were prepared by Schola Empirica and include four main parts.

The first part presents the definition of formal and informal preschool institutions. Generally, the informal educational institutions include foundations, NGOs, daycare centres and children centres. However, it has been demonstrated that the perception and description of informal educational institution differs greatly across the countries involved.

The second part deals with country-specific inclusive education policy strategies and implemented regulation. It focuses on the actors addressed by such regulation and the observed outcomes of their work. In their reports, the project partners also described main challenges and drawbacks that emerged when translating the national strategies of inclusive education for pre-school children into practice.

In order to illustrate the importance of inclusive education for children from socially or culturally disadvantaged environments or children with disabilities in a particular country, it was necessary to collect the available statistical data on the quantity of these children in the ECEC systems. This data is summarized in the third part of the country report. However, in some countries it was not possible to get all the data because of the protection of personal data of children.

The last part of the report describes the methods and activities implemented at the national level, which have proved to be effective. First, it focuses on the role of the informal educators in supporting participation of children and parents in mainstream education. Second, it describes the types of partnerships between formal and informal pre-school educational institutions in partner countries.

2.1. Czech Republic

Introduction

The pre-school education, and education in general, is a much discussed topic in the Czech Republic. Two issues in particular have received considerable attention recently. First, an amendment to the Education Act enacted in 2015 represented a crucial step towards the widening the support for children with special educational needs in schools. The amendment came into force in September 2016 and was met with both positive and negative reactions. The second issue concerns an amendment to the Education Act which came into force in September 2017 that made one year of pre-school education compulsory for 5-year-old children. The goal was to support children from socially excluded environments and ensure they are better prepared for primary school. These two issues are described in more detail in the second chapter. This chapter also contains a general description of the development and implementation of inclusive educational measures in the Czech Republic.

The first chapter describes the types of formal and informal preschool educational institutions in the Czech Republic. The nature of informal pre-school education and its place in the education system of the Czech Republic is elaborated in the fourth chapter. This chapter is also dedicated to the description of cooperation between formal and informal preschool institutions. The third chapter presents the relevant statistical data including the number of children with special educational needs (SEN) in the kindergartens in the Czech Republic.



Definition of formal and informal pre-school educational institutions

Informal pre-school educational institution in the context of the Czech Republic is, for the purpose of this paper, defined as an institution that is not included in the Register of Schools and School Facilities nor in the Evidence of children's groups. The institutions in the Register of Schools and School Facilities are managed by the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the children's groups are in the Evidence of the authority of the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Formal pre-school educational institutions are made up of kindergartens (*mateřské školy*) including forest schools (*lesní školky*), and children's groups (*dětské skupiny*).

"Kindergartens and forest schools fall under the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and provide pre-primary education for children aged between 3 and 6. Since 2017, children are obliged to attend a formal pre-school institution from the age of five.

A new legal form of the services for young children was set up in November 2014 – **children's groups**, for children from one year of age until the start of compulsory schooling (5 years). Children's groups can be established by employers for their employees and by various non-profit entities (e.g. municipalities, regions, higher education institutions, benevolent corporations)." (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2015: 15)

They are attended by children for at least six hours a day. The maximum number of children in children's group is 24 but in the majority of cases the groups are much smaller (around 12 children). There is usually one caregiver per 6 children.

Forests schools emphasize the importance of time spent in nature. The education takes place primarily in outdoor classes, mostly in forests. The children may relax in a shed, hut or caravan but in accordance with the Education Act not in a building.

Kindergartens, forests schools and children's groups follow central-legal curriculum. This curriculum sets the goals, form, length and compulsory content of education as well as the conditions for the education of children with special educational needs (SEN). It also details the necessary material, personnel and the required health and safety conditions. Primary education starts at age 6.

Informal pre-school educational institutions in the Czech Republic consist of pre-school clubs, forest clubs, maternity centres and centres for pre-school children.

Pre-school clubs are mostly run by NGOs. They often provide an opportunity for children from socially excluded areas to attend the pre-school institution. Their goal is to prepare children for primary school. Pre-school clubs also actively involve parents into the education and upbringing of their children. Mothers' clubs support mothers and provide a space for them to meet several times a week. They get information and share experiences on child upbringing. Preschool clubs are also closely linked to social work which supports parents in job-search, dealing with financial difficulties and other related issues.

Forest clubs provide the same service as forest schools but they are not registered under the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. This means that they are not entitled to the state financial allowance.

Maternity centres are established by NGOs and serve parents who want to actively spend time with their children to learn something new things or to meet other parents. In many cases, the centres offer special courses for pregnant women, for mothers with children or only for children. The maternity centres are not regulated therefore their forms vary. They aim to prevent social exclusion of mothers on their maternity leave. They are mostly based on the principle of self-help groups.

Centres for pre-school children were established as a municipality program in Prague and youth centres in Prague. These centres represent the response of the local government to the lack of kindergartens in Prague. The aim of the centres for pre-school children is to provide a weekly program for preschool children in the morning (usually from 8 a.m. till 12 a.m.). The program of the centre for pre-school children is based on the Framework Educational Program for Preschool Education. The maximum number of children in one group is 15 and their age may be anything between 3 and 6 years. The project is focused on the inclusion of children and their development in a small group based on an individual approach.



Policy approaches, regulations and strategies of inclusive education

In the Czech Republic, inclusive education was introduced by the Education Act in 2005, which stated that any child regardless of physical or mental disabilities on the one hand or extraordinary talent on the other has the same right to participate in mainstream education. Since 2005, the schools have received funding for work with children with special educational needs (SEN) just like special schools. (Polanská 2018) This is ensured by the so-called development programs through which a school can apply for support. The development programs are announced by the Education Group of the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and they aim at targeted support of specific areas of educational development (for example, support for technical education, funding for teaching assistants, support for access to education for disadvantaged children).

For the first time in the Czech Republic, the necessity for development and innovation programs was emphasized in the National Programme for the Development of Education, published in 2001. "The Czech White Paper is conceived as a systemic project, formulating conceptual starting points, general intentions and development programs to be relevant for the development of the educational system in the medium term." (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports 2001: 7) It was based on intensive debate among the social partners, representatives of the civil sector and various interest groups dealing with education and training issues, school administration staff and responsible authorities, and especially schools and pedagogical staff.¹

White paper defined the main strategic lines of education. One of these lines was *implementation of lifelong learning for all* and it included support for the education of disadvantaged individuals. The aims of this measure were described as follows:

"The wider introduction of specific development programs will support the education of physically, mentally and socially disadvantaged people. The effort to integrate them in line with the inclusive school principle and to ensure the highest possible quality of their education will be of primary importance. In addition, there will be compensatory programs geared mainly towards pre-school education for children from ethnic or culturally disadvantaged backgrounds and to support the education of people without qualifications. Particular attention will be paid to minority education and the education of foreigners and their children as part of the integration of these groups into Czech society." (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports 2001: 89)

As we have already mentioned, since 2005 the schools can apply for financial support for the work with children with special educational needs. It is important to stress that the application process is very demanding and lasts several weeks. At first, the child has to visit Psychological-pedagogical Council where he is assessed. If the Psychological-pedagogical Council diagnosed the child as someone with special educational needs and recommended to find an assistant, the school still received no funding unless it applied for it. Even when this application was successful, the school received funding for only a few hours per week. (Moree 2013: 18)

Another important turning point in shaping the inclusive education in the Czech Republic was the decision on the European level – so-called verdict *D. H. and Others v. the Czech Republic* – that linked inclusive education to the social exclusion.

"This case originated with the unsuccessful filing of complaints in the Czech courts in 1999 on behalf of eighteen children represented by the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) and local council. In 2000, the applicants turned to the European Court of Human Rights, alleging that their assignment to "special schools" for children with learning disabilities contravened the European Convention. Tests used to assess the children's mental ability were culturally biased against Czech Roma, and placement procedures allowed for the influence of racial prejudice on the part of educational authorities." (European Roma Rights Centre 2012)

Statistics presented to the court demonstrated the segregated nature of schools in Ostrava, concluding that in the year 1999:

¹) It was the last intensive debate on the development of education across different areas (EDUin 2017)



- Over half of Roma children were placed in “special schools.”²
- Over half of the students in “special schools” were Roma.
- Any randomly chosen Roma child was more than 27 times more likely to be placed in a “special school” than a non-Roma child.
- Even where Roma children managed to avoid the trap of placement in “special schools,” they were most often enrolled in substandard and predominantly Roma urban ghetto schools.

Once these children had been streamed into substandard education, they had little chance of accessing higher education or steady employment opportunities. Attempts to remedy the situation in the domestic courts failed. (Open Society Fund 2012)

Only in 2007, the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights issued a judgement and labelled this case of “segregating Roma students into special schools as an unlawful discrimination in breach of Article 14 of the European Convention (prohibiting discrimination), taken together with Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 (securing the right to education).” (European Roma Rights Centre 2012) This decision was legally binding for the Czech Republic because it ratified the European Convention on Human Rights and Freedoms.

After the verdict of *D. H. and Others v. the Czech Republic* and other continuous remarks from the European Court concerning non-fulfilment of the judgement, the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, in cooperation with other experts, developed the National Action Plan on Inclusive Education. This plan was approved by the government in March 2010. The next step that should have shown the EU that the Czech Republic attempts to solve the problem of exclusion of Roma minority was the establishment of Centres for Inclusive Education.

The Centres for Inclusive Education (CPIV) was a nationwide project that started in 2009 and lasted until 2013. It was funded by the European Social Fund and was aimed at the partnership with schools in order to implement inclusive principals into education. The beneficiary was the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The partners of the project were the National Institute for Education, Education Counselling Centre and Centre for Continuing Education of Teachers.

“The CPIV project provided the participating schools with expert support in project submission, designing an individual training plan, or designing a school support plan. The CPIV project also mediated further education of teaching staff, the purchase of aids to support inclusive education, ongoing consulting and counselling support (providing psychological and special-pedagogical services and providing social counselling). The CPIV project also provided advice on getting teaching assistants, speech therapists, and developing a strategy for the prevention of socially pathological phenomena. Another important task was the collection of quantitative and qualitative data and their subsequent analysis, on the basis of which a report on the state of inclusive education in the Czech Republic was produced every year within the project. CPIV project services were designed for teachers of public schools and school facilities involved, school and school staff, non-governmental non-profit organizations working with children and youth, and children and pupils with special educational needs (including preparatory classes and kindergartens) and for pupils at risk early school leaving.” (Centres for Inclusive Education 2009)

The aim of the National Action Plan on Inclusive Education was to suggest strategies and measures that would support inclusive education at all levels. These suggestions are based on a broad expert discussion with participation of representatives of relevant Ministry departments, academics, professionals, practitioners and representatives of non-profit organizations. In the preparatory phase, it became clear that the expert discussion was counterproductive due to the incompatibility of the views of the participants. (Lazarová et al. 2016: 41) Moreover, after the change of the Czech Minister of Education, Youth and Sports, the majority of experts left this group as a protest against the inefficiency of the Ministry. (Moree 2013: 17) Therefore the Action Plan remained in its preparatory phase and no other activities or initiatives of the experts took its place. In reaction to the failure of the National Action Plan, the Czech Expert Society for Inclusive Education was established. Its main aim is to promote equal access for all to quality education in the public schools. (Lazarová et al. 2016: 41)

2) „The Applicants have collected statistics from each of the eight special schools in the city of Ostrava. Each special school has stamped and signed a document testifying to the exact number of Romani and non-Romani pupils in each special school. The data show that, a total of 1 360 students in Ostrava special schools, 762 – more than 56 % – are Roma.” (ERRC Application to the European Court of Human Rights 2000)



The Committee of Ministers is the decision-making body of the Council of Europe which considers the actions that have been taken by the government of the Czech Republic every year. In 2009 the Open Society Justice Initiative submitted five memos to the Committee of Ministers highlighting its concerns that included:

- *Continuing Segregation.* Across the country as a whole, government statistics confirm that nearly 30 percent of Roma continue to be placed in re-named "special schools," compared with only 2 percent of non-Roma. In specific regions the figures are worse.
- *Failure to Take Measures for Effective Integration.* New laws introduced by the government are inadequate and have had little effect. Special schools have merely been re-named as "practical primary schools", with the same teachers, classrooms and curriculum. Positive measures suggested by the court such as preparatory classes and teachers' assistants have been underutilized due to a lack of change in the attitude of teachers and non-Roma parents, who are still in favour of segregation. (Open Society Justice Initiative 2009)

Similar to the Open Society Justice Initiative, the "Coalition Together to School" drew attention to insufficient government measures to end the segregation of the Roma. The Coalition was established after the judgement of the European Court of Human Rights of November 2007. In 2009, it appealed to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports to take unambiguous measures to end segregation practices in Czech schools.

Still in 2017 according to the Country Report on Human Rights Practices in the Czech Republic processed by United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, „only 24,3 percent of Romani children attended a mainstream elementary school. The remaining Romani children attended special schools, which effectively segregated them into a substandard educational system“. (United States Department of State 2018)

Despite the objectives of the White paper, the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights and the constant reminders by the European institutions, the path to inclusive education in the Czech Republic has been very difficult and still has not been satisfactorily resolved. The situation looks a little more hopeful today, nonetheless.

The amendment to the Education Act adopted in 2015 might be perceived as crucial in terms of inclusive education. It was the first legal action that explicitly recognized the need for supportive measures. (Lazarová et al. 2016: 38) Specifically, it included following changes:

- declaration of equal access to education for all children
- abandonment of the categorization of children (children with social disadvantage, children with health care disadvantage, children with disabilities)
- introduction of the concept of supportive measures necessary to ensure that maximum full-time education in the mainstream education for all children. Supportive measures will be chosen to suit the pupil's health status, the cultural environment or other living conditions
- introduction of a new definition of a child with special educational needs, describing him/her as a child who needs supportive measures to fulfil his/her educational potential and to uphold his/her right to education. The basis will be the setting of individual educational objectives, which will be followed by identification of special educational needs and recommendations and implementation of the supportive measures.
- provision of the possibility of education in preparatory classes for all children (only children with social disadvantage could be educated in the preparatory classes until 31 August 2015). (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports 2015)

These changes were outlined in the Action Plan for Inclusive Education 2016-2018 which detailed the specific key activities defined in the Strategy of the Czech Republic's Education Policy 2020. The Strategy was adopted by the government in 2014 and introduced 3 key activities: 1.) to reduce inequalities in education, 2.) to promote quality teaching and teachers, 3.) to manage the education system responsibly and effectively. (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports 2014)

The amendment to the Education Act from 2015 came into force in September 2016. It defined five degrees of supportive measures. The first degree is regulated by the schools themselves. Second-to-fifth degrees of supportive measures can be applied only with the recommendation of the school counseling facility. These degrees are state funded and involve specific materials, an individual education plan, individual approach, assistants etc. The fourth and fifth degrees also suggest the education in "a special school" or at home.

„Inclusive education, according to experts, involves four steps. The first is the simple **integration** (access) of children with SEN into mainstream schools. The second is **acceptance** (its intensity is directly visible on the



reaction of some Czech media, professional interest groups and politicians) and with it a parallel third step of **providing conditions and opportunities** for high quality education (e.g. supportive measures). The fourth step is to ensure **tangible results** of their education." (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports 2017a)

Evaluations of the first year of the inclusive education have already taken place. The new advantage was that schools as well as the parents could get some support. Inquiry on the impact of the reform of joint education³ indicated that 49% of headmasters stated that they could provide better support to children thanks to the new legislation. The changes allowed better funding for teacher's assistants and the methodological toolkits for inclusive education. However, finding a qualified assistant was considered a challenge by the principals of many schools. It was also found that some schools had already included children with SEN. 94 % of headmasters said that they have long-term experience with the education of the children with special educational needs (SEN). (Open Society Fund 2018)

According to the ex-Minister of Education Stanislav Štech, the media storm that surrounded the implementation of the new measures was paradoxically helpful. Parents, teachers and headmasters of the schools became interested in support options and, therefore, significantly more children who had not yet been diagnosed received supportive measures. (Czech school 2017)

A further step in promoting inclusive education was the adoption of the amendment to the Education Act that came into force in September 2017. This amendment made one year of preschool attendance compulsory for children aged 5. The aim of this measure was, in particular, to include socially disadvantaged children in pre-school education. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports commissioned the organizations 'Tady a Ted' ("Here" and "Now") and the Demographic Information Centre to prepare a feasibility study on the introduction of the compulsory year of pre-school education.

"The available information shows that compulsory attendance of kindergarten at the age of 5 does not significantly improve the educational prerequisites of socially disadvantaged children. Vulnerable children have in several times more excused and unexcused absences in elementary schools and the school cannot prompt their families to reduce these absences. It is unrealistic that kindergartens in their current form will manage to repair in one year what elementary schools fail to resolve in four. If the kindergarten is not consistent in the enforcement of the attendance, disadvantaged children will not attend. On the other hand, the more consistently the kindergartens enforce this obligation, the more obvious the impact will be on all parents, which could lead to antagonism against disadvantaged families and nurseries by others (although attendance at kindergartens is not yet compulsory, it enjoys great popularity and trust by the parent's public, as 90% of the five-year-olds attend it). According to our current estimates, approximately 1 500 socially disadvantaged children do not attend kindergarten in the entire generation of five-year old children. If there were 110 000 children throughout the generation, this would translate to 1,3 % only. Therefore, the proposed measure will not help disadvantaged children; on the other hand, in the case of successful recruitment, the overall picture of socio-economic situation of the families in kindergarten will deteriorate and this will strengthen the aversion of the majority of society towards the Roma or other endangered groups. At the same time the measures will increase the state budget expenditures. According to our recent calculations, the funds spend on the compulsory year of kindergarten attendance, would be better utilized for more effective individualized care for disadvantaged children and support for their parents. The funds could be also used to reduce the number of children in regular kindergarten classes (24/28 children per 2 teachers), and increase the normative standards for a child to support individualized care." (Tady a ted, o.p.s. and Demografické informační centrum, o.s 2015: 289–290)

The government's intention to introduce a compulsory year of kindergarten attendance was later criticized by other organizations. Permanent conference of associations in education (SKAV) issued a statement that mentioned that children from socially disadvantaged areas have specific needs in relation to education. Furthermore, they referred to the Median study that highlights the fact that pre-school education needs to last two years at least to make a tangible difference later in life for an individual. (EDUin 2015a)

Criticism of this proposal continued during the debate about the amendment in the Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Youth and Sports of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. The biggest problem has been left unnoticed, that primary schools are not reformed towards a more individualized teaching and adaptation function. According to SKAV representatives, emphasis should be placed on securing places in kindergartens for children at the age of three. (EDUin 2015b)

3) The inquiry was implemented by the research agency Nielsen Admosphere. The contracting authority was Open Society Fund Prague, Czech and Moravian Trade Union of Workers in Education and Czech Society for Inclusive Education.



In addition, the explanatory memorandum to the amendment of the Education Act states that the prerequisite for an amendment is the fact that a large number of children who have a postponed school attendance when recommended by Psychological-pedagogical Council come from socially disadvantaged families and usually do not attend any kind of pre-school education. However, according to SKAV representatives, a large number of postponements is also due to the fact that schools are unable to adapt to the individual needs of children.

Despite all of the criticism, the amendment to the Education Act was adopted and the introduction of one-year compulsory and free pre-school education was approved by the Council of Europe, more precisely by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). Additionally, ECRI supports the fact that the Czech Education Act establishes a right to placement in kindergartens for four-year, three-year and two-year-olds. However, the Civic Democratic Party has opposed the right to place two-year-old children in kindergartens, and this proposal was rejected.



Published statistical data on participation of pre-school children from socially or culturally disadvantaged environments in formal and informal pre-school educational institutions

In the Czech Republic, 362 653 children attended kindergarten in the school year 2016/2017 (Table 2.1.1). The number of children in kindergartens was gradually increasing until 2015 (from 2011 there were nearly 25 000 more children, an increase of 7 %). From 2015 the number of children started to decrease, which is given by a simultaneous decrease in the number of children born from 2010 to 2013, from 117 153 to 106 751. (Czech Statistical Office 2018)

Table 2.1.1. Number and share of disadvantaged children under Article 16 (9) and foreigners in Kindergarten in 2011/12 to 2016/17 (dates as of 30 September)

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Number of children	342 521	354 340	363 568	367 603	367 361	362 653
Disadvantaged children under Article 16 (9)	9 510	9 767	10 063	10 312	10 536	10 486
individually integrated	2 032	2 156	2 299	2 484	2 748	3 029
in special classes	7 478	7 611	7 764	7 828	7 788	7 457
Share of Z16/9 in the total number of children in Kindergarten	2,78 %	2,76 %	2,77 %	2,81 %	2,87 %	2,89 %
Share of individually integrated children in the total number of 16 (9)	21,40 %	22,10 %	22,80 %	24,10 %	26,10 %	28,90 %
Share of children in special classes in the total number of 16 (9)	7,86 %	7,79 %	7,72 %	7,59 %	7,39 %	7,11 %
Foreigners	4 714	5 434	6 307	7 214	8 302	9 494
Share of foreigners in Kindergarten	1,38 %	1,53 %	1,73 %	1,96 %	2,26 %	2,62 %

Source: Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports (Analysis of the first year of implementation of the joint education)

Concerning the children with Special educational needs (SEN) under Article 16 (9) (hereinafter Z16/9), their share in kindergarten oscillates around 2,8 % in the long term. These are children with mental, physical, visual or hearing impairment, severe speech defects, severe developmental learning disabilities, severe developmental behavioural disorders, concomitant multiple disabilities, or autism.

In kindergartens, the share of children individually integrated into common classes has increased in the long term. The Table 1 illustrates, among other things, the trend of decreasing shares of children in special classes and the growth of the proportion of children individually integrated into regular classes during the last six years. It includes also the school year 2016/2017 when joint education was implemented and surprisingly there was no deviation from the trend from previous years.

Simultaneously with the decrease of the number of children in kindergartens, the number of children with disabilities (10 536/10 486) slightly decreased, but the number of individually integrated children increased from the original 2 748 to 3 029, and the number of children in the special classes slightly decreased from 7 788 to 7 457.

Concerning the total number of children with SEN, 12 565 children attended kindergarten in the school year 2016/17. For most of them (10 486), Z16/9 was applied on the basis of an assessment by a school counseling facility. There were 620 children with other (health) disadvantages than those listed under Z16/9. In addition, there were 1 623 children whose disadvantages were related to the cultural environment (789), or living conditions in the family (520), or the disadvantage resulted from the combination of several factors (314). An extraordinary talent was discovered in only 7 cases.

During the monitored period there was a significant drop by 4,5 % in the number of children with impaired communication ability in kindergarten and the increase of the number of children with autism by 6,7 %. (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports 2017a)



The share of children whose parents are foreign-born in kindergartens was 2,6 % in the school year 2016/2017. In total, 9 494 foreigners attended kindergartens, which is almost 14,4 % more than in the preceding year, and over 100 % more than in 2011/2012. (Czech Statistical Office 2016: 147)

When comparing the immigrant children in kindergartens during the past five school years, one can notice, that the number of foreign children is rising every year, but the countries their parents come from are almost unchanged (Vietnam, Ukraine, Slovakia, Russia, Mongolia). The biggest share of foreign children in kindergartens could be observed in Prague, followed by the Central Bohemia region.

Table 2.1.2. Children in preschools by the type of disability and by the form of integration (2016/2017)

Form of integration		TOTAL	Disability/Impairment														
			Mental				Hearing		Visual		with serious speech defects	Physical		with multiple defects		with severe developmental disorders	Autism
			Total	of which			Total	of which severe	total	of which severe		Total	of which severe	total	of which deaf-blind		
				moderate	severe	deep											
Czech Republic	Children	10 486	74	204	47	0	263	173	472	84	5 402	367	95	1 426	0	751	1 231
	Girls	3 333	211	75	20	0	120	78	235	32	1 676	156	39	480	0	192	263
Children in special classes by type of disability	Children	7 457	286	93	29	0	159	115	363	46	4 568	157	45	1 023	0	246	655
	Girls	2 407	108	34	13	0	74	55	178	18	1 430	65	21	347	0	70	135
Individually integrated disabled children	Children	3 029	288	111	18	0	104	58	109	38	834	210	50	403	0	505	576
	Girls	926	103	41	7	0	46	23	57	14	246	91	18	133	0	122	128

Source: Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports

As it is apparent from the Table 2.1.2 above that in the school year 2016/2017 more than half of the children under Z16/9 (5 402) had a serious speech defect. Nearly 1 500 children in kindergartens had multiple disabilities and 1 231 children had an autism spectrum disorder. Most of the children with disabilities were boys (approx. 7 thousands). A larger share of children with moderate mental disability, physical disability and with severe developmental disorders was integrated individually compared to special need classes.



Citizenship	Kindergarten				Kindergartens for children without special educational needs				Kindergartens for children with special educational needs			
	Total	Girls	Foreigners		Total	Girls	Foreigners		Total	Girls	Foreigners	
			with permanent residence	Asylants			with permanent residence	Asylants			with permanent residence	Asylants
Total	362 653	174 058	8 893	2	359 724	173 110	8 843	1	2 929	948	50	1
Czech Rep.	353 159	169 516	0	0	350 281	168 582	0	0	2 878	934	0	0
Foreigners	9 494	4 542	8 893	2	9 443	4 528	8 843	71	51	4	50	1
Vietnam	2 552	1 184	2 488	5	2 543	1 182	2 479	15	9	2	9	0
Ukraine	2 254	1 104	2 151	4	2 238	1 099	2 136	13	16	5	15	1
Slovakia	1 722	827	1 556	0	1 714	826	1 548	0	8	1	8	0
Russia	587	291	553	3	582	290	548	3	5	1	5	0
Mongolia	273	121	258	10	272	121	257	0	1	0	1	0
Bulgaria	201	103	187	0	199	102	185	0	2	1	2	0
Romania	194	89	184	0	194	89	184	0	0	0	0	0
Moldavia	157	81	149	1	155	80	147	1	2	1	2	0
China	149	77	143	2	148	76	142	2	1	1	1	0
Poland	144	66	115	0	144	66	115	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports

Most of the children-foreigners at kindergartens come from Vietnam (2 552, i.e. 26,9 %), Ukraine (2 254, i.e. 23,7 %), Slovakia (1 722, i.e. 18,1 %), and the Russian Federation (587, i.e. 6,2 %). Only 51 foreign children attended special kindergartens for children with special educational needs. (Table 2.1.3)

As mentioned in the previous chapter, one of the groups at risk of social exclusion is the Roma minority. The sociocultural environment of the families influences the prerequisites for education. A representative Roma family environment is of low cultural and social status in Czech society. Endangered by socially pathological phenomena, this often creates a less stimulating environment for the development of children's cognitive and moral potential. (Zormanová 2015) Children brought up in this environment are less likely to participate in preschool education. This fact can be illustrated by the results of a 2011 survey presented by the UNDP, World Bank and European Commission – only 32 % of Roma children participate in pre-school education compared to 73 % of the non-Roma population (Table 2.1.4). At the same time, the survey results revealed low educational levels and tougher economic conditions in Roma households



**Indicators of socio-economic background and participation
in pre-primary education for Roma and non-Roma children, 2011**

	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Slovak Republic
Persons living in households at risk of poverty (%)				
Roma	83	82	83	92
Non-Roma	51	37	52	47
Respondents aged 20 to 64 who considered themselves as unemployed (%)				
Roma	38	36	33	34
Non-Roma	9	22	15	8
Household members aged 20 to 24 with at least general or vocational upper secondary education (%)				
Roma	30	23	26	18
Non-Roma	83	63	86	87
Children aged 4 to starting age of compulsory education attending pre-school or kindergarten (%)				
Roma	32	83	43	29
Non-Roma	73	88	63	59

Note: The survey results are representative for Roma living in areas in a higher than national average density of Roma population. Other residents in the same area were surveyed as a rough benchmark, but are not representative of the wider population. In the Czech Republic, 1856 Roma households and 850 non-Roma households were surveyed and at least two out of three Roma households were in urban areas.

