

Comparative study: Early childhood care and education system in the partner countries



ProChil: Professional Childcare in European Nurseries.

The project is co-financed by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union under the registration number: 2017-1-CZ01-KA202-035558.

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

This comparative study was created as a part of the [Prochil: Professional Childcare in European Nurseries project](#), which involves 7 partners from 6 countries. The comparison focuses on early childhood educational development (ISCED level 01) which is designed for younger children (in the age range of 0 to 2 years), whilst in some countries it was not possible to leave out the pre-primary education (ISCED level 02), which is designed for children from the age of 3 years up to the start of primary education, as those two are closely interconnected.

In the comparison we focus on three topics: the **family policy** in the country which influences the use of preschool facilities, on the **quality and accessibility** of preschool facilities and on the required **qualifications** of personnel in the facilities.

This comparison presents data on early childhood education and care in the following countries:

Czech Republic	CZ
United Kingdom	UK
Belgium (Flanders)	B
Spain	S
Greece	GR
Sweden	S

More information (also including the situation in other countries) can be found at familyandjob.eu/prochil-project and you can also contact the project manager of the project Štěpánka Mašlárová at stepanka.maslarova@gmail.com or the whole team through www.facebook.com/prochil.

The content of this study does not reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Responsibility for the information and views expressed in the study lies entirely with the authors.

Contents

1. Statistics on family policy and childcare in Europe	4
1.1. The accessibility and quality of ECEC in EU countries	8
2. Czech Republic	10
2.1. Qualification of nurses/childcare professionals in the Czech Republic .	10
3. Belgium (Flanders)	12
3.1. Qualification of nurses/childcare professionals in Flanders	13
4. Spain	15
4.1. Qualification of nurses/childcare professionals in Spain	16
5. Greece	18
5.1. Qualification of nurses/childcare professionals in Greece	18
6. Sweden	20
6.1. Qualification of nurses/childcare professionals in Sweden	20
7. United Kingdom	22
7.1. Qualification of nurses/childcare professionals in the UK	23
8. References	26

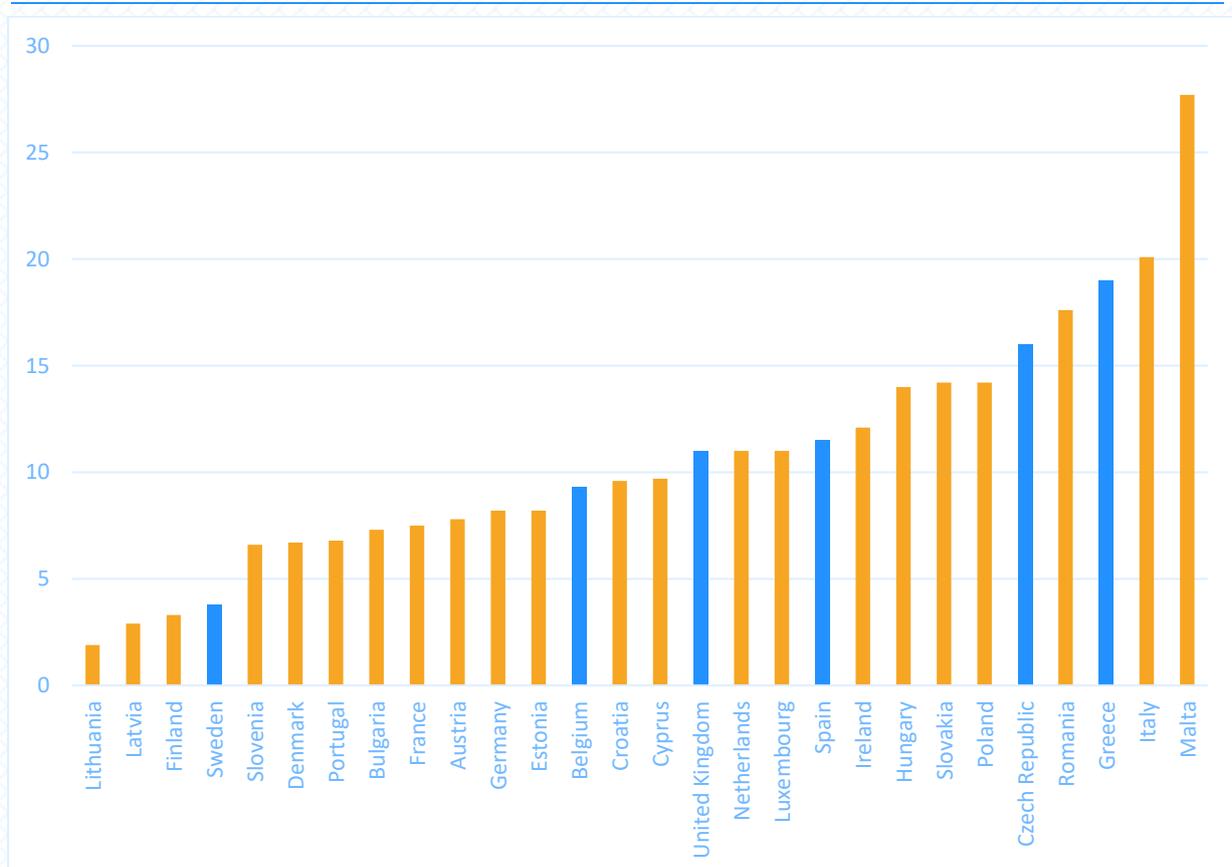
1. Statistics on family policy and childcare in Europe

There are two main purposes of Early Childcare and Education (ECEC): on the one hand it represents a part of **preschool education system** with special focus on early child development and education and on the other hand the availability and accessibility of good-quality childcare services has a positive impact on the **female participation in labour market**. That is why developed countries invest money into the availability of ECEC services.

A higher participation rate may increase gender equality, foster economic growth and help improve the sustainability of the present-day welfare state, especially in the light of an ageing population. Another argument points to the fact that childcare services might increase fertility rates by making a child less costly in terms of income and career opportunities (Plantenga, J., Remery, C., Meulders, D., & Kanjuo-Mrčela, A., 2009).

Apart from the well known gender pay gap which compares the earnings of men and women, we can also calculate and compare the gender employment gap, which is defined as the difference between the employment rates of men and women of working age (20-64). Across the EU-28, the gender employment gap was 11.6 p.p. in 2016, meaning that the proportion of men of working age in employment exceeded that of women by 11.6 p.p.

