

# Early childhood education and care curricula in Europe 2022/2023

## Eurydice – Structural indicators

Structural indicators for monitoring education and training systems in Europe – 2023

Children's development and learning is central to the quality of ECEC provision. At the national level, policymakers seek to influence the quality of educational processes taking place in ECEC settings by issuing a shared framework of guiding principles or a curriculum. The content of these guidelines varies, but they generally include developmental or learning goals and age-appropriate activities, sometimes in the form of a standard curriculum. They are intended to help settings improve the quality of care and learning and ensure that high standards are found across all ECEC services.

Some countries provide one document that covers the entire phase of ECEC, but usually different aspects of educational guidelines are covered in separate publications. Regulations on ECEC content and teaching approaches may take the form of an education programme, a reference framework of skills, care and education plans, educational standards and criteria for developing local curricula or practical guidelines for ECEC practitioners. These documents may be issued by the same or several different public authorities. The complete list of documents that form ECEC educational guidelines in European countries is provided in Table below (please click to activate the links to the full documents).

The analysis reveals that top-level authorities in all European countries have issued official guidelines to ensure that settings have an intentional educational component. However, in around a quarter of European education systems, curricula apply only to settings for children aged 3 and over (see the Figure). In these countries, the split between 'childcare' and 'pre-primary education' remains. The educational framework is set in separate documents for younger and older children and

issued by different authorities in Belgium (French and Flemish Communities), France, Luxembourg, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Montenegro and Türkiye.

The status of the top-level educational guidelines for ECEC settings varies between countries and, in a few cases, within countries according to age ranges. Some countries have issued several documents with different statuses. In these cases, main legal documents or core curricula are binding, but additional support documents may serve as recommendations.

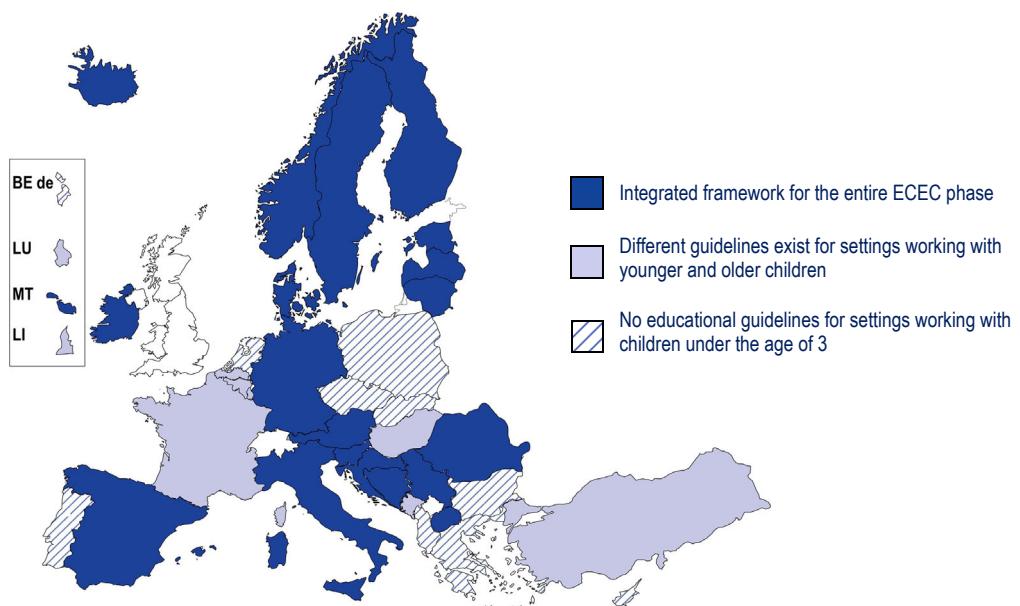
In countries with integrated curricula for the entire ECEC phase, the documents are usually binding. The only exception is Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the guidelines for the implementation of common core curricula are non-binding across the whole ECEC phase.