Source: UNDP/World Bank/EC regional Roma survey 2011 results in European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and UNDP (2012), *The Situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States – Survey Results at a Glance*, http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance_EN.pdf

Due to the absence of official data to monitor the integration of Roma children in mainstream education, some research reports compile data from different sources to provide estimates. One recent attempt (Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation, 2015) estimates that a significant proportion of Roma children is educated in segregated schools, although this information is contested by the Czech government. (Shewbridge et al. 2016: 63–64)

There is no available data concerning participation rates in informal preschool educational institutions in the Czech Republic. The only published data refers to the number of informal preschool institutions and their capacity. At the end of 2017, there were 93 forest clubs for children under the age of five in the Czech Republic. Approx. 4 500 children attended the forest clubs and the forest kindergartens in total. (Association of Forest Kindergartens 2017) By the end of March 2018, there were 600 children groups, with a total capacity of 7 749. (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs 2018) There were 19 Centres for pre-school children in Prague with a maximum capacity of 285. (Prague Youth Centres 2018)



Methods and activities at the national level, which have proved to be effective when including pre-school children from disadvantaged environments into ECEC

According to the definition published by the Czech Ministry of Education, informal education is the one that takes place outside the formal education system (the criteria of formal education is the achievement of a certain certificate, diploma, etc.) and does not result in comprehensive school education. The informal educational activities are organized outside the framework of the established formal schooling system and offer the participants further development of life experiences, skills and attitudes based on a unified system of values. These activities are usually voluntary. The providers of informal education are mainly associations of family, children and youth and other non-governmental non-profit educational organizations, associations for free-time education - especially free-time centres, educational agencies, clubs, cultural organizations and others. (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports 2018) Informal pre-school educational institutions in the Czech Republic include pre-school clubs, forest clubs, maternity centres and centres for pre-school children and parents.

Pre-school clubs are important contributors to increasing numbers of supported preschool children from socially disadvantaged areas. By attracting parents to preschool activities, the clubs raise their interest and skills in early education. One of the main purposes of preschool clubs should be to prepare children and parents for the successful transition of children into the formal pre-school or school education system. (Agency for Social Inclusion 2018)

There is a high number of preschool clubs in the Czech Republic, led by several non-governmental and non-profit organizations. A well-known NGO, People in Need, is one of these organizations. It currently runs 14 pre-school clubs in the Czech Republic, which work with around 330 children. The clubs target children who grow up in disadvantaged areas, live in hostels or asylum homes and experience other difficulties. Usually, these clubs target children who do not attend public kindergarten. Pre-school clubs are attended by children from age three to six. Ideally, they stay in the club for about a year to make the transition into formal public pre-school education easier both for the children and their parents. If children do not transfer to a pre-school, the clubs prepare children for successful entry to the primary school. The clubs do not compete with publicly funded kindergartens but rather, complement them. The teaching method used in the clubs operated by People in Need is based on the Norwegian method of conceptual teaching called Grunnlaget (which means Foundation). The clubs share their experience in application of this teaching method with teachers and other pedagogical staff during the special seminars and courses. Interested parties are also free to download a methodical guide from the website of People in Need, which was developed by professional methodologist and contains all important information for the teaching staff. (People in Need 2018)

Another type of informal education for pre-school children in the Czech Republic is represented by maternity centres. The main aim of the centres is to prevent social exclusion of mothers or fathers on maternity leave. They deliver the information and share experiences not only about early education and childcare, but also about personal development. The centres are informal, open and accessible for the whole family, and enable the integration of children regardless of race or health and social limitations. The maternity centres are not regulated by law therefore their organizational structure varies greatly.

Pre-school children are welcome at maternity centres. Mothers and fathers most often attend activities of the centres together with their children. The centres are especially useful for early socialization of children as babies have an opportunity to meet their peers and learn to establish contacts with them. This presents a perfect early development opportunity. Unlike public crèches and kindergartens, there is no need for separation from the parent, which makes the adaptation of the child to the group much easier. Children also have the opportunity to see and experience their parents in other social roles than at home. Here, the parents communicate with other children and adults and are not focused on their child exclusively. The children, therefore, learn that their parents are significant to other people. (Kolínková 1995)

The network of maternity centres is an organization, which connects the maternity centres in the Czech Republic and contributes to their better functioning. Currently, it brings together nearly 330 parent and family centres and represents them in negotiations with other state and non-governmental organizations. (Network of Maternity Centres 2009)

While forest schools have to comply with a formal educational curriculum, forest clubs have more freedom to develop their own programs and activities. Forest clubs are considered as an alternative to formal pre-school education. The clubs let children play and learn outside, usually in a forest.

The comparative analysis *Kořeny předškolní výchovy (The roots of preschool education)* (Vošahlíková 2012b) has demonstrated that the pedagogical concept of forest clubs corresponds to eight out of nine requirements of the formal



curriculum for pre-school education. According to pre-school education experts, children attending forest clubs are better physically developed than children attending regular kindergartens. The forest clubs stimulate physical health of children, movement, coordination and motor skills. (Vošahlíková 2012a)

According to the Czech educational think tank EDUin, one of the weaknesses of the Strategy of the Czech Republic's Education Policy 2020 is its lacking emphasis on building a partnership between formal and informal educational institutions. From the current studies on education, it is evident that what is generally called "the skill of the 21st century" is in many ways shaped elsewhere than in school, and often with much greater success.

Formal education institutions should be supported in their awareness of the importance of informal education and use its benefits. The crucial part of education takes place in particular locations, for example free time clubs, afterschool activities or scout clubs. (EDUin 2016)

One of the best examples of the partnership between formal and informal education is a cooperation between Štětí Kindergarten and non-governmental Civic Association Romano Jasnica in the Usti Region. There are several localities in the city of Štětí, which are defined as socially excluded localities according to the criteria of the Czech Ministry of Social Affairs. Štětí Kindergarten is located in this area.

The project was launched in September 2016 by the non-governmental educational organization Schola Empirica to support the partnership between the Štětí and Krupka kindergartens and non-governmental organization Romano Jasnica. The project is aimed at children and parents from socially excluded areas. The selection of children is ensured through the Counselling Centre of Romano Jasnica. The project focuses on several activities and is based on the cooperation between kindergartens and the non-governmental non-profit organization. Activities of the project include professional development of teachers, enhancement of parenting skills, and the development of support for pedagogical work with preschool children. The project has been very successful in establishing dialog between social workers from Romano Jasnica and the kindergarten pedagogical staff, as well as between parents of children involved in the project and teachers. The role of Schola Empirica is to support social workers in the enhancement of parenting skills and providing advice in early education and care. Since its beginning, over 20 Roma families were supported by the project. The project is based on the evidence-based inclusive methodology "Good Start" introduced by Schola Empirica and stemming from the principles of the Incredible Years programs focused on the development of social, emotional and cognitive competences of children. (www.incredibleyears.com)

In the Czech preschool educational institutions, the most commonly used methods are Start Together, Grunnlaget and Good Start. All these methods aim to promote inclusive education.

Start Together

Licensee of the program Start Together is organization Step by Step in the Czech Republic (SbS CR) which offers teachers and schools specific procedures for implementing the requirements and objectives of the central-legal curriculum. The aim and mission of Step by Step in the Czech Republic is to familiarize teachers with modern trends in education, to support their professional and personal growth, to develop their creativity, teamwork and active cooperation with parents of their pupils.

Step by Step's program Start Together is an open didactic system, which allows each school to adapt the program to its particular form of culture, customs and traditions of the country, its educational system and the needs of specific children. Start together is a pedagogical approach that combines modern knowledge of pedagogical and psychological sciences with proven educational practices. It supports an inclusion of children with special needs.

The Start Together approach makes use of project learning, integrated thematic lessons and a stimulating classroom environment (non-traditional class division into so-called "centres of activities"). All training courses of the SbS CR are accredited by the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The quality of this program is defined by the International ISSA Quality Standards of Pedagogical Work.

There are over 100 kindergartens and 80 elementary schools currently working with Start Together. In addition, there are several secondary schools and colleges involved in the preparation of future educators, as well as many non-profit organizations and state institutions at various levels. (Step by step ČR, o. s. 2018)



Grunnlaget is based on the theory of Norwegian teacher, Magne Nyborg, and his conceptual teaching program. The Nyborg model is focused on the development of the basic thinking processes and could be utilized in work with children with specific educational needs as well as with ordinary pupils. Through specific materials the children learn to understand basic notions such as colour, shape, number, etc. They learn to compare individual concepts, develop language skills and ways of thinking that can later be used not only in further learning, but also in everyday life. The first signs of progress appear after approximately half a year after the implementation of this method. This is evidenced by the experience of the pre-school club in Bílina, where the method is actively used.

"There has been a great improvement not only in the quantity of knowledge acquired, but the main change was the children's approach to learning. It has been a magical experience to watch them enjoying every success and being inspired to learn more. It can be best illustrated by an example from our recent trip to the zoo. We were working with a concept of a round shape and children were pointing round objects, which they could see around them during our journey and had great fun doing it." (People in Need 2017)

The method is mainly focused on developing basic cognitive processes, such as planning, paying attention, gathering and using new information. These processes are usually underdeveloped or structurally different in children with special educational needs. Using the method in practice can compensate for the learning difficulties stemming from the childhood spent in disadvantaged environments or as a result of mental and physical handicaps.

Good Start Methodology

The "Good Start" methodology focuses on how to support social and emotional competences of pre-school children and is founded upon the evidence-based principles developed by the US organization Incredible Years. (www.incredibleyears.com). Since its introduction in 2011, more than 250 teachers were trained in this methodology as 42 kindergartens across the Czech Republic implemented it. The goal of the Good Start methodology is to avoid certain risks, particularly the risk that children have little opportunity to learn by their own experience. The current learning process places too much stress on the transfer of information and knowledge, which children receive without being able to experience, understand or internalize it. A variety of issues is connected to such learning strategies: adults often experience an urge to stop their child from exerting effort due to the stress they are experiencing, the children are insufficiently motivated to express themselves, the environment places unreasonable demands on the child via negative assessment, lack of recognition and appreciation of the child's efforts. There is a lack of positive examples of behaviour: following the lead of children, praise is often perceived negatively and adults in a school environment often behave in non-authentic ways.

The training program of the Good Start methodology aims to enhance the professional competence of pedagogical staff in pre-school facilities, contributing to an improvement of their work with children, supporting healthy development and growth of children and nurturing their social and emotional skills. Particular attention is paid to children from socially disadvantaged or culturally diverse environments for whom entry to pre-school is often more challenging and results in behavioural difficulties. In addition, the attention is also paid to the children with a different mother tongue, especially with regards to their integration into the children's group and learning the new language, with the emphasis on non-verbal and visual ways of communication. (Havrdová & Vyhánková 2015)



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2.2. England / Great Britain

Introduction

When we look back over the last few years, it seems that the slow and fitful development of early childhood education in the UK stood at the centre of educational and social changes. There has been something of an explosion of activity, initiatives, interest and resources. Thus, in the last 25 years alone, from 1988 to 2016, there have been at least 25 major new policies which, apart from their individual effects, have, on the whole, changed the shape and status of Early Childhood Education and Care almost beyond recognition. A brief survey of this period reveals how policy changes have involved early childhood educators in the following:

- implementing the National Curriculum and subsequent revisions
- rigorous and (sometimes) stressful inspection processes
- implementation of the Children Act 1989
- interpretation of expected 'desirable outcomes' of nursery education
- implementing new codes of practice for the identification of children with Special Educational Needs
- implementing changes in relation to national assessment of children on entry to school, known as 'Baseline Assessment'
- the National Childcare Strategy in 1998
- implementing the new Foundation Stage curriculum developed from government guidance
- transforming the Foundation Stage from policy to practice
- implementing the Foundation Stage Profile
- The Ten Year Childcare Strategy 2004
- implementing the Birth to Three Matters Framework
- establishment of the Children's Workforce Development Council (2006)
- implementing the revised Early Years Foundation Stage (2007)
- acquiring Early Years Professional Status
- review of The Early Years Foundation Stage (Tickell, 2011) and implementation of the revised EYFS (2012)
- review of Early Years and Childcare Qualifications (Nutbrown Review, 2012)
- launch of the Childcare Commission³ (DfE and DWP, 2012)
- provision for 40 % of the most vulnerable 2-year-olds in England
- new policies announced in 'More Great Childcare' (DfE, 2012)
- new assessment policy announced (2013)
- the new pupils premium announced (2015)

It is important to remember that this list is by no means exhaustive and, of course, is supplemented by other social and educational policies which have – equally if less directly – impacted the culture, structure and status of early childhood education and care. As well as these demanding policy shifts, recent years have seen the establishment of what might be called a new recognition for the early childhood workforce with unprecedented government investment followed by unprecedented spending cuts, professional development opportunities (and expectations), networks of support expectation of further qualifications of some staff working with children from birth to five. Formulating and implementing early childhood education policy has been a largely devolved responsibility divided between different governments. Major pressure points in English early education policy – for instance around staff qualifications, inspection regimes, and the expansion of education for 2-year-old children at the greatest risk of disadvantage – share prominent features with those in the other three nations making up the UK. However, for the purpose of this report we will only concentrate on the overview of early education in England. The English early childhood service system differs from that of other European nations in important respects. Universal early education for 3- and 4-year olds (often referred to as childcare in official documents), free at the point of delivery and funded by a direct, supply-side provider subsidy, was introduced under the Labour Government. Since September 2010 the size of this universal early education entitlement has been 15 hours per week during school term times. The later government also continued and increased Labour's offer of free early education targeted at 2-year olds living in disadvantaged circumstances.

Since September 2017 the government has committed to doubling the amount of free childcare from 15 to 30 hours a week for working parents of three- and four-year olds. The development can, however, not be seen as exclusive without looking also at other policies aimed at providing good start for all which were covered under the umbrella Ending child poverty by 2020 strategy. (Faulkner and Coates 2013)



Definition of formal and informal pre-school educational institutions

The division between formal and informal early years education provision in England is not straightforward, particularly as the term is used to mean different things in different contexts. Informal childcare comprises a heterogeneous group of providers, fulfilling different roles, attracting different parental expectations, and providing varying quality of care. In its broadest sense, 'informal childcare' is simply the converse of 'formal childcare'. Formal childcare is childcare which is government-regulated (and studies usually include early years provision within this umbrella term), and can either be paid for by parents (with or without government or employer subsidies) or be provided for free at the point of delivery as part of the entitlement to part-time early years provision. If the 'informal childcare' is simply the converse of formal childcare, then it is 'unregulated childcare'. However, for the purpose of this study we are going to count the organizations which provide the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum as formal institutions, and parents and toddlers groups and the children's centres as informal. It is useful to know that Children's centres work closely with local authorities and provide a variety of services which are highly regulated. Moreover, parents and toddlers groups as well as Children's centres have to follow health and safety regulations. Equally all the staff working with children, regardless of whether they work voluntarily or as employees have to have safety training and a certificate by the DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) authority which proves they have no criminal record.

Registered Childminders

Registered childminders are self-employed childcare professionals who work in their own homes caring for other people's children. They care for small numbers of children in their home-setting and will often care for a range of ages. Childminders can be flexible and offer childcare to support many families.

They are able to take advantage of real-life learning experiences like outings to the park and library. Just like other forms of registered childcare, childminders are regulated and inspected by Ofsted in England, and CIW in Wales. Some childminders are able to offer free, funded, early education sessions for 2-, 3-, and 4-year-olds.

Day Nurseries

Day nurseries look after and educate children from 3 months to 5 years and tend to open from 8.00am to 6.00pm (although some are open even longer). Most are open from Monday to Friday, but a few now open on weekends as well to help support parents' different working patterns. Day nurseries operate year-round, usually with the exception of bank holidays. Some nurseries close between Christmas and New Year, while others remain open. Most offer free early education places that are available to 2-, 3-, and 4-year-olds.

Pre-schools

Pre-schools provide play and education sessions for children between 2 and 5. Most pre-schools are open five mornings a week, with some providing afternoon sessions as well. Some are flexible in terms of the sessions the children can attend, while others are more structured with children attending five full mornings or five full afternoons. Pre-schools and playgroups tend to run term time only, from around 9am to lunchtime or from lunchtime to around 3 or 4pm, depending of the sessions they operate.

For disabled children, more specialised care may be needed. Many childcare providers offer care for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and there are some institutions dedicated to the care of disabled children as well. However, a solid understanding of children's development and how to provide for their needs is essential to all of the institutions, so all of the providers have to demonstrate that they understand and are able to work also with specific needs children.

Parents and Toddlers Groups

Parents and toddlers groups provide a welcoming and supportive environment during the week. Because of this, groups can have a positive impact on parents lives, and the lives of the children who attend. They are run by group leaders



across the country. Parent and toddler groups provide a place for parents and carers to connect with new friends and also to seek support and advice. They aim to provide a safe place for children to make friends, learn and interact together and learn first social skills. They are mostly run by charities and voluntary organizations. They are, however, not completely informal as they have to follow the health and safety regulations. All of the staff also has to have the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.

Children's Centres

Children's centre services are a pivotal part of the early help offered by councils across the country. Whether they're provided from children's centre buildings, co-located with other services in the community, or provided by outreach workers, they allow families to access the help they need to handle early challenges, help to tackle inequalities, and give children a healthy start. Provision has moved on from the early days of Sure Start centres. However, children's centres are currently facing huge cuts and it is estimated that around 1000 have or will be closed in the next two years. As council budgets have reduced and the needs of families have changed, councils now have to look for new ways to provide services and make sure that children and families are getting the support they need within the resources available. Through consultation and engagement with residents and other public, voluntary and community sector services, they are finding new ways to get the services to the people at the right time. For some areas and for some residents, providing services in dedicated Children's centres is still the best option; for others, working with local schools, libraries and other community venues might be more appropriate; while in other cases, outreach services have been established. The decisions are made by local councils as they know their communities best, and are using that knowledge to restructure services around the needs of their residents. The councils are trying to maintain the essential links between the services to avoid children and families falling through the gaps. The examples of good practices are, however, yet to be gathered.



Policy approaches, regulations and strategies of inclusive education

In England tackling disadvantage in early education at a national level is closely linked with the policies aiming to reduce child poverty.

According to the figures from 2015 (Department for Work and Pensions), more than one in four children in England lives in poverty. It is widely accepted that good quality early years services provide children with a strong foundation for their learning and development going forward (Tickell, 2011). The core purpose of services, cross agencies work somewhere as Sure Start children's centres or other local networks, free child care for all 3- and 4-year olds and for disadvantaged two-year olds, is to improve outcomes for young children and their families, with a particular focus on those in greatest need. They work to make sure all children are properly prepared for school, regardless of background or family circumstances. A greater number of families are encouraged to take up free entitlement places at a younger age and become engaged with services, this is because it is considered important to understand the impact of these early years' services on children's lives, and the role they play in reducing the impact of low income. In 2015 the early years premium was also introduced. This additional support for low income families is calculated on a yearly basis.

Furthermore, some families with young children living in poverty can make use of crisis support services. These include services with discretionary welfare payments, food vouchers or access to food banks. Services such as the discretionary Social Fund provided vital support to vulnerable families and individuals. Increasing use of food banks has also been documented, with a range of research documenting the rise (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Hunger and Food Poverty 2014; Copper et al 2014). Research also shows that an increasing number of children is affected by homelessness and a reliance on temporary accommodation. Therefore, a range of services ensures that housing meets their needs. Another initiative which was introduced is The Healthy Child Programme. This programme aims to deliver a range of outcomes including supporting readiness for school and improved learning. The purpose of the Health Visitor Programme, which started in 2011, is to secure an extra 4,200 health visitors and transform the health visiting service across England. However, policy development since the passage of the Child Poverty Act must be seen in the context of reductions in public spending, including in local government.

In more narrow terms and looking at the early years child care providers, we can see that they are all required to follow the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework (Children First Northamptonshire 2018) and the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice 0 to 25 years (Gov.uk 2014). The EYFS document outlines four overarching principles, which include enabling environments, positive relationships, children developing and learning in different ways and at different rates and, the most importantly, the uniqueness of each child. It is understood that some children have additional needs which must be met by the institution with the support of the Special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) or Inclusion manager. The drive for early identification of children, who are not at their expected level of development, and the subsequent support and partnership that aims to narrow the attainment gap, is key for improving outcomes for the youngest learners. Through careful observation of children, their starting points, needs and interests, and subsequent learning experiences must be planned and differentiated accordingly.

Legally, it is the Equality Act (Department for Education 2014) that provides a framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all. Everything that the Early Years provides needs to be non-discriminatory and this may require regular reviews of practices, policies and procedures to ensure that they do not discriminate against people with a 'protected characteristic'. The Early Years Inspection handbook sets the requirements which include children learning to respect and celebrate each other's differences and develop an understanding of diversity beyond their immediate family experiences through a range of activities that teach them effectively about people in the wider world (Ofsted 2018).

Equality is further protected by the policies and strategies of the local councils which make sure the councils are active in promoting equality, access, and inclusion in service delivery, policy development and employment practices. There have been several learning resources designed for early years practitioners to support equality, diversity and inclusion. For example, the guidance for working with children with special needs is provided in SEN and disability early years toolkit which was prepared by the Council for disabled children. It's based on the statutory requirements and the guidance from the Early Years Foundation Stage and the SEN and the disability frameworks; draws on a range of practice guidance and includes useful tools and reflective tasks for early years practitioners. Each section of the toolkit focuses on a different aspect of SEN and disability in the early years. There are 10 sections covered: FAQs; statutory requirements; universal inclusive practice; first concerns and early identification; SEN Support in the Early Years; the role of the early years SENCo; how to involve parents and carers; working with other professionals; Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessments and plans; and transitions for children with SEN and disabilities.



The provision for children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller background in the EYFS is supported in various guidelines prepared by different councils. It invites practitioners from across the whole range of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) institutions to reflect on the quality of their provision for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) children and their families. The resource is set within the context of the themes, principles and commitments of EYFS and adds to the guidance on inclusive practice contained within the statutory framework and the practice guidance. It is one of a set of materials that aim to increase practitioners' knowledge and understanding of potentially vulnerable groups, so that providers give informed consideration to their particular circumstances and requirements.

A national strategy for supporting children learning English as an additional language, the guidance for practitioners in the Early Years Foundation Stage, which gives guidance and advice on support for practitioners working with children from birth to the age of five, was prepared by National Association for English as an Additional Language. (The National Strategies: Early Years 2010)



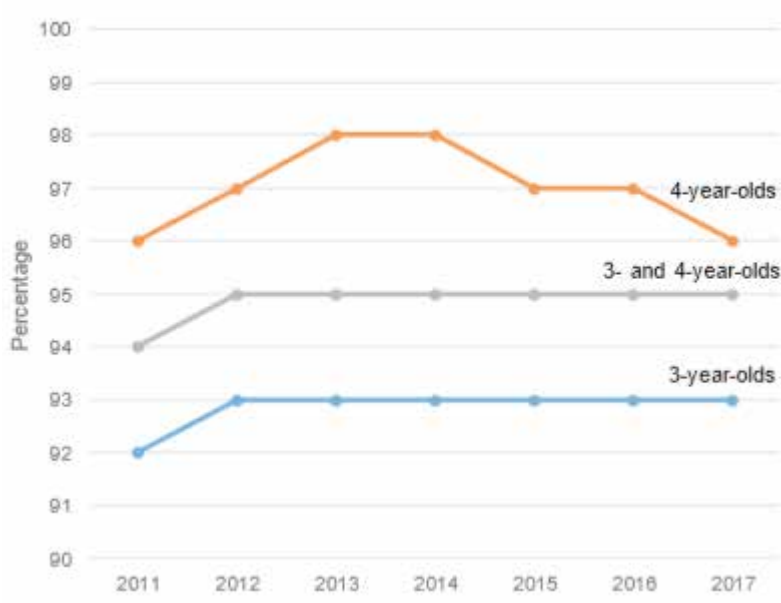
Published statistical data on participation of pre-school children from socially or culturally disadvantaged environments in formal and informal pre-school educational institutions

In January 2017, 663 660 children attended kindergartens in England. This is 93 % of all 3 year old population. All these children also benefited from some state funded early years education. The take up rate has remained the same since 2012. However, the number of 3-year-old children benefiting, decreased from January 2016 by 4,3%, from 660 430 to 632 330. This reflects a drop in the birth rate in 2013.

96 % of the 4-year-old population benefited from some funded early education in January 2017, a decrease from 97 % in January 2016. However, the number of 4-year-old children benefiting increased by 0,9 %, from 679 000 to 685 330. (Figure 2.2.1)

For the purpose of this paper we use the term “children from socially or culturally disadvantaged environments” for the 3 to 4 year old children who are entitled to children’s premium, and the two year old children who are eligible for free childcare. We are also adding the statistics for children with special needs who are benefiting from early years education provision and the children who do not speak English as their first language. Although neither of the groups are not necessarily disadvantaged.

Figure 2.2.1



11 % of 3-year olds were recorded as eligible and also claimed early years pupil premium. Therefore in January 2017, of the 632 330 3-year-olds benefiting from some funded early education, 71 620 were recorded as eligible and claiming early years pupil premium. This measure was introduced for disadvantaged 3- and 4-year-olds in April 2015. Children are eligible if they receive any number of hours of early education and meet the benefits related criteria for free school meals, are in the care of the local authority, or have left care through adoption, special guardianship or a child arrangement order. The most common criterion according to which the children get the premium is economic one.

In January 2017, 32 130 4-year-olds were recorded as eligible and claiming early years pupil premium. This excludes 4-year-olds benefiting from some funded early education in infant classes in primary schools, as they would receive the school age pupil premium.

The number of 2-year-olds benefiting from some funded early education in January 2017 was 163 250, 71 % of the eligible 2-year population. The number of 2-year-olds benefiting decreased by 2,2 % from 166 920 in January 2016. This reflects a drop in the birth rate in 2014. (Figure 2.2.2)



Figure 2.2.2



The children are entitled to free early years provision if they fulfil certain criteria. The largest proportion of children is allocated the funds based on economic criteria, followed by special needs criteria. 2 percent of children are entitled to the free provision based on that fact that they are looked after by local council or adopted from care.

