CoRe

Competence Requirements in Early Childhood Education and Care

A Study for the European Commission Directorate-General for Education and Culture

CoRe

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CORE

Competence Requirements
in Early Childhood Education and Care

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Research Documents

University of East London, Cass School of Education
and
University of Ghent, Department for Social Welfare Studies

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1   Introduction

There is a broad consensus among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers that the quality of early childhood services – and ultimately the outcomes for children and families – depends on well-educated, experienced and 'competent' staff. But what exactly makes a competent early childhood practitioner? How can *competence* be understood, and its development supported, in the highly complex and demanding field of working professionally with young children, families and communities? What approaches do different countries take, and what lessons can be learnt from practices developed by practitioners, training institutions and policymakers across Europe?

The 'Study on competence requirements in early childhood education and care' (CoRe) explored conceptualisations of 'competence' and professionalism in early childhood practice, and identified systemic conditions for developing, supporting and maintaining competence at all layers of the early childhood system. This study is a European research project jointly conducted by the University of East London (UEL) and the University of Ghent (UGent). The European Commission Directorate-General for Education and Culture commissioned the research, which was conducted between January 2010 and May 2011.

For each project phase (literature review, survey, case studies), a detailed research document was produced and discussed with project participants, an expert advisory team and the Directorate-General for Education and Culture. Moreover, we asked Pamela Oberhuemer (SEEPRO, Staatsinstitut für Frühpädagogik, Munich) to write a concise report that linked the relevant findings of the SEEPRO research project regarding formal training requirements for ECEC staff to the CoRe study. These original research documents are compiled in this document. We recommend reading them in addition to the final report: Urban, M., Vandenbroeck, M., Peeters, J., Lazzari, A., Van Laere, K. (2011) *CoRe. Competence requirements in Early Childhood Education and Care.* Final report commissioned by the European Commission, DG Education and Culture. This final report summarises the key concepts, key findings and policy recommendations of the project.

The CoRe research team at London and Ghent was supported by an international expert advisory team and collaborated closely with three key European and international professional networks: *Diversity in Early Childhood Education and Training* (DECET), *International Step by Step Association* (ISSA) and *Children in Europe* (CiE). These networks represent the field of ECEC in all EU27 / EFTA-ETA / states and candidate countries. In addition, a fourth international professional network (*Education International*) has shared expertise with the project, bringing in its strong workforce and teaching union perspective. Locally-based but internationally renowned researchers contributed hugely to the project by providing critical insights into the policies of their countries and through case studies of interesting practices situated in different European locations.

The aim of CoRe is to provide policy-relevant information, advice and case studies on the competences required for the ECEC workforce and on how to support competence development from a systemic perspective. In order to achieve its aims, CoRe has conducted original research, reviewed previous work and international literature, and consulted with experts in the field over a period of 15 months.

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The CoRe project could count on an international expert advisory board, whose members shared with us their experience from landmark international studies (Starting Strong, SEEPRO, Care Work in Europe) and helped orient our discussion. The board consisted of Pamela Oberhuemer (SEEPRO, Staatsinstitut für Frühpädagogik, Munich), Dr Claire Cameron (Care Work in Europe, Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London), Dr John Bennett (Author of Starting Strong I + II, OECD, 2001,2006; Caring and Learning together, UNESCO, 2010; Paris, France) and Prof. Linda Miller (Open University, Milton Keynes, United Kingdom, editor of several books on professionalism in ECEC).

Representatives of international professional networks (DECET, ISSA, CiE, Education International) made sure our discussions, while reaching a necessarily critical level, were always grounded in real-life experiences of organisations and professionals working towards achieving change on the local level: Ana del Barrio Saiz (DECET), Anke van Keulen (DECET), Carmen Anghelescu (ISSA), Colette Murray (DECET), Dr Dawn Tankersly (ISSA), Dennis Sinyolo (Education International), Mihaela Ionescu (ISSA), Myriam Mony (DECET), Nives Milinovic (ISSA / Children in Europe), Regina Sabaliauskiene (ISSA), Dr Tatjana Vonta (ISSA), Teresa Ogrodzinska (Children in Europe) and Stig Lund (Children in Europe).

Researchers conducting the case studies provided inspiring valuable 'practice-based evidence' (Urban, 2010) for policymakers and researchers in Europe: Dr Claire Cameron (Care Work in Europe, Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London), Fanika Balič (Vrtec Pobrežje Maribor, Slovenia), Jerneja Jager (Educational Research Institute, Slovenia), Jytte Juul Jensen (College of Pedagogy Århus, Denmark), Prof. Linda Miller (Open University, Milton Keynes, United Kingdom), Mariacristina Picchio (ISTC-CNR, Rome), Marie Paule Thollon Behar (Ecole Rockefeller de Lyon - Université Lumière Lyon 2, France), Monika Rosciszewska Wozniak (Comenius Foundation for Child Development, Poland), Myriam Mony (ESSSE Lyon, France), Olav Zylicz (Warsaw School of Psychology, Poland), Sonja Rutar (Educational Research Institute and Faculty of Education Koper, Slovenia), Steven Brandt (University of Ghent, Belgium), Susanna Mayer (ISTC-CNR-Rome, Italy), Dr Tatjana Vonta (DRCEI-Lublijana, Slovenia) and Dr Tullia Musatti (ISTC-CNR-Rome, Italy).

Researchers, locally-based but internationally connected, provided their expertise on local and national developments and responded to our endless queries while we conducted the survey: Dr Ana Ancheta Arrabal (Departamento de Educación Comparada, Universitat de Valencia, Spain); Ana del Barrio Saiz (Bureau Mutant, the Netherlands), Anna Tornberg (Lärarförbundet, Sweden), Anke van

2 Literature review

By Prof. Dr Michel Vandenbroeck, Dr Jan Peeters & Katrien Van Laere (University of Ghent, Department of Social Welfare Studies); Dr Arianna Lazzari & Prof. Dr Mathias Urban (University of East London, Cass School of Education); Dr Claire Cameron (Care Work in Europe, Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London)

2.1 Sources used for the CORE literature review

ECEC is increasingly expected to fulfil societal expectations regarding active citizenship and democracy, offering a strong foundation for lifelong learning, contributing to reducing child poverty, realising equal opportunities, and strengthening creativity and innovation in young children. There is a growing body of research, policy papers and accounts of practitioners' experiences on the complex relationships between quality and professional competences in the field of early-childhood education and care. While the early years have long been neglected, compared to the education of older children, over the last decades the interest has grown so rapidly that it has become virtually impossible to oversee the entire field. To give only one example: the amount of academic, peer-reviewed studies, published in journals that are listed in the Social Science Citation Index, has risen exponentially since 2005. For the present review, we have focused on the following types of literature:

2.1.1 Academic research

First, we conducted an analysis of articles on this topic since 1996, published in fully peer-reviewed journals, listed in the Social Science Citation Index. It should be noted that the research in this field is dominated by studies from the USA, Australia and the UK. This implies that the academic discussion on professionalism in early childhood in this vein of literature is dominated by contexts that are historically marked by significant differences in staff qualifications, large shares of care work provided by private providers, and few general governmental regulations regarding staff qualifications (OECD, 2006; Unicef Innocenti Research Centre, 2008). It is also dominated by the English language, meaning not only that English is the *lingua franca* in international scholarly literature, but also the dominance of a specific view on competences. As a matter of fact, in English language academic literature, the focus is on individual competences, rather than on collaboration among professionals (as is, for example, highlighted in Italian literature). In addition, the focus is rather on educational outcomes for children in the narrow sense, somewhat neglecting a more holistic approach to education (e.g. such as in the German concept of *Bildung* or the Danish concept of *paedagogik*). Therefore, we have expanded the review to literature of other languages (German, French, Italian, Dutch, Danish and Croatian) providing the potential to broaden the views on the issue of core competences for the early-years' workforce.

2.1.2 Policy documents

While the political discussions regarding ECEC has traditionally focused on the *quantity* (i.e. accessibility) of ECEC, there is now a growing interest from policymakers in the quality of the provision, both at local and international levels. We have incorporated some important documents from European policy on lifelong learning and ECEC, as well as policy-oriented documents from major international organisations (e.g. OECD and Unicef).

Early-childhood education has received unprecedented attention in the European public and political sphere in recent years. Many countries have set ambitious goals to increase both quantity and quality of provision.

2.2 Competence and lifelong learning

To understand the multiple meanings conveyed by the concept of *competence* and *lifelong learning*, a historical overview may be useful. This overview is partially based on the work that has been done by the LLL2010 research project assigned by the European Commission (LLL2010, 2007)[1].

Originally, the term *adult education* prevailed as it was used at the UNESCO second world conference on 'Adult Education in a Changing World' in Montreal, August 1960. Adult education includes 'education for literacy' and 'vocational and technical training', but the document also explicitly states the danger that the education of adults may become imbalanced by emphasising vocational needs and technical skills too much (UNESCO, 1960). The rationale for adult education consisted of both external merits for the sake of society, as well as merits for the local communities (with a focus on cultural merits), and for learners themselves, including an explicit concern about social justice and equal opportunities, adult education being explicitly framed as a right to (continuous) education for all.

In the next decades, the discourses on lifelong learning had multiple meanings, varying from the right to learn and a more equal distribution of learning opportunities over one's lifespan, to a plea to focus on adult education from an employability point of view (UNESCO, 1970). Since the 1990s, adult education and lifelong learning policy have been themes that are closely associated with globalisation of the economy and marketisation.

This shift is documented in the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 (LLL2010, 2007) and reinforced in the white paper on *Growth, Competitiveness, Employment: The Challenges and Ways Forward into the 21st Century* (European Commission, 1993). The latter paper pointed out that unemployment is the biggest threat to meeting the challenges of globalisation, information and communication technology, and to tackling the competitive threat from Asia and the USA. Preparation for working life cannot be satisfied by a once-and-for-all acquisition of knowledge and know-how (European Commission, 1993, p. 16). Education should be seen as a lifelong learning process: 'continuing training' has become essential (LLL2010, 2007) and lifelong education is, therefore, the overall

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[1] The LLL2010 project involves researchers from thirteen countries and regions of Europe: Scotland, England, Ireland, Austria, Belgium, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Norway and Russia. Further information on the project is available online http://LLL2010.tlu.ee

objective to which the national educational communities can make their own contributions (European Commission, 1993).

In addition, in 1995 the European Commission presented the white paper on 'Education and Training: Teaching and Learning, Towards the Learning Economy' (European Commission, 1995) defining a new set of European ambitions in the field of education. The Commission pleaded for the 'opening up of new avenues for validating skills' (European Commission, 1995, p. 37) as a part of lifelong learning and stimulated the European Social Fund to set up experimental projects on the accreditation of skills in the member states (European Commission, 1995). The focus on *knowledge, skills and* competences, in order to achieve employability as the outcome of lifelong learning strategies, was reinforced by the Lisbon strategy (Council of the European Union, 2000; European Commission, 2000, 2010).

It is contextual to this shift of focus on lifelong learning – that moved from an initial conceptualisation of emancipatory education to an individual responsibility of active citizens for their employability – that the discourse of *competence* has become progressively more relevant in developing the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and in the area of teacher education.

In the context of creating a knowledge society, the European Commission places emphasis on establishing a EQF. The objective of the EQF is to facilitate the transfer and recognition of qualifications held by individual citizens, by linking qualification frameworks and systems between national and sector levels (European Commission, 2005a). The key-purpose of EQF is to support lifelong learning by enabling learners to make more efficient use of their learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences). Competences, in this view, go beyond the use of knowledge (cognitive competence) and skills (functional competence) to encompass a personal dimension (knowing how to conduct oneself in a specific situation) and an ethical dimension (possession of certain personal and professional values). The European Commission underlines that these different components of competences should be approached in an integrative manner. Competence development is therefore seen as '*the ability of an individual to use and combine his or her knowledge, skills, personal and ethical competences according to the varying requirements posed by a particular context, a situation or a problem'* (European Commission, 2005a, p. 11)*.*

Although European policy documents are not specifically focused on the competence requirements of the early-years professional, clear views about the core competences of teachers in general have been expressed. In 2005, the document *Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications* emphasised the value that teaching and education professions '*add to the economic and cultural aspects of the knowledge society'* – stating the importance of looking at these professions in their societal context. Accordingly, teachers' competences are identified across three domains: working with fellow human beings (learners, colleagues and other partners in education), working with knowledge-technology-information, and working with and in society (at local, regional, national, European and the broader global level) (European Commission, 2005b). To work with and in society, teachers need to have an understanding of the value of respect for diversity and are able to work in close collaboration with colleagues, parents, and the wider community (European Commission, 2007, p. 13 & 14; Council of the European Union, 2010c, p. 4). The Council conclusions of 26 November 2009, on the education of children with a migrant background, accentuate that teachers and school leaders need to develop more intercultural competences to ensure educational

environments that take into account the cultural diversity of society (Council of the European Union, 2009a). These three core teachers' competences have a lot of similarities with the Framework of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (CASE, 2009).

Over the last twenty years, a range of terms such as *key* or *core skills* and *key* or *core competences* for every European citizen has been used in different European countries and at the European level (CASE, 2009). The white paper on *Growth, Competitiveness, Employment: The Challenges and Ways Forward into the 21st Century* (European Commission, 1993) accentuated, for example, the role of basic skills in order to combat unemployment. The Lisbon European Council in March 2000 and the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* stressed that 'Every citizen must be equipped with the skills needed to live and work in this new information society' and that 'a European framework should define the new basic skills to be provided through lifelong learning' (European Commission, 2000; Council of the European Union, 2000). Moreover, by analysing future trends in the labour market, the European Commission emphasised the growing demand from employers for transversal key competences, such as problem-solving and analytical skills, self-management and communication skills, linguistic skills and, more generally, non-routine skills (European Commission, 2008c; Cedefop, 2009, 2010). Based on a political mandate developed in the 'Education and training 2010' work programme (ET2010), a working group on basic skills, established in 2001, has developed a framework of key competences and, at the end of 2006, the *European Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* was released (European Commission, 2007a; LL2010, 2007). This framework identifies and defines key skills that everyone, including teachers, needs in order to achieve employment, personal fulfilment, social inclusion and active citizenship. The Reference Framework sets out eight key competences: communication in the mother tongue; communication in foreign languages; mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; digital competence; learning to learn; social and civic competences; sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; cultural awareness and expression. There are a number of themes that are applied throughout the Reference Framework: critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem-solving, risk assessment, decision-taking, and constructive management of feelings which play a role in all eight key competences (European Commission, 2007a). In a recent evaluation of the 'Education and training 2010' work programme by the Council and the EC, it emerged that a large number of member states are introducing reforms towards a more competence based educational approach. Much still needs to be done, however, to support the teachers' competences development (Council of the European Union, 2010a, 2010b; European Commission, 2009).

The EU competence framework builds on the work of international organisations such as UNESCO and OECD (CASE, 2009; OECD, 2005; UNESCO, 1996). The UNESCO report *Learning: the Treasure Within,* for example, stated that learning must contribute to the all-round development of each individual and defined four pillars of education: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be. UNESCO defines competences as more complex than skills and includes, in addition to a traditional notion of skill, the elements of social behaviours, teamwork, a sense of initiative and a readiness to take risk in a specific context (UNESCO, 1996). In 2005, the OECD DeSeCo (*Definition and Selection of Competences*) study developed a framework for key competences (OECD, 2005). In this framework, inspired by the work of Rychen and Salganik (2003), the definition of 'competences' moves beyond solely knowledge and skills: '*Key competences involve a mobilisation of cognitive and practical skills, creative abilities and other psychosocial resources such as attitudes, motivation and values'* (OECD, 2005, p. 8). In order to meet complex demands, reflectiveness is seen

as the heart of key competences. This implies the use of metacognitive skills (thinking about thinking), creative abilities and taking a critical stance (OECD, 2005, p. 9). The framework relates to individual competences, rather than to the collective capacities of organisations or groups. However, the sum of individual competences also affects the ability to achieve shared goals and, therefore, requires institutional competences (OECD, 2005, p. 6).

2.2.1   Competences – just a quality of an individual?

What is important in this historic overview is the gradual shift in conceptualising *learning* and *competences*. From a community-oriented approach in the 1970s, the concepts shifted to a more individual-oriented approach and – in parallel – the initial interest in education in its broadest sense risks being narrowed to learning as acquiring the knowledge, skills and competences that are needed for the labour market. This may lead to the idea that competences are a quality of individuals, rather than of early-childhood settings in their systemic context. In the discussions in this text, we wish to keep a balance between individual competences (knowledge and skills) and the systemic aspects that may or may not enable individual practitioners to develop their competences and to enact them.

2.2.2   Re-defining 'competence'

The term competence has become increasingly used in relation to the professionalisation of the ECEC workforce and in raising standards within ECEC practice. This move parallels a wider shift, to deploying competence as a framework for educational qualifications as well as professional practice. However, the term is contested. A recent investigation into 'competence' found that (at least) two notions are in common usage in European countries (Cameron, 2007). In the UK (and other English speaking countries) the definition of competence is largely confined to having 'sufficient' or 'adequate' knowledge, ability, skill or qualification to carry out a task. It does not imply a reaching beyond the minimum.

A 'competency-based approach' has evolved in relation to professional and other educational qualifications in which task-specific competences are stated and must be demonstrably met through training or other assessment. 'Sufficiency' understandings of competence have become tied into descriptions of 'occupational standards' for specific occupations and 'national minimum standards' for services. *The English National Occupational Standards* for example, that state which matters are considered to be 'critical aspects of competence at work' (CWDC, 2010) in settings concerned with children's care, learning and development, set out forty-six units, which practitioners at Level 3 must show they can meet. The first of these units is to 'develop and promote positive relationships', and consists of four elements, and against each of these there are a number of specific performance criteria for which practitioners must provide evidence. Although national occupational standards are 'statements of the skills, knowledge and understanding needed in employment and clearly define the outcomes of competent performance' (CWDC, 2010), Barnett (1994) made the point that they rely for measurement on that which is observable, and this is more usually skills rather than knowledge or understanding. The competency-based approach, particularly with this level of specificity, prioritises an instrumentalist approach to occupational performance, focusing on that which McKenzie et al. (1995, preface) called the 'can-do aspects of learning, arguably to the detriment of

knowledge, understanding and all-round development'. In this formulation, competence, as a guiding framework for professional practice, is a limiting and limited concept.

Cameron's (2007) exploratory study of the potential for social pedagogy in England's children's services asked professionals from a range of backgrounds to define the term competence. The results illustrated the different conceptions of competence discussed above. There were three types of response: the competent child who is resilient and resourceful; the competent worker who is 'confident about what they do, good role models'; and, most commonly, competence as ability tied to the expected or acceptable standards of work and effectively operated as a benchmark for quality of practice and training (Cameron, 2007, p. 29). The terms used by study respondents were 'fit to' carry out the job, being 'safe to practice', and being able to 'demonstrate being able to do something. Nothing has happened until it has been described … if you can describe what you do, it shows you are competent'. Many of the respondents were critical of the notion of competence in relation to professional practice, as they described it, for they saw it as incomplete and inadequate for the task of measuring work with children. Indeed, one said that a competence based approach 'regards people as technicians, not as professionals' which was insufficient for the complex reality of everyday practice.