Increasingly, ECEC systems are introducing learning components from the earliest age. During the last decade, educational guidelines have been introduced for ECEC settings with younger children in Belgium (Flemish Community), France, Italy, Luxembourg and Liechtenstein. Two countries have integrated the educational programme for settings working with younger and older children.

**Romania** adopted a new curriculum in 2019 that proposes a unitary approach to early education and care from birth to age 6, as there were previously different guidelines for each group.

In **Italy**, educational guidelines for the integrated system (for children aged 0–6 years) were issued at the end of 2021.

**Figure 1: Early childhood education and care curricula (educational guidelines), 2022/2023**



Source: Eurydice.

Many countries changed their ECEC educational guidelines or introduced new areas of instruction. The following is a summary of the changes since 2020.

In 2020, **Belgium (French Community)** introduced a revised reference framework on the competences to be developed during the 3 years of pre-primary education.

In **Czechia**, the provision of language support to children with insufficient knowledge of the Czech language was added to the framework educational programme for pre-primary education as of September 2021.

In 2020, **Denmark** issued a new strengthened pedagogical curriculum for the whole ECEC phase.

In **Germany**, the common education framework of the *Länder* for the whole phase of ECEC was revised in 2022.

In **Greece**, creative engagement in English language and soft skills workshops have been included in the preschool curriculum (children aged 4 and over) from 2020/2021. A new national curriculum framework is being launched. During the 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 school years, the Curriculum for Preschool Education was piloted in all experimental preschools in the country, in conjunction with the current curricula.

In **Spain**, the two main pieces of legislation on the pedagogical principles and teaching requirements in ECEC were updated in 2020 and 2022 respectively. Royal Decree 95/2022, which

establishes the organisation and minimum contents of ECEC, now covers the entire phase from 0 to 6 years.

In **France**, new educational guidelines apply since 2020 for ISCED level 020 settings (targeting children aged 3 and over). Moreover, the areas of language and mathematical skills have each been strengthened (June 2021) in the pre-primary curriculum.

In **Cyprus**, the pre-primary education curriculum was recently restructured in 2020, with a greater focus on skills and support to the language development of young children.

**Lithuania** updated the curriculum for the last year of pre-primary education in 2022.

In 2022, **Slovenia** started the curriculum revision process, adopting the [guiding principles](#).

**Slovakia** introduced a consolidated version of the educational programme for pre-primary education in 2022.

In **Finland**, the 2022 update of the core curriculum for ECEC mainly addressed support to children.

In **Sweden**, the curricula applying to the different phases of ECEC were revised either in 2018 or in 2022.

In **Liechtenstein** and **Montenegro**, the curriculum for ECEC for older children was updated in 2021 and 2023 respectively.

## Definitions

In this analysis, **early childhood education and care (ECEC)** refers to provision for children from birth through to compulsory primary education that falls within a national regulatory framework, i.e. which must comply with a set of rules, minimum standards and/or undergo accreditation procedures.