Table 2.2.1

Table 12: The basis on which a 2-year-old¹ has been funded for an early education place

Years: January 2014 - 2017

Coverage: England

	2014		2015		2016		2017	
	Number ^{2,3,4}	Percentage	Number ^{3,4}	Percentage	Number ^{3,4}	Percentage	Number ^{3,4}	Percentage
Total Children	86,640	100	157,030	100	166,910	100	163,240	100
Economic criteria	83,800	97	152,050	97	162,200	97	158,950	97
High-level Special Educational Needs (SEN) or disability	1,300	1	2,450	2	2,080	1	2,150	1
Looked after or adopted from care ⁵	1,490	2	2,940	2	3,220	2	2,830	2

Source: Early Years Census (EYC) and School Census (SC)

(1) Count of children aged 2 at 31 December in the previous calendar year.

(2) Includes 290 children where the basis for funding was not clear.

(3) Figures excludes 2-year-olds at general hospital schools whose basis for funding was not collected.

(4) A 2-year-old can be counted under more than one basis for funding if more than one applies.

(5) In 2014, only looked after children were eligible. In 2015 this was extended to children who left care through adoption, a special guardianship order or a child arrangement order.

According to the data from 2017, 34,1 % of children who qualify for some free childcare provision are not white British, the largest proportion identifies itself as white.



Table 2.2.2

Ethnicity	Number	Percentage ³
White	100,070	71.1
white British	92,650	65.9
Irish	220	0.2
traveller of Irish heritage	140	0.1
Gypsy / Roma	300	0.2
any other white background	6,760	4.8
Mixed	10,010	7.1
white and black Caribbean	2,840	2.0
white and black African	1,560	1.1
white and Asian	1,540	1.1
any other mixed background	4,070	2.9
Asian	16,220	11.5
Indian	2,150	1.5
Pakistani	8,680	6.2
Bangladeshi	2,490	1.8
any other Asian background	2,910	2.1
Black	10,450	7.4
black Caribbean	1,980	1.4
black African	6,630	4.7
any other black background	1,850	1.3
Chinese	550	0.4
Any other ethnic group	3,360	2.4
Classified	140,660	100.0
Unclassified⁴	22,580	
All pupils	163,240	

Source: Early Years Census (EYC) and School Census (SC)

The proportional split of 3-year-olds in private and voluntary providers (including childminders) has gradually increased from 58 % in January 2011 to 62 % in January 2017, whilst maintained nursery schools and nursery classes in primary schools have decreased their share from 39 % in January 2011 to 35 % in January 2017. The proportional split of 4-year-olds across provider types has remained broadly similar over the last 7 years. The proportional split of 2-year-olds in maintained nursery schools and nursery classes in primary schools has increased from 3 % in January 2014 to 11 % in January 2017 whilst private and voluntary providers have decreased their share from 96 % in January 2014 to 88 % in January 2017. (Table 2.2.3)

Table 2.2.3

Figure C: Percentage of children benefitting by provider type and age: January 2017, England

Type of provider	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	3- & 4-year-olds
	%	%	%	%
Private and Voluntary Providers	84	60	19	38
Childminders	4	2	-	1
Independent Schools	1	2	2	2
Maintained Nursery Schools	4	4	1	3
Nursery Classes in Primary Schools	7	31	13	22
Infant Classes in Primary Schools	-	-	63	33
State-funded Secondary Schools	-	-	1	1
Special Schools	-	-	-	-
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Early Years Census (EYC), School Census (SC), and School Level Annual School Census (SLASC)



Methods and activities at national level, which have proved to be effective when including pre-school children from disadvantaged environments into ECEC

A range of policy programmes and practice examples that have indirectly or directly impacted the enrolment of children in the early years education have been developed since 1990s in England. The most significant are Sure Start children's centres, the Healthy Child Programme and the Early Years Foundation Stage. In this part we will only focus on recent examples of practices set up in Government national programmes. They cover different areas of early intervention policy: health, educational development, social development, benefits and financial assistance and are summarised in Early intervention policy paper by Alex Bate (June, 2017): Although not an exhaustive list, the paper provides information on current government early intervention policies and recent policy developments targeting disadvantaged children. For the purpose of this report we will look closer at the policies related to health, education and social development.

Health:

Healthy Child Programme. The Healthy Child Programme (HCP) is a universal National Health Service (NHS) programme for the health and wellbeing of children. It aims to help parents develop a bond with their child, protect them from disease through screening and immunisation, and identify problems in children's development that may relate to neglect or other causes. The programme also focuses on identifying children at risk of problems later in life and parents with mental health or other problems. The NHS Choices sets out the minimum schedule of assessments that should be carried out between birth and five years of age. HCP is a universal service that is offered to all families, with additional services for those with specific needs and risks.

Health Visitors. Health visiting teams lead and deliver the Department of Health's Healthy Child Programme for all children aged 0–5. Health visitors are highly trained specialist community public health nurses. Health visitors work in close partnership with midwives who have an important role to play before birth and in the first days of life. Health visiting teams provide expert advice, support and interventions to all families with children in the first years of life (National health visiting service specification 2014/15 NHS England 2014). They are uniquely placed to identify the needs of individual children, parents and families (including safeguarding needs) and refer or direct them to existing local services, thereby promoting early intervention. They can also have a role in community asset mapping, identifying whether a particular community has any specific needs. By offering support through working in partnerships with other professionals, for example staff working in children's centres, they can help communities to benefit themselves.

The Family Nurse Partnership Programme (FNP) is an evidence-based, preventive programme for vulnerable first-time young mothers. Structured home visits, delivered by specially trained family nurses, are offered from early pregnancy until the child is two. Participation in the FNP programme is voluntary. When a mother joins the FNP programme, the HCP is delivered by the family nurse instead of by health visitors. FNP is targeted at first-time young mothers aged 19 and under, as this is the group shown to benefit most from the programme, and also whose children are shown to be at high risk of poor developmental outcomes. In 2013, the Government announced it would increase the number of places on the FNP programme from 11 000 to 16 000 by 2015. It also expanded the number of areas commissioning the FNP programme.

Healthy Start. Under the Healthy Start initiative, vouchers for vitamins, and for milk, fresh fruit and vegetables, are available to pregnant women and families with children up to four years of age, across the UK based on income-related needs.

Perinatal Mental Health. Perinatal mental health services focus on the prevention, detection and management of mental health problems that occur during the perinatal period – pregnancy and the first year after birth. This includes new-onset mental health problems, as well as recurrences of previous problems and women with existing mental health problems who become pregnant. Services include specialised in-patient mother and baby units, specialised perinatal Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs), maternity liaison services, adult mental health services including admission wards, community and crisis services, and clinical psychology services linked to maternity services.



Education:

Early Education Entitlement. As already discussed in previous parts of the report all three and four-year-olds, as well as around 40 % of what the government considers to be the most disadvantaged two-year-olds, have an entitlement to 15 hours of free early education per week. The current Government has legislated to extend this to 30 hours for working parents of three and four-year-olds. The free hours of early education and childcare can be taken at nurseries and nursery classes, playgroups and pre-school, childminders and Sure Start children's centres.

Early Years Foundation Stage Framework. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is a statutory framework for children up to the age of five, which sets out the areas of learning around which educational activities should be based. The framework sets the statutory standards that all early years providers must meet and it aims to provide: quality and consistency in all early years institutions, a secure foundation for all children for good progress through school and life, partnerships between different practitioners, partnerships between parents or carers and practitioners, and equality of opportunity for all children. The current framework sets out seven areas of learning which should be provided as part of early years education: literacy, mathematics, understanding the world, and expressive arts and design, as well as the three 'prime' areas of communication and language, physical development, and personal, social and emotional development. Prior to September 2016, all early years providers (any provider offering education for children under five, including nurseries and childminders) had to complete an EYFS profile for each child in the final term of the year in which they turn five. For most children this was the reception year into primary school. This is no longer required, although the EYFS continues to be statutory. Early years providers are also required to provide parents and caretakers with a progress check at age two, with a short written statement of their child's development in the three prime areas of learning. The Department for Health and Department for Education are currently piloting an Integrated Review in selected local authority areas, bringing the progress check together with a health visitor check.

Different areas across England provide the coordinated support in different ways, for example in Wakefield in the North of England they organise the so called Integrated Early Help Hubs. They are designed to provide additional structure and governance to the provision of early help to families in the Wakefield District and to ensure that professionals offering early help are supported to provide the right services to families at the right time. There are seven Integrated Early Help Hubs, one in each of the local Areas in the District. The Integrated Early Help Hubs integrate a variety of early help professionals and services in locality based hubs where they can work closely together to provide support to families across the entire spectrum of need. The Integrated Early Help Hubs will enable these professionals to work together and to support and learn from each other. Each Integrated Early Help Hub will also be able to develop close links with other services in their area including the local nurseries, schools and voluntary sector groups as well as specialist and targeted services including the Safeguarding and Family Support Service Locality Safeguarding Teams. These close links will ensure that support to families is coordinated and should enable the level and intensity of service provision to increase or decrease with the family's needs. Professionals located in or linked to the Integrated Early Help Hub will provide support across the entire spectrum of need from universal services onwards.

Pre-school special educational needs provision

The type of support that children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN) receive may vary widely. However, two broad levels of support are in place:

- **SEN Support** – support given to a child or young person in their pre-school, school or college.

For children under the age of five, the type of support provided includes a written progress check at age two, a child health visitor carrying out a health check at age two to three, a written assessment in the summer term of the first year of primary school, and making reasonable adjustments for disabled children (such as providing aids like tactile signs).

- **EHC Plans** - for children and young people aged up to 25 who need more support than is available through SEN support. They aim to provide more substantial help for children and young people through a unified approach that reaches across education, health care, and social care needs.

Parents can ask their local authority to carry out an assessment if they think their child needs an EHC Plan. A request can also be made by anyone at the child's school, a doctor, a health visitor, or a nursery worker. Early years providers must have arrangements in place to support children with SEN or disabilities. These arrangements should include a clear approach to identifying and responding to SEN.



The Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP): This is additional funding for early years institutions to improve the education they provide for disadvantaged three and four-year-olds (as already explained earlier). It was introduced in financial year 2015–16.

Social Development:

Sure Start Children's Centres is a network of local authority-run children's centres, providing activities for young children and ensuring that early childhood services in the local area are integrated. Services can either be provided by the centre, or the centre can provide advice or assistance on accessing these services elsewhere. However, there has been much debate and research over the impact of Sure Start and it is currently understood the best strategy of supporting children and families may not involve children's centres.

Parenting Classes. In July 2011, the government introduced support of parenting classes, saying "we want more mothers and fathers to be able to access high quality parenting programmes when they choose to do so." These programmes were first introduced as an experiment and after the positive impact assessment, it was planned to expand the parenting programmes nationally. However the policy has since been changed. More concretely they have been replaced by different local initiatives, one of them which was introduced in the north of England is The Integrated Early Help Hubs.

The Integrated Early Help Hubs (Integrated Early Help Hub) are designed to provide additional structure and governance to the provision of early help to families in the Wakefield District and to ensure that professionals offering early help are supported to provide the right services to families at the right time. There are seven Integrated Early Help Hubs, one in each of the local Areas of the Wakefield District. The Integrated Early Help Hubs will integrate a variety of early help professionals and services in locality based hubs where they can work closely together to provide support to families across the entire continuum of need. The Integrated Early Help Hubs will enable these professionals to work jointly together and to learn from each other. Each Integrated Early Help Hub will also be able to develop close links with other services in their area including the local schools and voluntary sector groups as well as specialist and targeted services including the Safeguarding and Family Support Service Locality Safeguarding Teams. These close links will ensure that support to families is coordinated and should enable the level and intensity of service provision to increase or decrease with the family's needs. Professionals located in or linked to the Integrated Early Help Hub will provide support across the entire spectrum of need from universal services right through to Level 4. At Level 3 of the continuum, where early help provided by professionals at a lower level (e.g. CAF) has not resulted in the desired outcomes, the Integrated Early Help Hub will assume responsibility and will take the lead role in coordinating the services to the family.



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2.3. Poland

Introduction

*„If everyone was the same,
nobody would be needed”*

ks. Jan Twardowski

Poland is in the group of the EU countries achieving the best results in terms of the percentage of early school leavers and the proportion of people with higher education. The overall level of basic skills of young people is high in comparison to other EU countries. Participation in early childhood education and care (ECEC) has increased considerably, but challenges sustain for the youngest children and pre-primary education.

Pre-school is considered to be a link connecting family education and upbringing at school, performing functions of care, education and socialization. In the context of education involving the child with Special Educational Needs (SEN), the work is very much related to building good relationships in the peer group. Children are different, they look different, have a different family background, social environment and educational experience, and, thus, pre-school becomes a place of tolerance for “the otherness”.

In Poland pre-primary education establishments aim at taking care and preparing children for school education. Such establishments are designated for children between the age of 3 and the beginning of their compulsory education in a primary school (at the age of 7).

Pre-primary education establishments include:

- nursery schools,
- pre-primary sections of primary schools,
- and since 2008/2009 school year also pre-primary education groups
- and pre-primary points,

which ensure the integration of all pupils with their peers.

Enabling the creation of pre-school points or pre-school education teams contributed to increasing access to pre-school education for 3-5 year old children from different environments, both urban and rural. Classes in a pre-school education team can be conducted on certain days of the week, a minimum of 3 hours in one day and a minimum of 12 hours during the week. The pre-school point, on the other hand, performs classes on all weekdays throughout the school year, with the exception of breaks determined by the leading authority. The basic criterion for distinguishing between both forms is the frequency of activities conducted in them. The working time of the team or the point should be flexible, depending on local needs and possibilities, adjusted to the size of the group of children and to the needs and expectations of parents, to ensure the ability to meet the requirements arising from the curriculum of pre-school education.

In 2016, a major educational reform was introduced. Under this reform, children start their compulsory education at the age of six by the mandatory reception (preparatory) class. At the age of seven, children start the first grade of primary school.

An obligatory one-year preparation period for children six years old was introduced in the nursery school or pre-primary sections of primary schools. Moreover, since September 1, 2011, an obligatory one year pre-primary education has been introduced for children at the age of five in pre-primary education establishments i.e. in pre-primary sections of primary schools and preschools (including special schools and special pre-primary schools), as well as since the 2008/09 school year in pre-primary education groups and pre-primary points.

The pre-school environment is not the only determinant of the child's success in the education process. Successful inclusion is also conditioned by the positive family environment, attitudes of parents, cooperation of parents with pre-schools and experts, but also, the acceptance of the “otherness” of the child by parents and teachers. This project is one of the first initiatives aimed at analyzing the situation of pre-school children with Special Educational Needs in Poland that originate from immigrant communities or families with low social status.



Definition of formal and informal pre-school educational institutions

According to the definition, informal education is organized educational activities that do not fall under the formal definition of school education. Informal education does not formally or informally change the level of education. Informal education usually leads to acquiring and extending skills in various areas of professional, social and cultural life. In contrast to informal education, informal learning should take place with the participation of a lecturer, instructor or teacher. For the purposes of this report, let us assume that informal education is understood as non-public education.

Pre-school education in Poland can be public, non-public with the status of a public school, or non-public. The public kindergarten should meet the following criteria:

- provide free education and upbringing in the field of at least the core curriculum of pre-school education;
- recruit children based on the principle of universal accessibility (a parent can apply for admission of a child with special educational needs (SEN) to any kindergarten), and the director should accept a child if there are the appropriate physical conditions and work organization, as well as, psychological and pedagogical support;
- hire teachers with appropriate qualifications.

Non-public pre-school education is an educational institution run by public entities or private persons on the basis of a record in the register of establishments and non-public schools under the Department of Education of a proper authority. A non-public kindergarten can obtain the status of a public kindergarten if it implements the minimum educational programme as required by the Polish Ministry of Education.

There are three coexisting models of education in Poland:

- special, for pupils with statement of special educational needs (SEN)
- inclusion, in which children with a special educational needs learn together with other children,
- and public provisions.

Special nursery schools are organised for children with moderate or severe disabilities - sight, hearing, motor-skills disability, chronic illness (units performing health care activities), with intellectual disability or multiple disability. A special nursery school can be an independent establishment or can be organizationally related to a special primary school, a special education centre or a healthcare facility. Compulsory education can be postponed for children with diagnosed special educational needs and for children over the age of six in special pre-primary education, but no longer than up to the end of the school year in the calendar year in which the child turns eight. In the case of a child who has been diagnosed as needing special education, the obligation of a one-year pre-primary school preparation starts at the beginning of the school year preceding the school year in which the child starts fulfilling compulsory education.

The child care and youth care services are offered both by special educational institutions such as special education care centres, rehabilitation and resort houses for children, as well as extracurricular care services in school. Special education care centres are the centres for children older than three years and youths with disabilities who require special organization of education and special methods of work.



Policy approaches, regulations and strategies of inclusive education

The inclusive education in Poland has its origins in 2006 when Poland became a member of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. Inclusive education is based on the social understanding of the needs of people with disabilities who have the right to use the universal education on equal terms. Activities for inclusive education are undertaken by more and more educators, not only in theory but also in practice. The representatives of this inclusive approach stress that inclusion is a chance for a good start not only for children with disabilities, but all the pupils, because it teaches the acceptance of diversity of gender, nationality, race, mother tongue, social environment, level of achievement or disability.

The concept of Janusz Korczak undoubtedly has an impact on Polish inclusive thought. Korczak's pedagogical thought was focused primarily on the subjective treatment of the child. Korczak was of the opinion that every child has the right to respect and good treatment. Every child has the right to develop their abilities. He perceived aptly that the development of the child, beyond their natural developmental potential, is influenced by the environment, in which they are located, from which they come. Korczak also argued that a good teacher and educator must first of all work on himself; to be able to influence the pupils, he must constantly improve. He paid attention to: individual potential of each child, the influence of the environment on development, the need to shape an individual in the peer group and the importance of the teacher's attitude to the children's development. Such an understanding turns out to be close to the current approach of inclusive education related not only to an individual support of the child, but also the perception of the child in the social group. Thus, the pedagogical activity becomes, apart from the student's educational success, a social integration. (Gajdzica 2011)

According to the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations 2015)⁴, it is essential to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all future generations of children in rich countries, especially in connection with equal access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education.

The main pre-primary education objectives in Poland are aimed at taking care and preparation of children for school education. Pre-primary education includes children from the beginning of the school year in the calendar year in which they turn three, until the end of the school year in the calendar year in which the child turns seven. Obligatory pre-primary education in Poland starts at the beginning of the school year in the calendar year in which a child turns six and, on the parents' request, children at the age of six could start education in the first class of primary schools. In the case of a child who has been diagnosed as needing special education, the obligation of a one-year pre-primary school preparation starts at the beginning of the school year preceding the school year in which the child starts fulfilling compulsory education. The provision of education and care, including special education and social prevention in kindergartens, is an educational task for municipalities. In addition, establishment and leading public kindergartens, integration and special education departments and other forms of pre-school education, falls under the municipalities' responsibilities.

According to Polish law every citizen is equal in regards to the access to education. Every citizen has the right to equal treatment by public authorities and no one can be discriminated for any reason, in political, social or economic life. (Article 32 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland 2 of April, 1997). Everyone has the right to education, and public authorities provide citizens with universal and equal access to education. For this purpose, the support systems are created for individual financial and organizational needs of pupils and students. (Art. 70 Constitution of the Republic of Poland) The second legal act of the Polish law which obliges to take a legal action is the REGULATION OF THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL EDUCATION from August 23, 2017, on the education of persons who are not Polish citizens and persons who are Polish citizens, but received education in schools abroad.

Education of children coming from abroad (from 1 January 2018)

The regulation provides that a child arriving from abroad is admitted to a public kindergarten, kindergarten unit in a public primary school or another public form of pre-school education on the same terms and the recruitment procedures as Polish citizens.

⁴ The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (or Global Goals for Sustainable Development) include a collection of 17 global goals set by the United Nations in 2015.



People who are not Polish citizens participate in education and care:

- in public kindergartens
- or public other forms of pre-school education,
- and also in non-public kindergartens,
- pre-school departments in non-public primary schools
- and other non-public forms of pre-school education,

They are subject to compulsory obligation of education on terms related to Polish citizens. Migration has currently become a top issue in Europe, but little is known about the needs of migrant children. Consequently, there are considerable differences between opportunities and means provided for children from immigrant and non-immigrant backgrounds.

Early childhood development support

From the 1st of September, 2017, an individual compulsory annual preparation for pre-school or individual education includes children, whose health makes it impossible or much more difficult to attend kindergarten, or other forms of pre-school education, or kindergarten in primary school or school. Due to the amendment to the Educational System Act, the Polish education system ensures the equal opportunity of learning in all types of schools for children with disabilities, social maladjustment or endangered by social maladjustment, in accordance with individual developmental and educational needs and predispositions.

According to the act “Law on School Education” – 14 December 2016 Dz.U.2017, students with special educational needs (SEN) are required to be diagnosed by the proper agencies, but do not need to be disabled as it is defined by the Act on Professional and Social Rehabilitation and Employment of the Disabled. Students with disabilities do not need a verification of special educational needs respectively.

Children with SEN are appropriately adapted to the pre-school education programs and the curriculum based on individual developmental, educational needs as well as the student’s psycho-physical abilities.

The adjustment takes place on the basis of an individual educational and therapeutic program developed for the student, considering the recommendations contained in the ruling of the special educational need.

Depending on the type of disability, including the level of intellectual disability, there is organized educational and upbringing support to children and adolescents. If necessary, it enables learning in a range accessible to them, improving disrupted functions, revalidation and rehabilitation, as well as provides specialist assistance and care.

Verification of the needs for early childhood development support and special educational need or an individual compulsory annual preparation for pre-school and individual teaching, as well as the need for revalidation and educational classes organized in accordance with the rules of mental health, are issued by teams of specialists and experts operating in public psychological and pedagogical counseling centres, including specialist clinics. The formal decision about special educational needs determines the recommended forms of special education, taking into account the type of disability, including the degree of intellectual disability.

The teams for early childhood development support can be created to stimulate the psychomotor and social development of the child, from the moment of detecting the disability to study at school, run directly with the child and his family.

For children deprived of full or partial parental care, as well as children who are socially maladjusted, the care and education is organized on the principles set out in the provisions on family support and foster care procedures as well as social assistance regulations.

Kindergartens can make an agreement with other organizations in order to implement some of the recommendations contained in the verification statements.



The agreement shall specify in particular:

- the number of hours of classes as part of early childhood development support,
- an entity obliged to provide data about classes in early childhood development support, organized for this child, in accordance with the provisions of the educational information system;
- the method of settlements between entities concluding an agreement.

Another thing is that THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE POLISH LANGUAGE MAY NOT BE THE REASON OF REFUSING THE ADMISSION OF THE CHILD TO THE PRESCHOOL. The kindergarten headteacher has the possibility to ask the governing body for the permission to organize the Polish language learning for a child or for permission to hire a teacher's assistant. However, according to the regulations, the right to additional, free Polish language learning is available only to persons being subject to compulsory education or learning obligation, not to children attending kindergartens. Therefore, ensuring the communication and friendly environment for children from migrant backgrounds, despite of language barriers, is a task for the headmaster and teachers.

Finally, it is important to mention here the **preparatory branches**, introduced on the basis of Polish law. These are school divisions for persons who are not Polish citizens and persons who are Polish citizens subject to compulsory education, but who have studied abroad. These children, therefore, do not speak Polish or know the language at a sufficient level for learning, as well as show disturbances in communication and adaptation difficulties associated with cultural differences or with the change of the educational environment, which requires adapting the process and organization of education to their needs and educational opportunities.

Inclusive education in Polish academic literature

Special education is organised for children and youths with special educational needs, including different types of disabilities, social maladjustment and endangered by social maladjustment. This education requires the use of a special organization of learning and working methods and may be fulfilled within the school system or in the forms of individual instruction in kindergartens, pre-primary departments in primary schools or other forms of pre-school education and centres, respectively.

Here, the opinions on the doctrine of inclusive education in Poland should be presented. According to Zenon Gajdzica, current pedagogues do not have sufficient competences and theoretical foundations for inclusive education in order to be convinced of the legitimacy of its application in their practice. He indicates the need to educate current and future teachers in the field of special education and pedagogy in a broader sense. (Gajdzica 2011)

The reform should primarily include changes in legislation to involve all children with special educational needs and enable changes in the organization of school work. As Anna Zamkowska remarks, transformations should be made at the level of the education system leading to attitudes towards the student's needs, and not to the educational results achieved by them. In addition, pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are not taken into account in assessing the effectiveness of schools, so they are not considered to be an integral part of the system. Zamkowska is of the opinion that the schools' tendency to achieve better academic results constitutes a significant limitation for the development of inclusive education in Poland. Some studies also point out to the concerns expressed by parents about placing their SEN child in a mainstream class. In the parents' opinion, inclusive education is not always beneficial. They stress the issues related to the health of the child, lack of experts, lack of rehabilitation equipment, inability to change the infrastructure of the given facility. (Zamkowska 2011)



Published statistical data on participation of pre-school children from socially or culturally disadvantaged environments in formal and informal pre-school educational institutions

Pre-school education is the first stage of education in the Polish education system. In the school year 2016/2017, it covered children aged three to six and was implemented in kindergartens, pre-primary departments in primary schools and from the school year 2008/2009 – also in pre-school and pre-school education groups. Kindergartens, pre-school and pre-school groups were intended for children aged three to six, and pre-school units in primary schools for six-year-olds.

The statistical data indicate that in 2016/2017 school year, there were 21,7 thousand formally registered pre-school education centres in Poland:

- 11,8 thousand kindergartens (increase by 0,4 thousand),
- 8 thousand pre-primary branches in primary schools,
- 0,1 thousand pre-primary education groups,
- and 1.8 thousand pre-school points.

In 2016/2017 school year, 1 299,1 thousand children were covered by the pre-school education system, 158,5 thousand more than in the previous year. (The increase in the number of children in pre-school education was caused by a change in the education system, which left parents to make a final decision on sending a 6-year-old child to the 1st grade of primary school). According to the data, the majority of parents decided to wait for the child to be sent to the 1st grade of primary school until reaching the age of 7 years. Pre-school education was attended by 80,7 % of children in the 3–6 age group, compared to 84,2 % in the previous year (then age group 3–5 years) and for children aged 3–5, this rate was 81,1 % (95,3 in cities and 61,6 in the villages). Despite substantial increase, these numbers represent less than average rate in the OECD countries or the European Union.