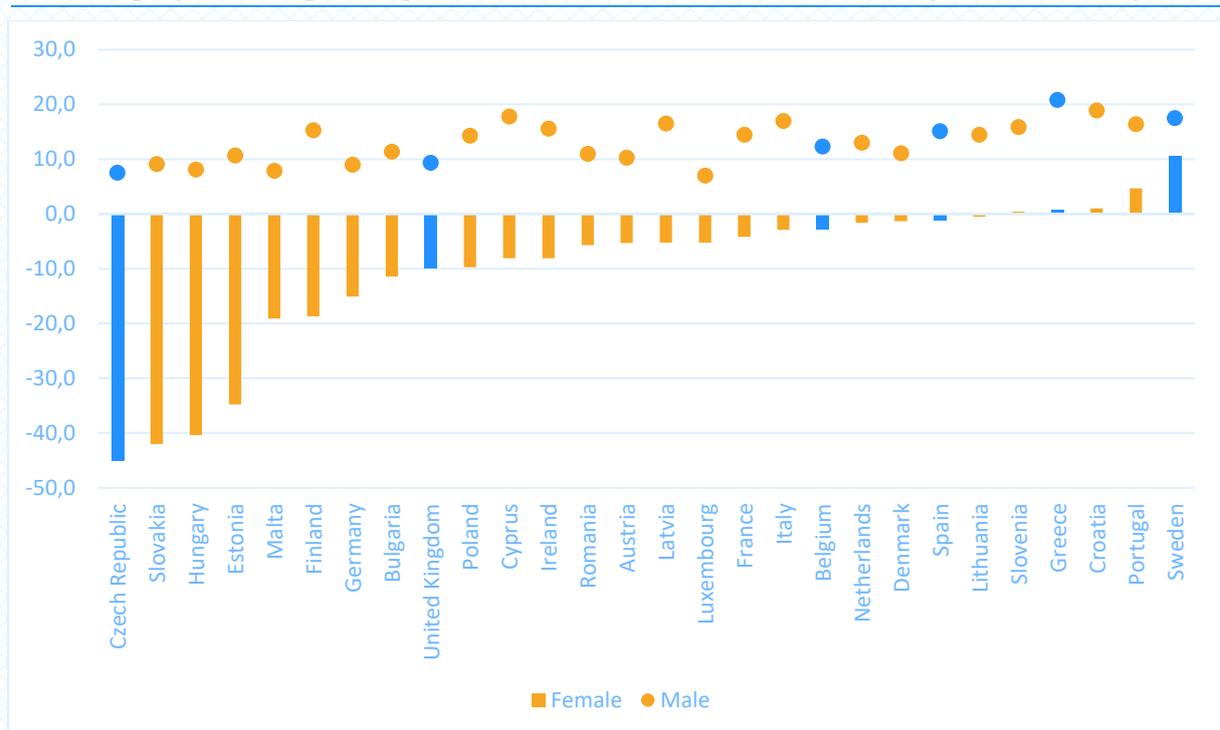
Employment Gender Gap, 2016 (Eurostat, 2018)



Partner countries are shown in blue colour. As we can see, regarding the partner countries there is big gender employment gap especially in Greece and in the Czech Republic.

Another very important and interesting statistics is the **Employment impact of parenthood on men and women**. The employment impact of parenthood is measured as the difference of the employment rate of women (men) with at least one child under the age of 6 and the employment rate of women (men) with no children, 20 – 49 years. The impact of parenthood on employment rates often works in opposite directions for women and men: while women’s work rates generally decrease as the number of children raises, men’s increase. Furthermore, parenthood increases the incidence of part-time work among mothers, particularly those with a tertiary qualification (OECD, 2002).

Employment impact of parenthood on men and women, 2016 (Eurostat, 2018)

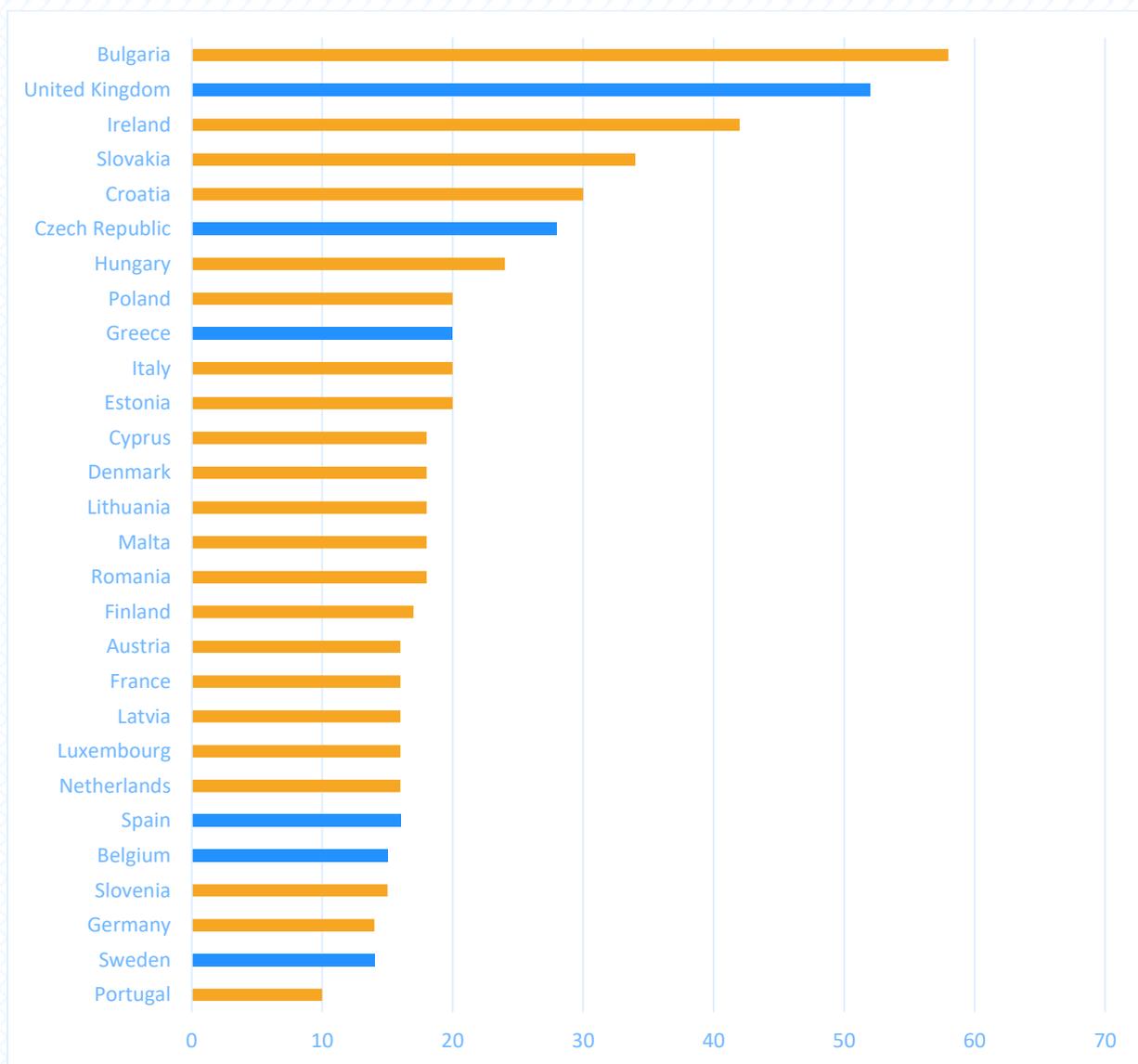


The highest impact of parenthood on women is in the Czech Republic (-45%), Slovakia (-42%) and Hungary (-40,4%). We can see positive impact on employment of women with children in Sweden (+10,6%), Portugal (+4,7%) and Croatia (+1%).