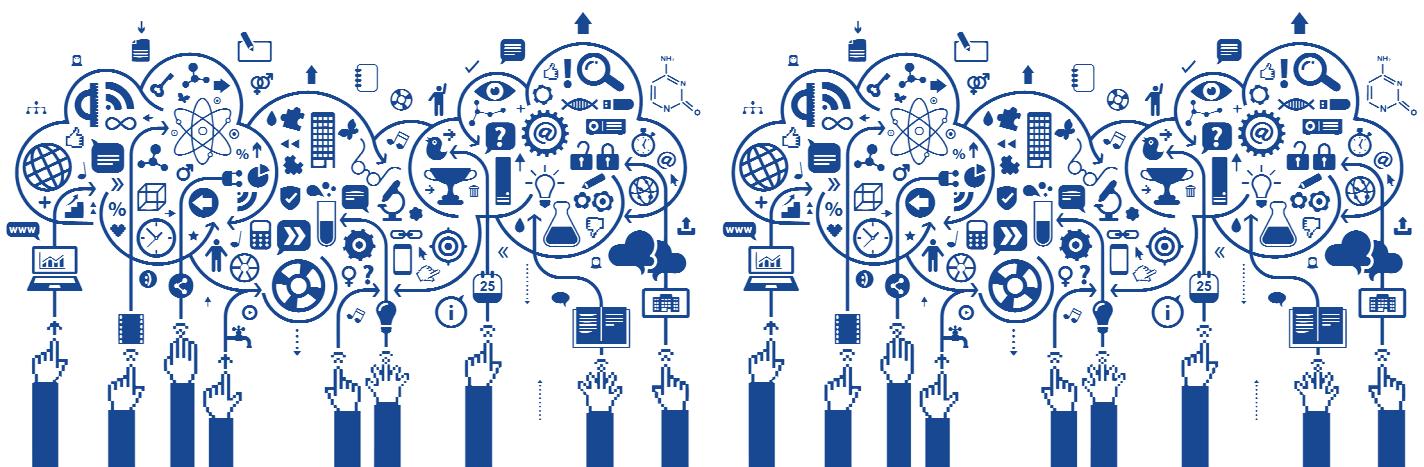
The definition goes beyond the education programmes classified as International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) level 0 (early childhood education), as it includes all registered and regulated ECEC services.

This fact-sheet, however, covers only centre-based ECEC. Home-based ECEC (childminding service or family daycare) that is usually delivered in a provider's home or other home-like places is not part of the scope. Individual care which occurs in the child's own home (e.g. live-in and live-out nannies and babysitters, care of relatives) is also not included.

Many European countries structure ECEC services according to the age of the children. Usually, the transition from the first phase to the second takes place when children are around 3 years old. In order to reflect the different regulations, a distinction is often made between the provision for children under 3 years old and for children of 3 years and over. However, it is important to keep in mind that in some countries the transition can be as early as 2.5 years (e.g. Belgium (French and Flemish Communities) or as late as 4 years of age (e.g. Greece, the Netherlands, Liechtenstein).

**Educational guidelines (curriculum):** official documents issued to steer or guide ECEC providers in the content of and approach to children's care and learning. They may include main principles, values, guidelines, developmental and learning goals or learning areas, educational/pedagogical approaches, learning materials and assessment methods. Such documents may be national curriculum framework or criteria for developing local curricula; they might be expressed as practical guidelines for ECEC practitioners, be incorporated into legislation as part of an ECEC programme, published as a reference framework of educational/care standards, care and education plans, etc. Depending on how formal or binding they are, steering documents allow varying degrees of flexibility in the way they are applied in ECEC settings. There may be more than one document applicable to ECEC within a country, but they all contribute to establishing the fundamental framework in which ECEC staff are required (or advised, where mandatory requirements do not exist) to develop their own practice to meet children's developmental needs.

**Pre-primary classes:** a specific compulsory ECEC phase during the last 1–2 years of ISCED 020, which provides an educational programme that is distinct from the main ISCED 020 programme. Pre-primary classes may be organised within centre-based ECEC settings or in primary schools.