Among five-year-olds, 90,7 % participated in pre-school activities, among four-year-olds – 84,6 % (83,9 % in 2015/2016), and among three-year-olds – 67,1 % (in the previous year – 70,5 %). Compared to 2015/2016, the number of all pre-school branches increased by 2,7 %. The increase was recorded in the number of kindergartens, which came to 431 (which was an increase of 3,8 %) – including 110 branches in the countryside, and in pre-primary branches at primary schools where the number of facilities increased by 208, i.e. 2,7 %, of which in the city there was an increase of 291 branches, and in the village a decrease of 83 outlets. The drop in the number of other types of branches was 3,5 % for pre-school points, and 16 % for pre-school education groups. Kindergartens accounted for over half (54,3 %) of all pre-school education centres, with over 2/3 (67,2 %) of all kindergartens located in cities. Pre-primary units in primary schools constituted 37,1 % of all types of facilities, with 75,7 % being located in the countryside. Pre-school and pre-school education teams accounted for 8,6 % of all facilities (59,2 % were located in the countryside, Table 2.3.1).



Table 2.3.1

Specification	The character of the village	Type of facility	2012	2013	2014	2015
Children in pre-school education institutions [person]	Total	Pre-school education centres	1 216 467	1 297 189	1 236 280	1 140 602
		Nursery schools	911 507	952 911	942 820	906 622
		Pre-primary points	30 495	37 217	35 456	31 701
		Pre-primary education groups	1 732	1 875	1 558	1 407
		Pre-primary sections of primary schools	272 733	305 186	256 446	200 872
	City	Pre-school education centres	824 798	869 147	831 700	765 735
		Nursery schools	706 934	731 809	723 154	695 016
		Pre-primary points	11 677	13 929	12 968	11 553
		Pre-primary education groups	361	351	308	284
		Pre-primary sections of primary schools	105 826	123 058	95 270	58 882
	rural	Pre-school education centres	391 669	428 042	404 580	374 867
		Nursery schools	204 573	221 102	219 666	211 606
		Pre-primary points.	18 818	23 288	22 488	20 148
		Pre-primary education groups	1 371	1 524	1 250	1 123
		Pre-primary sections of primary schools	166 907	182 128	161 176	141 990

Source: Central Statistical Office 2018

Number of pre-schoolers in pre-school education institutions:

- located in cities constituted 93,4 % of children aged 3 to 6 years (increase by 4,7 percentage points),
- the indicator for the village was 63,4 % (decrease by 1,7 pp).

The number of disabled children in pre-school education facilities increased by 24,7 %, which is still, as in previous years, 1,5 % (increase by 0,2 percentage points) for all preschoolers. One of the remaining forms of care for the disabled children is special kindergartens.

The number of pre-schoolers in pre-school education centres located in cities accounted for 93,4 % of children aged 3 to 6 years (an increase of 4,7 pp), including 87,9 % of six-year-olds, 102,6 % of five-year-olds, 99,9 % of four-year-olds and 82,7 % of three-year olds. The percentage of five-year-old children participating in activities in institutions located in cities exceeded 100 % due to the children brought from the village by parents working in the city. The indicator for the village was 63,4 % (decrease by 1,7 pp), including 68,5 % of six-year-olds, 74,3 % for five-year-olds, 63,6 % for four-year-olds and 45,6 % for three-year-olds.

Inclusive education of children with disabilities

Similarly, as in many other countries, inclusive education of children with disabilities in Poland starts at the stage of pre-school education. Contemporary indicators on inclusive education of children with disabilities at the stage of pre-school education are optimistic. The last statistical analysis (2014, 2015) shows that the rate of participation of children with disabilities in pre-school education is 75 %. Indicators are lower in the countryside, higher in the cities (67 % and 88 %, respectively). Preschoolers with disabilities are usually placed in ordinary kindergartens (79,1 %), then in entities of inclusive education (17,2 %) and in special pre-schools (3,8 %). The indicators are different in public and non-public pre-schools (respectively: 79,1 % and 65,4 %; 17,2 % and 25,9 %; 3,8 % and 8,6 %). Most children with disabilities participate in pre-school education in cities over 500 000 – 88 %, then in cities from 20 to 100 thousand. – 82 %, cities from 100 to 500 thousand – 80 %, cities up to 20 000 – 72 %, least disabled kindergarteners in rural areas – 67 %. The number of children with disabilities in pre-school education centres increased by 24,7 %, which is similar, as in previous years, 1,5 %

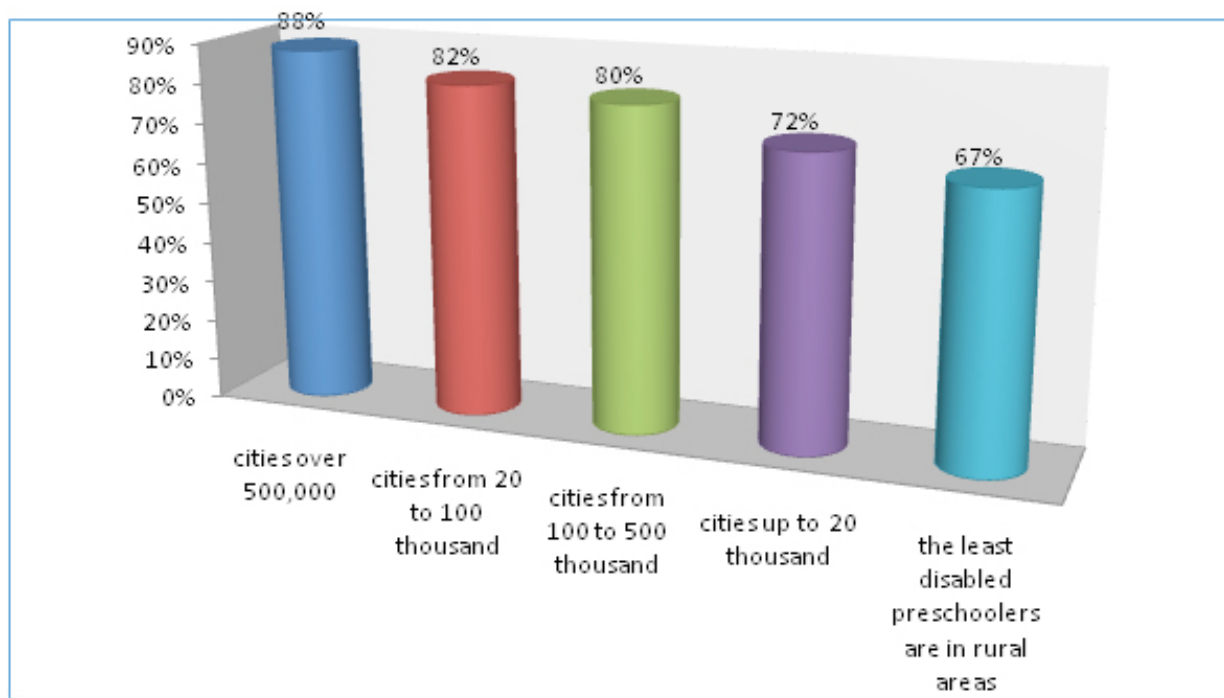


(increase by 0,2 pp) of all preschoolers. One of the forms of care for them is special kindergartens. In the school year 2016/2017 there were 242 such institutions (35 more than in the previous year), attended by 4 thousand children.

The studies conducted by Piotr Grzelak, Piotr Kubicki and Marta Orłowska also indicate that the vast majority of children with disabilities attend inclusive kindergartens. As indicated by the results of the research, 79,1 % of children with disabilities attend public kindergartens in public institutions, 17,2 % – integration and only 3,8 % – special kindergartens. The indicators are slightly different in the case of non-public institutions. There are lower rates of participation of children with disabilities in education together with healthy peers (65,4 % – open access and 25,9 % integration), and higher in special schools (8,6 %). As the analyses demonstrate, there is a correlation between the pre-school education of children with disabilities and the level of parents' education. The data indicates that the higher the education of parents, the higher the participation rates of children with disabilities in pre-school education. However, it is not known whether it is the result of higher awareness of parents, the necessity of early coverage of the child with education and specialist support, or rather related to the social and professional situation of parents. There is also the possibility, that every one of these conditions is important for the decisions made. The fact is that 90 % of children of parents with higher education participate in pre-school education, and only 64 % of children of parents with primary education. (Chrzanowska 2015) (Figure 2.3.1)

Figure 2.3.1

Most children with disabilities participate in pre-school education:



The main problem of inclusive education in Poland is the late diagnosis of disability. A great number of children with disabilities receive their first diagnosis at the age of 6–7 if we concentrate on sensory or movement disabilities, and even later if the child has an intellectual disability. In the case of slight intellectual disabilities, the largest group of children is diagnosed at the age of 6–11 respectively: 6 years – 11 %, 7 – 15 %, 8 – 12 %, 9 – 8 %, 10 – 10 %, 11 – 8 %. 18 % of children get a diagnosis up to 5 years old as much as 12 to 16 years old. The deeper degrees of intellectual disability: moderate and severe degree are most often not diagnosed till the age of two (41 %), but the diagnosis of disability after 5 years of age is a reality for approximately 34 % of children with moderate or severe intellectual disability. Analyses conducted on the same issue, but concerning children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD), indicate that at up to 3 years of age, only 12 % of children have a diagnosis. Most often, the diagnosis is formulated at the age of 3 years – 16 %, 4 – 14 % and 6 years – 13 %. A very large group (38 %) is diagnosed at the age of 7 to 15 years. As indicated by the directors, the parents' convictions, especially in the context of the last of the above categories, are confirmed to be the reason for refusal to accept the child to kindergarten. The next most frequent reasons for refusal were: adaptation failure ("the child cannot handle the kindergarten") – 23,2 %, specialization in disability ("we do not work with such disabilities") – 19,7 %, the absence of specialists in pre-schools – 14,3 %, negative attitudes towards children without disabilities ("we do not work with children with disabilities") – 10,8 %, building barriers – 6,5 %, no consent of other children – 4,4 %. Again, this data can be only presented as incidental (as interpreted by the authors of the research), however, it can also be a signal of deepening the sense of rejection and exclusion, with which not every family with a child with a disability will be able to cope. The analysis shows that children with ASD (85 %), with hearing-impairment (84 %), hard of hearing with a mobility disability and moderate or severe intellectual disability (79 %) are the most often diagnosed disabled children. Blind and visually impaired children are much less (66 % and 70 %). Perhaps for this reason only 35 % of children with disabilities attend kindergarten throughout the period of the statutory three-year period. On average, about 19 % of children spend two years in kindergarten, about 21 % – year. For slightly less than half of children with disabilities (47,3 %), a decision was made to change the kindergarten. Definitely more often in the case of public pre-schools than non-public kindergartens. In both cases, most often concerned is the abandonment of the child's kindergarten education (62 % from publicly accessible public kindergartens and 7,5 % from non-public kindergartens, 22,6 % from integration public kindergartens and 0,5 % from non-public, 6,8 % from special public kindergartens and 0,6 % from non-public kindergartens). Among the main reasons for changing the kindergarten were: transfer to kindergarten, which had a better opinion adapted to the needs of the child (19,9 %), change of place of residence (18,5 %), lack of support needed (11,9 %), bad relations with peers (10,9 %), suggestion of kindergarten employees (7 %). (Chrzanowska 2015)



Methods and activities at national level, which have proved to be effective when including pre-school children from disadvantaged environments into ECEC

Inclusive education is a humanistic revolution involving a change in national education systems. A change in the habits and values that have to be done in our hearts and not be imposed a priori. Equality and freedom are the core values of inclusive education. It is a serious challenge for all EU countries to defeat when taking different paths for fulfilling the same purpose. The process of change in education should guarantee a success, because it involves the most vulnerable group of population.

In Poland, one of the changes to good practice was the early enrolment of children starting the school in September. From the point of view of a child with SEN it is a very favourable circumstance, since the kindergarten staff, parents and children can get to know each other before the start of the school year. Adaptation classes are already widely organized and proved to be a very good opportunity for SEN children. The process of getting to know a child with special educational needs starts with an individual meeting of parents, and children with the kindergarten director and teachers. This meeting provides the teachers with valuable information about the child, the family background, social and cultural aspects, developmental and intellectual abilities. On the other side, parents and children get to know the teachers and get acquainted to the pre-school environment.

As was mentioned above, the education of disabled students in Poland can take place in: kindergartens / mainstream schools, kindergartens / schools or integration wards kindergartens / schools or special departments and centres. The parents decide on the form and place of education.

Organization of early support of children development from the moment of detecting the child's disability to the day they start compulsory school education was described above. Classes are conducted directly with the child and his family, subsidizing education, including pre-school education, children with disabilities - as part of the budget from the educational part of the general subsidy for local government units; funds for educating disabled children are much higher than those of a non-disabled student

The institution should provide each student with the conditions necessary for its development, prepare the student for fulfilling family and civic duties based on the principles of solidarity, democracy, tolerance, justice and freedom. In addition, the educational system provides care for disabled students by enabling the implementation of an individualized education process, forms and curricula, and revalidation classes. In accordance with the Act on the education system, the appropriate local self-government unit is responsible for providing special education to a disabled student, whose tasks include running appropriate kindergartens or schools of a given type.

“Law on School Education” in Poland provides⁵:

- adjusting the content, methods and organization of teaching to the psychophysical abilities of pupils, as well as the possibility of using psychological and pedagogical help and special forms of didactic work;

5) „Law on School Education” in Poland:

1. „Law on School Education” of December 14, 2016 (Journal of Laws of 2017, items 59, 949 and 2203 and 2018, item 650);
2. Regulation of the Ministry of National Education of 8 August 2017 on the conditions for organizing education, upbringing and care for disabled children and adolescents, socially maladjusted and endangered by social maladjustment;
3. Regulation of the Ministry of National Education of 9 August 2017 on the principles of organization and providing psychological and pedagogical assistance in public kindergartens, schools and facilities;
4. Regulation of the Ministry of National Education of 24 August 2017 on the organization of early support of children's development;
5. Regulation of the Ministry of National Education of 9 August 2017 on individual, mandatory annual pre-school preparation of children and individual teaching of children and youth.



- the possibility of learning in all types of facilities by children and young people with disabilities, socially maladjusted and endangered by social maladjustment, in accordance with individual developmental and educational needs and predispositions;
- taking care of disabled students by enabling the realization of an individualized education process, forms and curricula and revalidation classes.

The Minister of National Education has defined the organization of education and psychological and pedagogical help for children and youth in schools and institutions, including students with disabilities, primarily in the regulations on:

1. Principles of organization and providing psychological and pedagogical assistance in public kindergartens, schools and facilities (Journal of Laws, item 1591);
2. Conditions for organizing education, upbringing and care for disabled children and young people, socially maladjusted and endangered by social maladjustment (Journal of Laws, item 1578);
3. Individual obligatory annual pre-school preparation of children and individual teaching of children and youth (Journal of Laws, item 1616);
4. Judgments and opinions issued by adjudication teams operating in public psychological and pedagogical counselling centres.

Also:

- The Ministry of National Education has undertaken activities related to the dissemination of information on new solutions in the field of education of children with disabilities.
- Before the holidays, in June 2017, trainings for the inspectors visited the school's education offices. In the near future more trainings are planned.
- Additionally, to ensure full substantive support to education curators, headmasters of kindergartens, schools and institutions throughout Poland, a cooperation network and a plan of self-education of the inspectors were launched.
- Superintendents of education were familiarized with the introduced changes and obliged to hand them over to the directors of the education system units.
- Information materials on how to organize the education of students with special educational needs in the context of new legal solutions.
- A conference on inclusive education and support for children with disabilities is planned.

System projects for 2014–2020

- Equalizing educational opportunities of students and increasing the quality of education in schools providing general education (school development programs, disadvantaged areas)
- Measures to individualize approach to students, also by supporting units of the education system in working with students with special educational needs (including retrofitting of units of the education system with didactic and scientific aids)
- Implementation of a system project aimed at psychological and pedagogical counselling "Raising the quality of diagnosis and therapy in the education system"

The EU emphasizes the need to ensure high-quality pre-school education and care for children aged 3–5 based on the data which shows that its support leads to the long-term benefits and positive outcomes in education, health, work and declining criminal behaviour. In particular, participation in pre-school education reduces the likelihood of poor school performance (**early school leavers**) at the age of 15. These effects seem to be of particular importance for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.



Good practice in cooperation between formal and informal pre-school institution:

City kindergarten no. 40 – Formal – Municipal kindergarten cooperates with a Kindergarten therapeutic pre-school point – **RECEPTOR-ek**. In this facility, classes are intended for children aged 2,5–8 years with a diagnosed special educational needs (SEN) and a certificate of disability, as well as for children without SEN at the age of 2,5–6 years requiring intensive therapeutic and specialist support.

They organize joint meetings, workshops, events such as St. Andrew's Day, carnival ball, watching together theatre performances etc. at Municipal kindergarten facility and RECEPTOR-ek area as well.

Main objectives include:

- integration of environments,
- learning the sense of responsibility,
- acceptance of the other person,
- developing empathy,
- learning to help another person.



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2.4. Slovakia

Definition of formal and informal pre-school educational institutions

The notion early childhood education and care (hereinafter ECEC) includes all types of establishments offering care and education to children in preschool age (before compulsory school attendance), disregarding the establishing body, funding, operational hours, curricula or programme. Since children in Slovakia start compulsory school attendance upon completing 6 years of age, the ECEC is applicable to children aged 0 to 6 years. Institutional care for children aged 6 months to 3 years is generally provided by nurseries through day-long, half-day care or care for a couple of hours. Those services are used mainly by families where the mother or father has not used the 3-year parental leave scheme. Another possibility is to visit so-called mothers' and family centres, mostly established by civic associations or churches. These centres, offering a stimulating environment, enable parents and their children to spend quality time in contact with other children. However, they are not institutionalized care and educational establishments.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) includes all types of establishments offering care and education to children of pre-school age (before compulsory school admission), irrespective of the establishing body, funding, operational hours, curricula, or program. ECEC in Slovakia is applicable to children aged 0 to 6 or 7, the age compulsory education begins (RECI+ 2017).

FORMAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS:

Kindergartens represent the first educational institutions children in Slovakia may attend. They constitute part of the educational system and offer preschool education. They are designed for children from 3 years to compulsory school age of 6 years or to the age of 7 in case of those children with delayed admission to school (deferred entry). If the capacity of a kindergarten allows for it, it can also admit children aged 2 years, but overall, the preference is given to children aged 5 years old and to those with deferred entry. Parents may choose from a wide network of public, private and church kindergartens. In 2016, there were 2 078 state, 127 private and 74 church kindergartens. Slovakia does not have a compulsory system of early childhood education. Even so, a great majority of Slovak children attend kindergarten. According to the Centre of Scientific and Technical Information of the Slovak Republic, the gross enrolment ratio in 2015 was at the level of 88 percent.

INFORMAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS:

Nurseries provide care of children between the age of 6 months and 3 years. Nurseries are not a part of the education system. Municipalities found nurseries; private entities or church can also run nurseries. There is provided the professional care provision, including food, shelter, stimulation, play and development for young children.

Mother and family centres are meeting places in community settings where informal early education takes place and where young mothers/families and their children can socialize. They are established by NGOs and provide space, education or free-time activities for parents and their children.

Community centres provide early childhood education and care, especially in the area of health, education and social needs of the beneficiaries. It is a place that is specially provided for the people, groups, and organizations in a particular area, where they can go in order to meet one another and socialize. Community centres are establishments used by members of community for social gatherings, educational activities, etc.

With the age-based split system of ECEC services in Slovakia, policies for early interventions (age 0 to 3) and pre-school education (age 3 to 6) are disconnected. Responsibilities related to ECEC governance, regulation, and funding are divided between different authorities. Slovakia lacks legislative framework, policies, and national strategies aimed at comprehensive and prioritized early intervention and care. Systemic structural coordination between different sectoral stakeholders with ECEC interests and responsibilities for children aged 0 to 6 is necessary.



In recognition of the importance of ECEC, improved access to pre-school education has become one of the key objectives within the government's social inclusion and Roma integration strategies. Using state and EU funds, the government focuses on the expansion of early childhood education and on increasing capacities in kindergartens in localities with higher numbers of children from marginalized Roma communities.

In the programming period 2014–2020, the government continues to implement national inclusion in education projects (including all-day schools, teacher education, teacher assistant provision, and awareness-raising activities within Roma communities) that will be funded by the European Union's structural and investment funds. However, there are still disparities and inequalities in access to quality ECEC for Roma children compared to non-Roma children. This is a result of numerous complex structural and practical barriers preventing Roma children's participation in ECEC. To address these barriers, systemic solution and coordinated actions by all key actors are necessary.

Generally speaking, European and international organizations criticize Slovakia for its inability to deliver effective policies for Roma integration. These critics say Slovak integration policies lack a goal-oriented approach; ongoing assessment; evaluation of achieved goals; and do not provide financial coverage and weak implementation as a result. This analysis is also supported by an evaluation of the National Strategy for Roma Integration of the Slovak Republic until 2020 (hereinafter the "Strategy") prepared by a coalition of the following organizations – SGI, Association Orava and Wide Open School Foundation. The evaluation disclosed that the strategic document had not really been accepted by the previous government (2012–2016) and thus reality has not been changed under this strategy. Most of the quantified goals have not been achieved. Regarding ECEC, the strategy promised principal changes – a major increase in the enrolment ratio of children 3+ from marginalized Roma communities, thus requiring significant investments into early childhood education for children from marginalized Roma communities, together with support of early care programmes. This vision was to be partially met through a legislative measure that would introduce compulsory early childhood education, as reflected by the Slovak Government Manifesto for 2010–2014 (www.minv.sk).

In 2011, a revised National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion, 2005–2015 for the period 2011–2015 was created. According to this plan, in 2015, the minimum enrolment ratio of children from socially-disadvantaged environments or children from marginalized Roma communities should have been at least at the 50 percent level. A reform strategy from 2012, the Right Way – Roma Reform considered introduction of compulsory 3-year early childhood education. However, those goals were not realistic, therefore not achievable either. The main reason, though not the only one, was the lack of kindergarten capacity. The previous government had also acknowledged this fact, promising in its National Programme of Reforms of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter the "NPR") from 2015 that the state would especially focus its efforts on upscaling capacities of kindergartens in locations with higher representation of children from marginalized Roma communities. The costs of implementing this vision were proposed to be covered by a combination of public and EU funds. The current Government Manifesto for 2016–2020 also holds a vision of improved access to early childhood education. In line with the NPR's promise for 2016, the capacities of kindergartens continued to be scaled up also in 2016 and subsequent years – through EU structural funds. Building new kindergartens and scaling up existing capacities has been supported by almost €80 million from EU funds available to municipal, church and private entities establishing kindergartens. Now, the calls for proposals for scaling up existing capacities in regions with higher representation of children from marginalized Roma communities are open. The allocation is €58 million. The network of kindergartens is gradually being scaled up, as reaffirmed by a statement from our respondent. However, this issue is far from being resolved.

"Until 2018, the capacities of kindergartens will be gradually scaled up by about 200 classes nationally; also with the support of the Ministry of Education (€14 500 000). Operational Programme Human Resources through the Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development and national project managed by the Ministry of the Interior – Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities will also assist in improving access to early childhood education through scaling up capacities of kindergartens." (An employee of the Department of Primary Schools and Section of Regional Education at the Ministry of Education).

A report by the European Commission from 2016 also reaffirms that there has been an improvement when it comes to the lack of kindergarten capacities. According to the report, a certain level of progress can be observed in Slovakia when it comes to scaling up the capacities of early childhood education establishments that improves access to early education of children older than 3 years. No changes, however, have been made regarding systematic care for younger children. The report criticizes Slovakia for no progress in creating a legislative framework for supporting services of early childhood care. An updated Strategy for Roma Integration until 2020 plans to create and offer flexible programmes



of early care for children from marginalized Roma communities. This goal should be achieved between 2016 and 2018, having €11 521 147 earmarked for it but neither the timeframe, nor the budget is sufficient. A certain level of pessimism may also stem from the fact that there is no specification of a vision in any of the strategic documents. Hence, it is very difficult to interpret what is meant by *enlarging the offering of flexible programmes of early childhood care* and to forecast any favourable development.

OECD (2016) analysis shows that Slovakia invests very little into education. In 2014, Slovakia's expenditure on education overall represented 3,8 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), whereas the OECD average was 5,2 percent. Total expenditures on early childhood education institutions in 2013 represented 0,5 percent of GDP in Slovakia, in contrast to the OECD and European Union average of 0,8 percent of GDP (OECD 2016). Slovakia invests just over \$3 100 into early childhood education per child, compared to the OECD average of \$5 260 per child; OECD (2006) concluded that quality ECEC services require a minimum investment of 1 percent of GDP.

Policies for children aged 0 to 3

Political opinion shaped in the 1980s, which is still prevalent in Slovak society today, has been that children under 3 years of age benefit most from personal care by their parents; this perspective was manifest and translated into a relatively generous scheme of family benefits (Kusá 2013). In practice, until a child turns 3 years of age, one of her/his parents receives a state parental benefit, currently (2017) €213,20 if s/he does not declare any costs for childcare. A mother (or father) who stays with a child at home for three years is granted this social benefit. If the parent decides to start working (or continue her/his studies) and the child is enrolled into a day care or nursery, the benefit increases to €280 (www.employment.gov.sk). However, this amount often covers only part of the costs of a nursery or day care centre, which range from €300 to €500 a month. Many poor Roma families cannot afford to use this option.

This approach is based on the recognition of the evidence-based importance of parent–child attachment, especially during a child's first years of life (Hašto 2005). The problem, however, is that there are no other government funded programs of early childhood care being developed that would provide appropriately for the stimulation and development of children living with their parents in unsuitable and impoverished conditions. Due to the state parental benefit policy being based on the idea that a child should stay in a parent's personal care up to age 3, investments into programs of institutional early childhood care and development (and a limited network of nurseries for children aged 6 months to 3 years) remain minimal.

Policies for children aged 3 to 6

Kindergartens are financed through a combination of central and local funding. While the Ministry of Education covers operational costs (staff salaries), local/municipal authorities as the main ECEC providers and founders of kindergartens are responsible for infrastructure and other costs. Supplementary funding for children with special educational needs comes from the Ministry of Education. Pre-schools are partly subsidized and partly paid by parents. As previously described, the final year of pre-school prior to compulsory primary enrolment is free for all children, regardless of family income.

Support for kindergarten access by children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds has only become more systemic in the last decade or so. Since 2004 and 2006, respectively, meals and education aids in kindergartens have become free of charge for children of all ages coming from families with income below the subsistence minimum. Supplementary family allowances are also offered to families with children with special educational needs (SEN), but only for the final year of ECEC.

The School Act (Act No. 245/2008) made pre-school education free to children from the poorest families for the entire duration of schooling. Eligibility for social benefits (free meals and free aids) is based on household income. The social benefits program targets families receiving a material need allowance, or with income under the subsistence minimum level in the most recent half-year. In 2006, the share of pupils from minimum income families in each school also became a factor; all children are entitled to the benefit program if at least 50 percent of pupils in the pre-school or school come from low-income households.

The significant financial requirement connected with these policy initiatives was, unsurprisingly, a major obstacle to implementation even before the international economic crisis of 2007/08. Lack of finances was the main reason Slovakia diverted from its original intention to improve access to early childhood education for the most disadvantaged children (Kusá 2013). An alternative solution, "zero grades", was instead implemented to compensate for challenges resulting from social disadvantages and prepare these pupils for their eventual enrolment to the first year of elementary school.