Maternity leave is anchored in the law of every country, but the length and the financial support differs. Researches show that longer maternity leave has negative impact on labour market inclusion of mothers and causes higher unemployment of women. The absence of women in the labour market has also negative impact on their human capital – they loose their knowledge and skills during this period, which also makes returning to the labour market more difficult.

The maternity leave also has negative impact on the pension and can be one of the reasons for women poverty in higher age.

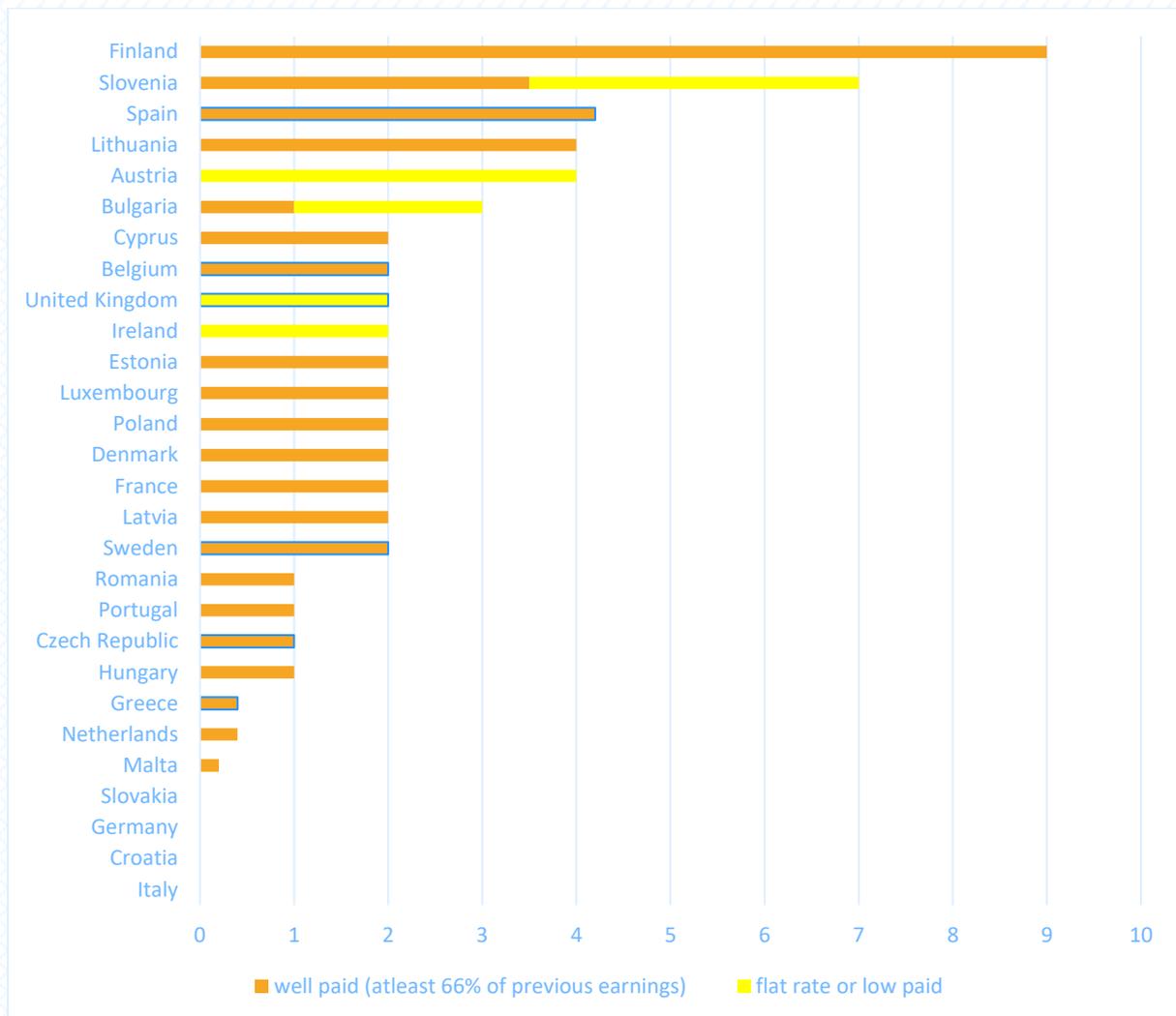
**Maternity leave (prenatal + postnatal), number of weeks, 2016
(Jurviste, U., Prpic, M., & Sabbati, 2018)**



In most of the EU countries duration of maternity leave is between 10 and 20 weeks. As we can see there is a long maternity leave in the United Kingdom and in the Czech Republic, while there is a very short maternity leave in Spain, Belgium and also Sweden.

In Sweden, the situation is specific - Swedish legislation on this issue is more gender neutral than in other states. The most relevant birth-related leave is parental leave, rather than maternity leave.

Paternity leave (well-paid / flat rate or low paid), number of weeks, 2018 (Janta, B., & Stewart, K., 2018)



Paternity leave is a short period of leave available for fathers after the birth of a child. Almost all EU countries offer some kind of paternity leave (except Slovakia, Germany, Croatia and Italy). The longest paternity leave is in Finland (8 weeks, and it is well paid all the time), Slovenia (6 weeks, but only half is well paid) and Spain (more than 4 weeks and it is well paid all the time). The rest of the countries have paternity leave between 1 day and 4 weeks.