Danish and German respondents in the study, all of whom shared a professional background in social pedagogy, responded rather differently to the question. The common theme here was that competence was not tied to prescriptive benchmarks or performance criteria but was about harnessing knowledge to action, similar to the Rychen and Salganik (2003) definition above. For example, one respondent said that being competent combined the 'knowledge and the ability and thought to do something' and another pointed out a self-development and self-awareness dimension to competence when she said that competence is 'to be able to be in relation, to have to reflect on and develop their competence, to be able to relate to others and to do it yourself'. Competence is 'to be able to go into practice and be able to develop knowledge, competence and values, personal and professional development' (cited in Cameron, 2007, p. 30). These cross-national differences appear to be both cross-cultural differences and the product of a particular historically specific moment when a professional consensus emerged around a certain definition. They are also, in the case of the UK, subject to professional resistance.

Rychen and Salganik (2003, p. 2), on the basis of an international and interdisciplinary panel, argued that, in modern societies, competence is the 'ability to successfully meet complex demands in a particular context. [it…] implies the mobilization of knowledge, cognitive skills and practical skills as well as social and behaviour components such as attitudes, emotions and values and motivations … The terms competence and skill are not synonymous'. Rychen and Salganik (2003) concluded that competence consisted of three categories that were, essentially, interactional and relational abilities, responsible self-management and autonomy, and command of socio-cultural and physical tools such as language, symbols, text and technology in an interactive and contextually aware way, so that their use contributes to wider goals. In this understanding of competence, ability, action, initiative, judgement and interaction are to the fore. This is rather similar to Carr's (2005) definition of competence in relation to young children's learning, which requires them to be curious, willing and being able to learn, and so links resources or knowledge (ability) to action (willing) with a view to renewing resources or learning.

A suitable definition of competence, that acknowledges the complexities mentioned, draws on the concept of human *capability* developed and explored by Nussbaum (2000). This position allows the idea of reciprocity to be put at the core: competences are defined within a specific cultural and social context but, at the same time are developed by individuals – the way emphasising the agency of individuals' competences. The interactions between individual competences and contexts open possibilities for change. Furthermore, the concept of capability enables us to extend the narrow (prescriptive) definition of competence based on individual professional performance, towards focusing on acts of *reflective deliberation* (Dewey, 1933) that focus on practitioners' professional knowledge and their ability to put it into practice in various contexts according to negotiated meanings (*reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action* – (Schön, 1983), & *democratic professionalism* - (Oberhuemer, 2005)).

In the light of international studies, and taking a necessarily critical stance, one might argue to abandon the term 'competence' altogether: it appears too narrow, hence inadequate to capture the complex relationships between knowledge and values, capabilities and concrete action that characterise professional practice in the field of ECEC.

This would be short-sighted, however; a premature surrender to a yet another 'dominant discourse' that has shaped the way we understand early childhood education and care. Based on the literature reviewed for this study, and on the data from both the survey and the case studies, we suggest a more constructive approach. 'Competence', we argue in this report, continues to be a central concept which is key to any understanding of professional practice in ECEC. It is possible and necessary, however, to re-define – and re-claim – the term based on the findings of the CoRe study. In this report we offer a conceptualisation of 'competence' that is multi-dimensional and systemic: it encompasses the dimensions of *knowledge*, *practices* and *values*. It unfolds at every layer of the early childhood education and care system – which, in a best case scenario, can develop into a *competent system*. We spell this out in more detail in the final report.

2.3 Quality and qualifications

The inextricable link between the professionalisation of ECEC practitioners and quality provision has been a central debate on the European platform in recent years and countries are increasingly recognising the need to reform and reconceptualise the early-childhood workforce (Peeters, 2008a; Urban, 2009; Dalli, & Urban, 2010).

It is generally recognised and supported by international research that the workforce is central in achieving the policy goals of increasing both the quantity and quality of provision (Dalli, 2003, 2005; MacNaughton, 2003; Oberhuemer, 2005; Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden, & Bell, 2002). Literature also hints at a correlation between the formal levels of qualification obtained by staff and the quality of ECEC services.

Both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies converge to say that qualifications matter. Higher levels of preparation correlate positively with better childcare quality as well as with better developmental outcomes for children (Clarke-Stewart, Vandell, Burchinal, O'Brien, & McCartney, 2002; Early, Maxwell, Burchinal, Bender, Ebanks, Henry, G., et al., 2007; Fukkink, & Lont, 2007; Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2004). Moreover, the 2006 Starting Strong report from the OECD concludes that: 'Research from many countries supports the view that quality in the early-childhood field requires adequate training and fair working conditions. Research shows the link between strong training and support of staff and the quality of ECEC services. In particular, staff who have more formal education and more specialised early-childhood training provide more stimulating, warm and supportive interactions with children' (OECD, 2006, p. 158).

There is broad consensus in literature around the required level of qualification for the core professional. 'Teachers with at least a bachelor's degree in early childhood or child development, or both, provided more appropriate care giving, were more sensitive and were less detached than teachers with vocational training or less'(Cassidy, Buell, Pughhoese, & Russell, 1995). In 2005, a working group of national experts on teacher education proposed several *Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications*. They made a recommendation towards national and regional policy that the teaching profession should be a graduate entry profession with a qualification from a higher education institution or equivalent. Teacher education programmes should be delivered in all three cycles of higher education in order to ensure their place in the European higher education arena and to increase the opportunity for advancement and mobility within the profession (European Commission, 2005b).

Although there is a consensus that places the ideal level of qualification needed at bachelor level, in many European member states the actual qualification level of the ECEC workforce is rather low (OECD, 2006; European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2008). This is the case for centre-based ECEC as well as home-based ECEC. Furthermore, significant differences in levels of qualification can be found across different regions. While some EU countries have invested in graduate qualifications at bachelor and master levels, be it of different types (e.g. the Danish pedagogue, the Swedish teacher), other regions have invested in the development of interesting practices regarding the 'accompagnement' or 'accompagnamento' (coaching on the job) of workers qualified at the secondary level (e.g. the cities of Pistoia, Reggio Emilia, San Miniato and Ghent and the work of ONE in the French Community of Belgium). The fact that some educators, already working in the field, might have missed out on the opportunity of receiving pre-service training needs to be acknowledged. In this sense, supporting educators by systematically providing opportunities for continuous professional development becomes essential. In fact, in this regard, research shows that in-service training (on the job) may be equally important as pre-service (initial) qualifications, provided it is of sufficient length and intensity (Fukkink, & Lont, 2007; Jaegher, Shlay, & Weinraub, 2000; Pianta, Mashburn, Downer, Hamre, & Justice, 2008).

In academic literature, the correlations between staff qualifications and children's developmental outcomes – mostly cognitive – have also been measured. There is a consensus in these studies that the level of qualification positively correlates with the outcomes in children: better 'pre-academic skills', including language development (e.g. Clarke-Stewart, et al., 2002).

Evidently, this does not mean that qualifications can be considered in isolation, or that the professionalisation of the workforce is in itself sufficient to predict the quality of provision. First, it is to be noted that educators with higher levels of qualification tend to choose to work in areas providing higher quality (Early, et al., 2007). Therefore, correlational studies can hardly distinguish whether higher quality entails more qualifications or whether, on the contrary, higher qualifications yield higher quality.

It should also be noted that correlational studies pointing to the relations between levels of qualification and quality are rarely specific, when they measure qualifications, about the meaning of quality and the exact content of the curriculum,.

Despite the consensus on the importance of initial training, there is very little research on the content and format of this initial training. Interesting studies in this domain have been carried out within several Italian Universities (Galliani, & Felisatti, 2001, 2005; Nigris, 2004; Supervisori di Bologna e Modena-Reggio Emilia, 2006; Torre, Ricchiardi, & Coggi, 2007) in the context of the introduction of a 4-year compulsory degree for the primary and pre-primary teaching profession (Laws 30/2000 and 53/2003). These studies highlight the central role played by specific activities – such as practicum and workshops – for the development of the competences of future teachers. The strength of the workshops, in particular, has been identified as bridging theory (university lectures) and practice (practicum experience in nursery schools) by promoting an alternative approach to the construction of knowledge through the active involvement of students in project work activities. Workshops are facilitated by teacher educators, who have relevant experience in several areas of ECEC, and are carried out in the context of small groups which promote frequent interactions among students and collective reflectivity. In particular, the study conducted by the University of Milano-Bicocca reported that the methodologies adopted in the workshops facilitate more critical reflection by students on their practicum experience (Nigris, 2004), while the study carried out by the University of Padova highlighted the central role of practicum for the acquisition of cross-disciplinary competences (e.g. relational, didactic and reflective) which are at the core of teachers' professionalism (Galliani, & Felisatti, 2005).

2.3.1 Contesting a technical understanding of training

Training is how education, preparation and continuous learning of early childhood practitioners is often referred to. Yet the term often conveys limited meanings of professional preparation and development. As Oberhuemer (2005, p. 7) notes, the term has 'increasingly taken on a technical, competencies-and-skills connotation in the educational field. In this narrowing sense it fails to do justice to the wider reaching aims of professionalisation as identified by the research community'.

The 'technical connotations' of training point to a 'particular concept of learning through instruction, repetitive practice, etc., it is about acquiring skills to deliver technologies. […] Its connotations contradict the very essence of professional and educational practice as a transformative practice of mutual dependence and respect, co-construction and shared meaning making between human beings' (Urban, 2008, p. 150).

It should be noted that when we use the term *training* in this report we do not necessarily assume that professional development requires instructional teaching and learning. Rather, we use it as a generic term that may comprise many different aspects, including *pre-service training* (qualifying or non-qualifying training before one is involved in practice, and *in-service training* (on the job), such as courses, team supervision, coaching, and other possible forms of learning).

2.4   Systemic conditions for professional competences

> *"Are policies that increase the educational attainment of pre-school teachers likely to lead to increased classroom quality or children academic gains? Data indicate that such policies alone are unlikely to have such effects. Instead, teachers' education must be considered as part of a system of factors that contribute to teacher quality […]"*
> (Early, et al., 2007)

Qualifications correlate with quality and they represent an important condition in achieving educational quality. However, the research literature also shows that qualifications do not suffice. Other, systemic conditions are equally important: 'pedagogical support or guidance on the job is a necessary condition for professionals to be able to use the competences of their training in their job' (Early, et al., 2007; Karila, 2008). Many researchers have specifically focused on in-service training and a consensus is apparent that in-service training positively influences quality, provided it is a minimal twenty hours per year (Clarke-Stewart, et al., 2002; Fukkink, & Lont, 2007).

Short in-service training that focuses on knowledge and skills has very limited effects: 'Short-term training, often knowledge- or technique-based, is the most common form of in-service training with substantial variation in nature and quality and virtually no evidence of effectiveness' (Pianta, et al., 2008) There seems to be a relationship between pre- and in-service training: staff with higher qualifications are more open to in-service training (Jaegher, et al., 2000).

As with qualifications, in-service training is only effective when accompanied by team meetings, supervision or other forms of coaching and on-the-job support (Gerber, Whitebook, & Weinstein, 2007). Pedagogical advisors or *pedagogisti* can, for example, play an important role in increasing the professionalism of practitioners.

2.5   Enhancing competences as a continuous process

In the conceptual section, we have highlighted that the concept of quality is often used in a rather narrow sense, that is, in a way that does not allow for the participative approaches of the users and local communities. Therefore, it is useful to enlarge this perspective with research traditions from non-English sources. More particularly, Italian literature may shed further light on the systemic conditions necessary for linking quality with professional competences. The issue of early-childhood professionalism in Italy has been explored in relation to ECEC quality, within a specific strand of literature that originated during the 1990s in accordance with an international trend and with reference to the work of the European Commission Childcare Network. During this period, several regional and local governments supported the experiences of the evaluation of early-childhood

institutions (*nidi*) which were carried out together by policymakers, administrators, pedagogical coordinators, and university researchers and which involved practitioners and families (Barberi, Bondioli, Galardini, Mantovani, & Perini, 2002; Bondioli, & Ghedini, 2000; Fortunati, 2002). The aim of these studies was not only to promote quality within ECEC services but also to reflect, at institutional level, on the concept of quality, as defined, in relation to the needs expressed by all the actors involved. Therefore, in this perspective, quality is defined as 'a democratic process of negotiating aims and targets by enhancing public debate on educational issues' and the process of participatory quality evaluation is conceived in formative terms (Bondioli, & Ghedini, 2000). As a consequence, the issue of professionalism has become progressively relevant not only because practitioners' professionalism – and professional satisfaction – were identified as necessary conditions for the quality of institutions, but also for the key-role played by educational evaluation in relation to the professional development of staff (Becchi, Bondioli, Ferrari, & Gariboldi, 1997; Zanelli, 2000). Within this strand of literature, the issue of early-childhood professionalism is addressed in systemic terms and it is conceptualised as a continuous process of *cultural and pedagogical growth* which is nurtured by critical reflection on educational practices (Fabbri, 1999; Bondioli, & Ferrari, 2004). Participatory educational evaluation, in this sense, is seen as a hermeneutical process that enhances professional development by promoting critical problematisation of practitioners' educational actions: the result of this ongoing process is the collective production of exchangeable professional knowledge (Musatti, Picchio, & Di Giandomenico, 2010). In this perspective, this strand of literature also offers a valuable contribution to the international debate on the 'reflective practitioner' (Schön, 1983) in the specific context of early-childhood education. By placing the discussion on professional practice and professional knowledge at the core of the systemic relationship between ECEC institutions and university/research centres, this approach conceptualises ECEC professionalism beyond the competence of the individual practitioners advocating 'institutional reflectivity' that produces political action within education systems.

In Croatian literature, too, issues of professional competence and the professional development of early-childhood practitioners are discussed within a systemic approach to the quality of educational institutions. Within this strand of literature, educational quality is not conceived to be determined by the individual interventions of practitioners, but rather as being determined by the entire context of the institution, of which practitioners are an integral part and which practitioners can change according to their degree of understanding. Within this approach it is argued that enhancing practitioners' understandings of the institutional contexts in which they are operating enables them to shape new beliefs for the development of educational practices aimed at improving the quality of the institutions (Žogla, 2008). In this sense, a crucial role is played by professional development that should be carried out within institutions themselves and that should be focusing on joint action-research (Slunjski, 2008), self-evaluation (Ljubetić, 2008), and collective reflexivity on educational practices generating new theoretical knowledge (Šagud, 2008). In this context, practitioners' professional development is conceptualised as a continuous process that – being constantly subjected to review and change – raises the level of practitioners' pedagogical competence.

Recent European policy documents on teacher education strongly emphasise a similar systemic approach to competence development[2]. In 2007, the European Commission stated that, '*As with any*

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other modern profession, teachers also have a responsibility to extend the boundaries of professional knowledge through a commitment to reflective practice, through research, and through a systematic engagement in continuous professional development from the beginning to the end of their careers. Systems of education and training for teachers need to provide the necessary opportunities for this' (European Commission, 2007b, p. 5). The starting point of this statement is that the profession of teaching is becoming more and more complex because the demands placed upon teachers are increasing. Teachers are, for example, increasingly called upon to help young people become fully autonomous learners by acquiring key competences, rather than memorising information. Therefore, teachers need to develop more collaborative and constructive approaches to learning and are expected to be facilitators and classroom managers. Secondly, the environments in which they work are more divers. Classrooms nowadays contain a more heterogeneous mix of young people from different backgrounds. These new demands require teachers not only to acquire new knowledge and skills, but also to develop them continuously (European Commission, 2007b)*. Consequently, initial education and continuous professional development for teachers and school leaders, based on reflective practice, need to support and empower them to deal with the diversity in classrooms (European Commission, 2007, p. 14; Council of the European Union, 2011). Generally, however, time spent on in-service training and professional development is minimal and many member states offer no systematic support for new teachers (European Commission, 2008b)[3]. According to the recent European Commission's communication on ECEC, the situation for ECEC staff is even worse: ECEC staff rarely has the same opportunities for induction, in-service training and continuous professional development as are available to school teachers (European Commission, 2011).

Improving the quality of teacher education as a continuous process is, therefore, an important goal for Europe's education systems (European Commission, 2007b, p. 10). Ministers in 2007 agreed to improve the quality of teacher education and to provide initial education, early career support (induction) and further professional development. Besides the professionalism of teachers, the quality of school leadership is crucial to increase students' performance (European Commission, 2007b). Hence, in 2008 *'An updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training'* was published to present strategic challenges to guide policy cooperation for the period to 2020. The member states and the European Commission should give priority to the professional development of teachers by giving more attention to teachers' initial training and by expanding the range and quality of the continuing professional development opportunities for teachers, trainers and staff involved in, for example, leadership or guidance activities (European Commission, 2008a). The Council conclusions of 26 November 2009, on the professional development of teachers and school leaders, strongly emphasise that initial teacher education, early career support and continuous professional education should be treated as a coherent whole. Continuing professional development programmes need to be of high quality, relevant to needs and based on a well-balanced combination of academic research and extensive practical experience. Newly qualified and more experienced teachers are continuously encouraged to reflect on their work individually and collectively (Council of the European Union, 2009b).

Council of the European Union, 2009a), Council recommendations of 7 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving (The Council of the European Union, 2011)

[3] *Induction of new teachers is seen as a significant challenge in the EU, with less than half of member states providing coordinated support for newly qualified teachers. The successful integration of newly qualified teachers requires four types of support: mentoring, collaboration with peers, access to external advice and knowledge and structured self-reflection. (European Commission, 2009, p. 19)*

From the previous chapters, we can conclude that the competences of early-years practitioners are served by pre-service as well as in-service training, but also that competences are not to be considered as an acquisition, but rather as an ongoing process of both individuals and teams.

2.6 Which competences for early years practitioners?

2.6.1 The reflective practitioner

Traditional sociological definitions of professionalism are difficult to apply in the ECEC sector. They refer to knowledge monopoly, expert versus inexperienced client, control over who may practice and who may not and maintaining a certain distance towards the client (Bourdoncle, 1991). In contrast, childcare and ECEC is in need of a professionalism in which the use of emotions is given an important place in work with children and their parents (Colley, 2006). For this reason, there is a tendency to head in the direction of a *normative* professionalism (Kunneman, 2005, p. 268). A purely technically-oriented professionalism ignores the value-bound elements of professional actions. Acting professional is bound to existential and moral sources of orientation: personal involvement, attention, integrity, loyal cooperation with colleagues and a sense of social responsibility, as well as creativity, curiosity and an innovative ability (Aelterman, 1995; Kunneman, 2005).

The concept of professionalism in ECEC should not be limited to the concept of a professional expert model, as the knowledge, skills and competences required would not be universally applicable. A specific body of knowledge as well as a series of skills are necessary but they do not suffice: 'It appears that product and skills-oriented education does not encourage teachers to reflect on their teaching' (Dogani, 2008).Bosse-Platière, Dethier, Fleury, & Loutre (1995) point to the danger of the 'professional expert' model in ECEC which can undermine the responsibility of the parents over their children.

In Croatian literature, the role of practitioners is currently being redefined within a shifting paradigm that conceives ECEC institutions as democratic learning communities (Petrović-Sočo, Slunjski, & Šagud, 2005) promoting children's development from a rights-based perspective which is framed by the UN Convention on the Right of the Child (Milanović, Stričević, Maleš, & Sekulić-Majurec, 2000). Within this shift of paradigm, practitioners' professionalism grounds on ethically responsible educational practices that are inextricably linked to the external social context: from this perspective the introduction of open communication with equal rights for every participant in the educational process, the enhancement of the quality of culture, and the increased consciousness for responsibility in a collegial and individual manner become essential elements of ethically responsible practices (Krstović & Čepić, 2005).