“Zero grades” became very popular because of the financial benefit for the school: financial support per student in such a class is approximately 200 percent higher than the amount allocated for a child in a mainstream class. Paradoxically, this form of compensatory provision turned out to be much costlier than expected (Farenzenová, Kubánová, and Salner 2012: 72). Shifting course, the government is now striving to enlarge kindergarten capacity, mostly with European Union’s structural and investment funds, but with some state funds, as well. No evidence is yet available regarding the long-term planned increase in public investment to reshape and improve the quality of early childhood education in Slovakia.



Published statistical data on participation of pre-school children from socially or culturally disadvantaged environments in formal and informal pre-school educational institutions

Demographics

The Roma represent the second largest ethnic minority in Slovakia, though some believe they are the largest (Šuvada 2015). In the last census, 2011, only 105 738 Roma identified as members of the Roma minority; a figure that represents about 2 percent of the overall citizens. The census, however, is based on voluntary self-ascription. Most Roma, possibly through ignorance or fear of subsequent discrimination, do not voluntarily self-ascribe their Roma ethnicity; most opt for an alternative nationality category, usually Slovak or Hungarian (Vaňo 2001).

When “attributed ethnicity” is applied, the structure of the Slovak population looks quite different. Statistical estimates and sociological mappings vary. Some claim there are about 500 000 Roma living in Slovakia (Šuvada 2015). *The Atlas of Roma Communities 2013* (Mušinka et al. 2014) gives a qualified estimate of about 403 000 Roma living in Slovakia, which represents around 7,4 percent of the total population. The Council of Europe estimates that Roma in Slovakia comprise 9,17 percent of the total population. Despite the inconsistent estimates, it is indisputable that Slovakia is now one of the European countries with the highest absolute number of Roma, as well as the highest relative share of the total population (Jurová 2004: 248).

Forecasts suggest that the number of Roma will continue to increase while the population curve of other nationalities will fall. The overall higher birth rate of Roma in Slovakia results in great discrepancies in the age distribution of Roma and non-Roma citizens. In Slovakia overall, the population of children younger than 16 is about 15,3 percent, whereas amongst the Roma this demographic represents 39,4 percent. Also of note, only 2,1 percent of Roma in Slovakia are 65+ years of age, while this demographic for the overall population is roughly six-fold higher at 12,7 percent (Šprocha 2014: 21).

Table 2.4.1. Comparative demographics of Roma in the Slovak Republic, 2011

Age group	Roma population	Overall population
0 to 14	39,4 %	15,3 %
15 to 49	49,9 %	52,0 %
50 to 64	8,6 %	20,1 %
65+	2,1 %	12,7 %

Source: Adapted from Šprocha, 2014, 21

According to Šprocha (2014: 147) the number of Roma children under the age of 15 was estimated at about 151 000 in 2012, and this age group was projected to grow to more than 165 000 Roma children in Slovakia by 2030. When combined with expectations of the significant decline of the overall child population by 2030, the proportion of Roma children in kindergartens and schools can be expected to continue increasing. While Roma children accounted for less than 7 percent in 1980, and slightly more than 18 percent in 2012, these projections suggest that Roma children could account for more than 21 percent by 2030 (Šprocha 2014: 148). Preventing the transmission of generational disadvantage for today’s Roma children is a crucial investment in Slovakia’s future, with long-term benefits for those Roma children, their families and communities, and the economy and society as a whole.

Slovakia does not yet have a compulsory system of early childhood education, but it is recommended that every child attends kindergarten for at least one year before compulsory schooling. All types of kindergartens, whether founded with public, church, or private funds and oversight, are obliged to ensure access to free kindergarten for children with residency within a given municipality who have one year left before entry to elementary school.



Table 2.4.2. Selected data on kindergartens in Slovakia (2015/16)

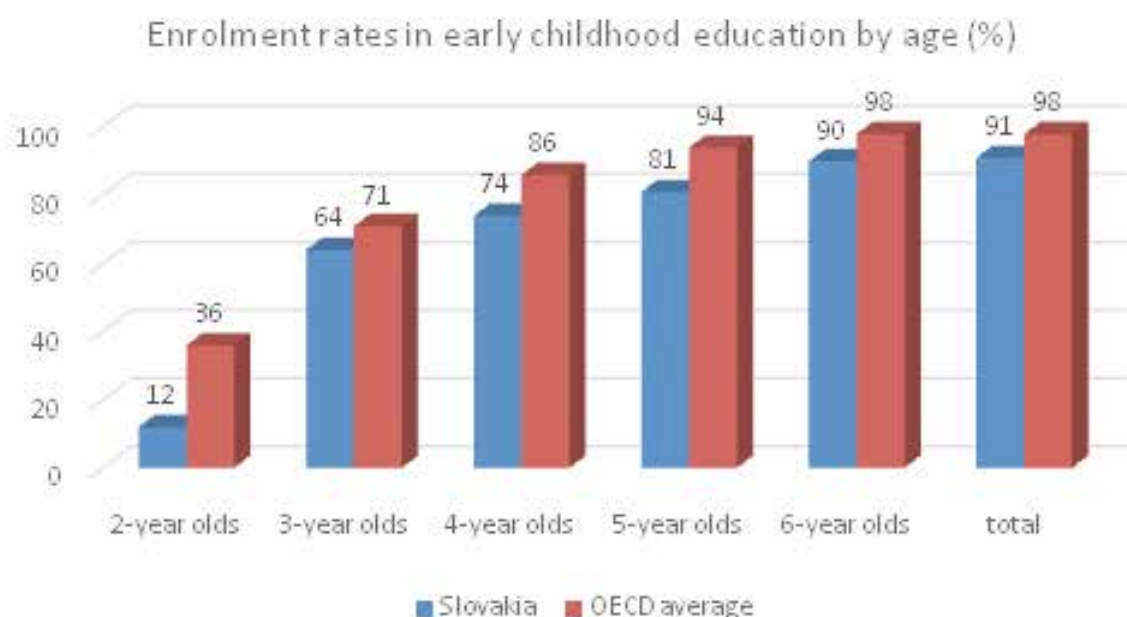
	Kindergartens			Together
	State	Private	Church	
No. of kindergartens	2 734	127	74	2 935
No. of classes	7 345	321	202	7 868
No. of children	148 456	5 240	4 260	157 956
No. of teachers	14 490	671	404	15 565
No. of teacher assistants	243	36	7	286

Source: Data extracted from the Statistical Yearbook: www.cvtisr.sk/cvti-sr-vedecka-kniznica/informacie-o-skolstve/statistiky/statisticka-rocenka-publikacia/statisticka-rocenka-materske-skoly.html?page_id=9602

Kindergarten enrolment

The participation rate for children of age 4 to the starting age of compulsory education was 77,4 percent in 2014, whereas the European Union average was 93,1 percent; Slovakia was thus well below the 95 percent Europe 2020 target (European Commission 2016: 4). According to the Centre of Scientific and Technical Information, *the gross enrolment ratio of children aged 3 to 5 in kindergartens* in 2015 was approximately 88 percent (Herich 2015: 13). However, according to OECD data from 2015 (OECD 2016), the enrolment rate for Slovak children is lower than the OECD average for all age groups, and particularly low for younger children: the participation rate in Slovakia for 3-year-olds was 64 percent (the OECD average was 71 percent), for 4-year-olds was 74 percent (the OECD average was 86 percent), and for 5-year-olds was 81 percent (the OECD average was 94 percent). (OECD 2016)

Figure 2.4.1. ECEC enrolment rates by age



Source: Author, based on data from OECD (2016)

External observers attribute this unfavourable pattern to underfunding of the educational system and low overall investment in this level of education. According to OECD (2014), the comparatively low level of Slovak children's participation is a result of the absence of integrated programs that would combine pre-school education with early care. The most important factor, however, is the lack of capacity of kindergartens.



Insufficient capacity of kindergartens

The tradition of kindergartens in Slovakia is very strong, but the availability of places is determined by demographic developments as much as the intake capacity and accessibility of kindergartens. Changes brought about by the Velvet Revolution in 1989 had an impact on population trends. Between 2000 and 2005, a decline of the population of children in the pre-school age cohort led to a corresponding and dramatic decrease in the number of children enrolled in kindergartens. After 2006, though, the population of 3 to 6-year-olds began to grow significantly.

Despite the growing number of pre-school age children in the past decade, the number of kindergartens actually decreased; Slovakia had 3 482 kindergartens in 1993, but only 2 870 in 2013 (a decrease of 17,58 percent). Since 2013, the number of kindergartens has been increasing slowly, reaching 2 935 in 2016, though provision continues to lag far behind demand, especially in rural areas. (Table 2.4.3)

Table 2.4.3. Number of kindergartens in Slovakia, 1993–2016

Year	State		Private		Church		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1993	3 481	100	1	0,03	–	–	3 482
1998	3 307	99,4	14	0,42	6	0,18	3 327
2003	3 180	99,1	11	0,34	19	0,59	3 210
2008	2 773	96,6	56	1,95	42	1,46	2 871
2013	2 716	94,6	89	3,10	65	2,26	2 870
2016	2 734	93,1	127	4,33	74	2,52	2 935

Source: Internal Ministry of Education report 2014 (“Analysis of Situation in Kindergartens – Insufficient Capacity” [Analýza situácie v materských školách – kapacitná nedostatočnosť]) and author’s own calculations using data extracted from the Statistical Yearbook: http://www.cvtisr.sk/cvti-sr-vedecka-kniznica/informacie-o-skolstve/statistiky/statisticka-rocenka-publikacia/statisticka-rocenka-materske-skoly.html?page_id=9602

Table 2.4.4 highlights how a sharp decrease in kindergarten accessibility during a time of population growth increased demand in the past decade – and simultaneously increased the number of rejected applications in the past decade, which rose by a factor of nearly 12 (from 1 074 to 12 486) between 2006 and 2016.

Table 2.4.4. Rejected kindergarten applications, 2006–2016

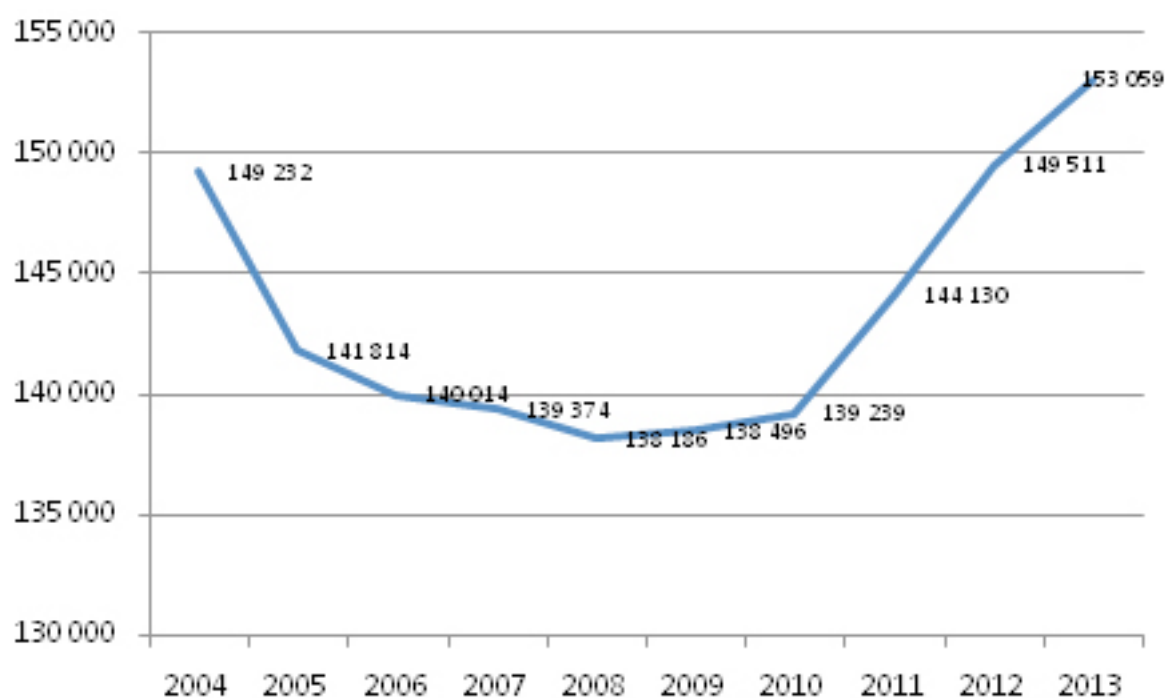
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Children in kindergartens	140 014	139 374	138 186	138 496	139 239	144 130	149 511	153 059	156 402	157 956	159 081
Rejected applications	1 074	1 764	3 010	5 151	6 042	7 061	8 144	9 682	11 444	13 482	12 486

Source: Internal Ministry of Education report 2014 (“Analysis of Situation in Kindergartens – Insufficient Capacity” [Analýza situácie v materských školách – kapacitná nedostatočnosť]) and author’s own calculations using data extracted from the Statistical Yearbook: http://www.cvtisr.sk/cvti-sr-vedecka-kniznica/informacie-o-skolstve/statistiky/statisticka-rocenka-publikacia/statisticka-rocenka-materske-skoly.html?page_id=9602

Another contributing factor to the current under-capacity of kindergarten places is a prevalent trend to defer enrolment into elementary schools. A growing group of children have reached the school age of 6 years but stay in kindergartens for an additional year (in 2014 there were 4 050 cases of deferred enrolment; in 2015 there were 5 470).



Figure 2.4.2. Number of children in kindergartens in Slovakia



Source: Internal Ministry of Education report 2014 ("Analysis of Situation in Kindergartens – Insufficient Capacity" [Analýza situácie v materských školách – kapacitná nedostatočnosť])

According to an internal analysis of Slovakia's Ministry of Education in 2014, around 24 500 new places in kindergartens were needed. Within this policy context, improving accessibility of kindergartens for Roma children requires even more concerted efforts. So far, there is no mapping of actual or needed capacity of kindergartens in the localities home to 804 concentrated Roma communities. According to Mušinka et al. (2014), in 2013, there were 1 456 kindergartens attended by 24 627 children, of who 9 164 were Roma, including 6 523 Roma children from socially excluded communities.

Although estimates of the number of kindergarten places needed for Roma children are not always accurate, such estimates do confirm significant discrepancies between capacity of kindergartens and number of pre-school age Roma children. Insufficient capacity of kindergartens for Roma children was repeatedly confirmed during the fieldwork research for this study, as well.



Methods and activities at national level, which have proved to be effective when including pre-school children from disadvantaged environments into ECEC

Although the Education Act prohibits discrimination and segregation, the Act is not sufficiently specific and robust to prevent or reverse such practices. The de-facto segregation of Roma children in the education system in Slovakia is systemic and often starts at pre-school age. It manifests in different ways, most often through the creation of ethnically homogeneous, so-called “Roma classes” or even Roma schools, or separate floors or school buildings, play yards, free-time activities, and so on. Ethnically homogeneous kindergartens also occur as a result of residential segregation and “white flight” (the withdrawal of non-Roma children by their parents from schools attended by Roma children). As documented in the qualitative research, the negative attitudes of the majority ethnic population towards the Roma are sometimes reflected by pre-school teachers who attach negative attributes to Roma as a group and to individual Roma children, thus creating literal and/or experiential walls between Roma children and their non-Roma class peers (RECI+ 2017).

At the age of transition/entry to elementary school, Roma children often end up in so-called “zero grade classes.” In the absence of kindergartens, “zero grade” classes were established to facilitate the compensatory entry and integration of Roma children into mainstream education. Available evidence shows that while zero classes may help facilitate a more successful start at school, zero classes have had very little impact on attainment or integration. In many instances, zero classes were found to reinforce existing and lasting segregation, including the channelling of Roma children into special education (Amnesty International and European Roma Rights Centre 2017). The two most recent and informed pieces of evidence recommend that the existence of zero grade classes in Slovakia should be seriously reconsidered (Amnesty International and European Roma Rights Centre 2017: 52; Roma Education Fund 2012: 9).

The decision to place a child into special education often happens during the assessment of “school readiness.” School readiness testing, especially for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and Roma children, has been repeatedly criticised as culturally biased. Evidence from qualitative studies shows that without adequate safeguards in place, the process allows for discriminatory practices.

Although the revised national curriculum of the State Educational Program of 2008 recommends the introduction of inclusive approaches to children, evidence from secondary sources and qualitative research consistently confirm that teachers generally lack the skills to apply inclusive approaches in their daily teaching practice. The evidence also confirms that teacher education and in-service training courses do not adequately prepare teachers to work with children from diverse socio-cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds. Teachers lack the skills and knowledge needed to teach intercultural education for all children without discrimination. In addition, staffing levels of specialists and teaching assistants with Romani language skills in kindergartens are decidedly insufficient.

One of the most fundamental system-level limitations is the lack of ethnic data collection. As a result, it is not possible to objectively determine the actual status of the participation of Roma children in pre-school education and care programs and services. Anonymous and secure ethnic data are crucial for evaluating and monitoring the impact of national ECEC policies and measures aimed at improved access, participation, and educational outcomes for Roma children. The lack of ethnic data ultimately limits the possibilities of the State School Inspection service and other relevant players to monitor cases of discrimination and segregation practices in kindergarten and other school environments.

An important factor that positively affects the participation and achievement of children in kindergartens is cooperation with parents and the wider community. Roma parents, however, are not seen as equal partners in the life and work of the kindergarten, and are not actively involved in the broader educational processes and learning experiences of their children. Prevalent approaches to parental involvement are top-down, information-type approaches, rather than the active engagement of parents with approaches that respect and utilize their cultural and social capital. Support services offered through European Union-funded projects are not often tailored to the specific needs of individual Roma communities (RECI+ 2017).

With significant European Union funds designated for Roma inclusion, Slovakia now has an opportunity to improve ECEC for Roma families. Complementing these investments with increased state funding to early education will benefit the entire education system, not just ECEC. Only a few countries are making use of EU funds for this purpose; Slovakia has the potential to become a model of best practice in Europe.



With long-term reform planning under way, it is now the right time for the Slovak government to take decisive action to fundamentally reshape ECEC services. Comprehensive early childhood services for all children – starting with the prenatal period and extending through the early years of primary education – need to be promoted, with an explicit priority focus on those groups most disadvantaged and marginalized, such as the Roma, so inclusive education can be a reality for this generation of young Roma children and beyond.

International research (Oakes and Lipton 2007; Epstein 1995 in OECD 2012: 1) identifies effective strategies of family and community involvement as including communicating, volunteering, and collaborating with the community. For poor and disadvantaged communities, the most pursued strategies involve activities to help families establish home environments to support children as learners (parenting). Stimulating development at home and including parents/communities in centre decisions (decision-making) seem to receive less attention and support. These are particularly important for families with children younger than pre-school age. Several projects in Slovakia focused on these aspects of family and community support, and findings suggest that there is rationale for including such initiatives within national pre-school policies and practice.

The Roma Parenting with Confidence program (2013–2015), developed by the International Step by Step Association and implemented by the Wide Open School Foundation, operated in three locations. Its goal was to improve the home learning environment of Roma families and increase children's participation in education in kindergartens. Trainings organized within the program focused on enhancing the parenting skills of Roma mothers and fathers. Also, there were so-called "Roma family teachers" working with the families in their home environment. The trainers were qualified lecturers in adult learning, certified in the Step by Step methodology and the organization's Education for Social Justice Program. As a result, according to Tankersley (2015), the conditions in participating households are now healthier, safer, and of a higher hygienic standard, and the purposeful interaction between parents and their children has increased. Parents are more active, too, in their interactions with the kindergarten and the number of children enrolled in, and attending, kindergarten increased; this improvement has been maintained. Parents have more trust in their own parenting skills, and now see themselves as the first teachers of their children. The performance of children has also improved:

„Before the project, 50 percent of Roma children enrolled into first grade of elementary school needed to repeat it or were streamed to a special school [from areas where the program was implemented]. Now, the children (or their parents) participating in our project are much more successful. In the academic year 2014/15, only one child from Location 1 (out of a total of 21) and two children (out of a total of 16) from Location 3 needed to repeat first grade; and not a single child out of 4 children from Location 2. This is mainly due to the success of their parents, who are better prepared to teach and raise their children.” (A project coordinator cited in Tankersley 2015: 14)

Literacy to the Third (*Gramotnosť na tretiu*) was a project focused on Roma families that was implemented from 2013 to 2015 through an international consortium led by the Orava Association for Democracy in Education. The project developed effective policies supporting family literacy in Roma communities with a goal to improve the academic performance of Roma children and the literacy of Roma adults. The project review concludes that: “There is strong evidence that, through influencing home learning experiences, family literacy initiatives can make up for many of the negative impacts of low socio-economic status and low parental education.” (Kovacs et al. 2015: 63). Children involved in the project improved their attitude towards reading, specifically reading for fun in a social context; the findings also illustrate that if learning becomes fun for adults, too, they can contribute to the development of their children even if they have insufficient education themselves.

Another program that builds on intergenerational learning is the Aflatoun program of social and financial education in kindergartens, implemented by the Open Society Foundation in Slovakia and piloted in six kindergartens in locations with high representation of Roma children. The pilot evaluation shows that parents see the activities as beneficial, mostly with a view to the future education of their children: “the future education of children has a bigger value for the parents than the education they originally achieved” (Đuríková and Vaněk 2016: 32–33). The reviewers also noticed positive impacts on learning for the participating children, as well as on their parents.

Supporting family, parenting, and parental skills to improve early childhood educational outcomes has been a specific goal of several international and national projects in Slovakia. A Good Start focused on **access to quality early childhood educational services for disadvantaged Roma children**. A Good Start II aimed to improve relations among mothers, children, and teachers, and also to support the development of parental skills and the self-confidence of pupils and mothers. Progress used literacy as a tool to empower families through the reading of children's books. These three projects were all co-funded by the Roma Education Fund.

Despite the strong and consistent evidence from these successful and effective initiatives implemented in Slovakia over the past years, best practices have not been institutionalised in a sustainable way in terms of being mainstreamed into



the education system, social structure, or even community work. Moreover, national education, social, and health policies reflect on and attempt to engage these issues, approaches, and goals only marginally (Roma Education Fund 2014).

An important factor that positively affects the participation and achievement of children in preschools is cooperation with parents and the wider community. Roma parents, however, are not seen as equal partners in the life and work of the preschool, and are not actively involved in the broader educational processes and learning experiences of their children. Prevalent approaches to parental involvement are top-down, information-type approaches, rather than the active engagement of parents with approaches that respect and utilize their cultural and social capital.

Formal links between school and community have multiple shortcomings, when it comes to supporting ECEC in our countries. There is no monitoring and evaluation of individual, family, and community needs, nor quality preparation for delivering such a service. However, there is convincing evidence that it is the informal relations and the encouragement of informal education in a family that supports a favourable welfare and learning environment for children, parents, and family members alike. Obstacles connected with the trust building between the Roma community and other relevant actors in the municipality life are influencing the broader community involvement into early childhood education and care, as well as examples of good practices. The evidence indicates that preschools do not generally have well-established direct cooperation with the families of enrolled children. Furthermore, there is no sound system of training or support programs for enhancing parental skills or family participation in educational activities. Most preschools do not organize training for parents, but if they do organize an event or activity, Roma parents often do not come as they feel that they are not welcomed. Inviting and involving parents in preschool events is important, as it strengthens the preschool's external communications with the family and community. This rather narrow focus of engagement with parents does not strengthen so called „inward“ communication, though, and does not reflect the opinions, needs, or wishes of the child's family unit. Mutually beneficial relationship between a preschool and the parent community requires strategies for active engagement between the two, based on trust and mutual respect. Such developments need to be initiated from a preschool and formulated as part of the institution's standard policies.

Improving the living conditions of marginalised people mainly entails measures to enhance their access to education, employment, health care, housing and social services. It is essential to recognize from the beginning that these aspects will need to be addressed in an integrated way. There is never one single cause of marginalization, but often a long list of them. Furthermore these causes are interrelated. Addressing one or only selected causes will not lead to change; the situation must be solved comprehensively and all causes must be addressed simultaneously. None of these causes can be underestimated.

Each area affects the others, so failing to address one area will impair progress in the other areas. For example, without good education it is difficult to find good employment. Poor housing conditions lead to bad health and also affect school performance. On the other hand education, employment, health and housing may be impacted negatively by the same cause. For instance, renovating roads or providing public transport can improve at the same time access to education, health care, and employment opportunities. A poor outcome in education, employment, health or housing often has multiple causes, which must be addressed together to make a positive impact. For example, building a new healthcare centre is by itself unlikely to improve the health of people. Health care workers, social workers or health mediators as well as transportation services will also be needed.

Issues that affect the Roma often concern the whole municipality and therefore need to be seen in this wider context. When public services provided to the Roma are of poor quality, it is very likely that they are not much better for the whole population. Local authorities are responsible for improving this situation. Roma people know what they need, why they need it, what the barriers are, what can be done, what is affordable to them, and what can be maintained. Participation increases also ownership of the inclusion process by Roma themselves, thus increasing the chances that it will be sustained over time. At the same time, the participation of non-Roma people is also critical to gain their support, avoid stigmatization of Roma, and foster interaction and cooperation between Roma and non-Roma on the basis of mutual interests. The municipality representatives during their action have to target Roma because they are socially excluded and disadvantaged, not just because they are Roma, they have to customize actions to address specific local needs and address barriers to the access to public services.



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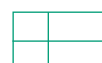


2.5. Sweden

Introduction

All pre-schools in Sweden, municipal or independent, are governed by the pre-school curriculum established by the National Agency of Education. Methods and rules for all preschools in the nation should be equally provided and fulfilled. It is the responsibility of the municipalities to ensure the certain number of pre-schools offer enough places for all children. Independent preschools are an alternative to municipal preschooling. It is the municipalities that approve independent preschools and they are also responsible for checking that preschooling fulfils the requirements of high quality and safety. The same rules apply to independent preschools as to municipal preschools. Municipalities should provide preschooling for children from the age of one when parents are working or studying and also when parents are unemployed or on leave of absence. Children of parents who are unemployed or on leave of absence should be offered a place for at least 3 hours a day or 15 hours a week. Some municipalities provide more hours.

From the age of 3, children are granted at least 525 hours per year free preschool education. Municipalities should provide enough places for these children.



Definition of formal and informal pre-school educational institutions

Most Swedish parents apply for a place in municipal or independent preschools for their children. Since a Swedish pre-school is a separate school form shaped and governed by the National Agency of Education, it is obvious that informal preschools play a minor role in Swedish society.

Still, there are some institutions which provide different services to pre-school children and their parents than pre-schools do. One of these institutions is called *open preschool* and represents a collaboration between the municipality and the region of Gävleborg, which both fund it. Open preschool should serve to provide early support and counseling to parents. All preschool children with their parents can stay there. There are nurses who work there, for example, to weigh, measure and vaccinate the children. The mothers can get help with breastfeeding, post-check of childbirth and get help with contraception from the midwives. Parents can also get advice and support from social workers. Its particular system of work may vary in different regions. It is up to the municipalities and regions if they want to establish open preschools. It is, however, a marginal activity in Sweden, because the core role in ECEC is played by the formal preschool.