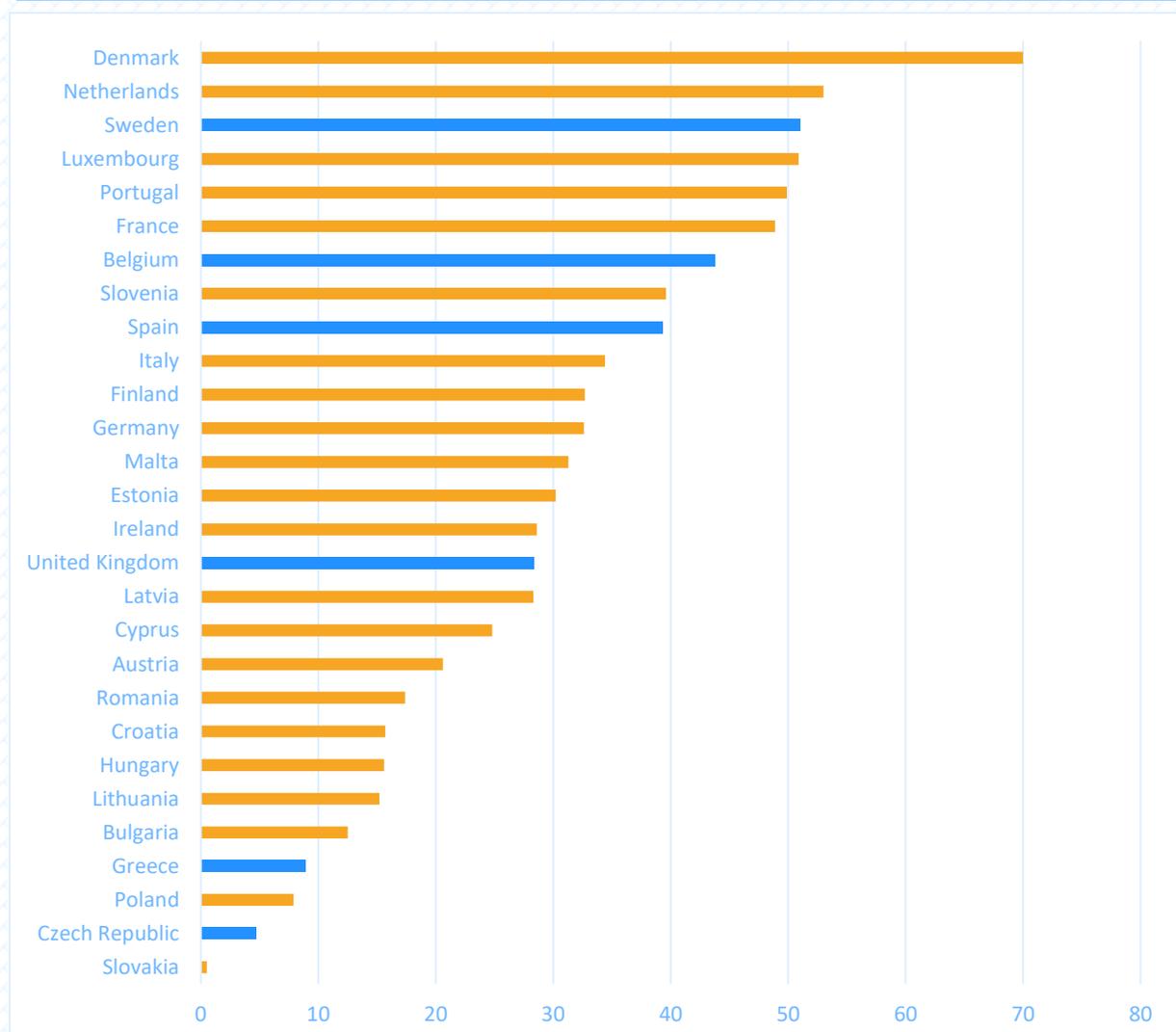
1.1. The accessibility and quality of ECEC in EU countries

Research shows that high-quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) services can have important and enduring impacts on children’s development, their educational outcomes and labour market prospects. The provision of affordable, accessible and high-quality ECEC services is also important for parents’ participation in the labour market.

The importance of the provision of formal ECEC services has been recognised at the EU level since the beginning of this century. At the Barcelona Summit in 2002, the European Council set childcare provision targets. EU Member States agreed to increase the formal childcare provision to ensure that by 2010 at least 33% of children under 3 years of age, and at least 90% of children between 3 and the mandatory school starting age, have access to formal childcare services.

On average, 32.9% of under 3 year-olds were enrolled in childcare in the EU in 2016. (Janta, B., Iakovidou, E., & Butkute, M.)

Proportion of children under 3 cared for by formal arrangements, 2016 (Eurostat, 2018)

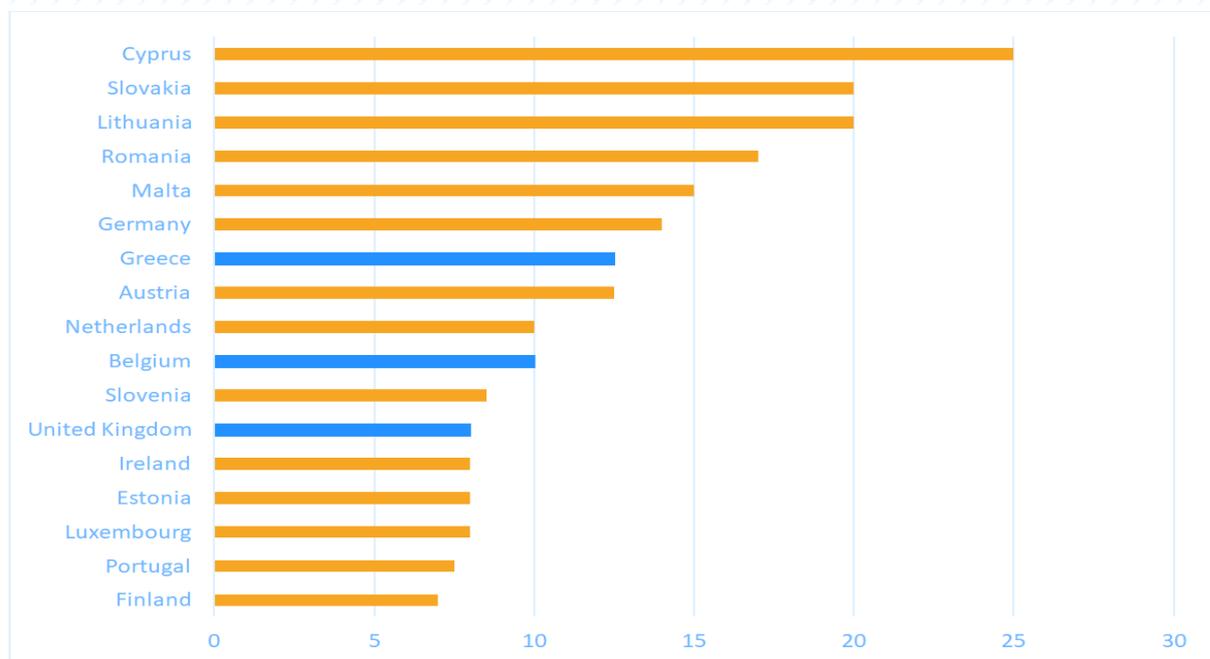


The number of children under the age of three years cared for by formal arrangements is the highest in Denmark (70%), Netherlands (53%) and Sweden (51%). On the other side, very low numbers have Slovakia (0,5%), the Czech Republic (4,7%) and Poland (7,9%).

Several countries across EU are increasing the available budget to create more childcare places. For example Germany increased the budget, aiming to have 100 000 more childcare places available in 2020. Extra public funding was also allocated in the Czech Republic in 2017 to create children’s group and micro-nurseries. Another countries (Hungary, the Czech Republic, Portugal, the UK) are focusing on providing guaranteed childcare places to reduce inequalities and improve equal opportunities among children. Several countries are also focusing to promote greater inclusion of children requiring additional support – for example Denmark focuses on quality of learning and care facilities with extra attention paid to disadvantaged children. (Janta, B., Iakovidou, E., & Butkute, M.)