It needs to be said, however, that the conceptualisation of reflective-normative professionalism is scarcely developed in the English language literature. First, the concept of the 'reflective practitioner', although frequently mentioned, remains rather underdeveloped and the apparent consensus on the need for reflection may very well hide a lack of consensus on its actual meaning. We may distinguish reflection-for-action (what will I do?); reflection-in-action (what am I doing?) and reflection-on-action (what have I done?) (Cheng, 2001; Isikoglu, 2007; Moran, 2007). Overall, however, the concept of reflection that is most dominant in academic literature concerns 'doing things right'. As Coussée, Bradt, Roose and Bouverne-De Bie (2008) rightly argue, this is quite

different in nature than a reflection on 'doing the right things'. In the latter view, the 'reflective practitioner' needs to question taken-for-granted beliefs and understand that knowledge is contestable (Kuisma, & Sandberg, 2008; Kunneman, 2005; Miller, 2008; Urban, & Dalli, 2008). While the first attitude focuses on documenting and evaluating one's practice within a fixed paradigm, the second approach questions the very paradigms in which one is operating. Despite a recent thematic monograph of the European Early Childhood Education Research Journal (Urban, & Dalli, 2008), in which this second approach to the reflexive practitioner is central, it remains quite underdeveloped in Anglo-Saxon scholarly research.

In short, reflection is considered to be a most important part of professionalism (Dunn, Harrison, & Coombe, 2008; Urban, 2008) As Schön introduced in 1983, teachers must be 'reflective practitioners' or 'teacher-researchers' who continually question their pedagogical practices and who – together with parents and the children – create an educational practice that is constantly renewed and improved (Cameron, 2005; Moss, 2006). The professional is a co-constructor of this continually evolving professionalism (Sorel, & Wittorski, 2005). The process of professionalisation can, therefore, be seen as the development of actions and initiatives. The professionalisation of individuals is a learning process in which meaning is given to the interpretation of the profession and this is continually undertaken in relation to others: colleagues, parents and children. Oberhuemer supports this view when she advocates democratic professionalism: 'Democratic professionalism is a concept based on participatory relationships and alliances. It foregrounds collaborative, cooperative action between professional colleagues and other stakeholders. It emphasises engaging and networking with the local community' (Oberhuemer, 2005, p. 13). The professionalisation process can therefore be seen as a social practice which is the consequence of interaction between social evolutions, policy measures and new scientific insights, and researchers, staff, parents and children (Peeters, 2008a, p. 48).

As a consequence, professionalism needs to be considered as an ongoing process of lifelong learning, rather than as a status, and this raises questions about the feasibility of describing core competences for the early-years practitioners.

2.6.2   Core competences in academic research
Despite these questions, several attempts have been made in literature to define core competences for early-years practitioners.

Oberhuemer (2000), on the basis of a study of early-childhood systems in four countries, pointed out that, in the late 1990s, a new profile of professional activities was emerging in ECEC, which required practitioners to acquire abilities in relation to networking and negotiating not just with children, but also with families, lay members of local communities and professional agencies. More than ever before, ECEC centres were required to undertake annual planning with parents, or local agencies, offer programmes of support to, and participatory roles for, parents, devise strategies for involving fathers and parents from minority ethnic communities, engage in evaluation and quality assurance methods and legitimate their professional practice to the local communities. These roles built on, but did not remove, the rather more inward focused educational and child-oriented roles of practitioners, and indicated a new complexity to practice. In the case of England, a policy decision to launch 2,500 multi-agency children's centres exemplified this complexity. These children's centres

were also meant to support the additional needs of particular groups of children, such as those with special educational, health or social and emotional needs, needs which would require skilful care and educational support from practitioners.

Recognising the complexity of care work practice, the Care Work in Europe study (Cameron, & Moss, 2007, p. 142) outlined a number of common requirements for European care work, which arose from their study of practice in six EU countries in early-childhood centres, in day and residential services for older people, and in services for people with severe disabilities. The study was also inspired by an exploratory study (Cameron, 2007) that showed that practitioners from diverse countries had diverging ideas about what competences were: while English practitioners refer to competences as 'standards', Danish and German practitioners refer to them as processes. The core competences, listed by Cameron and Moss (2007), include characteristics of the person, their abilities, skills, and knowledge, and largely map onto that which we know of early-childhood work. For example, Miller's (2008) and Dalli's (2008) studies of early-childhood workers in England and New Zealand drew attention to a similar list of competences required to practice in early-childhood care and education settings. Other authors (DECET & ISSA, 2011; Moss, 2008; Peeters, 2008a; Rinaldi, 2005; Urban, 2008; Peeters, & Vandenbroeck, 2011) have similarly attempted to identify the broader reflective competences and qualities that are required for a democratic professionalism or for professionalism as a social practice:

- *Working towards social change*

- *Communicating openly and enabling reciprocal dialogue*

- *Critically reflecting: dealing with complex issues from diverse angles*

- *Learning from disagreements*

- *Dealing with unpredictability and uncertainty*

- *Co-constructing new practice and knowledge with children, families and colleagues*

2.6.3 Different perspectives on core competences in Italy, Germany and Denmark

The *Italian national curriculum guidelines* have, since 1991, referred to the nursery school teachers' role as one that implies greater responsibility and that requires 'specific cultural, pedagogical, psychological, methodological and didactic competences along with an open sensibility and willingness to engage in educational relationship with the children' (Orientamenti, Ministero dell'Istruzione, 1991). The fact that a full paragraph is dedicated – within the Orientamenti – to the discussion of structural aspects defining ECEC professionalism ('Art. 3 – Strutture di professionalità') attests, on one side, the importance given by policy-makers to this issue and, on the other, the systemic approach according to which this issue is addressed. In the document, the conditions that nurture professionalism are identified around the concept of *collegialitá (*collegiality). Through collegiality teachers express their mutual commitment ('educational co-responsibility') towards the achievement of common purposes – made explicit in the pedagogical project of the school – and

they value each other's abilities to work toward those purposes through an adequate distribution of tasks. The aspect of professional development is also stressed in systemic terms and it revolves around a concept of nursery school designed as a 'professionalized environment aimed toward the full education of the child'. In this context 'the professional life of the teachers should be carried out in a working environment which is relationally rich, culturally thought provoking, based on collaboration and oriented at improving the school itself and its relation with society'. Particularly interesting are the experiences of community involvement and parents' participation, matured in the context of municipal institutions in Northern and Central Italy over the last forty years.[4] These experiences not only contributed to the process of democratisation of institutions in participative terms by sustaining the discussion of ECEC within the public and political debate, but they also contribute to conceptualising the role of early-childhood practitioners in relation to the needs of the communities within which and for which the institutions were conceived (Fortunati, 2006).

The beginnings of early-childhood institutions in *Germany* were linked to what might be called, in retrospect, a first debate on professionalism. The question of *who* should be working with young children, and to *what purpose*, was at the very core of the debate. According to one's socio-political, religious and philosophical background, the answers to these questions would differ significantly. Friedrich Fröbel, who initiated the *Kindergarten* movement in Germany, explicitly situated his approach to elementary education for all children in the context of the democracy movement that culminated in the 1848 revolution. Fröbel's Kindergarten was a radical concept in many respects. Not only was it explicit about the link between education and democracy in a civil society, but for the first time, the Kindergarten conceptualised education as detached from both state and church – as a public good and civil responsibility instead. Moreover, Fröbel's Kindergarten was a move to professionalise early education by opening qualification pathways and higher education to women (Heiland, 1999). After the failure of the 1848 revolution, the Prussian government banned Fröbel's Kindergartens. Banned from their profession and livelihood, many of the highly qualified women who had worked with Fröbel were forced to emigrate and became founders of the Fröbel tradition that is very much alive in many countries, except Germany, until today (Allen, & Othmer, 2000; Urban, 1997). Theodor Fliedner, the pioneer of the 'caring' tradition and founder of the first training institution for *Diakonissen* – women that would be working in the *Kinderbewahranstalten* – strongly opposed Fröbel's *Kindergarten* movement and the ideas of democratisation and modernisation behind it (Mayer, 1994). For Fliedner, occupational roles for women, particularly in education, could only be imagined under the auspices of the Church, and as *Liebestätigkeit* (a labour of love) for children, the poor and the sick.

Tensions arising from the two distinct historical roots of German early-childhood institutions – education in its broadest sense in Fröbel's Kindergarten and care for disadvantaged and impoverished children in the *Kinderbewahranstalt* – have not been resolved until today. This view is reflected in the wording of official documents as well as in the self-image of the sector: the purpose of early-childhood institutions is to provide the triad of *Bildung, Erziehung und Betreuung* which are seen as inseparable (Münder, 1998). From a less enthusiastic perspective, it could be argued that the triad is little more than an umbrella for three distinct approaches, which, in consequence, lead to different, often contradictory practices. Using an admittedly overly simplified picture, *Bildung* comprises the entirety of children's physical, emotional, cognitive, creative activities of *making sense*

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[4] The municipal ECEC centres in Northern and Central Italy are often quoted in international reports (OECD 2001, 2006) and by renowned scholars (Bruner, Katz, Dahlberg, Moss) as being of excellent quality.

of their world. *Erziehung* refers to children as recipients of that which adults do *to* them, purposefully, in educational settings. *Betreuung*, then, could be understood as providing secure spaces in which – at best – *Bildung* and *Erziehung* can unfold. What it means to be – and to act – professionally in early-childhood teaching in present day Germany, is determined by all three conceptual foundations of the system. It is reflected in the layout of the institutions, the regulations and the programmes. It is reflected, too, in the professional self-perceptions of practitioners and in the dilemmas in which they find themselves (Urban, forthcoming).

Danish early-childhood education is characterised by the focus on relational pedagogy and a child-centred ethos in which interaction is more important than content (Broström, 2005, 2006). Based on the kindergarten philosophy of Fröbel and theories of Rousseau and Pestalozzi, the 'pedagogues' make no distinction between care, upbringing and teaching (Broström, 2006; Peeters, 2008b). Pedagogues provide children which a rich, free environment that will give the best opportunities for the child's holistic development and growth (Broström, 2009). The Danish interpretation of professionalism is closely connected to the competent child-view (Brembeck, Johansson, & Kampmann, 2004). Therefore teaching is not seen as a specific activity: it is more perceived as a side-effect (Jensen, & Langsted, 2004). In a child-oriented approach to care, the concern exists that the nursery schools afford children so much freedom that learning and development may be compromised in some way. This concern led to discussion and to the reforming of the 'Nordic model' during the last decades of the twentieth century (Broström, 2006). In the law of 1964, there were no guidelines for the pedagogical content of the work of the 'pedagogue'. Only some general aims and educational principles are described (Broström, 2006; Peeters, 2008b). In 2000 and 2003 the PISA results showed a low level of Danish children's learning (Artelt, Baumert, Julius-McElvany, & Peschar, 2003). In 2004, a curriculum was introduced for young children (Broström, 2006). Even though the curriculum is very open and reflects the nursery school tradition, the majority of Danish pedagogues and researchers view the curriculum act as a problematic step towards more bureaucratic state regulation and as an adjustment to schooling (Ellegaard, & Stanek in Broström, 2006). The professional organisation of pedagogues, BUPL, reacted to this challenge by making the pedagogic vision of the pedagogue more explicit by initiating a discussion on the interpretation of professionalism (BUPL, 2006, p. 7). The professional expertise of the pedagogues is based on personal competences and on an awareness of one's own norms and values. It encompasses both the theoretical and practical knowledge of the development of children, of play and of friendship. The Danish pedagogues state that their work can be described as multi-dimensional: providing care, socialisation of the community, *Bildung* for citizenship and democracy and learning through the development of individual skills (BUPL, 2006; Peeters, 2008b). To prepare the future pedagogues, Bayer (2000) states that college education cannot only be linked with theory and workplace education and cannot only be linked with training of practical skills. Initial education and competence development needs to be seen as the interplay of education at college and a pedagogic workplace.

2.6.4   Pathways to enhance competences

As stated earlier, professionalism is to be considered as an ongoing process and, in addition to pre-service training, systemic conditions of ongoing support are necessary for professional development. However, literature on *how* to do so is relatively scarce.

The Parisian, *Centre du Recherche sur la Formation*, has developed the method of *analyse des pratiques*, for the social and educational professions, the objective of which is to reflect on the practice from a theoretical framework (Barbier, 2006; Wittorski, 2005). As far as Barbier is concerned, professionalisation within a training course is an infinite process of transformation of competences in relation to a process of transformation of activities. By analysing the practical experiences of the students and professionals – first on an individual basis and later in groups – this professionalisation process is steered and supported (Meunier, 2004, p. 118). This methodology is implied in the training courses of the *Educateurs Jeunes Enfants* in France and in team meetings in early-childhood services (Fablet, 2004). It does not aim solely at the acquisition of knowledge, but also at the *production* of knowledge starting from concrete situations (Meunier, 2004, p. 126). In the first year, via this analysis of internship experiences, the foundations are laid for a personal track towards professionalism. In the second and third years, the situations that the students experience and that have raised questions are discussed in the group. Using this approach, Meunier (2004, p. 127) seeks to develop new competences among the students, so that it then becomes possible for them – later, as professionals – to anticipate unforeseen pedagogic situations. According to Didier Favre, the 'analyse des pratiques' is a method intending to elicit more questions than answers and this in the context of critical analysis and co-operation (Favre, 2004, p. 63). By discussing the situations in the group – and by seeking solutions collectively – the 'analyse des pratiques' contributes to the creation of a theoretical basis for pedagogic actions. With this position, Favre concurs with Hughes and MacNaughton (2000) and Dahlberg and Moss (2005, p. 4) advocating 'minor politics,' by which professionals, children and parents together create a new type of knowledge. There are several concrete examples of how this is applied in practice. The training college ESSSE in Lyon for instance, has applied this practical analysis within a module 'Culture et Education' to deal with diversity in the services for young children (Malleval, 2004; Mony, 2006). The instructors at ESSSE make use of individual and group discussions in order to analyse the practical experiences and also use educational material that was produced within a European network working with the subject of diversity (DECET). According to Mony (in Peeters, 2008b), professionalism demands a creative way of thinking: 'The ability to find the uniqueness in each situation'. In order to master this competency, during their internship, all students are given the task of implementing an original educational project that is based on a concrete practical question.

'Sustainable Change in the Professional Learning Community' is a method developed in the Netherlands that is based on the same innovative learning theories as the 'analyse de pratiques': the reflection on practice and asking critical questions. Within this theoretical framework of the critical learning community, the project developed eight 'learning methods' that are combined with concrete themes relevant for everyday practice. The continuous documentation and analysis enables the participants to take control over their own learning and this has a very motivating effect on the learners. (Urban, 2009; Van Keulen, 2010; Van Keulen, & Del Barrio Saiz, 2010).

A last example of an interesting pathway to increase the competences are the ISSA 'Principles of Quality Pedagogy: Competent educators for the 21st century', that have been implemented in 27 countries in Eastern Europe and central Asia. In 1998, the International Step by Step Association began to develop the first pedagogical quality standards for ECEC teachers. As member NGOs and ISSA have worked with the standards over the years, there has been continuous shared learning and developed understanding about the required early-years teachers' competences. On the basis of this

shared learning, and with the help of a group of experts, these standards were revised in 2007 and are now called Principles of Quality Pedagogy. (ISSA, 2010)

2.7 Conclusions from the literature review

2.7.1 Impact of individual competences on quality

Higher levels of initial training correlate positively with the higher quality of ECEC as well as with better developmental outcomes for children. There is a consensus that a bachelor degree should be required for the core professional. Italian studies highlight the central role in the initial training of practice-based learning and workshops for the development of the competences of future teachers.

Supporting educators by providing systematic opportunities for continuous professional development is essential, especially for the practitioners without or with low level qualifications. Research shows that in-service training may be equally important as pre-service (initial) qualifications, provided it is of sufficient length and intensity.

Within the Italian literature, the issue of early-childhood professionalism is addressed in systemic terms and it is conceptualised as a continuous process of *cultural and pedagogical growth*, which is nurtured by a critical reflection on pedagogical practices. The Croatian literature, too, argues that enhancing practitioners' understanding of the institutional contexts in which they operate enables them to shape new beliefs for the development of pedagogical practices aimed at improving the quality of institutions. In this south European approach, competences are not to be considered as an acquisition, but rather as an ongoing process of both individuals and teams.

2.7.2 Required competences?

Professionalism is an ongoing process of lifelong learning, rather than a status and this raises questions about the feasibility of describing core competences for the early-years professionals. But several authors and international organisations have tried to define a set of key competences and a body of knowledge for the early-childhood professional.

In Italian official documents, the conditions that nurture professionalism are identified around the concept of collegiality (*collegialitá*). Through collegiality teachers express their mutual commitment towards the achievement of common purposes – made explicit in the pedagogical project of the school – and they value each other's abilities to work towards those purposes through an adequate distribution of tasks.

The professional expertise of the Danish pedagogues is based on personal competences and on an awareness of one's own norms and values. It encompasses both the theoretical and practical knowledge of the development of children, of play and of friendship.

2.7.3   Pathways to enhance competences

In several European countries the literature mentions concrete methods that are successful in underpinning this ongoing process of professional development. Some methods are mainly focused on critical reflection on practice, others try to describe the principles of a quality pedagogy, that can inspire ECEC teachers.

To conclude, one can say that – although a certain consensus on the importance of systemic aspects of practitioners' competences emerges both from academic literature and European policy documents – the studies investigating these aspects in more detail are scarce, especially in English language literature. Therefore, the case studies carried out within the CoRe project will aim to address the issue of competence development from a systemic perspective.

3   SEEPRO study

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3.1   Introduction

In line with the requirements of the Commission, as detailed in the 'Terms of Reference', two of the six objectives of the research project are:

- To provide a summary of the competences that countries require their ECEC staff to possess, based on definitions in relevant national legislations and policy documents.

- To provide a description of competences taught in a geographically balanced sample of training programmes that lead to the qualifications required for work in ECEC services.

Since we see CoRe situated in a wider research context, we decided to build on previous research to support our approach to these objectives. Pamela Oberhuemer (Staatsinstitut für Frühpädagogik, Munich), who supported CoRe as a member of the expert advisory team, agreed to provide a concise report that linked the main findings of the recent SEEPRO project to the CoRe objectives.[5] Since the SEEPRO study is mainly focused on training profiles, additional data seemed necessary to contribute to the European debate about competence requirements for ECEC staff. Therefore it was deemed necessary to conduct a survey that mapped the diverse positions countries can adopt towards competence profiles for the profession and for the initial training as well as towards the relations between them. (See next chapter.)
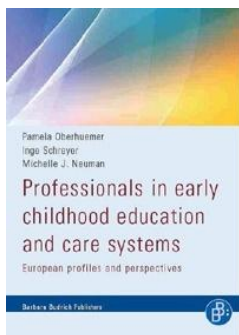
The **SEEPRO study** (**S**ystems of **E**arly **E**ducation/care and **Pro**fessionalisation in Europe), initiated and co-ordinated by Pamela Oberhuemer, focused on qualification requirements for working in early childhood settings in the 27 countries of the European Union. The research was based at the Bavarian State Institute of Early Childhood Research in Munich and received funding from the German Federal Ministry for Family and Youth Affairs (2007-2009). The initial focus was on the countries which joined the European Union in 2004 and 2007 (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Romania, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia). In a second step, the country profiles of an earlier IFP study in the EU15 (Oberhuemer & Ulich, 1997) were revised in close co-operation with national experts. The outcomes of the project were published in 2010 in English and German as: Oberhuemer, P., Schreyer, I., & Neuman, M.J. (2010). *Professionals in early childhood education and care systems. European profiles and perspectives.* Opladen & Farmington Hills, MI: Barbara Budrich.