Another type of informal preschool institution are parental co-operatives, which, by tradition, have the most experience in providing alternatives in Swedish child care. This form of ECEC is privately organised by groups of parents, but subsidised by the municipality in the same way as publicly run centres. Parental co-operatives are organized by the groups of parents and employ the personnel. Parents often also work themselves on rotating basis and are thus able to reduce the costs. Many parental co-operatives were started by parents full of initiative wanting to bypass the long waiting times for places in municipal pre-schools during its expansion years, and despite the fact that there is now full coverage they continue to flourish. Parental involvement and participation are the cornerstones in this type of child care and the number of institutions exceeded 1 000 in 1998. They are under the same legislation as municipal preschools but have different main characters.

Other non-publicly organised ECEC institutions include programs created by various organizations, corporations or churches. Non-municipally organised ECEC are unevenly distributed across the country and most often found in the larger cities.

These institutions have to meet the standards of public child care, and are also entitled to public tax funds to cover their running costs. Parental fees are not allowed to deviate from municipal norms, and privately organised programs have to follow the same basic ideological principles and fundamental values as stated in the national curriculum, such as democracy, equality and solidarity. (Martin Korpi 2000: 5)

Another, non-publicly organised ECEC which provides informal preschool activities in Sweden is an organization called Studieförbundet Bilda, another is the Red Cross. The activities may be of different nature with local variations in Sweden.

Religious preschools do exist and if their ambition is to get grants and subsidies from the state they have to meet the requirements of the National Agency of Education. Swedish society is secularized and Christian religious communities have to follow the same rules as any other religiously governed preschools. The purpose of religious preschools would be for the parents to influence their children to confess to the same religion as they do themselves. Swedish authorities claim that the main object of preschools is to prepare for the compulsory school education, which starts when the children reaches the age of seven. It is also noticeable that according to UNCRC (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) all children are entitled to a fair and equal education. According to the children's rights perspective, staff at preschools can deny parents' wish to dress their children in religiously symbolic clothing. The preschool should be enjoyable, secure, and rich in providing learning opportunities for all children attending. The staff in the preschool plans pedagogical activities enabling children to create, learn and explore. This takes place, for instance, through playing, cooperating with others, painting, building and singing. Creating security for both children and parents is an important task of the preschool.



Policy approaches, regulations and strategies of inclusive education

Sweden has signed The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (U.N. 1989), the UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (U.N. 1993), and UNESCO's Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (UNESCO 1994). These are all powerful tools to prevent exclusionary activities in the school sector. These documents have shaped a number of important government reports, directives and policies and worked to place inclusive education firmly on the agenda. (Berhanu 2010: 4)

As it was already mentioned, all children should receive at least 525 hours per year free of charge from the autumn term when the child reaches the age of 3. For children in need of special education, preschool teachers may be assisted by persons who are employed for giving the child extra attention and inspiration.

Now, within the Swedish Education system, people with learning disabilities are taught within the standard system. As stated by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education: The majority of pupils in need of special educational support are educated in general basic compulsory classes. If this is not possible, then the school must indicate very clearly why other educational options for pupils should be considered. This is an important philosophical standpoint for childcare organization and operation.

As municipalities have a large amount of independence, Special Educational Needs can be organised in different ways, including:

- The teachers of the child are supported by a resource centre at the local level.
- Specialist teachers work with the child concerned within the format of the activities of the larger group. This can be a permanent or temporary arrangement.
- The child leaves the larger group for limited periods to work with a specialist teacher.
- Resource centres may be supported by an adviser at the National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools (the managing body for the Resource Centres). (Murphy 2014: 10)

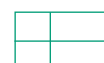
The current issue presents the fact that Sweden has recently welcomed many new inhabitants. In the last few years, there has been a large increase in the immigrant population in Sweden. In general, there has been a considerable increase of children with foreign background in all age groups between 2010–2015. The corresponding figures for children with Swedish background is significantly lower or even at a slight decrease. In the county of Gävleborg the increase of children with foreign background is much higher than in the rest of Sweden. The majority of these children are foreign-born. (See more in part on Published Data.)

„All immigrant and refugee children living in Sweden have the same right to attend school and preschool as other children living in Sweden. This is a privilege that most families take advantage of, almost to the same extent as Swedish families. A place in school is to be provided within 3 months, which means that the influx of immigrant children poses great challenges on the Swedish school system. The municipality where the children live is responsible for making it possible for them to go to school like the other children and young adults in the municipality. This concerns preschool, compulsory school, and secondary school. Moreover the parents have to attend Swedish classes and Introduction to Sweden classes in order to get their “salary” or allowance. This means that they have to put their children in the preschool.

However, statistics show that immigrant offspring have lower education outcomes and there are also more early school leavers among students from foreign background. These factors can be a result of the fact that it takes time to get integrated into society for these children and the fact that the educational level among the foreign-born adult generation is lower than their native-born counterpart.

There are of course great varieties in the foreign-born group, depending upon which country they come from. One can also see that recent immigrants have a higher level of education than those who immigrated earlier, but there are also groups of immigrants that only have primary school competences.” (ERASMUS+ MUTUAL 2017: 50)

“According to statistics, there are fewer foreign-born children attending preschool than native-born, but the difference is not significant. This difference can be explained by the fact, that fees for preschool are low and that parents can keep their children in preschool even when one parent is staying at home on parental leave. However, there might be some



children who are unknown to the local authorities since the Migration Agency is not allowed to supply information about children seeking asylum to the municipality without the parents' consent." (ERASMUS+ MUTUAL 2017: 44)

With growing number of foreign-born children in Swedish schools, the differences in cultural and religious values come to the surface. The issue whether Swedish preschool should be strictly non-confessional or not is widely debated by Swedish politicians. During the past five years the discussion has had a tendency to intensify. UNCRC (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) is important in this aspect in regards to all children's rights to fair and equal education and a secure and enjoyable childhood.

Depending on where the National Agency for Immigration can offer apartments to the immigrants, some school districts today have a lot of language diversity amongst their students. "Language is important, both the Swedish language and the children's mother tongue, if other than Swedish. The Swedish curricula for preschools also stress the importance of each child's own culture and the equality of all individuals, regardless of background.

Preschool staff in the country's kindergartens is in contact with more and more children and parents who speak a language other than Swedish. Important factors in the work of multilingualism in preschools are the staff's attitude and knowledge of how to give children who speak several languages to develop both Swedish and their mother tongue. Since the majority of preschool staff primarily speak Swedish, many questions and concerns arise about how to follow the curriculum's intentions. According to the preschool curriculum, preschools should strive to ensure that children who have a mother tongue other than Swedish, develop their ability to communicate both in Swedish and the mother tongue.

Research shows that the single most important factor in students' ability to learn in school is the teacher. Therefore, teachers' competences to teach newly arrived pupils are a crucial factor for their success in school. Collaboration between subject teachers and tutors improves the conditions for the student's ability to perform well. In order to cope with a more diverse working environment, the National Agency has developed support materials, based on the Education Act and the preschool curriculum, which aim to improve pre-school staff's knowledge, ability to inspire, and provide guidance in the work of multilingualism in preschool.

Multiculturalism in Swedish schools is for most municipalities a new phenomenon, which poses a great number of challenges on Swedish municipalities in terms of organization, facilities, floor space, competence development among staff and the carrying out of daily activities in the preschools to meet the needs of new children.

The vast majority of teachers have not been trained for the situation that Swedish preschools find themselves in, which is challenging for each school, municipality, as well as for the National Agency for Education.

The Education Act and the curricula clearly describe the goals with the activities of the Swedish preschool, but the municipalities, whose responsibility is to carry out this mission, are met with great challenges caused by the significant increase of immigrants recently.

A great deal of work is being done to meet these challenges on all levels, local, regional as well as national – work that is initiated and carried out by authorities as well as on grass roots level, by teachers in the classrooms." (ERASMUS+ MUTUAL 2017: 51)

The most challenged group concerning the inclusive education are not only children with different mother tongue, but disabled children. It is necessary to use specific teaching methods and to create a learning environment which would provide the best conditions for these children. The other issue is the lack of professional staff, which is mainly due to economic reasons and inappropriate financial remuneration.



Published statistical data on participation of pre-school children from socially or culturally disadvantaged environments in formal and informal pre-school educational institutions

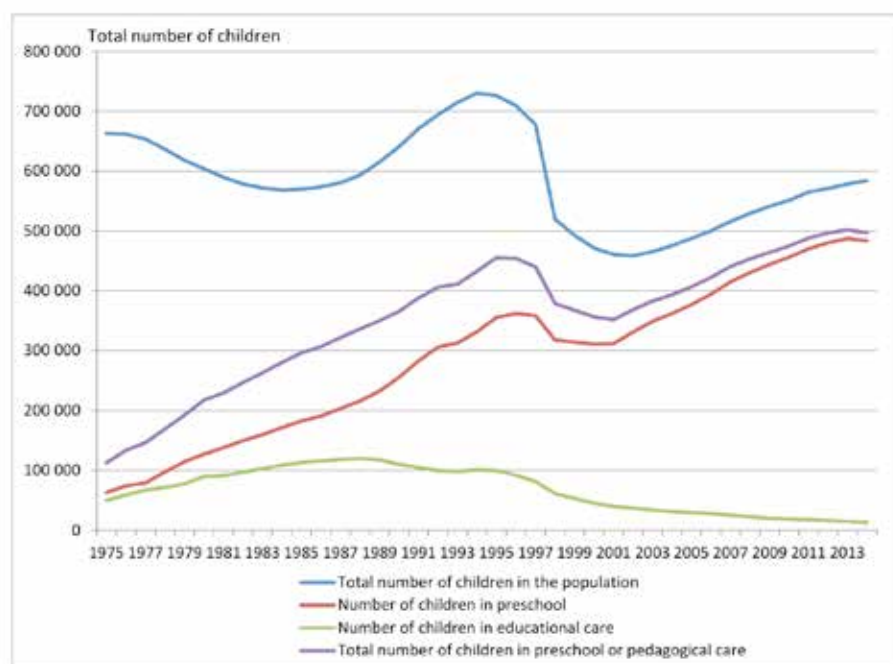
Due to secrecy provisions, we find it difficult to present accurate data on participation of pre-school children from socially or culturally disadvantaged environments. However, we are able to present the data on the numbers of foreign and foreign-born children in Sweden and also in the region Gävleborg, where the project partner organization (CFL) is located. Moreover we tried to analyze the present situation in Sweden and make conclusions via the debate going on in written media as well as public service. What is obvious is the fact that many families use the opportunity of having their children in preschool. It is also clear that most families prefer formal, main stream preschool to informal preschools presented above. The need of a preschool system is obvious, since we have a tradition of most parents wanting to work. Both men and women are available on the labour market. Few families keep their children at home till they are seven years old. Compulsory school attendance is enforced by Swedish law from autumn semester for children aged seven. The tendency is also clear that families with disabled children prepare their children for school or special school via preschools. Parents believe that attending preschool will promote the child's development and learning and contribute to better learning and, consequently, a better life. In a comparison between immigrant families inclination to have their children in preschool with Swedish families, it appears that more immigrant families choose to have their children a longer time in the home before the children start preschool.

The Figure 2.5.1 below demonstrates, how the number of children aged 1–6 (resp. aged 1–5) changed from 1975 to 2013 according to which facility they attended. The gap between total number of children in the population (blue line) and the total number of children in preschool or educational care (violet line) become smaller approx. in year 1997 and since then it remained virtually the same until 2013. Most of the children were in preschools and their number were still increasing. There was one significant drop approx. in 1995–1997 which was probably due to a demographical leap and a decrease in the number of children in the society. The role of other educational care (family day-care homes/part-time classes) has gradually declined since 1988, and these facilities have been attended by fewer children.

Figure 2.5.1

(Martin Korpi 2016: 85)

Figure 2. All children aged 1–6/aged 1–5 in the population and the number of children in daycare/preschool, family day-care homes/part-time classes, 1975–2013



Source: National Agency for Education



In Sweden there has been a 36 % increase in children aged 0–4 with foreign background between 2012–2017. For older children, aged 5–9, there has been an increase of 45 %. See Table 2.5.1. The corresponding figure for infants, aged 0–4, with Swedish background is a decrease by 2 % and for older children, aged 5–9, there is an increase of 5 %. One can see that there has been a considerable increase of children with foreign background the last six years, whereas the increase of children with Swedish background is much lower or even decreasing.

Table 2.5.1

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Foreign background						
0–4 years	105 426	110 766	117 342	124 170	134 634	143 145
5–9 years	103 484	111 965	119 739	128 993	139 758	149 818
Swedish background						
0–4 years	468 157	468 253	466 815	462 048	462 407	458 899
5–9 years	440 509	445 985	451 875	460 125	461 095	462 362

In the county of Gävleborg, where the main activities of the current project are carried out, there has been an increase of 75 % children aged 0–4 with foreign background between 2012–2017. For older children, aged 5–9, there has been an increase of 73 %. The corresponding figure for children with Swedish background is for infants, aged 0–4, a decrease by 4 % and for older children an increase by 1 %. See Table 2.5.2.

Table 2.5.2

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Gävleborg county						
Foreign background						
0–4 years	1 831	2 043	2 352	2 644	2 949	3 196
5–9 years	1 852	2 195	2 480	2 732	3 001	3 200
Swedish background						
0–4 years	12 544	12 518	12 359	12 271	12 288	12 080
5–9 years	12 725	12 594	12 568	12 704	12 579	12 602

In 2017, the children with foreign background aged 0–4 represented almost 24 % of all children at this age in Sweden. Regarding older children aged 5–9, the share was very similar, 24,5 %. Both numbers also corresponded to the share of the total number of foreigners living in Sweden. In Gävleborg, there was 21 % of children aged 0–4 and 20 % of children aged 5–9 who had a foreign background, which was a little bit less than the national average.

When looking more closely at the group “foreign background”, it can be divided into two groups; “foreign born” and “born in Sweden with two foreign born parents”. In the foreign born group one can note an increase of children by 64 % (aged 0–4) and 61 % (aged 5–14) in years 2012–2017 (Table 2.5.3), whereas the increase is lower for children born in Sweden in families of two foreign born parents; 31 % (age group 0–4) and 35 % (age group 5–14). This is probably given by the situation in the Middle East which caused the majority of these people to flee from their homes during the last few years.

The term “children with Swedish background” refers to children with either one or two parents born in Sweden. One can see an increase of 8 % (children aged 0–4) and 19 % (children aged 5–14) in the groups with only one parent born in Sweden. On the other hand, for the children with both parents born in Sweden, there is a decrease of 4 % (children aged 0–4) and an increase of 2,5 % for children aged 5–14.



Table 2.5.3

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Increase/Decrease
Foreign born							
0–4 years	15 734	17 138	19 052	21 314	24 647	25 747	64 %
5–9 years	37 893	42 231	45 510	49 273	55 440	61 020	61 %
Born in Sweden with two foreign born parents							
0–4 years	89 692	93 628	98 290	102 856	109 987	117 398	31 %
5–9 years	65 591	69 734	74 229	79 720	84 318	88 798	35 %
Born in Sweden with one parent born in Sweden and one foreign born parent							
0–4 years	80 251	82 040	83 188	83 990	85 708	86 375	8 %
5–9 years	64 448	67 174	70 183	73 042	75 079	76 932	19 %
Born in Sweden with two parents born in Sweden							
0–4 years	387 906	386 213	383 627	378 058	376 699	372 524	-4 %
5–9 years	376 061	378 811	381 692	387 083	386 016	385 430	8,5 %

In years 2012–2017, there was increase by 54 % of foreign born children aged 0–4 and 58 % foreign born children aged 5–9 in Gävleborg county (Table 2.5.4). Contrary to the situation in Sweden in general, there was a more significant increase related to the children born in Sweden with two foreign born parents than to foreign born children (namely 79,5 % increase of age group 0–4 years old and 93 % of age group 5–9 years old).

In comparison to previous data, there was really small increase in the numbers of children born in Sweden with one parent born in Sweden and one foreign born parent. In age group 0–4 it represented 2,3% and in age group 5–9 it was 11,6 %. Even in the case of children born in Sweden with two parent born in Sweden the number decreased by 4,5 % (0–4 years) and by 2,4 % (5–9 years).

Table 2.5.4

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Increase/Decrease
Gävleborg county							
Foreign born							
0–4 years	350	398	462	537	598	538	54 %
5–9 years	1 081	1 348	1 487	1 584	1 693	1 710	58 %
Born in Sweden with two foreign born parents							
0–4 years	1 481	1 645	1 890	2 107	2 351	2 658	79,5 %
5–9 years	771	847	993	1 148	1 308	1 490	93 %
Born in Sweden with one parent born in Sweden and one foreign born parent							
0–4 years	1 496	1 544	1 549	1 536	1 532	1 531	2,3 %
5–9 years	1 284	1 313	1 350	1 380	1 403	1 433	11,6 %
Born in Sweden with two parents born in Sweden							
0–4 years	11 048	10 974	10 810	10 735	10 756	10 549	-4,5 %
5–9 years	11 441	11 281	11 218	11 324	11 176	11 169	-2,4 %



Methods and activities at national level, which have proved to be effective when including pre-school children from disadvantaged environments into ECEC

The staff at the preschools often use trial-and-error methods in order to find the effective ways to develop the children's second language and increase their chance of school success and integration in Swedish society. There is no nationwide specific regulation or curriculum which would focus on special educational needs of children with a different mother tongue. However, the existing curriculum covers also a multicultural approach, including focus on language acquisition of all children.

The Bornholm method is used nationwide and aims to increase the children's phonetic awareness using songs, rhymes and stories in order to stimulate language learning and boost the children's pre-reading skills. Locally, there are many examples of good practices when it comes to tried and tested ways to work with diverse language groups of children. Many schools employ language assistants, also from migrant communities, so that the children can identify with them and speak with them in their native language.

It is important that children feel that both the Swedish language and their native language hold equal importance and status, and these assistants are also a great way to ensure working communication with parents. The assistants are present during the whole school day and do not isolate the bilingual children from the others, making sure they are included in the class. Studies have shown that employing adults at the schools that speak the same mother tongue as the students is crucial for achieving the academic success.

Most local preschools use a sign language method to enhance understanding and communication between the children and also between teachers and children. This supports all the children's language awareness and lessens frustrations that can come with misunderstanding due to a lack of vocabulary.

Another method teachers use in preschools is called "writing your way to reading". They break down rhymes and fairy tales into smaller components, both the language and the contents, to assist all the children in developing language and understanding. The preschools use QR-codes in many different ways, both to spark imagination and interest of children when reading books for example, but also to communicate with parents. Leaflets with crucial information (for example on how long to keep the child home after sickness, what clothes to bring, etc.) are sent home to parents, which also include QR-codes with the information recorded in many different languages so that illiterate parents can listen to it if they have problems reading.

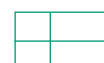
To integrate the children into society also means integrating the parents and encourage them to take part in the school life. It helps parents to understand the Swedish culture and its norms. It also contributes to better understand the role of the school and the role of the students, since this varies a lot across cultures. Some preschools have abandoned teacher-parent meetings in exchange for seasonal festivities where they invite parents to bring food and music. This way attracts more parents to show up at the events during which information is passed.

In order to optimize quality of teaching, many preschools offer their teachers the chance to study Swedish as a second language at university. Teachers familiar with teaching Swedish as a second language increase their awareness about the methods and materials that can be used for bilingual children.

Initially we showed that informal preschools play a minor role in Swedish society. Efforts to reach children in socially disadvantaged areas are, therefore, mainly carried out by staff from municipal or independent preschools. However, there is a rising tendency to cooperate across the formal and informal organizations in order to ensure best possible care for children.

There is only limited interaction or collaboration between open preschool and formal preschool. Open pre-school staff meet the other preschools teachers in a network for an exchange of experiences and collegial learning. They meet twice a semester. The network is organized and administered by two preschool directors. Besides them, there are 15 of the best pre-school educators who take care of it.

The municipal preschools have no special cooperation with parents co-operative preschools. The only cooperation occurs when children are transferred to municipal preschools.



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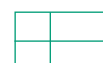
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3. Survey Report

The Survey report contains the information about methods which teachers use in work with children from socially disadvantaged or culturally different environments. In the first chapter we briefly present the results from the survey carried out in 2016 and the following chapters describe the findings of the survey carried out in 2018. However, it is not possible to compare these two surveys because the survey samples in both cases were rather small and involved different countries (in 2016, Poland and Sweden were not included in the previous survey). In addition, the selection criteria of respondents varied in each survey as did the main focus of the surveys – the current survey focused on the cooperation tools between formal and informal educators.

The main four criteria for selection of respondents in 2016 were:

- 1) the respondents had to cooperate with one of the partner organizations,
- 2) only publically funded preschool providers were selected,
- 3) respondents experienced in work with disadvantaged children were preferred,
- 4) the location of the preschool provider had to belong to region that is considered “disadvantaged” (by respective national definitions).

Whereas in 2018, the criteria were defined as follows:

- 1) it was supposed to fill in 40 questionnaires from each partner country (five),
- 2) 20 questionnaires were filled in by educators formal pre-school institutions and 20 educators from informal pre-school institutions,
- 3) it was possible to get more questionnaires within one institution (the main focus was placed on individual practices of educators and not on practices of one institution only).

Both surveys used semi-structured questionnaires.

Back to the previous project

As was already mentioned in previous chapters, the first survey was led by Schola Empirica (Czech Republic) in cooperation with partner organizations Open School (Slovakia) and Tiny Signers (England) two years ago. The explicit aim of the survey was to identify the needs of pre-school teachers working with children from culturally different or socially disadvantaged environments in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and UK. In addition, the data yielded important information for designing and implementing training programs for pre-school teachers to support their professional development. In total, 126 questionnaires from pre-school teachers and education staff were collected, 48 from the Czech Republic, 41 from Slovakia and 37 from UK. The sample consisted mainly of full-time teachers, but also included some advisors, part-time teachers and head teachers.

The survey identified three main problems that teachers faced in their everyday work. The first problem was that children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), defined very broadly, are much more demanding than ordinary children, which was an issue identified by most respondents. This problem is closely related to the lack of teaching assistants and the lack of an “individualized” teaching approach. Many of the respondents taught classes of over ten children (some even over 20), which made it very difficult for them to focus on individual work with children.

The second group of issues identified by the survey was related to the undesirable behaviour some children displayed in classrooms, more specifically aggression, emotional instability, bullying, and insufficient hygiene. Emotional instability and signs of aggression were recognized by most respondents experiencing this behaviour occasionally, often and some even quite often. This pointed to children lacking the necessary “emotional maturity” (or emotional development) to realize their feelings and cope with undesirable behaviours in a controlled way in spite of their emotions. Incidences of aggression were thus not necessary a manifestation of ill will, as evident from the fact that bullying had been reported as mainly non-existent or occasional at best. They were rather indicators of the inability to process one's own feelings, recognize the feelings of others and try to resolve the situation in a reasonable way. The last problem of insufficient hygiene was an issue that was likely rooted in the lack of emphasis on good hygiene in the child's household.

The third identified group of issues was related to the different conception of education and good behaviour that children were exposed to in their family environment. This difference in approach to education could lead to other problems such as frequent absence from classroom, uninterested parents, or difficulty when communicating with parents. Another manifestation of these problems was a significant number of professionals that thought that children brought improper habits from home to school, and also the number of professionals who experienced language barrier when communicating with the child.

The activities that teachers/staff introduced in their pre-school to support parental engagement varied from country to country and were to some extent pre-determined by the regulations in education policies and resources available. The majority of Czech and Slovak teachers and pre-school staff involved in the survey organized regular class meetings with parents, during which they delivered the most important information about the organizational issues of the pre-school. The second most frequent activity, as indicated by Czech teachers, were thematic afternoons with parents in pre-school. These were usually dedicated to some kind of creative activities and musical performances. 65 % of teachers/staff in the Czech Republic organized one-to-one meetings with parents, whereas there were no such individual meetings arranged in Slovakia. By contrast, in the UK, the most frequent form of communication with parents was a one-to-one meeting. It was also quite common that parents were directly involved in the pre-school activities during the day (as volunteers) and organized parents' group meetings in pre-school. In the UK, it was also common to make home visits, especially where small children were involved, which was culturally unacceptable in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Background of the current survey

The current results are based on the data from exploratory questionnaire survey among educational professionals and other staff from pre-school institutions in the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden, and United Kingdom. About forty workers responded to the questionnaire in each country resulting in 202 filled in questionnaires altogether (125 were filled in by educators from formal institutions and 77 by educators from informal institutions).

The goal of this survey was to map up and better understand good practices in work with children from socially excluded areas and with culturally different backgrounds as well as the challenges educators face when approaching children and families. Another more specific goal was to identify models of cooperation between formal and informal pre-school educational institutions.

Project partner organizations from each country were responsible for data collection along shared methodological guidelines. A common questionnaire in English was created by the project coordinator, Schola Empirica, with feedback from the partners and then distributed to all partners for translation. There was some space for individual countries to adapt their questionnaire to better fit their national context. However, most of the questions remained the same for all the countries.

The composition of each country's sample is somewhat different: The respondents were chosen by partners from each country by the means of convenience sampling. Multiple respondents from one institution were sometimes surveyed. Therefore, the results reported in this paper do not aspire to produce generalizations. Due to its atypical design and selection of respondents from one institution, the survey cannot serve for comparative analysis of situation among partner countries. However, it is intended to provide insights and inspiration for work in partner organizations as well as a base-line data for further comparative research in the field of pre-school education.

Composition of respondents

Formal and informal institutions

The individual project partners were instructed to gather data from 20 educators in informal institutions and 20 educators in formal institutions, nevertheless some countries were less successful in gathering data from informal institutions. The final composition of respondents across countries and according to the type of institution is in the table below.