Country	Table 1: Top-level educational guidelines, 2022/2023	Children < 3 years	Children ≥ 3 years	Pre-primary classes
	● Binding    ○ Non-binding <span style="background-color: #d9e1f2; border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">No pre-primary classes</span>			
BE fr	Quality Code for ECEC Centres ( <a href="#">Code de Qualité de l'Accueil</a> )	●		
	Psycho-pedagogical guide for quality childcare - Minding very young children, go for quality ( <a href="#">Référentiel psycho-pédagogique pour des milieux d'accueil de qualité - Accueillir les tout petits, oser la qualité</a> )	○		
	Guidelines for quality practices in ECEC (Meeting the families, Meeting the children, Supporting professionals) ( <a href="#">Repères pour des pratiques d'accueil de qualité (À la rencontre des familles, À la rencontre des enfants, Soutien à l'activité des professionnels)</a> )	○		
	Initial Skills Reference Guide ( <a href="#">Référentiel des compétences initiales</a> )		●	
BE de	Activity plan for pre-primary education ( <a href="#">Aktivitätenplan für den Kindergarten</a> )		●	
	Decree of 26 April 1999 on regular basic education ( <a href="#">26. April 1999 - Dekret über das Regelgrundschulwesen</a> )		●	
BE nl	A pedagogical framework for childcare for babies and toddlers ( <a href="#">Een pedagogisch raamwerk voor de kinderopvang van baby's en peuters</a> )	○		
	Developmental aims of pre-primary education ( <a href="#">Ontwikkelingsdoelen kleuteronderwijs</a> )		●	
	Decree on elementary education ( <a href="#">Decreet basisonderwijs</a> )		●	
BG	Pre-school and School Education Act ( <a href="#">Закон за предучилищното и училищното образование</a> )			●
	Regulation N 5 for pre-school education ( <a href="#">Наредба № 5 от 3 юни 2016 г. за предучилищното образование</a> )			●
CZ	Framework Educational Programme for Pre-primary Education ( <a href="#">Rámcový vzdělávací program pro předškolní vzdělávání</a> )		●	
DK	Executive Order on pedagogical objectives and content in six curriculum themes ( <a href="#">Bekendtgørelse om pædagogiske mål og indhold i seks læreplanstemaer</a> )	●		
	The Act on Early Childhood Education and Care ( <a href="#">Bekendtgørelse af lov om dag-, fritids- og klubtilbud m.v. til børn og unge (dagtilbudsloven)</a> )	●		
	The strengthened pedagogical curriculum - Framework and content ( <a href="#">Den styrkede pædagogiske læreplan Rammer og indhold</a> )	●		
DE	Common Framework of the Federal States for Early Education in Child Care Centres ( <a href="#">Gemeinsamer Rahmen der Länder für die frühe Bildung in Kindertageseinrichtungen</a> )	●		
EE	The national curriculum of preschool institutions ( <a href="#">Koolieelse lasteausatuse riiklik õppekava</a> )	●		
IE	<a href="#">Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. National Council for Curriculum and Assessment</a>	●		
EL	A cross-thematic curriculum framework for compulsory education ( <a href="#">διαθεματικό ενιαίο πλαίσιο προγραμμάτων σπουδών (δ.ε.π.π.σ.)</a> )		●	
	Pre-school Education Teachers' Guide ( <a href="#">Οδηγός Νηπιαγωγού</a> )		●	
	Curriculum for Pre-school Education ( <a href="#">Προγραμμα σπουδών για την Προσχολική Εκπαίδευση</a> )		●	
	Skills labs ( <a href="#">Εργαστήρια Δεξιοτήτων</a> )		●	
ES	Organic Law 3/2020, of 29 December, which modifies Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education ( <a href="#">Ley Orgánica 3/2020, de 29 de diciembre, por la que se modifica la Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de Educación.</a> )	●		
	Royal Decree 95/2022, of 1 February, which establishes the organisation and minimum teaching of Early Childhood Education ( <a href="#">Real Decreto 95/2022, de 1 de febrero, por el que se establece la ordenación y las enseñanzas mínimas de la Educación Infantil.</a> )	●		
FR	National Charter for the care of young children ( <a href="#">Charte nationale pour l'accueil du jeune enfant</a> )	○		
	Pre-primary education curriculum ( <a href="#">Programme d'enseignement de l'école maternelle</a> )		●	
HR	National Curriculum for Early Childhood and Preschool Education ( <a href="#">Nacionalni kurikulum za rani i predškolski odgoj i obrazovanje</a> )		●	
IT	National guidelines for ECEC under 3 ( <a href="#">Orientamenti nazionali per i servizi educativi per l'infanzia</a> )	●		
	Educational guidelines for the integrated system 0-6 ( <a href="#">Linee pedagogiche per il sistema integrato zerosei</a> )		●	
	National guidelines for the curriculum of pre-primary education and for the first cycle of education ( <a href="#">Indicazioni nazionali per il curricolo della scuola dell'infanzia e del primo ciclo d'istruzione</a> )		●	
	National guidelines and new scenarios ( <a href="#">Indicazioni nazionali e nuovi scenari</a> )		●	