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[5] A similar version of this paper is to appear in:
Linda Miller, Carmen Dalli & Mathias Urban (Eds.) (forthcoming). *Towards a Critical Ecology of the Profession: Early childhood grows up*. Dordrecht and London: Springer.

The SEEPRO interviews and exchanges with national experts revealed that European-level goals and targets for higher education and vocational education have generated a number of restructurings of the national qualification systems for work in the early childhood field (Oberhuemer, Schreyer & Neuman, 2010). Although the impact of the Bologna process has been significant, during the data collation phase of our study (2007-09), national strategies for including training routes for the early years in the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning were mostly at an early stage of development. Unless directly asked, country experts did not refer to this framework. It would be interesting to learn to what extent the professional competence profiles identified in the CoRe survey were part of these overall reforms of higher, vocational and professional education.

In the SEEPRO study we tried to pinpoint both similarities and differences across and within countries, searching not only for tensions, but also for common issues and implications. In the following I will focus primarily on the formal qualification requirements and professional profiles for core practitioners only, in order to provide another perspective on the competence requirement debate. For this particular purpose, I have chosen to look at similarities and differences in 12 EU countries grouped into four clusters: three English-speaking or mainly English-speaking countries (Ireland, Malta, UK); three Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Sweden); three central/eastern European states (Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia); and three French-speaking or partly French-speaking countries (Belgium, France, Luxembourg).

3.2 English-speaking / mainly English-speaking countries

In the **UK**, the Republic of **Ireland** and **Malta**, the history of early childhood provision and professionalisation reads like a collection of unfinished stories, of fragmented and un-coordinated initiatives. In none of these countries has there been a tradition of a highly professionalised early years workforce in settings for children up to compulsory school age. Instead, there have been historically ingrained divisions between the education and welfare/care sectors, with only limited publicly-funded nursery provision in the education system.

Until recently, a Bachelor-level qualification (ISCED[6] Level 5) has been required only for work in mainly state-maintained pre-primary education provision (although not for work in the kindergarten centres in Malta, where the requirement is much lower - ISCED 3B/C). Provision for children below statutory school age - officially four in Northern Ireland, five in England, Scotland, Wales and Malta, and six in the Republic of Ireland - has been predominantly in the private-independent and voluntary sector. Qualification requirements for work in the various forms of private provision have traditionally been at a much lower formal level than those for work in the education system. For example, in Ireland and Malta there have been no specified requirements at all for work in the largely privately-run early childhood provision outside the school system. At the same time Irish teachers working with 4- and 5-year-olds in (non-compulsory) infant classes in primary school are primary-trained, but usually without a strong specialisation in early years pedagogy.

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[6] ISCED - International Standard Classification of Education - an instrument for comparing levels
and fields of education across countries, developed by UNESCO in the 1970s, and revised
in 1997. http://www.unesco.org/education/information/nfsunesco/doc/isced:1997.htm

A recent survey of the Irish workforce showed that 12 per cent of the childcare workforce does not have any accredited childcare-related qualification (OMCYA, 2009). A new set of occupational profiles linked into the National Qualifications Framework of Ireland aims to enable early childhood practitioners in Ireland to acquire an award as a Basic Practitioner in Early Childhood Education/Care at Level 4 of the National Qualification Framework (ISCED 3A/C). Practitioners can then progress through various stages to become an Advanced Practitioner at NQF Level 7 (ISCED 5B) or Level 8 (ISCED 5A), or to complete postgraduate studies for the award of Expert Practitioner (ISCED 5A and 6).These profiles for career progression currently have the status of non-binding recommendations. This is, however, expected to change in the wake of a new policy initiative which since 2009 has entitled a free year of pre-school provision for all 3-year-olds. The entitlement policy additionally requires that the leader of settings offering this provision holds a certificate in childcare/early education at a minimum of Level 5 (equivalent to ISCED 4C) on the Irish National Framework of Qualifications, or an equivalent nationally recognised childcare qualification, or a higher award in the childcare/early education field. It is also expected that in the reasonably near future the required qualification for staff in this position will be a Level 6 major award (OMCYA, 2009).

The restructurings in England include a new look at the graduate component of the workforce. Until recently, graduates with a one-year postgraduate qualification or a three- or four-year undergraduate degree leading to Qualified Teacher Status accounted for only around 12 per cent of the workforce in early years provision for children from birth up to school entry. Up to 2005, this Bachelor-level qualification was required only for those working as a teacher in state-maintained provision in the education sector (nursery schools, nursery classes), but not for those working in the private, voluntary and independent sector, where requirements traditionally have been much lower, even for those managing a centre. Building on research evidence from the influential, government-funded EPPE study[7] and driven by goals to create conditions for the successful implementation of the recent (2008) statutory curricular framework for 0-5-year-olds, the Early Years Foundation Stage, a new graduate qualification was introduced for work in the multi-professional children's centres - the Early Years Professional Status (CWDC, 2008). As yet there are no evaluation studies available which scrutinise the quality of the multiple pathways available for gaining EYP status. It is also not clear how this new qualification will sit alongside the award of Qualified Teacher Status. The declared political goal is clear, however: the proportion of graduates with a pedagogical qualification working in the early childhood sector is to be significantly increased. The qualifying courses are fully funded for those working in the non-statutory sector. Currently (2011) there are over 6000 qualified EYPs and 4200 in training (CWDC, 2011).

In terms of the professional profiles for early years workers in these countries, the following pattern can be identified: in the UK and Ireland, those working in state-maintained settings before compulsory primary schooling are mostly trained as primary school teachers, either with a specialisation in the early years (possible in England, Scotland, Wales) or not (generally the case in Northern Ireland and Ireland). It is a competence profile strongly linked to the logistics of the education system and excludes work with the under-threes. In the case of the wide variety of vocational qualifications for work in the non-statutory sector, the training is on the whole fairly

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[7] EPPE – Effective Pre-school and Primary Education 3-11 project. http://www.ioe.ac.uk/schools/ecpe/eppe/eppe3-11pubs.htm

specialised towards working with young children across the age range of birth to five, or birth to eight.

3.3 The Nordic countries

In contrast to the fragmented landscapes in the English-speaking countries, the development of qualification routes for early childhood staff in the Nordic EU countries – **Denmark**, **Finland** and **Sweden** – has been contextualised within a co-ordinated approach towards early childhood services. In Sweden this has (since 1996) been under the overall auspices of the Education Ministry whereas in Denmark and Finland responsibility lies with the national Social Welfare Ministry– although in Finland there are current moves in many local authorities to transfer this responsibility to the education office at the regional level (Onnismaa, 2009). This has led to a single structure qualification for the core practitioners in early childhood settings, with no dividing lines between 'education' and 'care', and in all three countries the higher education study route leads to a Bachelor degree (of three years' duration in Finland and three-and-a-half years' duration in Denmark and Sweden). Sweden has the longest tradition, with higher education courses at universities or university colleges starting in 1977, whereas the first university-level study routes in Finland leading to the award of "kindergarten teacher" (*lastentarhanopettaja*) commenced nearly two decades later, in 1995. All three countries adapted their degree qualifications (BA/MA) to the Bologna requirements at an early stage. Even in these neighbouring Nordic countries, however, the focus of the core qualification for work in early childhood settings varies considerably.

In Denmark the profile is that of a social pedagogue (*pædagog*) with a broad qualification for social work and pedagogical settings outside the education system, including early childhood institutions. In Sweden, the focus up to 2001 was on early childhood education and care (from birth to age six), but since then has been part of a unified approach to teacher education across the pre-school and school system, and early childhood professionals (*lärare för yngre åldrar*) may now also work in pre-school classes and the first grades in school. In Finland, the "kindergarten teacher" is an early childhood professional working both within a social welfare framework in early childhood centres and an education framework in pre-school classes for 6-year-olds.

Among the Nordic EU countries Denmark has the highest level of graduates in the early years workforce (60 per cent), followed by Sweden (50 per cent) and Finland (around 30 per cent). Auxiliary staff in Sweden are educated/trained at upper secondary level whereas in Denmark no specialist qualification is specifically required for those working as assistants, although qualification routes are available once one is employed within the field. In Finland, staff working alongside the "kindergarten teachers" may have a degree-level qualification as social pedagogues, but are more likely to have a post-secondary qualification within the health/care professions. In Finland, it is a requirement for a third of the staff working in any one centre (birth to age seven) to have a degree-level qualification.

Despite these well-ordered landscapes, a number of reconstructions are either taking place or being discussed. For example, since 2007 in Denmark – the country with the broadest professional profile in Europe – there is now for the first time a compulsory curriculum framework for the *pædagog* profession organised mainly according to areas of learning rather than individual subjects. The

introduction of the compulsory curriculum has led to course content for each area becoming more specified at the central level; the demands on the work placements (15 months) have become greater; and the spectrum of arts subjects that may be studied has been reduced. While still adhering to a generalist and broad-based approach, the new curriculum puts more focus on a specific field of work. For example, if students choose to specialise in the early years, they will now spend their third work placement (six months) in an early years setting and be expected to write a report on that particular field of specialisation (Jensen, 2009). Structural changes have also been taking place: the former 32 higher education colleges (*seminarier*) specialising in social pedagogy have been fused into eight large units and renamed University Colleges (*professionshøjskoler*).

In Sweden, a national evaluation of the unified teacher education/training scheme in operation since 2001, combined with recruitment problems across the education system and particularly for work in the early years, has fuelled debate about the present system of teacher education. Up to 3,600 new recruits will be needed by 2012 in order to combat the shortage of early childhood teachers and maintain the current levels of quality in centres. The fact that the new teacher education profile has resulted in a drop in the number of students wishing to work with young children is a cause for concern among experts in the field (Karlsson Lohmander, 2009). These issues and developments have led to a government proposal to introduce four separate teacher preparation specialisations instead of the current unified approach. Included in the proposals is a reduction in the length of professional study courses for early years teachers from three and a half years to three years; also, they would no longer be able to work in pre-school classes (in school) for 6-year-olds without an additional one-year qualification. Understandably, these proposals are controversial. In Finland it is also becoming more difficult to recruit graduates with a specific specialisation in early years pedagogy ("kindergarten teachers"), and in some centres there are currently no staff with this qualification – again, a cause for concern in the field. On a more positive note, the Nordic countries have some of the highest participation rates of male workers in Europe, particularly Denmark, where 6 per cent of workers in infant-toddler centres, 10 per cent in kindergartens and 12 per cent in age-integrated groups are men. In Finland and Sweden the percentage of male workers in early childhood provision is 4 and 3 per cent respectively.

3.4 Three central/ Eastern European countries

Three countries have been chosen to illustrate some of the changes taking place in the qualification routes for early childhood professionals in central/eastern European countries: **Hungary**, **Slovakia** and **Slovenia**. Whereas the qualifications system in Hungary has developed along clearly divided lines, with specialised and separate qualification routes for work in kindergartens (three to six years) and infant-toddler centres (birth to three years), the qualification profile for working in the age-integrated centres for 0-to-6-year-olds in Slovenia is that of an early childhood professional with a specialisation in pedagogy across the early years, including work with 7-year-olds in school alongside the first-grade teacher. Again, these qualification routes mirror the country-specific system of early years administration: in Hungary it is split between the Education (kindergartens) and Health (infant-toddler centres) Departments, whereas in Slovenia it is integrated under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. In the Slovak Republic the picture is again different, with kindergartens coming under the responsibility of the Education authorities, but no designated ministry is responsible for the

regulation of centre-based provision for under-threes; radical cuts in the early 1990s led to the closure of all but a few of the latter.

The required formal qualification levels also vary. In Slovenia, centre and group leaders are educated/trained at university for three years (ISCED 5A), and kindergarten pedagogues in Hungary at teacher education colleges affiliated with universities (ISCED 5B). The requirements, however, are lower for childcare workers in Hungary (a three-year post-secondary course, ISCED 4A) and for the kindergarten educators in Slovakia (four years upper secondary vocational, ISCED 3A). In Slovakia there are policy proposals to raise the requirement to Bachelor level, but the target date is not until 2020. At the same time, higher education courses specialising in early childhood education at Magister level (now MA) have long been established, but these have not been a requirement, and only an estimated 12 per cent of the workforce has this qualification. In higher education circles, both in Hungary and Slovakia, there is some resistance to the Bologna Process largely because of the fear that in introducing higher-level requirements for early years teacher education, the requirements for teacher education in general will be lowered to BA level instead of remaining at the traditional Magister level. In terms of work with the under-threes in Hungary, the very low pay levels, and the fact that the training route leads exclusively to work in a highly specialised field, tend to result in low motivation to undertake higher-level training for this profession; nevertheless, a BA-level qualification for infant care workers was introduced in September 2009, although it is not yet a requirement for work in the field.

The overall story line is therefore one of steadily increasing professionalisation of the workforce in these countries. It is only Slovenia, however, which has a highly-structured career advancement system that enables qualified early childhood pedagogues to progress to different levels of expertise (e.g. as mentor or advisory teacher). Such awards are permanent and do not have to be renewed, and they are accompanied by an increase in pay. Again, this is another region of Europe where there are considerable variations between neighbouring countries in the professional profiles followed and in requirements for work with young children

3.5   French-speaking / partly French-speaking countries

In **France** and **Belgium** there is a very long tradition of a professionalised workforce for those working in pre-primary education institutions for 2.5/3-to-6-year-olds within the education system prior to compulsory schooling. In both countries, these developments started around 1880, with France still having the highest formal level of qualification requirement for work in pre-primary institutions in Europe (a three-year university course, followed by two years of postgraduate professional preparation). In all three countries, however, a split system of administrative responsibility for different age-groups has led to fractured qualification systems. In France, for those working in the infant-toddler centres outside the education system, qualifications are generally of a high formal level, but traditionally with a focus on healthcare rather than pedagogy. The early childhood educator (*éducatrice/éducateur de jeunes enfants*) was introduced in 1973 and qualifies candidates for work with children from birth to seven in diverse settings outside the education system. Compared with the number of teachers in the *écoles maternelles*, however, this professional group is relatively small, and often with a less well-defined job profile. Nevertheless, the formal requirements

are high: professional training takes place at a specialist vocational college and the award is at ISCED 5B level.

In **Luxembourg** there has been a steady increase in the formal requirements for working in what is now called the "first cycle of learning" (work with 4- to 6-year-olds in pre-primary education and with 3-year-olds in early education groups) of the restructured *école fondamentale* under the 2009 Education Act. There is now no specialisation in early childhood education, however, and preparation for work with these two age groups is integrated into the four-year general teacher education courses at BA level; these include one mandatory semester of studies in another country. Core practitioners working with children outside the education system in childcare provision under the auspices of the Ministry of Family Affairs are generally qualified at higher education level in social pedagogy and special needs education. In Belgium, practitioners working with children in services for the under-threes are mostly infant care workers with secondary vocational level education, whereas the management staff are educators, medical nurses or social workers trained at Bachelor level.

The overall picture for these countries is therefore one of high formal requirements across the early childhood period (with the exception of Belgium (Flemish community) for work with under-threes), but with differing professional profiles and specialisations for work with young children before they reach compulsory school age.

3.6   Concluding remarks

Review of the qualification requirements for core practitioners in 12 EU countries grouped according to language or geographical vicinity reveals a mosaic of differently shaped component parts. Not only is there considerable variance in the formal level of the professional education/training required for work with young children, but also in the professional profiles pursued (early childhood professional, pre-primary professional, pre-primary and primary school professional, social pedagogy professional, infant-toddler professional, health/care professional).

The current variations suggest that there is no clear profile of agreement across Europe on the competence requirements for working with young children up to the age of school entry. Furthermore, they imply that there is a need for continuing research across countries which views diverse country-specific traditions as a starting-point for seeking out a "red thread" of common understandings of professionalism in the early years. The CoRe survey was based on this implication. The research explores diverse trends of formal competence requirements for the profession and the initial training in different country contexts.

4 Competence survey

By Katrien Van Laere, Prof. Dr Michel Vandenbroeck and Dr Jan Peeters (University of Ghent, Department of Social Welfare Studies)

4.1 Introduction to the survey

The following chapter presents the findings of a survey of formal competence requirements in early childhood education and care in 15 European countries. Drawing on the data gathered in collaboration with experts in the field in each country, the chapter then identifies and discusses key *fields of tension* that arise from the cross-national analysis of competence requirements in ECEC.

The aim of the survey is to explore competence requirements for ECEC staff according to official regulations in European Union member states. It builds on important and selected findings of the SEEPRO[8] and Care Work in Europe[9] studies concerning training and competence requirements for ECEC staff. Since the SEEPRO study mainly focused on training requirements and the Care Work in Europe study mainly focused on the early childhood care workforce (not on the early childhood educational workforce), additional data seemed necessary to contribute to the European debate about competence requirements for ECEC staff.

By gathering different professional competence profiles and competence profiles for initial training, we want to map the diverse positions that could be adopted towards these profiles as well as towards the relations between them. Consequently, the countries mentioned in this study are given as examples of the diversity of possible positions, rather than pretending to be representative. Therefore, we focus on diverse trends, rather than on the details of precise job descriptions in different countries.

The aim is not to give a comprehensive overview of competence lists in the entire European Union. Such a task would not be possible within the time and budget limitations of this project. Nor is the aim of this study to adopt a comparative perspective: as competence profiles are rooted in (sometimes disputed) positions of the early childhood education field in society, they are deeply embedded in local historical, social and political contexts and therefore comparison is not only impossible but also quite meaningless.

In conducting the survey that informed this report, we soon realised that it would be neither possible nor desirable to come up with conclusions on what may be the ideal competence profile or the example of best practice. Rather, it seems more useful to give an impression of possible choices to make, and of their advantages as well as disadvantages, as experienced by experts in the field.

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[8] Oberhuemer, P., Schreyer, I., & Neuman, M. J. (2010). *Professionals in early childhood education and care systems. European profiles and perspectives.* Opladen & Farmington Hills, MI: Barbara Budrich.
[9] Cameron, C., & Moss, P. (2007). *Care work in Europe. Current understandings and future directions*. London-New York: Routledge.

In so doing, we hope to contribute to a discussion on these positions and the fields of tension in which we have to position ourselves when thinking about recommendations regarding professional or training competence profiles for ECEC staff.

4.2 Methodological framework of the survey

4.2.1 Data base

In 2010-11 CoRe conducted a cross-national survey in 14 European member states and one European candidate member state. Countries in a geographically balanced sample included in this survey were (Flemish (Fl) and French-speaking (Fr) communities), Croatia (as a candidate state), Denmark, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom (England and Wales). In order to gather factual as well as qualitative data from each of these countries, locally-based but internationally renowned researchers were asked to work in close collaboration with the CoRe research team. This approach ensured that in-depth knowledge of the ECEC systems in the sample countries became available to the project. Indeed, the aim of the survey was not limited to collecting factual data on competence requirements laid out in official documents. We were also interested in the informed interpretations of local experts about the actual implementation of these profiles (frameworks, etc.) in practice. Consequently, the researchers were selected for their long-standing expertise in the field of early childhood education, for their previous active contribution to the four key European networks, as well as for their knowledge of both legislation and practice. The researchers decided autonomously how to collect the data (e.g. in collaboration with other experts from the local field, through focus groups, etc.).

4.2.2 Research process

A semi-structured questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was sent to the locally-based researchers, containing questions about the competence requirements for the ECEC profession and the competence requirements in initial training for each type of practitioner. The open-ended questions related first to definitions and requirements in official regulations and national/regional policy documents.[10] In countries where official competence requirements exist, we refer to them as "professional competence profiles" and "competence profiles for initial training" (see below for research terminology).