Table 3.1. Type of institution (formal vs. informal) by country

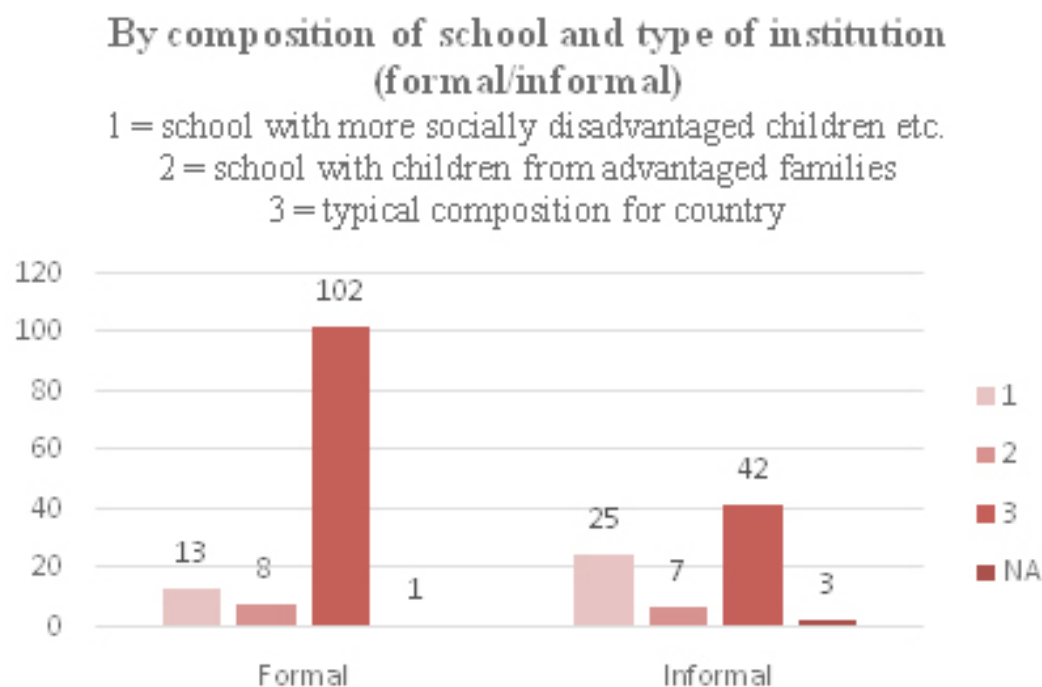
Type	Czech Republic	England	Poland	Slovakia	Sweden
Formal	28	25	23	29	20
Informal	16	15	20	11	15

The exact meaning of the term “informal educational institution” varies in partner countries. In the Czech Republic, it was defined in accordance with the Register of Schools and School Facilities. If the institution was registered, it was perceived as formal, in the opposite case it represented informal educational institution. The formal institutions in the Czech context include kindergartens, forest schools and children's centres whilst pre-school clubs, centres for pre-school children, forest clubs and maternity centres belong to informal institutions. In Poland the public pre-schools were perceived as the formal institutions whereas non-public pre-schools were perceived as informal because they do not have to fulfil the same requirements as private pre-schools. In England, designated registered childminders, day nurseries and pre-schools are considered as formal educational institutions because these organizations provide the state-directed Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. The other educational institutions which offer services and education for the pre-school children, such as parents and toddlers groups and the children's centres are counted as informal. In Slovakia, the pre-school institutions are divided into formal and informal on the basis of the age of children who visit them. The formal educational institutions represent kindergartens which are for children aged 3–6. The informal institutions include nurseries, mother and family centres and community centres. These provisions provide care for children between the age of 6 months to 3 years and serve as the meeting place not only for children but also for their parents. In Sweden, most of the children visit the pre-schools which represent the formal educational institutions. Apart from these

municipal pre-schools, there exist open preschool, parental co-operatives and programs created by various organizations, corporations or churches which also offer early care and education. (For more information see country specific parts on Secondary Data)

Most of the respondents were employed by the pre-school provisions where the composition of children is typical for pre-school institutions in that country without a significant number of children from disadvantaged or advantaged background. Concerning the comparison between formal and informal institutions, there is disproportion in the number of institutions which look after socially disadvantaged children or with other disadvantages or disabilities (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1



Job position of respondents

In all countries, most respondents were teachers. Other categories of job positions were much less frequent, and their representation differed greatly across countries. For example, while there were relatively many volunteers in the sample from the UK, Sweden and Slovakia, there were none in the sample from the Czech Republic and Poland.

Figure 3.2. All sample (n=202) by job position

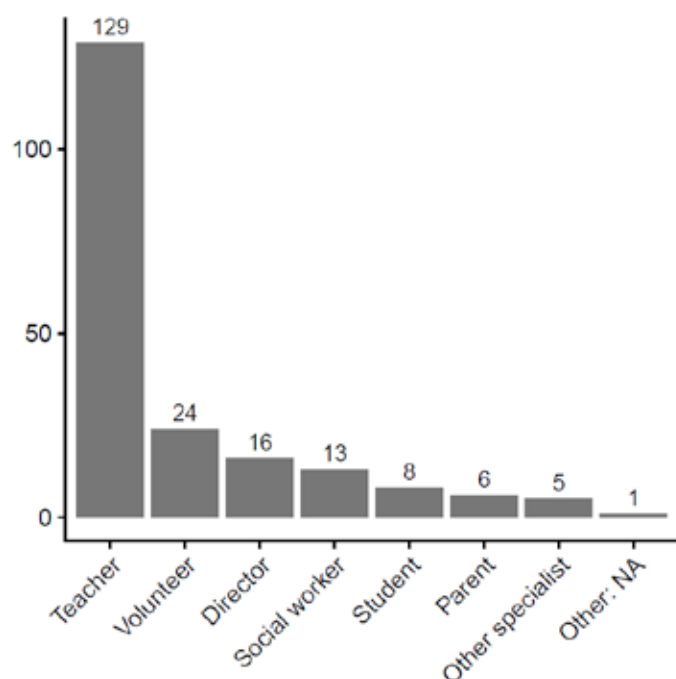


Table 3.2. Position by country

Position	Czech Republic	England	Poland	Slovakia	Sweden
Teacher	30	22	34	20	23
Volunteer	0	10	0	6	8
Director	7	0	6	3	0
Social worker	4	0	2	4	3
Student	0	8	0	0	0
Parent	0	0	0	6	0
Other specialist	3	0	1	0	1
Other: NA	0	0	0	1	0

Table 3.3. Position by institution type (formal vs. informal)

Position	Formal	Informal
Teacher	100	29
Volunteer	3	21
Director	10	6
Social worker	0	13
Student	3	5
Parent	6	0
Other specialist	3	2
Other: NA	0	1

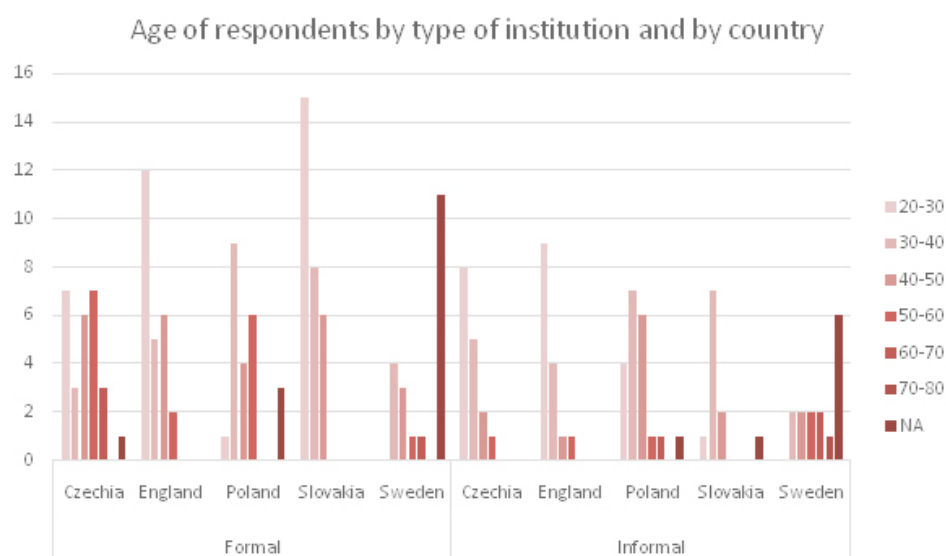
Gender composition of respondents

Gender composition of respondents is very unequal with 190 women and only 9 men in the sample⁶ – 4 from England, 2 from each Slovakia and Sweden, 1 from the Czech R., and none from Poland. Five among the nine men worked at a formal institution, four in an informal institution. Five men were volunteers or students, the rest of them worked in a variety of other the positions.

Age of respondents

From the Figure 3.3 below, it is visible that the age composition of respondents was quite disproportionate, especially in Slovakia and England. Most of the respondents were at age group 20 to 30 and 30 to 40. However, in Sweden, there was also one respondent who claimed to be 72 years old. However, most of the Swedish respondents did not indicate their age.

Figure 3.3.



6) Three people did not specify their gender.

Respondents by years of experience

In accordance with the data on age composition of respondents there are data on the length of work experience. Respondents from England and also from Slovakia indicated the smallest number of years of work experience (0–2 years). On the contrary, the questionnaires from Sweden as well as from Poland were filled in mainly by respondents with more years of experience (10 to 20 years of work experience). In the Czech Republic, the sample was quite evenly distributed.

Figure 3.4. Respondents by years of experience

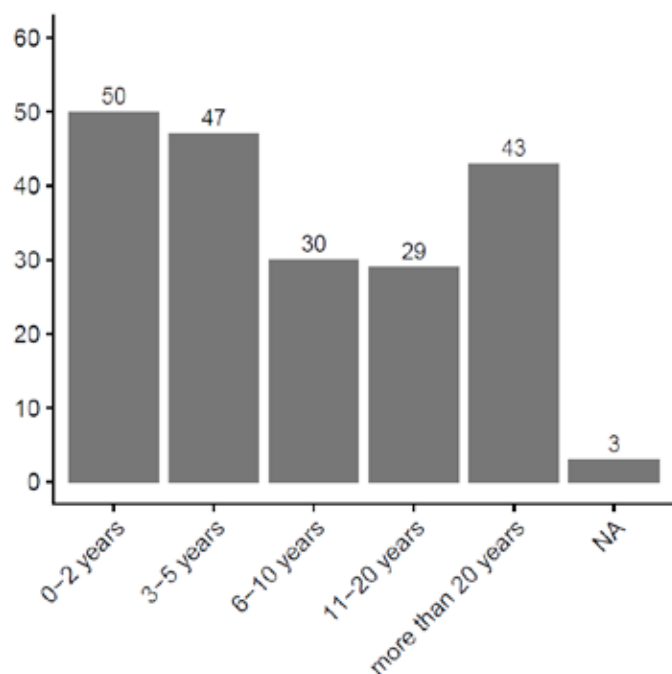


Table 3.4. Respondents by years of experience and institution type

Years of Experience	Formal (count)	Informal (count)	Formal (col percent)	Informal (col percent)
0–2 years	33	17	26 %	23 %
3–5 years	25	22	20 %	30 %
6–10 years	19	11	15 %	15 %
11–20 years	18	11	14 %	14 %
more than 20 years	30	13	24 %	18 %

Table 3.5. Respondents by years of experience and institution type – counts

Years of Experience	Czech Republic (count)	England (count)	Poland (count)	Slovakia (count)	Sweden (count)
0–2 years	8	21	0	14	7
3–5 years	11	19	10	7	0
6–10 years	7	0	11	11	1
11–20 years	4	0	10	7	8
more than 20 years	14	0	12	0	17

Table 3.6. Respondents by years of experience and institution type – column percent

Years of Experience	Czech Republic (col percent)	England (col percent)	Poland (col percent)	Slovakia (col percent)	Sweden (col percent)
0–2 years	18 %	53 %	0 %	36 %	21 %
3–5 years	25 %	48 %	23 %	18 %	0 %
6–10 years	16 %	0 %	26 %	28 %	3 %
11–20 years	9 %	0 %	23 %	18 %	24 %
more than 20 years	32 %	0 %	28 %	0 %	52 %

Institution size

Institution size measured by the number of children in the institution varied greatly with the smallest institutions with just around 10 or 20 children and the biggest with as many as 1 000 children per year. However, most of the organization has capacity of 70 to 300 children. There is no clear correlation between the number of children in an institution and the type of institution of the country except for the fact that most of the Czech informal provisions have less than 20 children and that all respondents who indicated that they work with around 1 000 children in their provision were from Swedish informal educational institutions. This number is so high because it represents the total number of children with whom their institution works in the short-term during the period of one year.

Number of organizations

As was mentioned earlier, the questionnaires could be filled by more respondents within one organization. The total number of organizations involved in the survey was 68. The biggest number of pre-school institutions was involved in the survey in the Czech Republic (25) whereas Swedish respondents are only from 5 institutions.

Cooperation with parents

Cooperation with parents: Good practice

Most of the respondents said that the key factor for cooperation with parents (and other family members) is communication and personal contact with each other. It is important for the teachers to establish a relationship with or an individual approach to children and their families. This is probably easier when teacher takes care of smaller groups of children (i.e. has more time and capacity to invest in the relationships with parents). Parents' meetings, consultations with parents, parents' involvement in joint events and activities organized by preschool institutions, or just ordinary day-to-day meetings can be successfully used to serve the purpose of establishing a partnership between the teacher and the family.

Following quotes illustrate this:

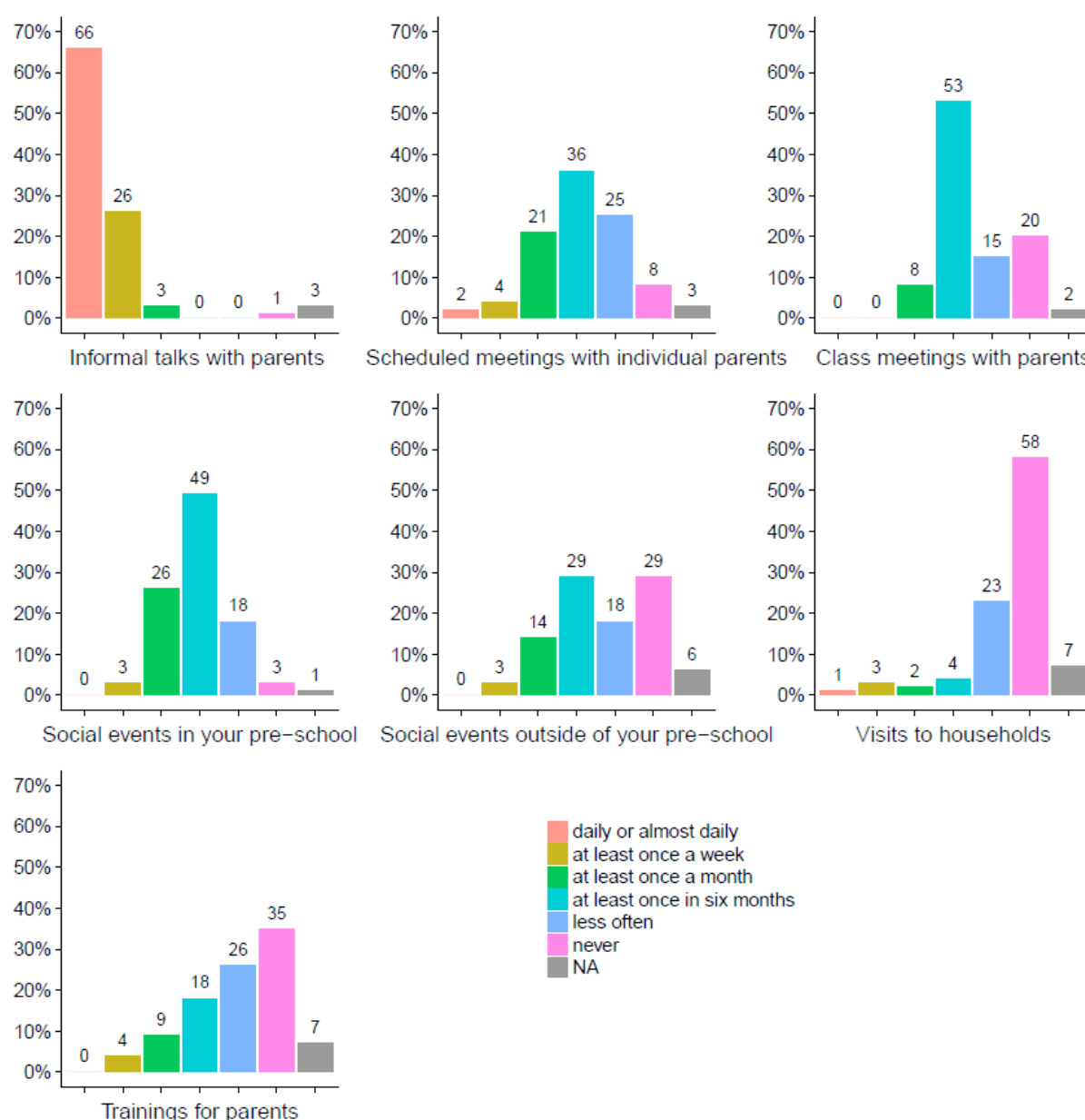
"It is very important to stay in touch with the parent and provide information about the child on a daily basis. I also recommend a phone contact. It is worth engaging parents and relatives to organize and participate in various types of school and pre-school celebrations. Parents also count on our advice for different types of issues regarding children's behaviour and problems." (PL – formal)

"Good practice is giving the parents a summary of what happened during the day in preschool. It is good to get information from parents in the morning if something happened that may affect the child during the day." (SW – formal)

"1. Conversations with parents about the work, behaviour and progress of their children. 2. Exchange of observations with parents about the child's functioning in kindergarten and at home. 3. Involvement of parents in kindergarten work - cooperation in the preparation of the pre-school ceremony and other events." (PL – informal)

"Give time to each single parent/parents. Listen. Respect. See the positive aspects in the behaviour of their children. Encourage. Do not give more help than required. See each individual as competent. Create natural meeting places and activities." (SW – informal)

Figure 3.5. Relative frequency of types of cooperation with parents (percent of answers, n = 202)



Note: There is a different number of respondents per institution. Hence practices at an institution with multiple respondents can skew the results.

Two thirds (66 %) of our respondents talk with parents informally on a daily basis when the parents come to collect their children. Scheduled meetings are much less frequent, which makes sense as minor issues can be talked over without planning in advance. For most teachers and other workers interviewed, class meetings take place at least once every six months (53 % of respondents). On the other hand, about one fifth of respondents said that their institution never organizes class meetings with parents.

In addition, the survey indicates that institutions vary in their approach to organizing social events for children and their families. We can recommend experimenting with various forms of personal contacts between teachers and parents and sharing the specifics of good practices for each form.

Differences among countries also appear. Of course, they are very tentative due to the non-standard sampling of the survey. However, this comparative data could be considered as a first step towards sharing good practice in more detail and raising further questions for discussion. For example, in England, there are far more respondents who said that their institution never organized class meetings with parents. This can be because the preschool education is highly individualised. Not all of the children are in the nursery every day and some of them go to more than one nursery, depending on the decisions of the parents. The common issues are communicated via newsletters or emails. The feedback to a particular parent is nevertheless given on a regular basis, often every day at the drop of or pick up time. The common meetings, as held in some of the European countries, are not regular. On the other hand, almost all of the

nurseries organise common gatherings around social events (these include Christmas plays, Easter hops and fundraising events) and aim to encourage parents to meet and socialise rather than discuss particular issues.

Home visits are generally rare. However, there are few pre-schools in the sample, which seem to regularly visit their children's families. Notable examples are the Swedish institution Barn och familjehälsan, Trädgårdsgatan 826 32 Söderhamn (with multiple home visits per week) and Rädda Barnen 107 88 Stockholm with at least rare visits. They could be consulted for further details on their experience and the impact of home visits in building better partnership with parents.

Finally, none of the respondents from Poland answered that they never organized trainings for parents. Unfortunately, we do not have a satisfactory answer to the question why it is, what the trainings are focused on and what the impact on the communication with parents is.

Cooperation with parents: Challenges

According to the survey, the biggest challenges for working with parents are unreasonable parents' demands on children and preschool institutions, and difficulties in communication. Respondents also reported lack of time, parents' unwillingness to engage in school activities and the lack of interest in their child's development. Another challenge is communicating children's difficulties and problematic behaviour to parents. Some respondents also experience issues with irregular attendance and special demands on working with parents of children with special educational needs (SEN) and parents from lower socio-economic environment or with a different mother tongue.

Following quotes⁷ illustrate these challenges:

"Time – as there is a rush in the end of the day." (UK – formal)

"Parents not having time to speak to you" (UK – formal)

"Parents should cooperate more and more willingly engage" (CZ – formal)

"How to make parents be more engaged with children (we are currently having a course)" (UK – formal)

"Misunderstanding because of the language." (SW – formal)

"Parents sometimes show a lack of understanding, they are demanding and it is difficult to talk about problems." (PL – formal)

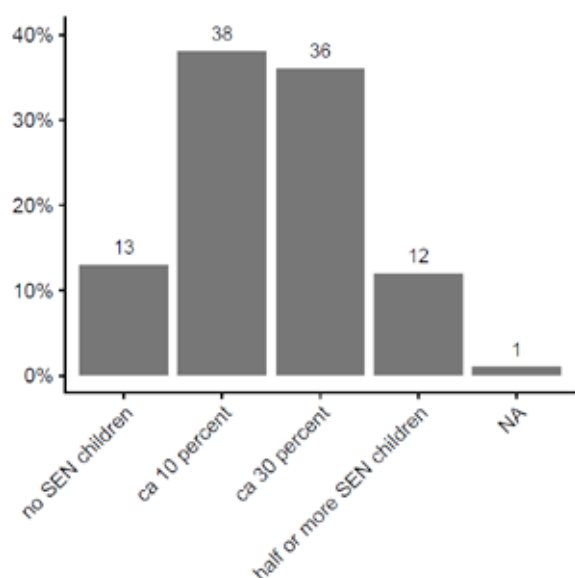
Children with special educational needs

The number of children with special educational needs (SEN) in our respondents' child groups varied a lot⁸. The figure below shows that only about 13 % of the respondents reported that they do not work with any SEN children. Others reported working with a varied percentage of SEN children, mostly less than half of the group. (Figure 3.6)

7) Answers to the question: „What are the biggest challenges in working with parents for you? Think of it as what you would like to see addressed/discussed more or where you would welcome some help or support.“

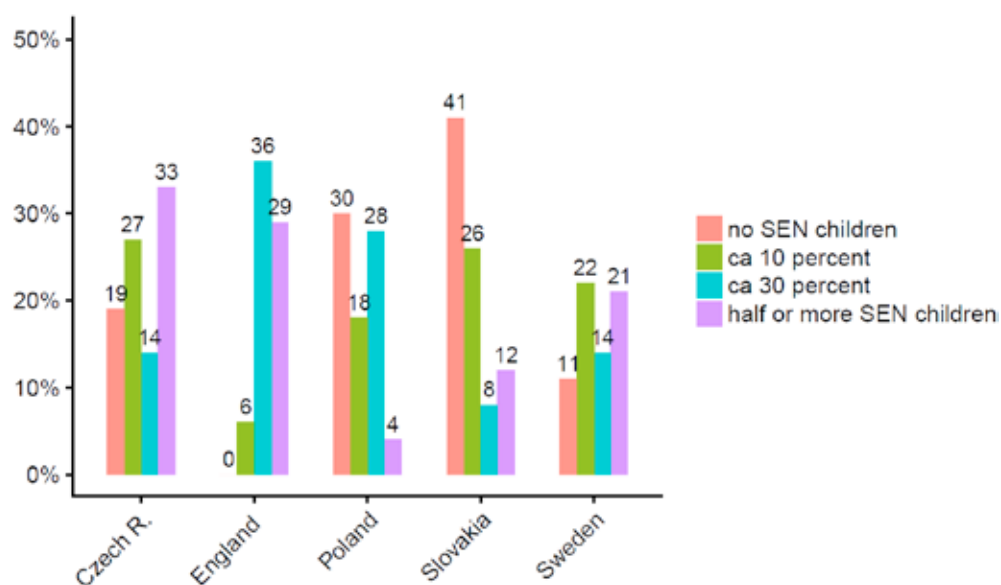
8) Question wording: “Are there any children with special needs among the children you work with? These can be related to their health, mental state and cognitive abilities, but also different socioeconomic, cultural or religious background, when such background implies special needs (more care, special arrangements, special methods etc.). Please, indicate how many such children there are in your institution, approximately.”

Figure 3.6. Respondents with given percentage of SEN children in their group (percent of answers, n = 202)



The following chart shows the same survey question country by country. The sampling in individual countries is hardly comparable. For example, there are no respondents in the UK sample without SEN children in their group, while 41 % of the Slovak sample reported caring about no such children.

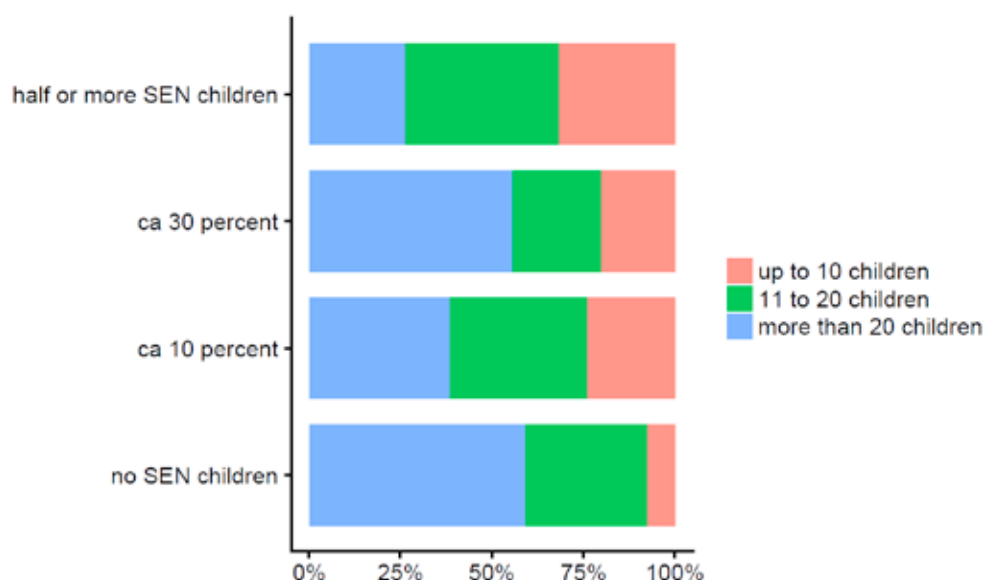
Figure 3.7. Respondents with given percentage of SEN children in their group – BY COUNTRY (percent of answers within country, n = 200, NAs omitted)



We can also look at the data by combining the percentage of SEN children and the group size respondents usually work with. This is shown in the following Figure 3.8. Again, the data collection did not secure a representative sample,

which means the results are only broadly indicative. It shows that within our sample, there is no consistent relationship between the percentage of SEN children in the group and the group's size.