This brings us to another aspect of ECEC, which is the quality of the services. High quality ECEC promotes educational success and social inclusion; broad access to it has the potential to break the cycle of disadvantage by creating equity in education early on. One important aspect is the Staff-child ratio which is even more important with the children aged 1-3 years old when individual approach is crucial.

Staff-child ratio at the age of 3, 2013 (European Commission, 2014)



Number of children per staff member is very diverse in the EU. 11 countries have no regulations for children at the age of 3 or the regulation differ very much in different ECEC facilities. In Finland and Portugal there has to be a professional for each 7/7,5 children, while the Cyprus, Slovakia and Lithuania it can be 20 or even more.

2. Czech Republic

Before 1989 nurseries were very popular in the Czech Republic and when in the 90's the demand for places in nurseries decreased, they used to be run without a greater change in the child care system until 2012. Until March 2012 nurseries belonged to healthcare facilities falling under the competence of the Ministry of Health. The legislation was contained primarily in the law on public healthcare. The nurseries were mainly public facilities and when run as non-governmental facilities, they followed the law on healthcare services provided in private healthcare facilities.

In 2013 the Ministry of Health decided that there is no need to provide the child care services (taking care of healthy children and their comprehensive development) as a form of healthcare and all nurseries had to change their legal status.

Since April 2013 a nursery may be operated as a professional business facility. The service providers are required to meet certain standards such as professional competence of the entrepreneur and qualification of the nurses as well as specific hygiene requirements and other legal conditions.

Since 2014 there is a new law on providing child care services in so called „child groups“ as an activity on a non-commercial basis and as an alternative to the official preschool educational system in the Czech Republic. Child groups are designated for children from 1 to 6 years old.

Apart from child groups there are also kindergartens designed for children in the age from 3 to 6 years old. Kindergartens are overseen by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Teachers in kindergartens have to have a University degree from pre-school pedagogy. Some kindergartens also take children from age 2.

Kindergartens can be public (run by municipalities) or private (not for profit or for profit).

2.1. Qualification of nurses/childcare professionals in the Czech Republic

In child groups one of the following obligatory professional competence is necessary according to law:

- a) professional competence of a general nurse, medical assistant, midwife, health and social worker, paramedic, psychologist in health care or clinical psychologist
- b) professional competence of a social worker or a worker in social services
- c) professional qualification of kindergarten teacher, teacher in a primary school or an educator
- d) **a professional qualification of a nurse for children under the mandatory school age**
- e) the professional competence of a doctor

To gain the professional qualification according to d) you have to complete a course accredited by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs with given standards. This course contains compulsory modules of education and consists of 100 hours of theory and 60 hours of practice.

The contents of the professional qualification course are the following:

- f) Providing First Aid to children
- g) Taking care of a routinely ill child in home care
- h) Guiding the child towards hygiene habits
- i) Application of the healthy lifestyle principles according to the age of the child
- j) Application of teaching methods and methods of pedagogical work according to the age of the child
- k) Finding solutions to unfavourable educational situations from the pedagogical-psychological perspective
- l) Practical application of knowledge about the development stages of a child and its socialization
- m) Following ethical principles in the work of a nurse and guiding children towards moral values
- n) Orientation in labour relations that are applicable in professional life of a nurse
- o) Operating and hygiene rules when working with children at home or at a child care facility

The law on child group is currently (February 2019) being amended by the members of Parliament based on suggestions made by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

Starting from 2022 new requirements are planned for the nurses, among them continual professional development. The form and scope of these requirements are not set yet.

3. Belgium (Flanders)

In Belgium, each of the three communities are responsible for childcare in their own community. The organization of childcare is therefore different in the Dutch, French and German speaking part of Belgium. We will focus on childcare in Flanders, the Dutch community of Belgium.

In 2014 a new decree was regulated which tries to simplify the organization of the childcare sector in Flanders. Whereas there used to be a multitude of childcare initiatives, there are now only three major forms of childcare, based on the number of children taken care for.

- Family organized childcare: facilities with max 8 children
- Group organized childcare: facilities with 9 children or more
- Home childcare: for ill children that need to stay at home and can't go to their regular facility

All formal Flemish childcare organisations must have a (quality) license from the policy agency Child and Family (Kind en Gezin). This organization is a governmental, public agency dependent on the Flemish Minister of Welfare. Child and Family regulates and supervises all formal childcare up to 3 years, but doesn't organize childcare services (Levräu, Neels, Loos & de Valk, 2014).

The objectives of the decree of 2014 are to ensure that the quality of care remains high, prices remain stable and the number of care facilities continues to expand in the long run. Therefore, a new system subsidies was set. In this new system the subsidy of a childcare facility gradually increases when the facility fulfills to more conditions.

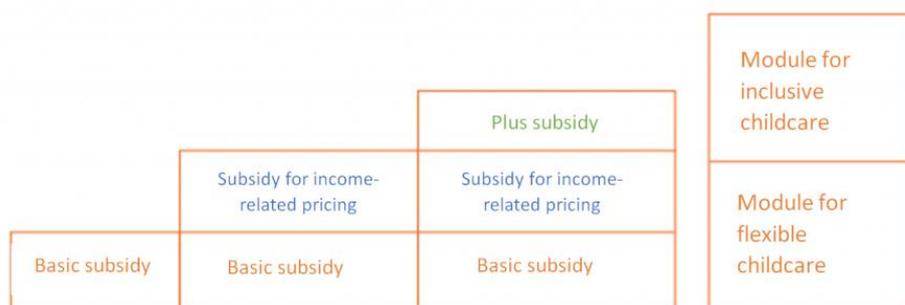
A license from child and family is not enough to get subsidized, it is merely a set of starting conditions. To get a basic subsidy, the facility needs to be open for 220 days, the nurses need to have a certain knowledge of Dutch and there needs to be a language policy to stimulate Dutch language in children, whilst ensuring an important place for the mother tongue of the children. The nurses need to be supported in this task (Eeckhout, 2014).

A second set of conditions is for those facilities with an income-related pricing policy and who apply certain priority rules for enrolment in the childcare facility. The amount each family pays not only depends on their income, it also depends on the number of hours per day the child attends the care facility (Levräu, et. al. 2014).

The third set of conditions focusses on vulnerable families and is called the 'plus' subsidy (Eeckhout, 2014). Facilities with 30% of children from target groups (e.g. poverty), that have specific services for these families (e.g. urgent need for childcare, respect for diversity,...) and that adjust their childcare to the needs of these target groups, can get this third degree of subsidies.

The gradually subsidy system is shaped as a staircase. This means a facility only can apply for the second degree of subsidies if they have a license from child and family and if they meet all the specifics for the basic subsidy. For the third degree, they need to have a license, the basic subsidy and meet every condition of the second degree.