Country	Table 1: Top-level educational guidelines, 2022/2023	Children < 3 years	Children ≥ 3 years	Pre-primary classes
	● Binding    ○ Non-binding <span style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 2px 10px; border-radius: 5px;"></span> No pre-primary classes			
CY	Preschool Education Curriculum ( <a href="#">Αναλυτικό πρόγραμμα προσχολικής εκπαίδευσης</a> )			●
LV	Regulations regarding the state guidelines for pre-school education and the model pre-school education programmes ( <a href="#">Noteikumi par valsts pirmsskolas izglītības vadlīnijām un pirmsskolas izglītības programmu paraugiem</a> )			●
LT	Outline of Criteria for Preschool Education Curricula ( <a href="#">Išimokyklinio ugdymo programų kriterijų aprašas</a> )			●
	Methodological recommendations for development of preschool curriculum ( <a href="#">Metodinės rekomendacijos išimokyklinio ugdymo programai rengti</a> )			○
	A description of the achievements of ECEC children ( <a href="#">Išimokyklinio amžiaus vaikų pasiekimų aprašas</a> )			○
	General Curriculum for pre-primary education ( <a href="#">Priešmokyklinio ugdymo bendroji programa</a> )			●
LU	Curriculum Framework for Non-formal Education for Children and Youth ( <a href="#">Cadre de référence sur l'éducation non formelle des enfants et des jeunes</a> )	●		
	Framework plan for pre-school education (Cycle 1 – first year) ( <a href="#">Plan Cadre pour l'éducation précoce</a> )		●	
	Study Plan for Fundamental Education (Cycles 1 (2nd and 3rd years) to 4) ( <a href="#">Plan d'études pour l'école fondamentale</a> )			●
HU	National core programme of education and care in crèches ( <a href="#">A bőlcsođei nevelés-gondozás országos alapprogramja</a> )	●		
	National Core Programme of Kindergarten Education ( <a href="#">Az óvodai nevelés országos alapprogramja</a> )		●	
MT	<a href="#">National Standards, Early Childhood Education and Care Services</a>	●		
	<a href="#">A National Curriculum Framework for All 2012</a>		●	
	<a href="#">Learning Outcomes Framework Levels 1 to 4</a>		●	
	<a href="#">Early Childhood Education and Care (0–7 years) – national policy framework for Malta and Gozo</a>	●		
	<a href="#">Educators' Guide for Pedagogy and Assessment: Using a Learning Outcomes Approach</a>		●	
NL	<a href="#">Core objectives for primary education (Kerndoelen primair onderwijs 2006)</a>		●	
AT	Statewide Framework Curriculum for ECEC Services in Austria ( <a href="#">Bundesländerübergreifender BildungsRahmenPlan für elementare Bildungseinrichtungen in Österreich</a> )	●		
	Live Values, Develop Values – Development of values in early childhood ( <a href="#">Werte leben, Werte bilden: Wertebildung in der frühen Kindheit</a> )	●		
	Module for the last year in early childhood services ( <a href="#">Modul für das letzte Jahr in elementaren Bildungseinrichtungen</a> )			●
	Language promotion for the transition from kindergarten to primary school ( <a href="#">Sprachliche Förderung am Übergang vom Kindergarten in die Grundschule</a> )			●
PL	Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 14 February 2017 on core curricula for pre-school education and core curricula for general education for primary school including for pupils with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities, general education for stage I sectoral vocational school, general education for special school preparing for employment and general education for post-secondary schools ( <a href="#">Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 14 lutego 2017 r. w sprawie podstawy programowej wychowania przedszkolnego oraz podstawy programowej kształcenia ogólnego dla szkoły podstawowej, w tym dla uczniów z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną w stopniu umiarkowanym lub znacznym, kształcenia ogólnego dla branżowej szkoły I stopnia, kształcenia ogólnego dla szkoły specjalnej przysposabiającej do pracy oraz kształcenia ogólnego dla szkoły policealnej</a> )		●	
PT	Curricular Guidelines for Preschool Education ( <a href="#">Orientações Curriculares para a Educação Pré-Escolar</a> )		●	
RO	Curriculum for early childhood education for children from birth to 6 years of age ( <a href="#">Curriculum pentru educatia timpurie - copii de la nastere la 6 ani</a> )	●		