In addition, the respondents were asked to gather data about the systemic aspects of each type of practitioner according to official regulations: adult/child ratio, professional support system, non-contact time, salaries and unions. For the professional competence profile, the competence profile for initial training and the systemic aspects of the job the researchers were also asked to provide a SWOT[11] analysis as we were interested in personal opinions about the effects of the implementation of formal regulations in day-to-day practice. Consequently, the data are a combination of factual information and subjective, informed interpretations by the ECEC experts.

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[10] Regional means when a country has different communities and the responsibility for ECEC lies at community level and not at national level. In the survey the United Kingdom and Belgium fit into these categories. We do not take into account the local and municipal regulations. When necessary they are mentioned in the analysis.
[11] Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats .

The country reports produced by the experts served as the raw data for this study. A preliminary analysis showed us that the nature of the different reports varied widely. For example, some reports contained more extensive contextual information than others. This was to be expected, considering the limited time and lack of budget available to the respondents. Additional data were constructed through ongoing consultation via email and internet telephony (Skype®) between the CoRe research team and the local researchers. In this first analysis key issues and fields of tension were identified (e.g. position of assistants, individual versus collective responsibility, body of knowledge, competences oriented towards whom). They were presented to, and discussed with, the expert advisory team and representatives of the four key European and international professional networks. Consequently, a second analysis of the data was conducted with the focus on these specific key issues. Pamela Oberhuemer and Claire Cameron reviewed the data based on their experiences from SEEPRO and Care Work in Europe. The local researchers were then asked to verify the data; the results were again presented to and discussed with the expert advisory team and representatives of the four key European and international professional networks.

As a result we produced a descriptive *thematic analysis* of these expert reports, looking at overarching themes that constructed links between different country reports. We paid particular attention to those themes that highlighted the *diversity* of approaches, rather than generalisations about similarities. In a second phase, looking to identify themes of a higher order, we used the interpretative *phenomenological approach* as described by Smith (1995), in order to identify underlying fields of tension.

4.2.3 Terminology used in the survey

For the purposes of this survey, we analysed two types of profiles: professional competence profiles and competence profiles for initial training.

- **Professional competence profiles**: official regulations and/or national/regional[12] policy documents about the competences that are required for work in ECEC institutions (0-6-year-olds)

- **Competence profiles for initial training**: formal guidelines at national/regional policy level for training institutions delivering initial and qualifying training for the future early years workforce. These profiles include competence requirements. They do not focus on descriptions of the content of the training such as curricula, listings of subjects or study materials, but rather on the competences that students should acquire.

In the survey we refer to training institutions and ECEC institutions

- **Training institutions:** institutions that provide initial training/ pre-service training for future ECEC staff (e.g. vocational training institutions, universities, university colleges, etc.)

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[12] Regional means when a country has different communities and the responsibility for ECEC lies at community level and not at national level. In the survey the United Kingdom and Belgium fit into these categories. We do not take into account the local and municipal regulations. When necessary they are mentioned in the analysis.

- **ECEC settings:** early childhood institutions for children and their families (e.g. childcare centre, pre-school, daycare centre, kindergarten, crèche).

Considering the large variety of professional titles in the European ECEC sector (Oberhuemer et al., 2008, 2010), we distinguish and refer to three different types of practitioners in the survey:

1. **Core practitioners** (**CP**): the practitioners who work directly with young children and parents (as professionals, group leaders or heads of centres). We rely on the SEEPRO project that has identified six main recurrent profiles for the core practitioners (Oberhuemer et al., 2010, pp. 490-496):

- Early childhood professional = the core professionals in unitary early childhood systems study at higher education level for pedagogical work in early childhood centres for children from birth up to compulsory school age. In split-sector systems the level of qualification is sometimes lower.
- Pre-primary professional = the core professionals are educated/trained as pre-primary teachers for work with children aged three to five or six, i.e. for the two or three years immediately preceding compulsory schooling.
- Pre-primary and primary school professional = the core professionals are qualified at higher education level primarily as teachers for the school system, i.e. for work in primary schools and also in pre-primary settings for the two or three years preceding school entry. Study routes tend to be heavily influenced by school requirements.
- Social pedagogy professional = the core professionals are in the majority of cases educated/trained at higher education level to work not only with young children but also with school-aged children and youths and – in some cases – adults. The main focus is on social pedagogy/social work outside the school system.
- Infant-toddler professional = these core professionals are educated/trained specifically for work with the under-threes.
- Health/care professional = in some countries, core professionals working with under-threes have a health/care qualification. This may be a child-focused qualification (e.g. paediatric nurse/children's nurse) or a general health or social care qualification for working with people of all ages.
2. **Assistants** (**AS**): the practitioners who assist the core practitioner in working directly with children and parents.
3. **Family day carers** (**FD**): the practitioners who care for infants and toddlers in the carer's own home.

Since national strategies for including training routes for the early years into the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for Lifelong Learning are mostly at an early stage of development (according to the data of the SEEPRO study and the CoRe survey), we use the **International Standard**

Classification of Education – ISCED to describe the educational level of the initial training programmes. The current version, ISCED 97, distinguishes seven levels of education:[13]

ISCED 0: Pre-primary education

ISCED 1: Primary education

ISCED 2: Lower secondary education

ISCED 3: Upper secondary education

ISCED 4: Post-secondary, non-tertiary education

ISCED 5: Tertiary education (first stage)

ISCED 6: Tertiary education (second stage)

4.2.4   Limitations of the survey

The different competence profiles for family day carers are mentioned in the thematic analysis of the survey. The workforce issues of this part of the ECEC workforce however are very specific and slightly different from the issues of the core practitioner and the assistant working in teams of ECEC settings. Time and budget constraints did not allow for a thorough analysis of all these variations. The phenomenological analysis and discussion therefore do not focus on family day carers. Additional research is needed to gather specific data about competence- and professionalisation policies for family day carers.

In some countries out-of-school care is provided for young children who attend pre-school. Similarly to family day carers the workforce issues of these professionals are very specific issues and additional research would be needed to gather specific data about competence- and professionalisation policies for out-of-school care workers. In this survey therefore we focus on the competence requirements of ECEC staff who work in pre-school or daycare centres.

4.3   Thematic analysis

4.3.1   The presence or absence of official competence requirements in professional and/or training profiles

Early childhood professionals across Europe are experiencing rapidly changing work contexts both at the macro and at the micro level. Driven primarily by demographic, economic and social pressures, awareness of the advantages of a well-resourced system of early childhood services is growing, with beneficial effects seen in terms of family and employment policies, long-term education policy and also economic policy. Consequently, expectations of early childhood professionals are increasing and intensifying. A core theme emerging from the survey is the diversity of existing official competence requirements documented in the professional competence profiles and/or competence profiles or in

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[13] http://www.uis.unesco.org/ev.php?ID=3813_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC

initial training for core practitioners, assistants and family day carers. Four different scenarios can be identified:

(A) Nationally/regionally valid competence profiles exist <u>both</u> for the profession <u>and</u> for professional education/training

(B) Nationally/regionally valid competence profiles exist <u>only</u> for the profession <u>but not</u> for professional education/training

(C) Required nationally/regionally competence profiles exist <u>only</u> for professional education/training <u>but not</u> for the profession

(D) <u>No</u> nationally/regionally valid competence profiles exist, <u>either</u> for the profession <u>or</u> for professional education/training.

For each of these scenarios, we look at what experts have to say about the advantages and disadvantages of this situation.

> ➔ APPENDIX 2 provides an overview and references of all competence and training profiles for core practitioners, assistants and family day carers in the 15 countries.
>
> ➔ APPENDIX 3 provides a table of these four scenarios
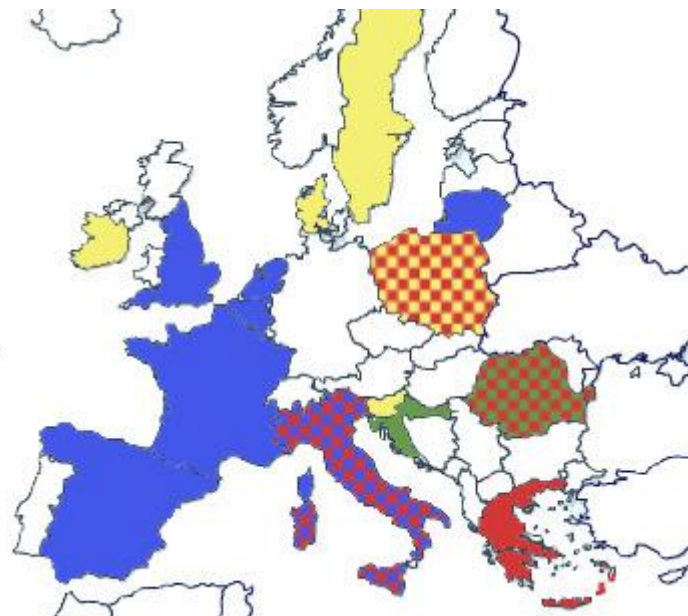
Source: CoRe

Assistants

- **A. Training profiles deduced from professional profiles** (blue)
- **B. Only professional profiles and no training profiles** (green)
- **C. Only training profiles and no professional profiles** (yellow)
- **D. No professional profiles and no training profiles** (red)
- **No assistants** (hatched)
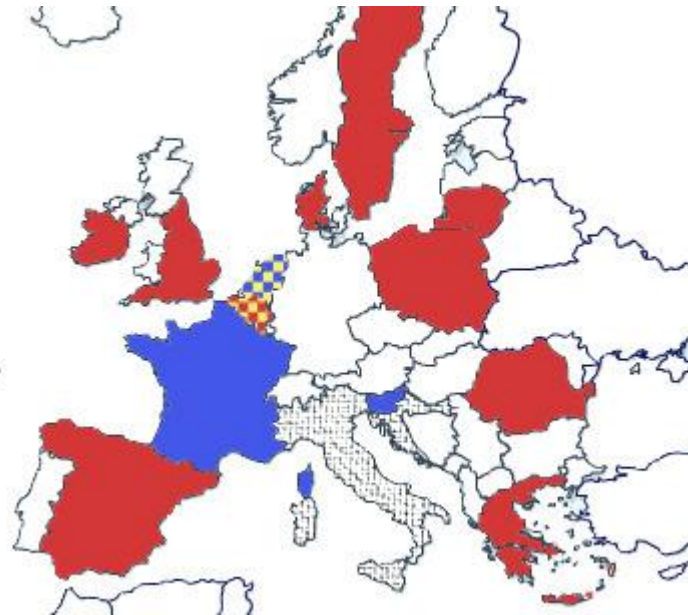
Family Day Carers

- **A. Training profiles deduced from professional profiles** (blue)
- **B. Only professional profiles and no training profiles** (green)
- **C. Only training profiles and no professional profiles** (yellow)
- **D. No professional profiles and no training profiles** (red)
- **No family day carers** (hatched)
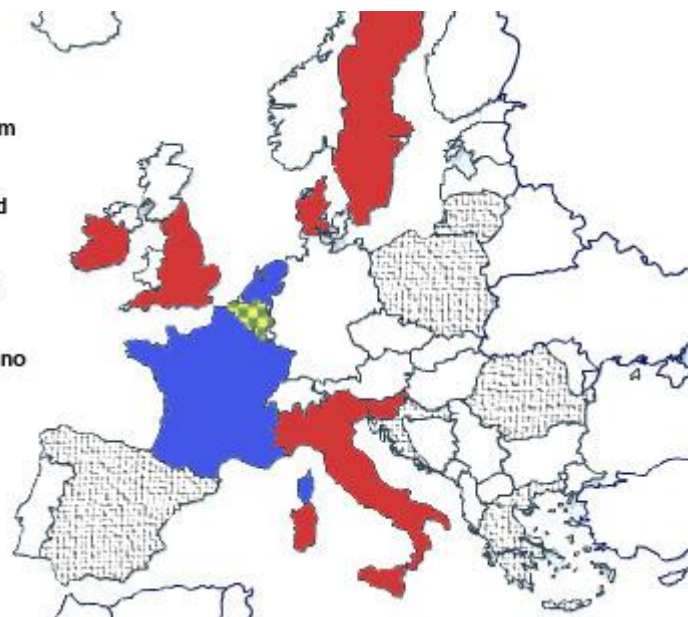
Most of the professional and training profiles are exclusively oriented towards ECEC staff. In Belgium, France, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Poland the professional competence profiles of the pre-primary professionals (ages two, five to six) apply to pre-primary and primary education in general. In Denmark the training profile of the *pædagog* (social pedagogy professional) refers to working with people of all ages (0-100) in a variety of settings. In Belgium (Fl) and France the professional and training profile of the *bachelor pedagogie van het jonge kind* and the *éducateur de jeunes enfants*

(pedagogue/educator of young children) solely applies to young children, albeit in different kinds of social-pedagogical settings.

(A) Nationally/regionally valid competence profiles exist <u>both</u> for the profession <u>and</u> for professional education/training

In some countries, formal professional competence profiles exist for core practitioners; they form the basis of competence profiles of initial training.

➔ **Core Practitioner**: the *kleuterleidster*, *de begeleider kinderopvang*, and the *bachelor pedagogie van het jonge kind* in Belgium (Fl), the *institutrice de maternelle*, *the puéricultrice* and the *auxiliaires de l'enfance* in Belgium (Fr), the *éducateur de jeunes enfants*, the *professeur des écoles*, the *puéricultrice* and the *auxiliaire de puériculture* in France, the *insegnante* in Italy, the *auklètojas/auklètoja in* Lithuania, the *pedagogisch medewerker* and the *leraar basisonderwijs* in the Netherlands, the *maestro/maestra especialista en educación infantil* and the *técnico/técnica superior en educación infantil* in Spain, the *early years professional* with EYP status and the *early years childcare practitioner* in the United Kingdom (England and Wales).

In Belgium (Fl) and in the Netherlands, the colleges that educate the *kleuterleidster* (pre-primary professional)*,* the *pedagogisch medewerker* (infant-toddler professional) and the *leraar basisonderwijs* (pre-primary professional) compile their own competence profiles for training. They are compelled to do so according to the formal professional competence profile that applies throughout the region/country. A similar tendency can be seen in the United Kingdom (England and Wales)**:** what core practitioners are expected to do is set out in the early years foundation stage curriculum and in the standards governing practice. Government agency guidance "considers the best approaches to play and learning for young children and clarifies the role of adults who support and enhance young children's learning".[14] What the practitioners are expected to learn (training competence) is how to "deliver" the standards and the curriculum. Agencies and universities, where practitioners are trained, are expected to show how they meet the criteria for delivery of the curriculum. There are no separate regulations concerning the actual content of the courses.

As a consequence, in these cases, there is continuity in competence profiles and a certain degree of homogeneity throughout the country, although local accents and diversity are still possible, according to the identity that the specific college wishes to highlight. In Belgium (Fl), because of the common competency framework, exchange between pre-schools and training institutions is stimulated. This facilitates the transition of graduates to their place of employment. The continuity between competence profiles also supports co-operation between teacher training institutes and the services that provide work placement.

Where training profiles are deduced from professional profiles, this does not necessarily imply that students are expected to match the professional competence profile when completing their training. In Lithuania, for instance, the Ministry of Education has defined criteria for a teacher education

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[14] http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/earlyyears

based on the professional competence profile of an *auklètojas/auklètoja* (early childhood professional). Teacher training institutions are expected to develop a basis for the professional career as an early childhood professional, rather than to comply with the professional profile. The defined competences in the professional profile are not expected to be solely acquired in the training institution but are also developed and improved during a teacher's working life. Experts have noted that in consequence it is unclear to the training institutions what competences teachers need to have on graduation.

Where training profiles are derived from professional competence profiles, there may be gaps between the required competences and the outcomes of the initial training on secondary level. In the Netherlands, for instance, the competence profiles for initial training of the *Groepsleidster Kinderopvang* (infant-toddler professional) are expected to be based on the professional competence profile[15]. Yet in the Netherlands there seems to be a discrepancy between the training profile and the professional competence profile. Research by Fukkink and Ruben (2010) concludes that the standards of the *Groepsleidster Kinderopvang* (infant-toddler professional), as formulated by the relevant official bodies, have not yet been properly incorporated into the formal curriculum, despite their mandatory national status. Whereas the professional competence profile is oriented to broad competences, the training profile is focused on competences for working with children: competences in evaluation, teamwork, and developing policy are largely ignored in the training.

Slovenia, the Netherlands[16] and France are the only European countries that have professional and training profiles for assistants. In Slovenia, professional standards and competences are defined only for professions with vocational training, not for the professions whose training is provided by universities. Consequently, the core practitioner has no professional competence profile, whereas the assistant does. France is the only European country that has professional and training profiles for both core practitioners and assistants, as well as for family day carers. France is one of only two countries with a professional and training profile for family day carers.

➔ **Assistant**: the *CAP petite enfance* (0-3) and the *ATSEM Agent territorial specialisé des écoles maternelles* (2,5-6) in France, the *Onderwijsondersteuner* (4-12) in the Netherlands and the *Pomočnik vzgojitelja* in Slovenia

➔ **Family day carer:** the *Assistante maternelle* in France and the *Gastouder* in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands the professional competence profile for family day carers is at the start of a new legislation developed by stakeholders, and recognised by Calibris. Calibris has translated this into a competence profile for initial training and into a programme for recognising earlier required competences. Stakeholders have also agreed to monitor and develop professional competence profiles for future new family day carers.

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[15] NIZW beroepsontwikkeling (2006) *Groepsleidster kinderopvang.* Utrecht: NIZW
www.calibris.nl/onderwijs/attachment.php?t=ksdocumenten...f. This profile has been replaced by the *pedagogisch medewerker*, a professional with more broad pedagogical, socio-pedagogical or socio-cultural vocational qualification.
[16] In the Netherlands the *onderwijsondersteuner* (4-12-year-olds) represent only 2.76 % of the workforce in pre-primary and primary schools.

(B) Nationally/regionally valid competence profiles exist <u>only</u> for the profession <u>but not</u> for professional education/training

In some countries, formal competence profiles for core practitioners exist, but there are no complementary formal competence profiles for initial training.

➔ **Core Practitioner:** the *odgajatelj/odgajateljica* in Croatia, the *profesori pentru învăţământul preşcolar şi primar*, *institutori învăţământ preşcolar*, *educatoare* in Romania

In Romania a new professional competence profile for the *profesori pentru învăţământul preşcolar şi primar*, *Institutori învăţământ preşcolar and Educatoare* (pre-primary and primary school professional) was developed with the intention to work towards a more comprehensive and reflective educational practice which promoted child-centred education and children's holistic development. This consequently required more competences for professionals, which are developed through a national in-service training programme within the *Early Childhood Reform Project* (2006-2011), the *Inclusive Early Childhood Education Program*me and pre-service training. The training institutes are expected to use the professional competence profile as a frame of reference. According to local experts it is unclear whether or not this actually happens, since training institutes are not evaluated on this aspect. In general, there is little connection between initial training programmes and recent policies in ECEC in Romania. In Croatia the experience is quite the opposite. Although universities are not obliged to follow the formal professional competence profile for pre-schoolteachers *(odgajatelj/odgajateljica)*, they do use this professional competence profile as a guideline for developing their own informal training competence profile.

➔ **Assistant:** the *Assistant aux instituteurs préscolaires* in Belgium Fr (2,5-6)

Belgium (Fl) is the only country that requires competences for the profession of the family day carer, but has no training profile since there are no official training requirements.