The only two exceptions to this staircase system are modules for inclusive and flexible childcare. Inclusive childcare is a regular childcare that also cares for children with special needs. Flexible childcare means that the childcare facility either has a great flexibility to parents, for example childcare that isn't set on a specific day or set of days, or childcare at nights or weekends.



To encourage pedagogical quality in childcare, there is a **pedagogical framework for childcare facilities**. This pedagogical framework is a concise vision text on quality childcare and contains a best efforts obligation for childcare facilities (MeMoQ, 2014). This means that all childcare facilities have a commitment to work along the lines of the vision text and make efforts in this direction, but without the obligation to achieve results. The vision text describes what childcare means for children, for families and for society.

3.1. Qualification of nurses/childcare professionals in Flanders

Certification of the childcare workers is an important step to quality in care facilities. In 2011 the professional bachelor Early Childhood Education was founded according to the plans of the decree of 2014 to provide the sector with more professionals who are certified to manage day care settings or professional who can give pedagogical support in the sector. The decree focuses not only on the certification of managers in childcare facilities, but also on the childcare workers. In 2024 at the latest, everyone in day care settings has to have qualifications to work there.

Childcare workers in all facilities of family or group based childcare, need to have a vocational training (EQF 5). This vocational training can be attained in secondary education or adult training centers. In secondary school it means two years general vocational training with a focus on care and one year specific on childcare for children up to 12 years. The program in adult training centers contains 1.280 hours of training on a variety of subjects in the domain (Kind en Gezin, 2018)

Managers of childcare facilities up to 18 children need no more qualifications than childcare workers. Managers of care facilities with 19 children or more need a bachelor diploma (EQF 6) in a relevant domain (e.g. Early childhood education, nurse, teacher,...) (Kind en Gezin, 2018).

4. Spain

In Spain it remains relatively common for young children to be cared for by their extended family (often grandparents) – therefore we can see low rates of use of formal childcare, even compared to countries in the region.

Childhood education in Spain is provided to children from birth until they become 6 years of age. It is divided in two cycles:

- 1st one is from 16 weeks to 3 years of age.
- 2nd one is from 3 to 6 years of age. This cycle is free of charge.

Although this stage (both cycles) is not compulsory, currently almost 100% of children are attending the 2nd cycle.

There is a national law which establishes education structures. Each of the 17 Spanish regions and autonomous communities set up its education policy independently, but based on this national education law. Besides, schools have independence when it comes to organization and teaching techniques to develop and adapt the syllabus to the needs and characteristics of their children and their social and cultural environment.

The curriculum of the first cycle is not established at central level but determined by the Autonomous Communities for their respective regions. In the case of the second cycle, the Ministry of Education is responsible for setting the core curricula and defines the objectives, contents and evaluation criteria for the whole State, subsequently completed by the education authorities.

There are two types of schools in the Pre-Primary Education: public and private.

- Private schools must meet national regulations.
- Public schools belong to town halls or regional governments and can be of two types:
 - with direct management – which means that they are directly managed by town halls or regional governments.
 - schools managed by companies after winning a public tender for a given period of time.

For children in the first cycle (from 0 to 3 years) there are two types of facilities:

Children education centres: regularly accept children from 16-weeks to 3 years. These centres are regulated by each regional government with a law.

Play schools are not regulated by law. These facilities just need a municipal license. Children go there on a sporadic basis, for leisure purposes.

The proportion of children enrolled in this early stage, from 0 to 2 years of age, has significantly increased over the past ten years. The main reason of this increase is the current financial crisis in Spain, as now both parents have to work.

Class groups are normally created according to the year of birth in both cycles. Each group has a class teacher assigned, who, as far as possible, keeps the same group of pupils throughout the whole cycle.

The national government establishes a series of minimum educational requirements. Centres can use alternative methodologies, provided that they meet the standards of the official syllabus. In order to ensure that centres comply with the national regulations (ratios, required square metres, qualification of staff...), inspections are conducted in all centres.

4.1. Qualification of nurses/childcare professionals in Spain

There are three possible training paths to be qualified to work with children from 0 to 3 years of age.

1. Child education university degree, with which people can become teachers, specialized in Infant Education. It is a university career that is currently taught as a degree with a minimum of 240 credits. According to the regulations in Spain, all public and private centers must have at least one graduate teacher.
2. Advance training programme in education, with which people can become advanced technicians in children education. It is a training of 2000 hours and this degree is issued by the Educational Administration.
3. Professional certificate, which is equivalent to the advance training programme in education, but it is obtained through work experience.

Besides, all the staff must provide their criminal record certificate and their sexual offences certificate, as well as the food handler's card.

All the staff members should be qualified. All the centres must have at least one person with a child education university degree, who will be in charge of the direction of the centre.

The basic competences that the child education professional should acquire in their training should be, in summary, the following:

- Promote and facilitate learning in early childhood in the cognitive, emotional, psychomotor and volitional dimensions.
- Design and regulate learning spaces in contexts of diversity that meet the unique educational needs.
- Promote coexistence in the classroom and beyond and address the peaceful resolution of conflicts.
- Promote the autonomy and uniqueness of each student as factors of education of emotions, feelings and values in early childhood.
- Know the evolution of language in early childhood, know how to identify possible dysfunctions and ensure their correct evolution.

- Know the educational implications of information and communication technologies in early childhood.
- Know foundations of children's dietetics and hygiene. Know the psychological processes, learning and personality construction in early childhood.
- Know the organization of the schools of infant education.
- Act as counsellor for parents in relation to family education in the period 0-6 and master social skills in the treatment and relationship with the family of each student and with all families.
- Identify learning difficulties, cognitive dysfunctions and those related to attention.
- Know the language and literacy curriculum of this stage, as well as the theories about the acquisition and development of the corresponding learning.

5. Greece

Preschool care in Greece is offered both by the **Kindergartens** ran by the Ministry of Education, which cater for 4-6 year olds as well as through **Day Care Centers** which care for children 6 months up to the age of 5 and are run by the Municipalities, under the supervision of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The Ministry of Education exercises centralized control over state schools, by prescribing the curriculum, appointing staff and controlling funding. Private schools also fall under the mandate of the Ministry, which exercises supervisory control over them. All levels of education are catered for by both private and public schools. State-run schools and universities do not charge tuition fees.

Early childhood education, represented by Kindergarten programmes (Nipiagogeion), provide services for children 4 to 6 years of age. Since 2006 this has become compulsory for children ages 5 and 6. These settings, either in the private or the public sector, are supervised by the Ministry of Education and provide exclusively educational services based on a newly introduced national curriculum.

Early childhood education offered through the Day Care Nurseries caters for children from 6 months up to 5 years. The local municipalities are responsible for the running of the day care nurseries and there is no national curriculum in relation to the early years' education offered at the Day Care Nurseries, only some brief guidelines. The children can attend the Day Care Nurseries between 7.00 and 16.00.