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SI	<a href="#">Kindergarten Curriculum (<i>Kurikulum za vrtce</i>)</a>	●		
	Supplement to the Kindergarten Curriculum for Roma children ( <a href="#">Dodatek h Kurikulu za vrtce za otroke Romovh</a> )	●		
	Supplement to the Curriculum for working in the bilingual areas ( <a href="#">Dodatek h Kurikulu za delo na dvojezičnih področjih</a> )	●		
	Instructions regarding the Kindergarten Curriculum with adapted implementation and additional professional support for SEN children ( <a href="#">Navodila h Kurikulu za vrtce v programih s prilagojenim izvajanjem in dodatno strokovno pomočjo za otroke s posebnimi potrebami</a> )	●		
	Guidelines for the counselling service in kindergarten ( <a href="#">Programske smernice za svetovalno službo v vrtcu</a> )	●		
	Guidelines for the integration of immigrant children in kindergartens and schools ( <a href="#">Smernice za vključevanje otrok priseljencev v vrtce in šole</a> )	●		
SK	State Educational Programme for Pre-primary Education in Kindergarten: Consolidated version ( <a href="#">Štátny vzdeláváci program pre predprimárne vzdelávanie v materských školách - konsolidované znenie</a> )		●	
FI	<a href="#">National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care 2022 (<i>Varhaiskasvatussuunnitelman perusteet 2022</i>)</a>		●	
	<a href="#">National Core Curriculum for Pre-Primary Education 2014 (<i>Esiopetuksen opetus suunnitelman perusteet 2014</i>)</a>			●
SE	<a href="#">Education Act (<i>Skollag (2010:800)</i>)</a>		●	
	<a href="#">Curriculum for the pre-school (<i>Läroplan för förskolan, Lpfö 18</i>)</a>	●		
	<a href="#">Curriculum for the elementary school, pre-school class and after-school centres (<i>Läroplan för grundskolan, förskoleklassen och fritidshemmet, Lgr22</i>)</a>			●
AL	<a href="#">Curriculum Framework for Preschool Education (<i>Korniza Kurrikulare e Arsimit Parashkollar</i>)</a>		●	
BA	<a href="#">Guidelines for the implementation of common core curricula and defined learning outcomes (<i>Smejernice za implementaciju zajedničke jezgre nastavnih planova li programa i definirano na ishodima učenja</i>)</a>		○	
IS	<a href="#">The Icelandic national curriculum guide for pre-schools (<i>Aðalnámskrá leikskóla</i>)</a>	●		
LI	Guidelines of the Office for social affairs for Approval and Quality assurance of extra-familial child care services ( <a href="#">Richtlinien des Amtes für Soziale Dienste für die Bewilligung und Aufsicht in der ausserhäuslichen Betreuung von Kindern</a> )	●		
	<a href="#">National Curriculum (<i>Liechtensteiner Lehrplan</i>)</a>		●	
ME	Programme of care and educational work with children under the age of 3 years ( <a href="#">Program njege i vaspitno-obrazovnog rada sa djecom uzrasta do 3 godine</a> )	●		
	Programme for activity areas in preschool education (3–6-years-old) ( <a href="#">Program za područja aktivnosti u predškolskom vaspitanju i obrazovanju (od 3 do 6 godina)</a> )		●	
MK	Standards for early learning development ( <a href="#">Ран детски развој - Стандарди за рано учење и развој кај деца од 0 до 6 години</a> )	●		
	Curriculum for early learning and development ( <a href="#">Програма за рано учење и развој</a> )	●		
NO	<a href="#">Framework Plan for Kindergartens (<i>Rammeplan for barnehage</i>)</a>	●		
RS	<a href="#">Fundamentals of the Preschool Education Programme (<i>Osnove programa predškolskog vaspitanja i obrazovanja</i>)</a>		●	
TR	Educational programme for children aged 0–36 months ( <a href="#">0-36 Aylık Çocuklar İçin Eğitim Program Kullanım Kılavuzu</a> )	○		
	Pre-school education programme ( <a href="#">Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programı</a> )		●	