Figure 3.8. Percentage of SEN children by group's size



Children with special educational needs: Good practice

According to our respondents, group size is very important regarding work with SEN children as they need an individual approach. Work in small groups is desirable to achieve this individual approach. Equally important is the manifestation of trust, patience and tolerance, as well as consistency in requiring compliance. Assistance of a specialist/pedagogical assistant/volunteer or general assisting staff is very important when dealing with SEN children in class. Special trainings are also seen as helpful. The following quotes further illustrate what are perceived good practices in working with SEN children by the respondents:

"Individual approach, enough time for work with children." (SK – Formal)

"Individual approach of teachers, empathy, principles of suitability and consistency." (CZ – Formal)

"Providing additional/trained member of the team." (UK – Formal)

"Individual approach, support of specialists." (PL – Informal)

"Teacher assistant." (SK – Formal)

"Fewer kids in class, teacher assistant." (CZ – Informal)

"Small group work." (UK – Formal)

"1. In-depth knowledge of the child's needs, 2. Individual approach to the child, 3. Integration with children who do not require special care" (PL – Formal)

"Being able to work with diversity is absolutely incredible and even if we have group activities, we obviously also see the individual needs of the children – whatever they are." (SW – Informal)

"Respect the needs of the child and his individuality, build the relationship with the child" (CZ – Formal)

Children with special educational needs: Challenges

Balancing the needs of children with special educational needs (SEN) with the requirements and needs of other children is especially hard in large groups. Many respondents would also welcome better training for work with SEN children, as well as better information and cooperation between parents and special educators. It is important to be able to lean on a suitable work methodology, which is not always available. Some respondents lack quality support from other institutions and pedagogical centres. Following quotes further illustrate the perceived challenges by our respondents:

"Lack of support from outside agencies" (UK – Formal)

"It requires the acquisition of knowledge, collaboration with parents and possibly other agencies" (SW – Informal)

"Work without support is demotivating for educators. Supporting school counselling facilities are important. It is important to be able to approach professional partners, because training without contact makes no sense."
(CZ – formal)

"Wishing there were more specialist teacher and more educated staff." (SW – Formal)

"To get more knowledge how to work with these children in the group." (CZ – Formal)

"If one child needs your full attention it is complicated for others to get a program fulfilled, even if there are two teachers in the class." (CZ – Informal)

"A smaller number of children per classroom." (SK – Formal)

"Not having enough knowledge about the child's needs." (UK – Formal)

"Finding a way of working that works for that particular child" (SW – Formal)

Perception of selected problems

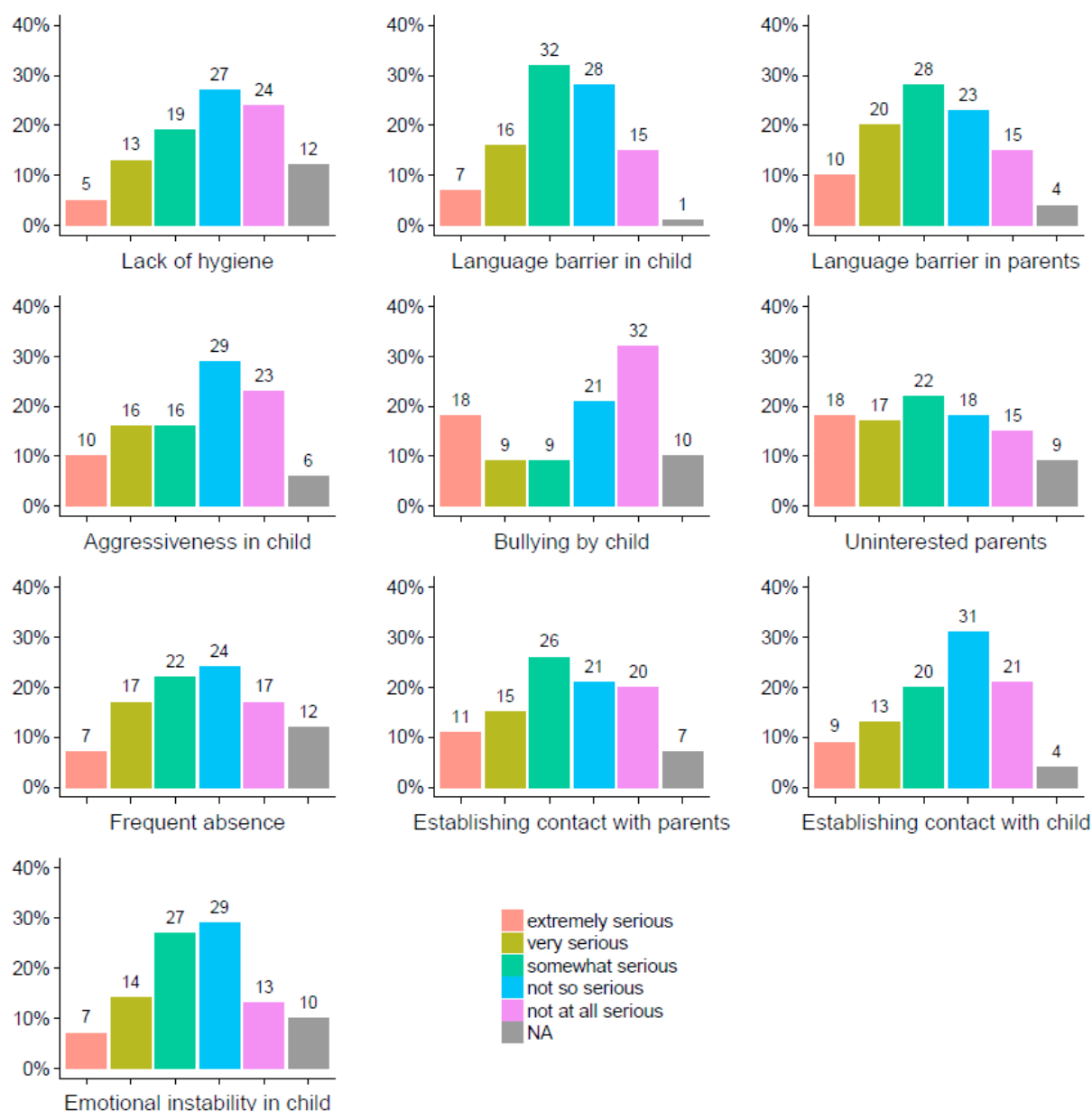
We further asked our respondents about their perception of selected problems they may encounter during their work. Specifically, we asked for each of the following problems whether the respondents considered them extremely serious, not at all serious or any level of seriousness in between:

- a) lack of basic hygiene skills,
- b) language barrier in communication with the child,
- c) language barrier in communication with parents,
- d) aggressiveness of children,
- e) bullying by children,
- f) uninterested parents,
- g) frequent absence of children (low attendance),
- h) difficulties in establishing contact with parents,
- i) difficulties in establishing contact and communication with the child,
- j) children's emotional instability, inability to control feelings.

As we can see from Figure 3.9, there are no clear most-serious problems and no utterly non-serious problems. In fact, most selected problems show somewhat similar distribution of answers resembling a bell curve with most respondents choosing categories somewhere in the middle. This is not the case for bullying by children, which is considered extremely serious by almost one fifth of respondents, while almost a third considers this not at all serious. Bullying seems to be a problem specific to some institutions. Another reason can be the different definitions of bullying in partner countries, which may be either stricter or milder. Another problem considered extremely serious by almost one fifth of respondents is the lack of parents' interest.

In Slovakia and England, there are specific measures to prevent the frequent absence of children. In Slovakia, a local civilian guard accompanies a child to kindergarten if the child is not present in kindergarten or if his/her parents are unable to ensure the attendance of children in pre-school institutions. In England, the same task is fulfilled by an attendance officer who unlike the Slovakian guard gives the fines to the parents who do not send their child to kindergarten. If the child has an attendance of less than 95 %, the kindergarten has to call the attendance officer.

Figure 3.9. Overall perception of selected problems



In addition, Figure 3.10 shows the perception of problems by type of institution (formal vs. informal). For clarity, we have recoded respondents' answers into numbers ("not at all serious" = 0, "not so serious" = 1, "somewhat serious" = 2, "very serious" = 3, and "extremely serious" = 4) and we calculated mean values separately for formal and informal institutions. The results indicate that informal institutions workers tend to perceive most of the selected problems as somewhat more serious than formal institutions' workers. However, we warn against jumping to conclusions as there is a different number of respondents from formal and informal institutions in different countries. In other words, the observed difference could only reflect difference among countries. To further inspect this hypothesis, we present a similar chart (Figure 3.11) organized by countries. The results confirm large difference by countries. England tends to show less negative perception of the selected problems. This could be also given by their ability to already deal with this kind of issues. Contrarily most of the Polish respondents assessed all the problems as very or extremely serious.

Figure 3.10. Perception of selected problems by institution type (higher values mean 'perceived as bigger problem')

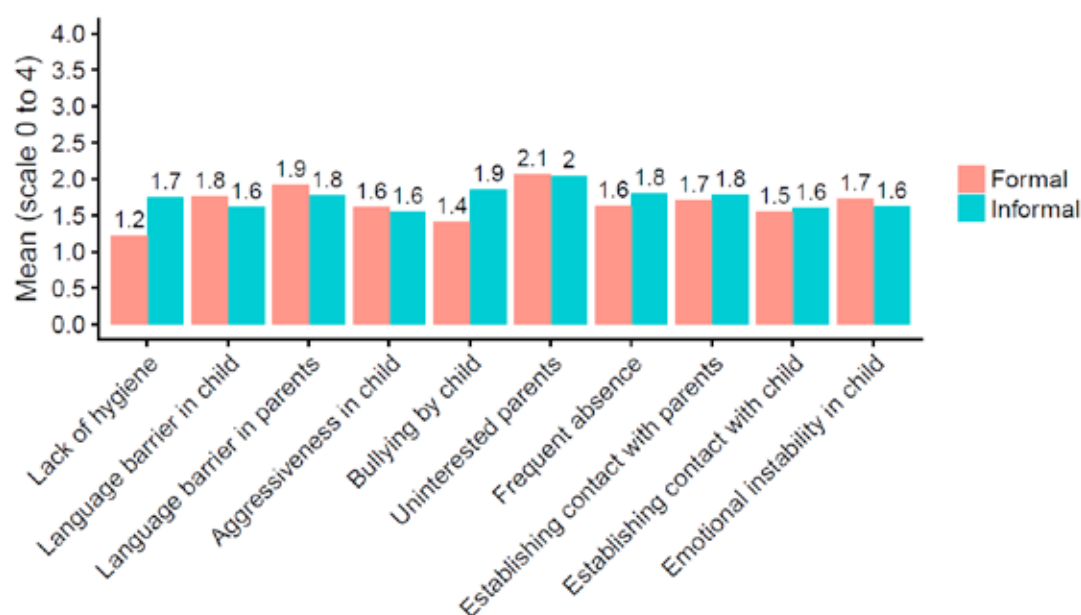
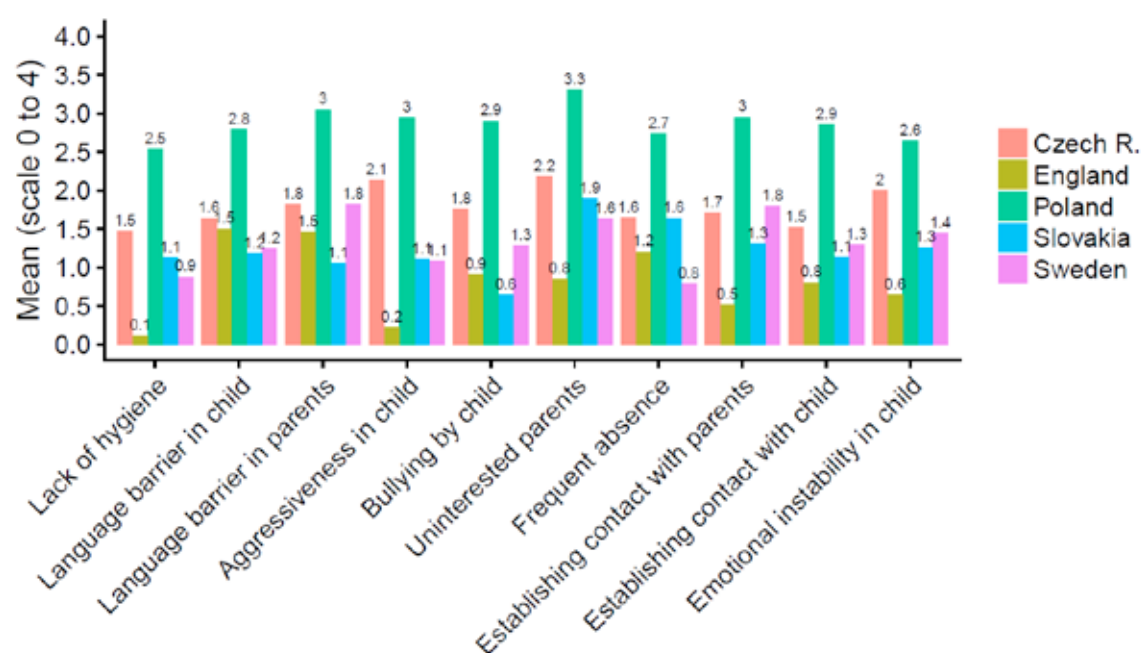


Figure 3.11. Perception of selected problems by country (higher values mean 'perceived as bigger problem')



Some respondents also decided to mention other problems in an additional open question. While we cannot be sure how many other educators would consider these additional problems very serious, the following statements of additional problems may inspire further discussion within the platform:

"Overprotection of parents in relation to their children, which leads to the unreliability of children, lack of independence." (PL – formal)

"Unawareness of parents and failure to admit that the development of their children is seriously disturbed. It is not possible to send families for a compulsory diagnosis to the pedagogical counselling centre." (PL – informal)

"Demanding attitude of parents and lack of cooperation with parents." (PL – informal)

"Parent who doesn't respect the pedagogue as an expert. Parent who conceive our facility as a repository for a child and not as a child's education and socialization facility." (CZ – informal)

"No communication between parents and children. They do not talk together, and children prefer to play with mobile phones." (CZ – formal)

"1. low social skills of children 2. emotional difficulties of children. 3. health status, e.g. chronic diseases." (PL – formal)

"Language barriers and language code." (SK – informal, CZ – formal)

"Hyperactivity, disturbance of attention and concentration in the case of some children (case-by-case)." (CZ – informal)

„The serious problem is the motivation of workers working with socially disadvantaged or neglected children. And also lack of awareness in the society." (CZ – informal)

„Teachers' incompetence; fear of otherness; low level of teachers' knowledge in the area of working with children with SEN; lack of a permanent staff with which one can develop a single front of the activity in which one can invest – long-term employment; perpetuating the teaching model, not the learner; reproduction of stereotypes in teaching, etc." (PL – formal)

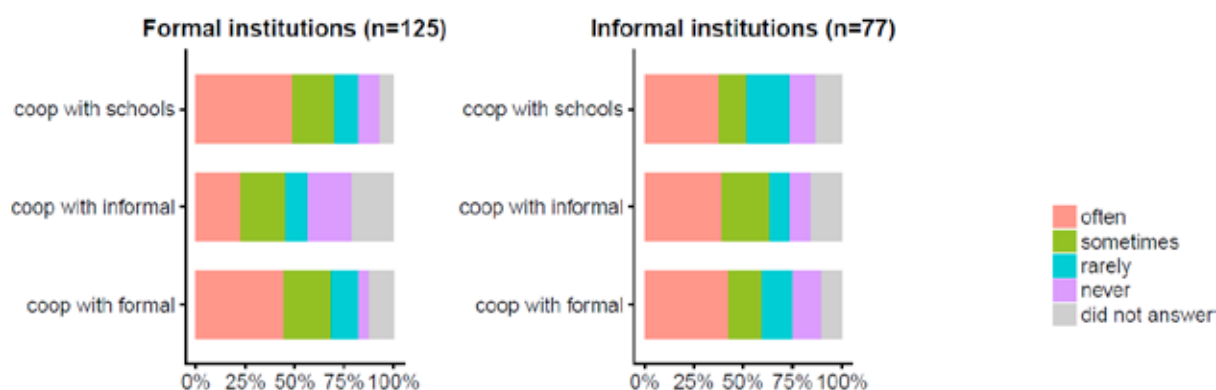
"The high number of children in the classroom, making individualized education more difficult, as well as overall communication." (CZ – formal)

Once again, educators emphasized the communication with parents in the quotes above. Moreover, the respondents, especially from Poland and the Czech Republic, stated that parents disregard the advices of the teachers and do not devote enough care and time to their children. Some respondents declared that one of the issues which they are dealing with in their work with children is children's poor social skills and their ability to cope with their emotions. Furthermore, the lack of teachers' competence and knowledge and their low motivation to work with children from disadvantaged areas was perceived as problematic.

Cooperation with other preschool institutions

The survey data suggests that formal and informal institutions tend to cooperate fairly often. The cooperation also happens across institutional types (formal and informal) as illustrated in the figure below. Specifically, respondents from formal pre-schools said that their institution often or sometimes cooperates with other formal institutions in 69 % of cases (red and green categories in the chart below), with informal institutions in 46 % of cases and with schools in 70 % of cases. For respondents from informal institutions, the numbers for cooperation with formal, informal and school institutions are 60 %, 64 % and 52 %, respectively.

Figure 3.12. Cooperation of formal (left) and informal (right) pre-schools with other institutions



In the questionnaire, we also asked about specific forms of cooperation. According to the respondents, the most common forms of cooperation between pre-school institutions include organizing and participating in joint events, festivities and meetings. One of the types of joint meetings is between teachers and staff and serves primarily to share experiences between related pre-school facilities and between elementary schools (nearby or in the community). There is also cooperation with cultural houses or pedagogical-psychological centres. A specific example follows:

"For example, the project 'Teacher's career advancement path' – aimed at exchanging teachers' experiences with trainee teachers and the goal was achieved." (PL – formal)

Furthermore, there is also international cooperation, either in the framework of Erasmus+ projects or cooperation with foreign elementary schools, such as the eTwinning educational project. This type of cooperation serves to develop intercultural education. For example, one Polish respondent mentioned an international project focusing on inclusive education model and including several partner countries: Romania, Estonia, Czech Republic, Macedonia, United Kingdom, Italy, Sweden.

In addition, Polish respondents also stressed an international cooperation with overlap to the multicultural education and integration of foreigners and minorities as illustrated in the example below:

"Foundation for the development of local democracy – Łódź department – development of the project 'inEDU inclusive education model for children with migrant backgrounds in pre-schools'. Partners: Romania, Estonia, Czech Republic, Macedonia, United Kingdom, Italy, Sweden. The project is implemented as part of the ERASMUS + Program, Action 3: Initiatives for innovative policies - Social inclusion through education, training and youth, financed by the European Commission. Kindergarten is the only one in Lodz that accepts children with migration experience in a planned and purposeful way. Important effect: full-time employment (40) of a language assistant." (PL – Formal)

The same project was mentioned by other respondent from the same organization who highlighted its success.

"Our kindergarten regularly participates in international ERASMUS+ projects. The aim is to exchange experience and co-implement the project. It always works. It is always a beneficial experience" (PL – formal).

Contrary to the above quote, some reported problems with communication in larger international projects.

"The project with kindergartens through the e-Twinning – the documentations of mascot from foreign country – it started well but ended unsuccessfully because some of the kindergartens didn't communicate well. Project Edison – the attendance of foreigners in our kindergarten and week of multicultural exchange was very successful." (CZ – Formal)

Some respondents, mainly from Poland, also replied that they participate in regional competitions, most frequently in arts, such as drawing, singing, dancing or reciting as well as science and sports. These competitions serve to develop children's skills and interests.

The most common goals of these types of cooperation include child integration and sharing of experience, but also personal development of the child, psychological support and preparation for school life.

"1. Participation in art and recitation competitions, 2. Participation in actions for the promotion of children's rights, 3. Participation in sports tournaments – demonstration lessons, charity fundraising, song festivals." (PL – Formal)

In Poland, there was also a specific support of children with disabilities. On the contrary in the Czech Republic the most common cooperation was based on working together with other preschools mostly through the mutual attendances and common celebrations and festivities.

Cooperation with educational support organizations, e.g. children's centres

Apart from cooperation with other pre-schools and sometimes primary schools, respondents also reported cooperation with education support organizations such as maternity and community centres, children's centres and leisure centres and various non-profit organizations. The most frequent forms listed by respondents were visits and excursions into these facilities. Other forms of cooperation include organising courses, workshops or training sessions together.

An interesting kind of cooperation that appeared across more countries was establishing contacts with libraries and art schools.

"Our kindergarten has been cooperating with the district library for many years. The aim is first of all to familiarize children with literature, read books and encourage them to read a book. Very good cooperation." (PL – Formal)

"We cooperate with libraries" (UK – Formal)

Among answers from the Czech Republic, the cooperation with NGOs such as Romano Jasnica, Dobro Volno, and Schola Empirica was indicated.

Less frequently mentioned organizations were Christian Charities, for example the Integrative Centre of Treatment and Rehabilitation John Paul II Caritas of the Archdiocese of Lodz as well as Caritas in the Czech Republic.

In general, the aim of the cooperation was often to share and exchange information about the needs of families, integration of children and supporting their competencies as well as providing and organizing different activities for children: various art, music, theatre or knowledge competitions. Another goal was to bring preschool children together through joint workshops and training.

However, Romano Jasnica and Caritas in the Czech Republic present the specific example of the cooperation between formal and informal educational institution. Both organizations offer social services for children and their families from socially disadvantaged areas and both are involved in the project which is managed by Schola Empirica. The aim of this project is to promote inclusive preschool education in three Czech towns: Roudnice nad Labem, Steti and Krupka. One of the main objectives is to support the inclusion of pre-school children from socially disadvantaged and culturally different environment into the mainstream education. The project focuses on the cooperation between parents and pre-school teachers enabling an easier entry and adaptation of children in pre-schools. This process is also closely related to the cooperation between educational and social services, so it is effective when motivating and supporting parents to participate in the education of their children. The three kindergartens in Roudnice nad Labem, Steti and Krupka are now in close contact with Romano Jasnica and Caritas and they are sharing information about the children and their families striving to find the way how to support these families and integrate children into the mainstream pre-school education.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

From the Secondary Data on National Policies of Inclusive ECEC, it is apparent that the contexts in each country differ. One of the important points of this report is to discuss the cooperation between formal and informal educational institutions in order to promote the best available care for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. It has been demonstrated, that in some of the countries the informal education plays a relatively minor role in comparison with others where the role of informal preschool institutions is significant (Czech Republic, Slovakia).

There is also a difference across the countries regarding the key issues in ECEC. For example, the inclusive education as introduced by the new Education Act is a widely debated issue in the Czech Republic. This Education Act represents a key turning point because it implemented the abandonment of the categorization of children and it introduced the concept of need for supportive measures. Inclusive education is a polarising topic in Poland as well. Some experts (Gajdzica and Zamkowska) emphasize the need to educate current and future teachers in the field of special education in order to provide professional education and care for every child. On the other hand, Slovakia is more concerned with cooperation between institutions taking care of children younger than 3 years of age and the children at the age of 3 to 6. Moreover, there is a lack of capacities in kindergartens which means that pre-primary education is not available for everyone. In England, poverty, which affects one in four children, constitutes a major issue in public debate. Therefore tackling disadvantage in early years education at a national level is closely linked with the policies aiming to reduce child poverty. Swedish education system deals mostly with the foreign-born children who do not speak Swedish. For most municipalities, multiculturalism in Swedish schools is a new phenomenon and the majority of pre-school teachers have not yet been trained for this situation.

Other challenges in ECEC and pre-school education emerged within the survey outcomes. These topics which appeared to be insufficiently addressed and would need more attention and support in the future include the following:

- Better services of counseling centres

„I would like every comprehensive facility to provide specialist care, e.g. a speech therapist, therapist, psychologist, and nurse. So that the waiting time for consultations with specialists in psychological and pedagogical counseling centres is, for example, 2 weeks, not 6 months, etc.“ (PL – Formal)

- Cooperation with experts

„I think that with regard to cooperation with experts, a psychologist and a special educator would sometimes be really helpful in kindergarten. It would also be great to try mentoring.“ (CZ – Formal)

- Support of social and emotional competences

„In my opinion, greater emphasis could be placed on emotional and social intelligence, because the child will get a huge amount of information in his life. But sometimes it is more important to be able to understand the feelings and feelings of others.“ (CZ – Informal)

- Building good relationships within the institution

„Also important is co-operation in the facility, relationship to management, support for activities.“ (CZ – Informal)

- Individual approach

„When working with children, it is important to have an individual approach to their needs, to notice their problems, and to cooperate with their parents accordingly. I think a lot depends on the personality, willingness and commitment of teachers.“ (PL – Formal)

Despite the many challenges that need to be addressed, there already exist several good practice examples which, among others, stress the importance of cooperation between formal and informal pre-school institutions.

The partnership between formal and informal educational institutions have been shown as very beneficial in the North of the Czech Republic, in the city of Štětí and Krupka, where a large amount of people live at a risk of social exclusion. In 2016, the non-governmental educational organization, Schola Empirica, launched a project to support the collaboration between Štětí and Krupka kindergartens and a non-governmental organization Romano Jasnica. Moreover, the project also aims to support professional development of teachers, enhancement of parenting skills, and the development of support for pedagogical work with preschool children. The project has been very successful in establishing a dialog

between social workers from Romano Jasnica and the kindergarten pedagogical staff, as well as between parents of the children involved in the project and their teachers. The role of Schola Empirica is to support social workers in the enhancement of parenting skills and provide advice that is founded upon the evidence-based inclusive methodology “Good Start”. Good Start was introduced by Schola Empirica and focused on the development of social, emotional and cognitive competences of children. Since its launch, over 20 Roma families have received support via the project.

The Integrated Early Help Hubs in Wakefield in the North of England were founded to support families in need. Their goal is to provide additional structure and governance to the provision of early help to families and to ensure that professionals offering early help are supported to provide the right services to families at the right time. The Integrated Early Help Hubs integrate a variety of early help professionals and services in locality based hubs where they can work closely together to provide support to families across the entire spectrum of need. Moreover, they try to develop close links with other services in their area including local nurseries, schools and voluntary sector groups. These close links ensure that support to families is coordinated and enable the level and intensity of service provision to increase or decrease with the family’s needs.

In Poland, Municipal kindergarten (City Kindergarten no. 40) and Kindergarten therapeutic pre-school point (RECEPTOR-ek) where the most of the children were diagnosed with special educational needs cooperate. These two facilities organize joint meetings, workshops, carnival balls and lot of other events in order to create inclusive environment, to teach the children the sense of responsibility, acceptance, empathy and willingness to help another person.

In Slovakia, the largest marginalized group of people is Roma community. Therefore, most of the integration programs are focused on this ethnic group. One of those programs which proved successful was Roma Parenting with Confidence (2013–2015). It was developed by the International Step by Step Association and implemented by the Wide Open School Foundation. Its goal was to improve the home learning environment in Roma families and increase children’s participation in education in kindergarten institutions. Trainings organized within the program focused on enhancing the parenting skills of Roma mothers and fathers. According to Tankersley (2015), the conditions in participating households are now healthier, safer, and of a higher hygienic standard as a result, and purposeful interaction between parents and their children has increased. Parents are also more active in their interactions with the kindergarten and the number of children enrolled in, and attending, kindergarten increased; this improvement has been maintained. Parents have more trust in their own parenting skills, and now see themselves as the first teachers of their children. The performance of children has also improved.

In Sweden, there are many methods developed to address the needs of children from a different cultural background or with a different mother tongue. The most successful practice turned out to be the employment of an adult from a migrant community at the school as an assistant. These assistants help children feel better at school because the children can see that their native language holds equal importance as the Swedish language. In addition, these assistants represent a good way of ensuring that the school will be able to communicate with parents. The assistants are present during the whole school day and they make sure that bilingual children are included in the class. Studies have shown that employing adults at the schools that speak the same mother tongue as the students is crucial for achieving academic success.

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