While the Pre-School Curriculum for the Kindergartens under the Ministry of education is prepared by the Pedagogical Institute (Paedagogiko Institutouto) and manuals are available in order to carry out the educational task, there is no explicit curriculum in relation to the Day Care Nurseries. There are brief guidelines which refer to suggestions in relation to the children's care and daily schedule.

5.1. Qualification of nurses/childcare professionals in Greece

The preschool teachers employed at the Kindergartens under the Ministry of Education have completed a 4 year preschool education course at one of the Preschool Education University Departments. The **preschool educators** employed at the Day Care Nurseries ran by the Municipalities, under the Ministry of Internal affairs can be University graduates, but have mostly completed a 4 Year Preschool Education programme at the Preschool Education Departments of the Technological Educational Institutions.

The preschool teachers employed by the Ministry of education are offered regular Continuing Professional Development opportunities, some of which are compulsory. This is not the case for the educators employed by the Day Care Nurseries ran by the

Municipalities, where Continuing Professional Development opportunities are not centrally controlled and largely depend on the specific circumstances of each Municipality.

The educators employed at the Day Care Nurseries are mostly graduates of the 4 year preschool education programmes ran by the Technological Educational Institutions or graduates of the University Departments. Educators who have attended up to 2 year courses may be employed as assistants.

6. Sweden

In Sweden the parents have the right to leave their children at preschool from the year the child turns one year of age until the year it turns six. The children begin school in autumn the year they turn six when the compulsory school attendance begins. 83% of all children are enrolled in the preschool, that is about 480 000 children.

In Sweden there are both municipal and private preschools. All preschools charge the same fee and follow the same curriculum.

The municipal preschools are obliged to have opening-hours between 06.00 and 18.30, while the private ones choose their own opening-hours. There are also a few municipal preschools that are open round the clock.

Each preschool have children from one to six years of age. In what way they are divided into different departments is up to the head of the preschool. They can choose to have younger and older departments where the children are divided according to age or they can have all ages at the same department. In Sweden the average number of children in a group was in 2016 15.9 children but it varies depending on where you live. In the major cities there are often more children in a group while there are less in smaller places. The staff density was in 2016 5.2 children per staff. This means that there are three staff working in a group of 15 – 16 children. If the preschool have younger and older departments there are often fewer children in the younger groups and more in the older ones but the same amount of staff.

The cost of childcare in Sweden is set by law, the highest rate is for the 1st child and the rate is smaller for the 2nd and 3rd child. Child number four is free of charge. The fee is also limited by the maximum rate compared to the gross income of the family.

Child number one in a family costs 1382 SEK a month or a maximum of 3 % of the guardians' gross income. Child number two costs 922 SEK or a maximum of 2 % of the gross income. Child number three costs 451 SEK or a maximum of 1 % of the gross income. Child number four is free of charge.

Each preschool receives a subsidy for each child enrolled at the preschool. This also applies to the private preschools. The subsidy is being paid out by the municipality and is revised once a month. 9800 SEK/month is paid out for each 3-, 4- or 5-year-old. 11211 SEK/month for children who are one or two years old. This money should cover everything, the staff's salaries, premises, meals, cleaning staff, kitchen staff, water and electricity, further training, movables, toys and the expense for children with special needs.

6.1. Qualification of nurses/childcare professionals in Sweden

In Sweden there are two different trainings which qualify you to work at a preschool. The childminder training is three years at upper secondary school and one and half year at adult education. The training includes both theoretical and practical parts. The preschool teacher's

training is 210 points placed at a university or high school. It includes 20 weeks of practice at a preschool

According to law child minders and preschool teacher aren't obliged to further training but most employers provide further training for all employees. The focus varies but often the municipalities have the possibility of applying for state grants. These grants are earmarked and must be used to improve the staff's competence.

7. United Kingdom

The UK Government is committed to promoting the welfare and development of all our young children. Good quality care and education in the early years raise educational standards and opportunities, and enhance children's social development.

The Government is determined that all child care services, be they new or established, provide a secure and safe environment for children, not least so that parents can have confidence that their children are well looked after. (Full Day Care, National standards for under 8s day care and childminding, 2003) There are 14 national standards, each representing a particular quality outcome such as child protection and environment and a minimum standard of quality below which no provider may fall.

In March 2018, The Department of Education Issued a Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Early Education and Childcare, updating its full range guidance on government-funded early education and childcare for providers and local authorities, including the statutory guidance, the operational guidance, and the model agreement. (Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY), 2018)

The National Standards set up the provision of sessional care for children under the age of eight, i.e. children who attend day care for no more than five sessions a week, each session being less than a continuous period of four hours.

The standards aim to provide a stimulating and safe environment for children's welfare and development and represent a baseline of quality below which providers should not fall. There are 14 national standards, each covering a separate area with supporting criteria, including: the suitability of carers and the qualifications/experience needed; the quality of the premises, equipment and facilities; the security of the children; their health and dietary requirements; and the provision for children with special educational needs or disabilities.

All 3 to 4-year-olds in England can get 570 hours of free early education or childcare per year. This is usually taken as 15 hours each week for 38 weeks of the year. Some 2-year-olds are also eligible. Parents can start claiming free childcare after their child turns 3. The date you can claim will depend on when their birthday is.

The free early education and childcare can be at: all types of nurseries and nursery classes playgroups and pre-school childminders Sure Start Children's Centres. Parents can't continue to claim free childcare once their child starts reception class in a state school.

Some 2-year-olds in England can get free early education and child care. It is the case if parents fulfil some criteria, for example are getting income support or job seeker's allowance and in other cases which make them eligible. **Children are also entitled to a place if they're looked after by a local council or in some other special cases.**

7.1. Qualification of nurses/childcare professionals in the UK

Until 2012 The British Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC), a non-departmental public body set up in 2005 to support the implementation of the Government's "Every Child Matters" strategy, was responsible for ensuring that people working with children had the appropriate skills. It was closed in 2012 (Children's Workforce Development Council, 2012). Among other things, the CWDC was responsible for introducing Early Years Professional Status as part of the Government's aim to professionalize the early years' workforce. The CWDC was assessing many of these qualifications to determine which can be considered 'full and relevant', and therefore can count towards the minimum ratio of qualified staff in any group setting. CWDC passed to the Department for Education's (DfE) Teaching Agency. Since May 2012, DfE develops the British Childcare and Learning Standards.

Generally, there are 5 types of qualifications in childcare in the UK: CACHE, NVQ, BTEC, City & Guilds and Montessori.