➔ **Family day carer:** the *Onthaalouder* in Belgium (Fl)

In the Flemish community of Belgium, the social economic council for Flanders (SERV) is responsible for the professional profiles up to ISCED level 4 (below Bachelor or Master). In 2001 SERV developed a professional profile for the core practitioner *Begeleider Kinderopvang* (infant-toddler professional) in collaboration with the sector and specialists. Since the family day carer is not recognised as a real professional (they receive no salary but an expenses allowance), SERV cannot develop a job profile for the family day carer. Therefore experts in ECEC have developed a professional profile for family day carers based on the SERV profile of the *Begeleider Kinderopvang* (infant-toddler professional). This professional profile was approved, in 2005, by the board of administrators of *Kind en Gezin* (Child and Family), the governmental agency responsible for childcare. The profile is communicated as a non-mandatory guideline for family day care services; it is not seen as a formal recommendation either.

(C) Required nationally/regionally competence profiles exist <u>only</u> for professional education/training <u>but not</u> for the profession

In some countries core practitioners have competence profiles for initial training, whereas professional competence profiles are non-existent.

➔ **Core Practitioner:** the *pædagog* in Denmark, the *intermediate / experienced/ advanced/ expert practitioner in early childhood education/care* in Ireland, the *Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego* in Poland, the *Vzgojitelj* in Slovenia, the *Lärare för yngre åldrar* in Sweden

In all these countries, the competence profile or training is nationwide yet each training institution has the autonomy to translate the profile into training courses. In the case of Poland and Ireland this is considered to be a problem by local experts. Owing to the large supply of Polish teacher training studies (*Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego*) offered by the different university colleges – especially by private institutions – the quality of preparing candidates for working in the kindergarten has been visibly diluted. Although the competences or outcomes for the Irish initial training for qualified early childhood professionals *(at – FETAC Level 5 and 6/ ISCED 4C & 5B)* are clearly laid out, the content differs from programme to programme. Some programmes may be highly reflective whereas others may be limited and highly directive in content. For example, in relation to diversity a multicultural approach is generally evident in current training programmes at FETAC Level 5 (ISCED 4C). This approach focuses primarily on the "touristic" elements of culture and lacks recognition and respect for diversity in general, and fails to address discrimination or power issues in Irish society and practice. A new elective module may address these gaps in the future. General concerns remain, however, about the qualifications of some trainers who deliver early childhood training programmes.

It has to be noted that in Denmark and Ireland professional competence profiles for the core practitioners do exist, albeit not in official national regulations. In 2004, in the absence of a Danish official professional competence profile for *pædagogs* (social pedagogy professionals), the Danish trade union for *pædagogs* BUPL (Danish National Federation of Early Childhood Teachers and Youth Educators) developed a professional profile. The aim of developing this profile was to provide the basis for a common professional identity, to raise the profile, social status and professional pride of pedagogues, to provide guidelines for development within the field of pedagogy, and to clarify and put into perspective the social significance and relevance of the pedagogical core task.[17] The profile consists of an overall competence (*being capable of acting and reflecting in relation to the development, care and learning of children, young people and also adults with special needs*) and six professional basis competences (*social and communicative -, personally and relationally -, professional-, organizational -, systemic- & developmental and learning competences*)[18] In 2007, this competence profile was adopted by the Ministry of Education for the development of the training profile of the *pædagog.* In the case of Ireland, a professional competence profile of the *Basic/ Intermediate / Experienced/ Advanced/ Expert practitioner in early childhood education/care* (early childhood professional) was developed and supported by the government in 2002. After nine years,

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[17] http://www.bupl.dk/iwfile/BALG-82XKAL/$file/Pedagogicalprofile.pdfhttp://www.bupl.dk/iwfile/BALG-82XKAL/$file/Pedagogicalprofile.pdf
[18] http://www.bupl.dk/iwfile/BALG-82XKAL/$file/Pedagogicalprofile.pdf

however, this profile has still not been formalised and implemented. Moreover it is unclear if and when this will be formalised.

→ **Assistant:** the *begeleider kinderopvang* in Belgium Fl, the *groepshulp* (0-4) in the Netherlands[19]

In 2001 the Flemish Ministry of Education in Belgium wanted to smooth the transition between childcare and pre-school institutions for children. For the youngest children in pre-school (2.5-3-year-olds), and only for limited hours per week, early childhood teachers (*kleuterleider*) get support from a qualified childcare worker (*begeleider kinderopvang*) trained to ISCED level 3B. Whereas these childcare workers have a professional profile to work in the services from birth to three, they have no professional profile describing the specific responsibilities and required competences for working in the pre-schools. Their tasks and position can vary depending on the actual school.

→ **Family day carer:** the *accueillant-es- d' enfants à domicile* in Belgium (Fr)

(D) <u>No</u> **nationally/regionally valid competence profiles exist,** <u>either</u> **for the profession** <u>or</u> **for professional education/training**

In a few countries, official competence requirements are non-existent for either the profession or the training of the <u>core practitioner.</u>

→ **Core Practitioner:** the *nipiagogos*, *vrefonipiokomos* in Greece, the *educatrice/educatore* and the *coordinatore pedagogico / psicopedagogico / pedagogista* in Italy, the *opiekunka dziecięca* in Poland, the *asistente de pediatrie* in Romania

It is remarkable that all of these core practitioners work in services for children from birth to age three, and that these countries all have split systems where the "care" of the youngest is separated from the "education" of the older pre-school children. A clear distinction is made between professionals working with the youngest children (0-3-year-olds) and professionals working with children from three to six years of age. Whereas the latter have a formal competence profile, no formal professional competence profile and training profiles exist for the professionals who work with children from birth to three.

In the case of Italy, services for under-threes are regulated by regional laws and municipal regulations. Some regional and municipal regulations do contain competence requirements for the profession and the training of the *educatrice/educatore* (infant-toddler professional) and the

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[19] In the Netherlands the 'assistants' represent a very small part of the workforce. No statistics can be found for the *Groepshulp.* It is estimated that this percentage is very low.

pedagogista. Very recently, regions or municipalities introduced job descriptions or professional competence profiles for the service. In the case of the *pedagogista*, half of the Italian regions[20] have introduced the professional profile of the coordinator and describe her/his tasks. Although these descriptions are more or less detailed, they appear to be quite homogeneous: orienting and monitoring the educational practices (sometimes documenting and evaluating the quality), coordinating services in the same area, coordinating the educational services with the municipal administration, orienting and planning policies for early childhood and families in the city. Most regional regulations are also quite strict in requiring initial qualifications. Some universities, for instance, have recently set up specific programmes (within the class course in Sciences of Education and Formation) in early childhood,[21] specifically concerned with the training of the *educatrice/educatore* (infant-toddler professional).[22] The competences which are assessed in evaluation of students are made explicit by each university in their own documents. According to Catarsi (2004), some common competences can be identified and clustered into five areas: cultural and psycho-pedagogical competences, technical and professional competences, methodological competences, relational competences and reflexive competences. The analysis of the documents produced by the universities shows that each university defines the competence profile of ECEC educators somewhat differently, with an emphasis on one or another area of competences. Generally, we can say that these specific university curricula aim at forming a complex professionalism. The professional profile that emerges is an educator able to read children's and families' needs in relation to social themes, and to give articulated answers; an educator able to develop new knowledge and put it into practice by reflexivity and adopting a research attitude.

In the case of Greece there are no formal national competence profiles for early childhood educators. One may come across such profiles in isolated cases of certain municipal daycare centres, but these profiles are not valid throughout Greece. Early childhood educators are of course always appointed on the basis of certain certified qualifications (degrees, knowledge of Greek language, computer skills, written exams in the case of kindergarten pedagogues working in public kindergartens, etc.). There is no written, formal and universal description of what their role and competences should be. Upon completion of their initial training studies professionals are qualified and supposed to be competent to perform their tasks in any early childhood institution. Initial training studies vary, according to the rank of the early childhood educator (kindergarten pedagogues/relevant university degree, early childhood educators/relevant technical educational institute (TEI) degree and early childhood educator assistant/relevant vocational training centre (IEK) certificate supplemented by a certification from the Organisation for Vocational Education and Training (OEEK), or relevant vocational high school (EPAL) or Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED) schools' graduation award). Each institution is entrusted to equip the students with the necessary competences to carry out their responsibilities effectively. The curriculum and content of modules in initial training institutes are defined by the general assembly of the relevant department and approved by the institute's council. Only recently has the European Union – through Greece's National Agency (IKY) – begun to request higher education institutes to specify in writing their

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[20] Abruzzo, Emilia-Romagna, Marche, Lombardia, Liguria, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Puglia, Umbria, Val d'Aosta, Veneto.
[21] This programme is named: *Educatore di nido e di Comunità infantili* (*nido* and early childhood communities educator), or *Scienze dell'infanzia* (Early Childhood Sciences), or *Educatore dell'infanzia* (Early childhood educator), etc.
[22] Macerata, Bologna, Padova, Verona, Milano-Bicocca, Torino, Perugia Firenze, Modena-Reggio Emilia, Foggia, Catania, Palermo, Salerno, Brescia-Sacro Cuore, Bergamo, Salerno.

learning objectives and outcomes, based on the Bologna Declaration. This request, albeit mandatory, has not yet been implemented in all Greek higher education institutes.

In most of the countries official competence requirements for the profession and training of the assistant are missing. We will come back to this in the phenomenological analysis.

➔ **Assistant:** the *Doelgroepwerknemer* in Belgium (Fl), the *Pædagogmedhjælper* in Denmark, the *Voithos nipiovrefokomou / voithos pedagogou* in Greece, the *Basic practitioner in early childhood education/care* and the *Community Worker –Employment Scheme* in Ireland, the *Auklėtojos padėjėja* in Lithuania, the *Pomoc nauczyciela* in Poland, the *Ingrijitoare* in Romania, the *Técnico/técnica Educador o Asistente en educación infantil* in Spain, the *Barnskötare* in Sweden, the *Nursery assistants/teaching assistants in United Kingdom (England and Wales)*

Family day care providers are another important but often "forgotten" group.

➔ **Family day carer:** the *family day carer* in Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Slovenia, Sweden, the United Kingdom (England and Wales)

It is noteworthy that there are no formal competence requirements for the profession and the training of family daycare providers in most European countries.[23] Only Belgium (Fl), France and the Netherlands have developed competence profiles for family day carers, but neither France nor Belgium (Fl) have a corresponding system to monitor whether family day carers actually acquire the competences of the profile. In Belgium (Fr), France and the Netherlands, and in some municipalities in Sweden and Italy, family day carers do have training requirements (Oberhuemer et al., 2010, p.503). In France the '*assitantes maternelles*' are expected to complete basic training within a period of five years. The training is expected to focus on four domains: development, rhythm and needs of the child; relationships with parents regarding their child; educational aspects of child care and the role of the caregiver; and the institutional and social frameworks for early childhood (Oberhuemer et al., 2010, p.156). Only in Belgium (Fr) do family day carers have a training competence profile.

To conclude, one of the findings of the survey is that many different systems exist within the EU, varying from clear competence profiles for both the professional at work and for the initial training to no formal requirements whatsoever. Even in cases where both exist, relationships between the competence profiles vary, making comparative approaches quite difficult, if not meaningless. Experts also differ in their position regarding the desirability of nationwide profiles as well as the desirability of tight relations between professional and training competence profiles. We will come back to this in the phenomenological analysis.

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[23] Countries like Lithuania, Greece, Poland, Romania, Croatia, Spain have no formal organised family day care

In short, we can conclude that there is a large diversity within the EU. It appears to be beneficial for clarity, continuity and professional identity where countries or regions have clear competence profiles for both the profession and training – even more so if these are connected. The downside of continuity, however, may be lack of innovation. Clarity may result in over-technical specifications, leaving little room for reflexivity, and a clearly defined professional identity may lead to a closing of the profession to influences from outside. Developing broad (rather generic) competence profiles that leave enough room for local interpretations and adaptations appears to be a viable option for dealing with these dilemmas.

4.3.2   Different understandings of competences

In those cases where competence profiles exist, a diversity of understandings of what competences actually are about can be noted.

> ➔ APPENDIX 4 provides an overview of how competences are defined and the place of body of knowledge in the different profiles.
>
> ➔ APPENDIX 5 clarifies to whom competences are oriented in the different profiles

Tasks: specific technical or broad reflective competences?

Where competence requirements are formalised in national/regional policy documents, they are elaborated in various ways. The required competences can be written in terms of tasks, in terms of standards, in terms of outcomes, in terms of attitudes, skills and/or knowledge, in terms of functions, in terms of subjects for study, in concrete or conversely very general terms. Overall, we cannot but note that "competence" is used as an umbrella term for very divergent meanings. In Lithuania, for example, competences for the *auklètojas/auklètoja* (early childhood professional) are defined "*as a collection of knowledge, skills, capabilities, value attitudes, approaches and other personal qualities that determine a successful teacher's activity*".[24] The professional competence profile of the family day carer (*Onthaalouder*) in Belgium (Fl) describes competences as "*the concrete and individual capacity of applying practical knowledge, skills and attitudes in practice, in order of a concrete, daily, and constantly changing work situation and in order of personal and societal activities*".[25] Whereas in the majority of the competence profiles the word competence is explicitly used, in some profiles "competence" as a concept is not even mentioned. In Poland for example standards in terms of general skills and non-technical general tasks exist for the initial training of the *Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego (*pre-primary professional) without referring to the word "competence". Since Poland started the debate on a Polish Qualification Framework, experts have experienced problems with translation and vocabulary. For example, in a special glossary translating English terms

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[24] Ministry of Education and Science (15 January 2007). *Order No ISAK-54 on the approval of the description of professional competences of teachers.* Vilnius.
[25] Kind & Gezin (2005) Competentieprofiel van een onthaalouder
http://www.kindengezin.be/Images/CompetentieprofielOnthaalouder_tcm149-44517.pdf

in the area of education into Polish "competences" are translated as: *kompetencja, umiejetność* (competency, skills) and "qualification" as: *kwalifikacje, kompetencje* (qualification, competences).

Concerning the training competence profiles, some profiles start from general competences (e.g. the *auklètojas/auklètoja in* Lithuania, the *Técnico/técnica superior en educación infantil* in Spain), whereas others start from subject-related competences (e.g. the *Pædagog* in Denmark, the *Pomočnik vzgojitelja* in Slovenia), or training profiles start from general and subject-related competences (e.g. the *insegnante* in Italy, the *Vzgojitelj* in Slovenia). In Denmark, for example, the official announcement of the Ministry of Education states that "*Pædagog students shall acquire knowledge, insight and competences to attend to the developmental- learning- and caring tasks that are connected to the Pædagog profession*".[26] Each of the many subjects offered[27] is elaborated in three competence dimensions: 1. description of the subject, 2. professional goals for the competence, 3. central knowledge and skills areas.

The majority of the official competence requirements for the ECEC professional are elaborated in terms of tasks. Tasks can vary from being very technical and specific to being more general and less technical. Some competence profiles in countries like Belgium, France, the United Kingdom and Slovenia describe detailed specific tasks. The competence profile of the *Begeleid(st)er Kinderopvang/Kinderverzorger* (infant-toddler professional) in Belgium (Fl) for example describes competences as "*a coherent pack of knowledge, skills and attitudes that has to be shown in concrete actions and activities of the childcare worker*".[28] The profile therefore has indicators for evaluating the actions of the professional. In the United Kingdom (England) the *Early Years Foundation stage (EYFS) Framework* contains the competence requirements for ECEC staff who work with children from birth to five years old. The EYFS framework states the following principles: "*i) Every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured; ii) Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person; iii) The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning; iv) Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of Learning and Development are equally important and inter-connected*".[29] The actual competences derived from the principles are rather prescriptive and technical. There is a move away from prescriptiveness (with the good practice guide), in line with the ideology of the new government. The tendency, however, is still to compensate for not very advanced educational requirements with prescriptive and technical requirements at practice level. The Care Work in Europe study points out that in this approach competence as a guiding framework for professional practice is a limiting and limited concept since an instrumentalist approach to occupational performance is prioritised (Cameron & Moss, 2007).

Some competence profiles in countries like Croatia, Italy, Poland and Spain describe more general tasks. An important general task of the *Insegnante di scuola dell'infanzia (*pre-primary professional) in Italy is "*implementing the process of teaching/learning aimed to favor the human, cultural, civil*

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[26] Undervisningsministeriet (2007) *Bachelor in Social Education.* Copenhagen.www.uvm.dk
http://eng.uvm.dk/~/media/Files/English/Fact%20sheets/080101_fact_sheet_social_education.ashx
[27] Educational theory and practice; Danish language, culture and communication; Individual, institution and society; Health, the body and exercise; Expression, music and drama; Arts and crafts, science and technology; Practical training; Cross professional cooperation
[28] SERV (2001) *Beroepsprofiel Kinderopvang begeleid(st)er,* http://www.serv.be/competentieteam/publicatie/beroepsprofiel-begeleid
[29] *Early years foundation stage (EYFS) framework (0-5 years),* http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/earlyyears

and professional development of pupils".[30]. In Croatia, the "Program guidelines for preschool education' (1991) and the "National pedagogical standard of preschool education" (2008) describe solely the general tasks of the *Odgajatelj/odgajateljica (*pre-primary and primary school professionals). The tasks are derived from a general vision of ECEC: schools provide humanistic-developmentally appropriate practice with respect for the children's rights and cooperation with parents. Regarding this last point the "*Teacher should cooperate with parents and professionals within the kindergarten and outside the kindergarten in order to insure and to improve conditions for development and education of every child that is entrusted to him/her*".[31]

Overall, existing competence profiles in the EU vary widely regarding the absence/presence of reflective and/or reflexive competences. Where the profiles refer to more specialised jobs, they tend to be more technical, whereas more generic job profiles tend to give more weight to reflective/reflexive competences. Whereas the term *technical* competence refers to knowledge, skills and attitudes to perform specific tasks, *reflective* competences refer to competences to reflect upon practice ("do I do things right?"). Some authors also add *reflexive* competences: they refer to the competences to reflect on the broader context of the work ("do I do the right things?") (Peeters, 2008; Vandenbroeck et al., 2010).

Body of knowledge

Many of the professional competence profiles and competence profiles for initial training include knowledge requirements. It is mainly the competence profiles for the core practitioners that describe knowledge requirements. Knowledge requirements for assistants and family day carers are rarely mentioned. The following types of knowledge are predominantly stressed in the profiles: knowledge of children's development and learning; knowledge of didactics and teaching methods; knowledge of different teaching subjects; knowledge of children's rights; knowledge of the ECEC system and regulations; knowledge of children's hygiene, health, nutrition and safety. Whereas the body of knowledge is predominantly narrowed down to knowledge about the education and care of children, some profiles mention knowledge in broader fields including, for instance, parent participation and teamwork.

Some tensions can be distinguished in the use of the concept of "knowledge". The professional competence profiles of the *Odgajatelj/odgajateljica (*Pre-primary and primary school professionals) in Croatia and the *Professeur des écoles (*Pre-primary and primary school professionals) in France, and the training competence profile of the *Vzgojitelj (*Early childhood professional) in Slovenia, state that professionals should innovate and improve their practice by keeping their professional knowledge up to date. Unlike the professional competence profile of the *Kleuterleid(st)er* (pre-primary professional) in Belgium (Fl) that is valid for students and early childhood teachers. One differentiation is explicitly made in the professional profile for these two groups. Whereas the future early childhood teachers / students need to acquire sufficient knowledge to meet the competence requirements of the professional profile, there is no requirement for the experienced early childhood

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[30] *Decreto Ministeriale 26 maggio 1998,* http://attiministeriali.miur.it/anno-1998/maggio/dm-26051998.aspx
[31] Ministar Prošvjete I Sporta (2008) *Drzavni pedagoski standard predskolskog odgoja i obrazovanja.,* http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?sec=2195

teacher to develop new knowledge to meet the competence requirements of the professional profile.