### Country notes

**Ireland:** the curriculum framework designed for the whole ECEC phase (Aistear) is not legally mandated but is binding for all centre-based settings under contractual agreement for receipt of public funding from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

**Greece:** the Curriculum for Pre-school Education was piloted in 2022/2023. It will be implemented in all kindergartens from 2023/2024.

**Netherlands:** there are no national curricula for ECEC for children until the age of 4 years. However, in order to be able to offer *voorschoolse educatie* (subsidised-based provision targeting disadvantaged children) for that age range (2.5 to 4 years), centre-based settings must apply an education programme that meet legal requirements.

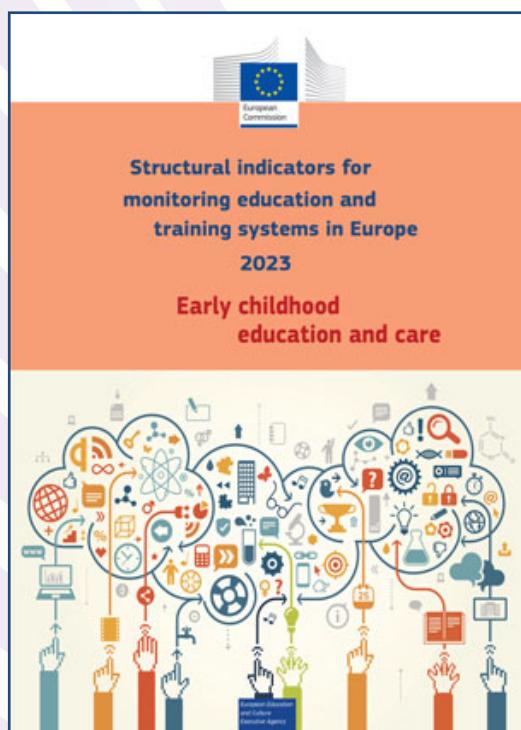
**Finland:** the early education centres that participate in the trial (2021–2024) to extend the pre-primary education programme to 2 years use a separate pilot curriculum.



## Early childhood education and care curricula in Europe – 2022/2023

This fact sheet explains the coverage of early childhood education and care (ECEC) curricula in Europe. It lists the top-level documents that contain educational guidelines for all EU Member States, as well as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Türkiye.

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More information on ECEC systems in Europe is available in the full report:  
[Structural indicators for monitoring education and training systems in Europe – 2023](#)

Please also consult the [national descriptions](#) of each European education system.

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The Eurydice Network's task is to understand and explain how Europe's different education systems are organised and how they work. The network provides descriptions of national education systems, comparative studies devoted to specific topics, indicators and statistics. All Eurydice publications are available free of charge on the Eurydice website or in print upon request. Through its work, Eurydice aims to promote understanding, cooperation, trust and mobility at European and international levels. The network consists of national units located in European countries and is co-ordinated by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).

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