- **CACHE** is a specialist body that develops courses and qualifications in childcare. Their courses range from entry level to advanced qualifications for sector professionals.
- **NVQ** stands for National Vocational Qualification which allows people in the work place with no formal qualification the opportunity to get a recognised qualification. You'll learn practical, work-related tasks designed to help you develop the skills and knowledge to do your job effectively.
- BTEC are work related qualifications that provide a more practical, real-world approach to learning.
- **City & Guilds** create relevant childcare qualifications that help learners gain the skills employers value.
- The **Montessori** Method is an internationally renowned qualification. It is a method used that gives individual care and attention to a child's needs allowing the child to fulfil their highest potential spiritually, emotionally, physically, and intellectually.

Different qualifications are grouped together into various levels.

- **Entry Level Qualifications:** Are for beginners and provides the basics. If you don't have any prior experience, and you don't feel confident about your abilities, then this level could be a good place to start. You will gain the basics required in working with children, however at this level you will not have the ability to work in a specific job role. Entry levels will provide a step towards further education and training.
- **Level 1 Qualifications:** Introductory qualifications that are ideal for those new to the industry. They cover basic tasks and knowledge. At this level you will gain relevant knowledge and skills to complete routine tasks under supervision.

- **Level 2 Qualifications:** Are slightly more advanced and need learners to have some knowledge of the subject area. This level will provide you with a good knowledge and understanding and the ability to perform various tasks with some direction and guidance in various settings under supervision. **Level 2** qualifications will provide you with the knowledge and skills you need for the following job roles, where you will be working under supervision (UK Government Guide, Department for Education, 2018):
 - Au Pair
 - Babysitter
 - Crèche Assistant
 - Mothers/Fathers Help
 - Nursery Assistant
 - Playgroup Assistant
 - Pre-school Assistant
 - Teacher Assistant
- **Level 3 Qualifications:** Cover more complex tasks and begin to develop learners' supervisory skills. Qualifications are designed to provide you with the knowledge required to be able to complete tasks and deal with fairly complex problems. This is an appropriate level for people who want to go to university, work independently in various settings, or supervise and train others. **Level 3 qualifications** are suitable for workers who will be working unsupervised in the following job roles:
 - Childminder
 - Maternity Nurse
 - Nanny
 - Nursery Nurse
 - Nursery Room Leader
 - Pre-school Leader
 - Senior Playworker
 - Teacher Assistant
- **Level 4 Qualifications:** Require learners to have specialist or technical expertise. Qualifications will provide you with the ability to identify and use relevant methods and skills in complex and non-routine situations. This level is for those working in management and other professional roles. **Level 4 qualifications** are for people looking to work in the following job roles:
 - Nursery Deputy Manager
 - Nursery Manager
- **Level 5 Qualifications:** Require learners to have a grasp of the most complex principles. They're designed for those who are expected to manage people and resources.
- **Level 6 Qualifications:** Are aimed at senior managers.

- **Level 7 Qualifications:** For those seeking continuous professional development.

There are no set entry requirements for nursery assistants. Employers expect a good level of literacy and numeracy and may ask for GCSEs or equivalent qualifications. Employers may ask for a childcare qualification such as NVQ or BTEC. They usually expect some experience of childcare, which could be voluntary or paid, including experience within the family or babysitting. Apprenticeships in a childcare related role are sometimes available. Nursery nurses have qualifications in childcare or early years.

This could be, for example

- CACHE Level 3 Diploma in Child Care and Education
- BTEC National Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development
- NVQ Level 3 in Children's Care, Learning and Development

To get onto a childcare course you need GCSEs, including English and math, or equivalent qualifications.

The UK Department for Education's Early Years Qualifications list sets out the qualifications needed at each level of childcare. Employers may also ask for qualifications in first aid or food hygiene.

8. References

- Eurostat. Children in formal childcare or education by age group and duration - % over the population of each age group - EU-SILC survey. Retrieved October 26, 2018, from <https://goo.gl/hPpsPw>
- Eurostat. Employment rate of adults by sex, age groups, educational attainment level, number of children and age of youngest child. Retrieved October 26, 2018, from http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfst_hheredch
- Eurostat. Gender employment gap. Retrieved October 26, 2018, from ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tesem060&plugin=1
- European Commission, 2014. Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe. 2014 Edition. Eurydice and Eurostat Report. Retrieved October 26, 2018, from www.cesifo-group.de/ifoHome/facts/DICE/Social-Policy/Family/Childcare/Staff-child-ratio-maximum-group-size/fileBinary/Staff-child-ratio-maximum-group-size.xls
- Plantenga, J., Remery, C., Meulders, D., & Kanjuo-Mrčela, A. (2009). *The provision of childcare services: A comparative review of 30 European countries*. Retrieved October 26, 2018, from ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=545&furtherNews=yes
- Eeckhout, K. (2014, Februari). Trappen en modules. De nieuwe subsidieregels. *Kiddo*, pp. 20-22.
- MeMoQ. (2014). *A pedagogical Framework for childcare for babies and toddlers*. Kind & Gezin, Brussels
- Janta, B., & Stewart, K. (2018). *Paternity and parental leave policies across the European Union. Assessment of current provision*. Retrieved October 26, 2018, from ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8120&furtherPubs=yes
- Jurviste, U., Prpic, M., & Sabbati, G. (n.d.). *Maternity and paternity leave in the EU*. Retrieved October 26, 2018, from [www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2016/593543/EPRS_ATA\(2016\)593543_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2016/593543/EPRS_ATA(2016)593543_EN.pdf)
- Kind en Gezin. (2018). kwalificaties en attesten in de kinderopvang. Retrieved on 30th of May 2018, of <https://www.kindengezin.be/kinderopvang/sector-babys-en-peuters/personen-in-de-opvang/opleiding-en-vorming/>
- Levrau, F., Neels, K., Loos, J., & De Valk, H. A. G. (2014). *Family Policies: Belgium*. Retrieved on 28th of March 2018, of <https://www.perfar.eu/policy/family-children/belgium>
- OECD Publishing. (2002). *OECD Employment Outlook 2002*. Retrieved October 26, 2018, from www.unesco.org/ulis/cgi-bin/ulis.pl?catno=129696&set=005BD2D7E7_0_438&gp=1&lin=1&ll=1

Full Day Care, National standards for under 8s day care and childminding, Document setting out UK Government standards for all child care services (2003) – Retrieved on September 5th 2018 from <https://x.iriss.org.uk/content/full-day-care-national-standards-under-8s-day-care-and-childminding>

Report of Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (2018) – Retrieved on September 23rd 2018 from <https://www.pacey.org.uk/news-and-views/news/archive/2018-news/june-2018/updated-guidance-on-early-education-and-childcare/>

Children's Workforce Development Council (2012). Retrieved on September 30th 2018 from <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/childrens-workforce-development-council>

British Department for Education (2018), Retrieved on September 3rd 2018 from <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>

Early education and childcare, Statutory Guidelines (2012, with updates in 2016 and 2018) Retrieved on September 27th 2018 from <https://www.gov.uk/topic/schools-colleges-childrens-services/early-years>

UK Government Guide, Department for Education (2018), Retrieved on 1st of October 2018 from <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/early-years-qualifications-finder> Published 25 April 2014