Some profiles differentiate between "theoretical" and "practical" knowledge. The professional competence profile of the *Técnico/técnica superior en educación infantile* (infant-toddler professional) in Spain and the training profiles of the *Pomočnik vzgojitelja* (early childhood assistant) and the *Vzgojitelj (*early childhood professional) in Slovenia, accentuate the importance of both. In Belgium (Fl) the professional competence profile of the family day carer (*onthaalouder)* is based on the professional competence profile of the *Begeleid(st)er Kinderopvang/Kinderverzorger* (early childhood professional)*.* It is remarkable, however, that the profile of the family day carer stresses that a family day carer only needs practical knowledge, and definitely not theoretical knowledge. The early childhood professional, on the other hand, does need general theoretical knowledge as well as practical knowledge. The interviewed ECEC expert of the French community of Belgium questions the artificial boundary between theoretical and practical knowledge. The training competence profiles for the *puéricultrice* (Fr) and *auxiliaires de l'enfance* (Fr) (infant-toddler professional) only require basic theoretical knowledge of different psycho-pedagogical disciplines. The perspective that besides being theoretical knowledge can be practice-based (by co-constructing practice with children, parents and team), situated and contextualised is missing. The new competence profile for initial training of the *bachelor pedagogie van het jonge kind* (infant-toddler professional/ social pedagogogy professional, ISCED 5B) in Belgium (Fl) is an inspiring example of a more dynamic, complex relation between theoretical and practical knowledge. This new professional has an innovating role in the ECEC settings since *"he/she needs to build new pedagogical knowledge by analyzing practice in team and connecting this with research"*.

Competences oriented towards whom?

Since ECEC is a social practice and embedded in local society, we analysed whether competences are oriented towards the micro- (relations children-parents-professionals), meso- (relations policy ECEC setting) or exosystem (relations (local) society). This differentiation is based on the ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979), and is further elaborated in the concept of a "critical ecology of the profession" (Miller, Dalli & Urban, forthcoming).

Professional profile core practitioners

- Competences are dominantly oriented on children
- Focus on children, parents and professional self
- Focus on children, parents and society
- Focus on children, team and professional self
- Focus on children and society
- No professional profiles

Training profile core practitioners

- Competences are dominantly oriented on children
- Focus on children, parents and professional self
- Focus on children, parents and society
- Focus on children, team and professional self
- Focus on children and society
- No training profiles

The majority of the competence profiles are oriented towards the *micro system* of children's learning, well-being and development. The official competence requirements for the *Maestro/maestra especialista en educación infantile* (early childhood professional) in Spain state that the professional has "*a guidance role in integrating the pupil into the group of classmates and the*

adaptation in the school. They provide academic and professional guidance and prevent learning difficulties of children".[32]

The perspective of competences of parents and families is less developed in most of the competence profiles or limited to a more instrumental role of parents, rather than their democratic participation in the co-construction of ECEC. In Poland the competences described in the standards for teacher training (*Nauczyciel przedszkolny*) are mainly oriented towards children. "Additionally" teachers should be also prepared for: "*cooperation with pupils and teachers, pupils' family environment and with social outside school environment in the realization of the educational tasks*".[33] In Spain, too, the professional competence profile of the *Maestro/maestra especialista en educación infantil* (early childhood professional, ISCED 5A) is mainly oriented towards children (see above). The competence profile for the *Técnico/técnica superior en educación infantil* (infant-toddler professional, ISCED 4A) is focused on creating a safe environment for children in partnership with families. These educators, however, work in the same early childhood education centres (*Escuela de educación infantil,* 0-6-year-olds).

Many competence profiles stress communicative competences, including communication with parents, but the relationship with parents is consequently often instrumentalised for the benefit of children's development. In the professional competence profile of the *Kleuterleid(st)er* (pre-primary professional) in Belgium (Fl) one of the main roles of the professional is to be a partner of parents or caregivers. This role is translated into six general tasks with the focus on informing and communicating with parents about children's development, and talking about the support parents need to provide at home. In the professional competence profile of the *Groepsleidster Kinderopvang* (infant-toddler professional) in the Netherlands, the professional is, on the one hand, expected to be open and non-judgmental towards the values and norms of parents. On the other hand, the main focus lies in informing parents about the rules and working principles of the ECEC setting. "*In cases of restlessness and irritability of parents, the professional remains calm and has a convincing attitude…She speaks to parents in a quiet, non-judgmental way about their behaviour, if it goes against the generally accepted norms. The professional points out to the parents what the consequences of their behaviour are for her and for the children*".[34] The professional competence profile of the *Professeur des écoles (*pre-primary and primary education professional) in France is predominantly focused on supporting the social, civic, language and general competence development of the children. Respecting parents and collaboration is mentioned in terms of "*promoting parents who engage themselves in the school[35]*". Knowledge about parental boards is therefore required. This implies that the professional has no responsibility towards daily collaboration with all parents, and parents who do not actively and formally (parent board) participate in schools are not considered.

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[32] http://sauce.pntic.mec.es/~jsanto5/legisla/legislatio/loe.htm
[33] http://bip.men.gov.pl/index.php?option=com_wrapper&view=wrapper&Itemid=50
http://bip.men.gov.pl/men_bip/akty_pr_1997-2006/rozp_302_1.doc
[34] NIZW beroepsontwikkeling (2006) *Groepsleidster kinderopvang.* Utrecht: NIZW, p. 21.
www.calibris.nl/onderwijs/attachment.php?t=ksdocumenten...f. This profile has been replaced by the *pedagogisch medewerker*, a professional with more broad pedagogical, socio-pedagogical or socio-cultural vocational qualification.
[35] Ministère de l'Education Nationale, *Les compétences professionnelles des maîtres* Bulletin Officiel n°1 du 04 – 01 – 2007 complété par le Bulletin officiel n° 32 du 3 septembre 2009, circulaire n° 2009-098 du 17 – 8 – 2009.
http://sceco.paris.iufm.fr/IMG/pdf/Recapitulatif_des_ompetences_profs_2007_.pdf

In these circumstances, one can hardly consider communicative competences with parents as reciprocal collaboration. It is indeed harder to find competence profiles (such as the local training competence profile of the *educatori* in Italy) that refer to competences related to children and their families in collaborative terms. In the competence profiles of the *Éducatrice/éducateur de jeunes enfants (*early childhood professional /social pedagogy professional, ISCED 5B), and the new competence profiles of the *bachelor pedagogie van het jonge kind* (infant-toddler professional /social pedagogogy professional, ISCED 5B) in Belgium (Fl), the competences are equally oriented towards children and their families. Professionals ensure continuity between the home environment and the childcare environment, so that parents and children feel recognised. The professionals and parents co-construct a social-pedagogical approach and project for the child. They build a trusting relationship and respect parents in their parental role. They are capable of connecting their own professional expertise with the expertise of parents. Moreover, the professional enables parents to meet and share experiences in the daycare centre.

Besides the relation with children and parents, many profiles describe competences concerning collaboration with the *meso system* of colleagues and competences in team work. In some profiles these competences are accentuated and seen as crucial.[36]. It is remarkable, however, that in the case of Slovenia the professional competence profile of the early childhood assistant (*Pomočnik vzgojitelja)* has more competence requirements concerning collaboration than the initial training competence profile of the early childhood educator (*Vzgojitelj*[37]).

Some competence profiles (e.g. the *kleuterleidster* and the *bachelor pedagogie van het jonge kind* in Belgium (Fl), the *Pædagog* in Denmark*,* the *insegnanti* in Italy, the *Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego in Poland**,*** the *profesori pentru învăţământul preşcolar şi primar*, *institutori învăţământ preşcolar*, *educatoare* in Romania, the *Técnico/técnica superior en educación infantil* in Spain, the *éducateur de jeunes enfants* in France, the *Lärare för yngre åldrar in* Sweden) mention the *exo system* of the societal responsibility of an ECEC educator. In some profiles like the *kleuterleidster* (pre-primary professional) in Belgium (Fl), the *Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego* (pre-primary professional) in Poland**,** the *profesori pentru învăţământul preşcolar şi primar, institutori învăţământ preşcolar, educatoare* (the pre-primary and primary school professional) in Romania these competences are more general in nature and are less clear about what exactly they mean. No specific tasks for example are connected to this level, unlike the level of the child. In contrast, the training profile of the *Lärare för yngre åldrar* (early childhood professional) in Sweden describes the professional role as follows: "*Professionals need to impart and establish the basic values of society and democracy. They need to counteract discrimination and other degrading treatment of children and pupils. Professionals need to become familiar with, analyse and take a position on universal matters, ecological living conditions and changes in the world. Moreover they need to realize the importance of gender differences in teaching situations*".[38] The competence profile of the *bachelor pedagogie van het jonge kind* (infant-toddler professional /social pedagogogy professional) in Belgium (Fl) states that "*the professional outreaches in local society and collaborates with external organisations. They follow societal evolutions and can see the social relevance of their professional*

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[36] The *Pomočnik vzgojitelja* (assistant) and the *Vzgojitelj* in Slovenia, the professional competence profile of both *educatori* and *insegnanti* in Italy, the *Onderwijsondersteuner* (assistant) in the Netherlands, the *bachelor pedagogie van het jonge kind* in Belgium, the *Éducatrice/éducateur de jeunes enfants,* the *Auxiliaire de puériculture* and the *Assistant CAP petite enfance* in France.

[37] The *Vzgojitelj* has no professional competence profile, unlike the *Pomočnik vzgojitelja.*

[38] *Degree Ordinance by the Government, p. 9.*
http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/08/45/66/ae3126e1.pdf

activities".[39] These profiles concern the critical role professionals have in changing societies. Professionals need critical-reflexive competences to reflect on the broader context of the work ("do I do the right things?") (Vandenbroeck, 2010). The societal role can also be approached as confirming the existing societal structures. The professional competence profile of the *Professeur des écoles (*pre-primary and primary school professionals) in France, for example, accentuates the civic competences children need to develop. Therefore professionals need to "*share the values of the French republic with children and parents*".[40]

All the formal national competence profiles start from the responsibility of the individual professional. From that perspective, nearly all competence profiles emphasise the responsibility of the ECEC educator for his/her own professional development. In the professional competence profile of the Croatian early childhood professional (*Odgajatelj/odgajateljica*), the Spanish infant-toddler professional (*Técnico/técnica superior en educación infantile),* the Dutch infant-toddler professional *(Leidster kinder centra)* and the Danish *Pædagog* (social pedagogy professional) this is a crucial segment.

Who was involved in the construction of profiles?

A diversity of approaches exists regarding the extent to which competence profiles are co-constructed by policymakers, training institutions and/or practitioners. In some countries (e.g. Croatia, Belgium (Fl), the Netherlands and Ireland), the competence profiles are constructed in dialogue with training institutions, other Ministries and representatives of the ECEC sector (such as trade unions). In Belgium (Fl) university departments of educational science were a crucial partner in the construction process of the profile of the *kleuterleidster* (pre-primary professional). This process was based on an interactive paradigm in which the interaction between knowledge and context is central. The available scientific knowledge on competences is tested against the requirements of the professional field. According to the experts this was successful in terms of commitment and support of the ECEC field and the training institutions: the development of the professional competence profile of the *kleuterleidster* was a major impetus for the majority of pre-schools and training institutions to innovate their policy and programme. It needs to be said, however, that the implementation of a professional competence profile is part of a congruent quality framework for pre-schools: other investments such as the policymaking capacity of schools, personnel, coaching and career counselling need to be taken into account to create a higher commitment in the ECEC field towards quality improvement.

In Ireland the competence profiles of initial training are constructed in dialogue with the sector generally through a web-based consultative process for early childhood programmes at FETAC Level (Ireland). Training institutions primarily submit to this process, as well as other Ministries and representatives of the ECEC sector (such as trade unions). Even though the professional competence profiles for the *Basic/ Intermediate / Experienced/ Advanced/ Expert practitioner in early childhood education/care* (early childhood professional) are still in the process of formalisation, the model framework is the result of a long process of dialogue and consultation with the entire ECEC sector

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[39] *Beroepsomschrijving bachelor in de Pedagogie van het jonge kind*, goedgekeurd en positief geadviseerd door het Raadgevend Comité van Kind&Gezin op 16 December 2009.
[40] Ministère de l'Education Nationale, *Les compétences professionnelles des maîtres* Bulletin Officiel n°1 du 04 – 01 – 2007 complété par le Bulletin officiel n° 32 du 3 septembre 2009, circulaire n° 2009-098 du 17 – 8 – 2009.
http://sceco.paris.iufm.fr/IMG/pdf/Recapitulatif_des_ompetences_profs_2007_.pdf

from 1995 to the present. The consultation process undertaken to reach this point has been challenging and at times difficult, but resulted in a high level of commitment within the ECEC sector to resolve issues related to the education and training of practitioners. Moreover, Irish ECEC policy in general is developed through consultation. Research by Bradley (2010) shows that all stakeholders involved in the process value the multi-directional nature of consultation. They have the freedom to contact core policymakers on their own initiative, and discuss issues of concern and contribute to policy discussions on an ongoing basis. According to stakeholders, however, conflicts, different agendas and lack of consensus led to the characterisation of a competitive, conflicting, disharmonious environment which restricts policymakers' capacity to engage collaboratively in and work towards shared consensual policy goals in favour of young children and their families.

Another issue occurs in the case of the construction of the competence profile of the infant-toddler professional (*Begeleid(st)er kinderopvang)* in Belgium (Fl). Representatives of the ECEC field were thoroughly consulted by SERV, the official government body that is responsible for the construction of professional competence profiles. In this process SERV accented that competence profiles are dynamic and likely to change as society and the labour market change in time. Evaluations and adaptations of the competence profiles can be made in dialogue with the representatives. The experts nevertheless state that no evaluation has been undertaken in dialogue with them.

In conclusion, it is clear that competences may mean very different things and therefore competence profiles in different countries cannot be compared. This seems to have some advantages when competence profiles are considered as rather broad areas, including a body of knowledge, some basic skills as well as reflective and reflexive competences. It seems equally important that the competences are oriented towards children and parents as well as colleagues and the broader educational and social system.

Preferably, competences should be co-constructions involving experts, policymakers and practitioners. When the participation procedures are both very formal and comprehensive, however, the result may be that they are too time-consuming, leading to a lack of flexibility.

4.4 Phenomenological analysis and discussion

In these different contexts and within the different conceptualisations of a competence profile, we can identify some common issues that deserve closer attention, as well as fields of tension. The way in which countries deal with these tensions may vary according to the position they take regarding the relationships between professional profiles and training profiles. In this part we will discuss some of the more salient tensions and problems that arise from the analysis of the profiles.

4.4.1 Quality and competent staff: (de-)centralising responsibilities?
One of the findings of the survey is that many different systems exist within the EU, varying from clear national official competence requirements for both the professional at work and for training to no official national requirements at all. Even in cases where both exist, relationships between the competence profiles vary. Experts differ in their view of the desirability of nationwide profiles as well

as about the desirability of tight relations between professional and training competence profiles. In some cases (e.g. the *educatori* and *pedagogisti* in Italy), the experts affirm that in the absence of nationwide professional or training competences, a special relationship between the professional identity and the local social, historical and political context could be developed in some areas. When competence profiles are fixed and prescribed in a top-down dynamic, this may jeopardise the local dynamics that are essential to the quality of ECEC settings. A lot of municipalities and training institutions have a clear vision of quality ECEC settings and how staff need to work on quality (e.g. time for shared reflection in teams) without having official national guidelines. On the other hand, when staff competencies are a local responsibility, inequalities between the different municipalities and regions can occur. According to the experts some regions/municipalities in Italy, Sweden, Denmark and Spain, for example, can deliver less quality than other regions/municipalities. In 2007, for example, the World Association of Early Childhood Educators (AMEI-WAECEC, 2007) carried out a study to explore schoolteachers', educators' and parents' opinion on education for 0-6-year-olds in Spain. Some of the most relevant opinions were emphasised: the need for education to acquire a "State policy" level, the existing inequality between different autonomous regions and the high pupil/teacher ratio.

What seems to influence the implementation of competence profiles is the degree to which the competence profiles are negotiated with the stakeholders, including practitioners and training institutions. But even in these cases (e.g. Belgium, Ireland and Romania), this does not always imply that a competence profile automatically leads to more competent staff.

4.4.2 Quality and competent staff: individual versus shared responsibility?

Most formal competence profiles are oriented towards the individual professional. Although some competence profiles (Slovenia, Belgium (Fl), Denmark, Romania) also address issues of how the ECEC educator can function in the system (communication and collaborative skills), in the end it is still the responsibility of the individual professional to function in this system. Consequently, the competence profiles construct the idea that quality is the result of the sum of individual competences, and rarely develop a systemic view on quality in which competences of systems rather than of individuals are valued. In reality, as documented in the literature review, competences of educators determine the quality of education, along with other issues, such as support for the teachers of future professionals, stimulating the policymaking capacity of ECEC settings and leadership, personnel, coaching and career counselling. Investment in all of these areas of the system is necessary in order to create a congruent quality framework as a shared responsibility.

Formal national competence profiles most often start from the responsibility of the individual professional. From that perspective, nearly all competence profiles emphasise the responsibility of the ECEC educator for his/her own professional development. In the professional competence profile of the Croatian early childhood professional (*odgajatelj/odgajateljica*) this is a crucial element. Moreover, professional development is obligatory for all early childhood professionals regardless of their level of initial training (*odgajatelj/odgajateljica* and *medicinska sestra*). Through a thoroughly elaborated credit system, implemented by the government, early childhood professionals manage their lifelong learning process. By so doing they can advance to become "mentors" and "advisers". In Spain there is a similar tendency: continuing professional development is both a right and a duty of

all early childhood professionals (*Maestro/maestra especialista en educación infantil*). The educational authorities and educational institutions, however, need to enable this right and duty according to the law. Besides the individual responsibility of the professional, the educational system has a shared responsibility for lifelong learning.

From this systemic perspective, the Italian perspective on professionalism is an inspiring one. The Italian ECEC system has a national formal professional profile for the pre-schoolteacher (*insegnanti)* but not for the professionals who work in a municipal daycare centre (*nido)(educatore)*. The *nido* are regulated through municipal regulations that contain detailed description of the professional identity of the institutions, rather than of the individual working in these institutions. Competences of the professionals are included within the competence profile of the institution, albeit indirectly. The institution as a system is responsible for delivering high-quality ECEC. *Collegialitá*, cooperation, and participation are recurring terms in the municipal regulations concerning *nido* but also in municipal pre-schools (*scuola dell'infanzia*).

In short, it seems important that competence profiles reflect collegiality and cooperation in order to avoid leaving the responsibility for the quality of the institutions with the individual professional.

4.4.3 Quality and competent staff: responsibility of the labour market versus responsibility of the training institutions

Previously, we have pointed out that some competence profiles have been elaborated in a bottom-up approach, heavily involving the early years workforce. We have indicated that this participatory approach may result in a strong commitment for implementation. Yet this participatory approach may also lead to situations where it is the field (the actual workforce and/or the actual employers) which determines the competences instead of the training institutions. When competence profiles are elaborated solely as a result of the demand of the labour market, this may contain some risks. On the other hand, when training institutions elaborate their competence profiles completely independently of the labour market, there may also be counterproductive effects.

When competence profiles for training are to a large extent based on the needs and demands of the early years labour market, there may be a focus on continuity, rather than change. In the case of the Dutch *Bachelor pedagogisch management* (pedagogical management), for instance, the purpose is to train middle management (head of a provision). From an external perspective (outside the Netherlands) it can be observed that if the training is to a large extent geared towards the expectations of the employers (i.e. privately-owned consortia of childcare institutions), this could mean that reflection is limited to implementation strategies, rather than to critical reflection on fundamental assumptions of the pedagogical programme (e.g. the use of methodological protocols, or market-oriented terminologies of offer and demand, efficiency and effectiveness). In any case, training institutions operate in a field of tensions between the expectations of employers and the desire to train critical and reflexive practitioners.

In England, there has been a sustained focus on improving the quality of the early childhood workforce over the last ten years. Regulations state that the person in charge of a nursery for children under five will have a Level 3 qualification (ISCED 3) or higher, and that half of the rest of the staff have a Level 2 qualification (ISCED 2). The government's aspiration is that by 2015 all settings

will be led by someone with a Level 6 (ISCED 5) qualification and all other workers will be at Level 3. In 2010 a new Level 3 (ISCED 3) Diploma for Work with Children was launched, to include those working in a range of occupations related to children and young people, in which a proportion of the study time is shared, but the largest proportion is specific to a particular pathway, such as the Early Learning and Child Care pathway. This pathway has five units of study: (i) context and principles; (ii) promoting learning and development; (iii) promoting children's welfare and well-being; (iv) professional practice; and (v) supporting children's speech, language and communication. This could be seen as a (training and) competence profile, as each unit of study contains a number of specific milestones, such as "*Prepare an area within the work setting, explaining how the area supports and extends children's learning and development*" (Early Years Mandatory Pathway Unit 1 2009). Moreover, the diploma pathways were developed by the Children's Workforce Development Council, which is a body driven by employers that ensures employer "concerns, experiences and views directly influence workforce reform".[41] This means the Diploma is likely to represent what employers want practitioners to do in practice. This has advantages (with employers behind it, practitioners are likely to be supported to complete the diploma) but there are also disadvantages. The disadvantages relate to the competence-based approach, which details, in a prescriptive way, what must be done. It does not match the research evidence on the situational, discretionary, analytical and reflective competences required for complex work. In part this discrepancy comes from the rather low level – Level 3 (ISCED 3) – at which practice is set.

In some countries like Belgium (Fl) and the Netherlands it can be challenging to match the competences required by the labour market of an infant-toddler professional (*begeleider kinderopvang , pedagogisch medewerker)* with the needs and abilities of secondary vocational students. In the case of the Netherlands, therefore, many childcare services offer training for new employees because professionals who have just finished training are not able to work according to the demands of professional daily practice.

Even when training competence profiles are based on the needs of the labour market, this does not necessarily mean that all students are trained according to the same requirements. The competences or outcomes for the Irish initial training for qualified early childhood professional at FETAC level (ISCED 4/5) are developed in consultation with the ECEC sector. Although the competence outcomes are clearly laid out, the content differs from programme to programme. With the implementation of the "workforce development plan" the validation of course content becoming a reality (2011), and the implementation of the external assessors for quality assurance purposes (FETAC level 5 and 6, ISCED 4/5) the quality challenge will begin to be addressed and the sector will be moving in the right direction.

An interesting example of this tension is the actual discussion of the professional profile of the Danish pedagogue (*pædagog)* by the trade union BUPL, as reported by the experts we consulted. The profile was developed in 2004 and based on figures from the labour market, showing that the main area in which the pedagogues are employed is childcare facilities for children from birth to 10 years of age. In addition to the financial pressures, there is a growing pressure on early childhood centres to focus on academic outcomes of children and on "learning" in a narrow sense, somewhat

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[41] Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/, accessed 8/9/2010

neglecting the traditional more holistic view that used to be central in the pedagogues' professional identity. This evolution may jeopardise aspects of the traditional kindergarten philosophy such as the importance of play to children's development.

Experts' opinions on the need for labour market-oriented professionals differ. Although some experts point to the dangers (e.g. academisation or schoolification of the early years, lack of innovation and critical reflexion), others praise the benefits of the seamless transition from training to the workplace.

In short, a balance will probably have to be struck between the demands of the labour market (and of employers) and the role of training institutes as places of research, critical reflection and innovation in society. This asks for an interactive and co-constructive approach between training institutions and workplaces.

4.4.4   The invisible assistants

> → APPENDIX 6 describes the systemic aspects of the core practitioner and the assistant

One of the most remarkable findings of this study relates to *invisible assistants*. It needs to be noted that, in several countries, large groups of educators who work with young children and their families are not covered by any of the regulations regarding the early years workforce. Indeed, many country studies and international comparative tables look at qualifications of staff, but fail to mention the large proportion of practitioners who are actually working with the children and their parents. In all the countries in this study, except Croatia and Italy, staff with higher qualifications work in close collaboration with staff with lower or no formal qualifications. The group of lower or non-educated staff are considered assistants of or auxiliary to the core practitioners, pre-school teachers, educators or pedagogues.

Presence of assistants in the workforce: some numbers

The absence of assistants in international overviews is in sharp contrast to their numbers in the workforce. In France, Sweden, Slovenia and Lithuania, for instance, these assistants represent approximately 50% of the workforce, a workforce that remains invisible in much of the international literature. In Denmark 60 % of the ECEC workforce represents social pedagogy professionals (*Pædagog*) and 40 % represents the assistants (*Pædagogmedhjælper).* In Romania approximately 28% of the workforce represents assistants.

The Netherlands and Poland are two countries where assistants represent only a small part of the workforce. The *onderwijsondersteuner* (4-12-year-olds) represent only 2.76 % of the workforce in pre-primary and primary schools. In the Dutch services for the youngest children (0-4-year-olds) no specific statistics about the presence of the *groepshulp* can be found. It is estimated that this percentage is very low. In Poland it is quite difficult to estimate the percentage (perhaps 2 %) of teachers' assistants - they work only with groups of 3-year-olds, and not everywhere (very rarely in rural pre-schools). Similarly, no specific statistics can be found for Greece.

In the UK, the discussion about assistants is complex. According to the Labour Force Survey for England (Simon et al., 2006), there are almost as many educational assistants as there are teachers (281,000 vs. 299,000). This relates to education settings such as nursery classes and schools (this is not exact, as the statistics count primary teachers with nursery teachers and educational assistants work across all age groups). Within childcare settings, such as day nurseries or sessional care (preschools or playgroups), the LFS counted 128,000 nursery nurses, 101,000 family day carers and related occupations, and 51,000 playgroup workers. The category of nursery nurse includes practitioners with a diploma qualification and those with a lower level award or none at all. It is impossible to specify how many of the latter two groups are actual "assistants". What is clear is that the presence of the nursery assistants/teaching assistants has doubled over the last ten years.

Who exactly is the assistant?

Defining whom we consider to be an assistant is a complex matter. For example, in Italy in the services for under-threes, *Addetti ai service generali* or *ausiliari* do not work directly with children and parents but are in collaboration with the educator responsible for caring for the learning environment. There are also more hybrid cases where assistants, despite their lower status, are included in some of the planning and decision-making.

Taking into account that clustering professions is not an exact science, we select two criteria to distinguish the groups of assistant to which we refer in the survey:

(1) Assistants work directly with the children and their families.

(Consequently the profile of the Italian *ausiliari* is excluded)

(2) The assistant's main job is to assist the core practitioner, who has a higher educational level.

These two criteria bring us to the following group of ECEC staff in the different countries.

➔ **Assistant**: the *begeleider kinderopvang* (3-6) *and Doelgroepwerknemer* (0-3) in Belgium (Fl), the *Pædagogmedhjælper* (0-6) in Denmark, the *CAP petite enfance* (0-3) and the *ATSEM Agent territorial specialisé des écoles maternelles* (2,5-6) in France, the *Voithos nipiovrefokomou / voithos pedagogou* (0-6) in Greece, the *Basic practitioner in early childhood education/care* (0-5) and the *Community Worker –Employment Scheme* (0-5) in Ireland, the *Auklėtojos padėjėja* (1-6) in Lithuania, the *onderwijsondersteuner (4-12) and the groepshulp* (0-4) in the Netherlands, the *Pomoc nauczyciela* (3-6) in Poland, the *Ingrijitoare* (0-7) in Romania, the *Pomočnik vzgojitelja* (0-7) in Slovenia, the *Técnico/técnica Educador o Asistente en educación infantil* (0-6)in Spain, the *Barnskötare* (1-7) in Sweden, the *Nursery assistants/teaching assistants* (0-5) in the United Kingdom (England and Wales).

Roles and tasks of the assistant

Assistants generally have a lower status than core practitioners. There are few job descriptions or professional competence profiles, let alone competence profiles for training. Where descriptions are available, they are often framed in technical or "caring" tasks. In Lithuania, for instance, teacher assistants (*Auklėtojos padėjėja, no specific qualification*) are described as technical workers, who are in charge of cleaning the facilities, feeding children and other routine chores. In the Romanian nurseries and pre-schools, "caregivers" (*ingrijitoare,* no specific qualification) have to work as "assistants" alongside specialised medical nurses or pre-primary professionals. The caring staff are responsible for cleaning, supervising children, napping, snacking, and taking children to the toilet. In Spain the assistants (*Técnico/técnica o Asistente en educación infantil)* help the other staff to look after pre-primary education pupils, especially in relation to their hygiene and diet, their well-being and personal attention to children. In Poland the teacher assistants (*pomoc nauczyciela***)** support the pre-primary professionals (*nauczyciel przedszkolny*) in hygienic routine, dress children when they go outside, etc. In France the teachers are assisted by municipal employees or ATSEM (*Agent territorial specialisé des écoles maternelles).* The ATSEM work with teachers and assist with daily activities such as cleaning up and toileting. They may also assist the teacher in pedagogical activities with children (Oberhuemer et al., 2010, p. 161). In general, however, the ATSEM are regarded as technical assistants, who are not involved in the educational mission of the *école maternelle* and their educational competences are rarely valued. In England, a nursery assistant will usually work alongside and under the supervision of a nursery nurse and work towards an entry (Level 2/ISCED 2) qualification. One local authority website states that nursery assistants "would be responsible for planning and organising educational, fun activities as well as taking care of children's personal needs – for example, meal times and rests" (Wigan Borough Council, 2010). An "occupational summary sheet", however, published by the Children's Workforce Development Council and describing "all early years workers in day nurseries", only mentions assistants in passing, as working in teams with nursery nurses (CWDC, 2008). An educational assistant's job is to assist the teacher in terms of organising materials, delivering parts of the lesson to children with special educational needs, helping individual children, and helping with discipline. The focus is primarily instrumental.

In the Netherlands, the assistants (*Onderwijsondersteuner*), besides taking a supportive role in technical and caring tasks, are also responsible for pedagogical-didactical tasks. Because of the presence of the assistants, more individual learning processes can be initiated in the class. In France the assistants of the teacher (ATSEM) can support children with special needs on an individual basis. A recent large scale study of the impact of educational or teaching assistants on children's progress in schools (mostly primary schools) in the UK found, however, that the substantial increase in the numbers of assistants in recent years has not led to improved learning outcomes, particularly for children with special needs. Such children spend less time with teachers, and more with assistants, than other children. The quality of the assistant-child interactions was poor compared with interactions with qualified teachers (Blatchford et al., 2009). This study casts serious doubts on the merits of large-scale use of assistants to improve learning although they have a positive impact in some specific curriculum-based interventions, and can improve the general levels of behaviour in the classroom. Developing a professional identity can be problematic, too, for assistants. They see themselves as having a role in "assisting" teachers, and although they often have a broader remit around caring for, or taking an interest in, particular children (such as those with disabilities or behavioural difficulties) or particular settings (such as the playground), the skills, competences and

experience utilised for this work are rarely valued or articulated as part of a distinctive professional profile.

We can conclude that assistants are predominantly perceived as technical workers with caring duties. This has two major and interconnected consequences. First, it means that caring tasks are considered to be of lower status than education, and the educational value of these caring activities may be denied. Second, it also implies that a narrow view on education (as "formalised learning") prevails, resulting in a separation of care and education (including in some "integrated" or "unitary" services), and therefore undermining the holistic approach to young children's education. It seems that in several countries the assistant takes care of the physical needs of children which are considered to impede the real learning and therefore the "real" task of the teacher or educator. The assistant is then reduced to a technical helper without any educational mission; the child's education is conceptualised as separate from her or his caring needs. This decontextualised approach to learning may result in situations in which contact with the parents and the social education of the children (e.g. during free playtime among peers) is in the hands of the assistant and therefore even more removed from their educational value.

Lack of formal professional competence requirements

The thematic analysis showed that assistants in different countries have fewer professional competence profiles than the core practitioners. In Lithuania, Romania, Denmark, Poland, Ireland, Spain and Sweden no professional competence profile for the assistant exists. In Belgium (Fl and Fr), childcare workers (*kindbegeleider, puéricultrice*) with a secondary qualification can "assist" pre-school teachers (*kleuterleid(st)er, Instituteur/ Institutrice de maternelle)* for some hours during the week, helping with the caring duties towards the youngest children (taking them to the toilet, napping, snacking, etc.). Although this "assistant" has a professional competence profile for child care (0-3), the competences of this profile are not applicable to the context of a pre-school (*kleuterschool* or *école maternelle*).

Lack of formal training requirements

In most countries formal training requirements and training competence profiles for assistants are inexistent. Belgium (3-6), the Netherlands (4-12), Slovenia, Sweden and France have specific training requirements. In Sweden (with a compulsory school age of seven), the *barnskötare* complete a three-year upper secondary vocational training in childcare and leisure-time studies (ISCED 3A), enabling them to work as support staff in early childhood centres (*förskolan*) for 1-5-year-olds and in school-age childcare facilities. In Slovenia (with a compulsory school age of six), the pedagogical assistants complete a four-year upper secondary qualification (ISCED 3A) with a pedagogical focus on work in early childhood centres for 1-6-year-olds.

Lack of professional development opportunities

One of the results of this separation of tasks and the "inferior" position of assistants is that their opportunities to access professional development are often limited. Those with the lowest levels of initial qualification are likely to have little chance of participating in professional development on a regular basis (Oberhuemer et al., 2010, p. 497). In Lithuania, for instance, teachers (*Auklètojas/auklètoja*) have five days per year for professional development, whereas their assistants (*Auklėtojos padėjėja*) have none since they are not considered as "educational" staff. There is a similar tendency in Romania and Poland. Whereas most Spanish early childhood centres (*Escuela de educación infantil)* provide teachers (*Maestro/maestra especialista en educación infantil*) with non-contact time for planning and documentation, this is less usual for assistants (*Técnico/técnica o Asistente en educación infantil)* although they have the same working schedule. In Denmark no national regulations exist for the professional development of all staff. Where local regulations exist, they exist solely for the core practitioner (*Pædagog).* As a rule, the pedagogues attend a one-day course two or three times per year and every week the pedagogue has a couple of hours of non-contact time to attend meetings and analyse documentation. The assistant (*Pædagogmedhjælper)* has little or no time for preparation and documentation since this is considered to be the responsibility of the pedagogue.

In some local governments in Greece assistants (*Voithos nipiovrefokomou / voithos vrefonipiokomou / voithos pedagogou)* have a clear professional competence profile, yet their role remains less specified at a national level because the assistants are not yet established. Only early childhood educators *(vrefonipiokomos*) are covered by professional rights and a collective labour agreement at national level. Assistants are not in the same position, as the Greek vocational training institutes and technical vocational schools have not promoted the issue of professional rights for all their vocational training areas. It is very rare to find trade unions for assistants, but trade unions for the core practitioners are usual. Only Slovenia, Sweden and Denmark have trade unions. In Sweden and Denmark the assistants are represented by the union for nursery staff. In Slovenia the assistants are represented by the trade union of the pre-school community, the same as the core practitioner.

The absence of regulations on professional development for assistants perpetuates their role as the Cinderellas of the ECEC system for their entire career.

Risk of deprofessionalisation

The continued low status and low degree of continuous professionalisation of low- or non-qualified assistants may threaten the professionalisation of other, more qualified, colleagues. In 1997 for example, Denmark introduced education for pedagogical assistants. From 2009 it was called the Pedagogical Assistant Education (*Pædagogisk Assistent Uddannelse, PAU*) which is a post-16 upper secondary vocational course. The Danish Trade Union of Pedagogues, BUPL, for example, states that the introduction of vocational training for pedagogue assistants is a threat because it is a (n) (inferior) rival to pedagogue education. In Denmark, but also in France, there is a fear that budgetary measures could favour the influx of unskilled or low-skilled (and cheaper) assistants, reducing the ratio of qualified workers.

Possible inclusive approaches in ECEC systems and practice

Despite this general picture, some countries have shown that there are ways of dealing with this situation. Assistants in France (the *CAP petite enfance* (0-3) and the *ATSEM Agent territorial specialisé des écoles maternelles* (2,5-6)), in Slovenia (*Pomočnik vzgojitelja*) and in the Netherlands *(Onderwijsondersteuner)* have their own professional competence profile. This implies that assistants need to have a pedagogical and educational background in order to engage in discussions with core practitioners about their work. The professional competence profile states that assistants need to collaborate with the pre-school teacher (work as a team) in planning, preparing and carrying out the activities for children and parents and for the pre-school institution. In the case of Slovenia, teacher assistants are obliged to participate in five days of training per year. Moreover, the assistants and teachers are entitled to non-contact time to enable them to prepare, plan and evaluate activities in collaboration with the teacher. In reality, however, in many pre-schools teamwork is not as well developed as it should be. In these cases, the job of an assistant is often also reduced to activities like cleaning, maintaining order, taking the children to the toilet, etc. Despite the existing regulations, the assistants may be less involved in professional development seminars than the teachers. In many cases, the director sends the pre-school teachers and not the assistants. In some schools, however, training is undertaken together with all team members. A more interesting example can be found in Belgium (Fr), the Netherlands and France: all ECEC professionals, irrespective of their profile and qualification, have the same opportunities and obligations regarding professional development – in theory. In the Netherlands the assistants (*Onderwijsondersteuner)* are offered the same training opportunities as the teachers (*Leraar basisonderwijs)*. Some experts state that explicit attention is necessary to make sure that the assistants indeed realise those opportunities: when choices have to be made because of practical problems or a limited budget, priority tends to be given to the core practitioners.

In Romania, the plea for collaboration between teachers and assistants has been translated into a national Early Childhood Education Reform Project.[42] An integrated kindergarten-based in-service training programme has been implemented. The programme covers all kindergartens (*Grădiniţe*) in Romania, providing services to children from three to six or seven years old. The integrated programme targets all staff in the kindergarten with an extended curricular offer comprising seven training modules. All staff, in the Romanian case, comprises: teachers, managers, care staff, medical staff, assistants and psycho-pedagogical counsellors. The integrated professional development programme aims at promoting a new educational culture in ECEC. It enables all adults working with children to use coherent educational practices based on the same understanding of the importance of the early years for supporting children's learning and development. This reform project started in 2008 and the first results show that the assistants (*ingrijitoare*) and teachers (*Profesori pentru învăţământul preşcolar şi primar, Institutori învăţământ preşcolar)* are more likely to work together. Moreover, the assistants in the project feel acknowledged, valued and are more committed to the ECEC mission. For the first time in their professional career, they receive training, which is even more valuable as it is undertaken together with teachers.

In France a similar evolution is taking place. In daycare centres (*crèches*), there has been an increase in the number of unqualified or low-qualified workers (*Assistant CAP petite enfance*), expected to

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collaborate with qualified "colleagues" (*auxilaires puéricultrices*, *éducateurs jeunes enfant*, *puéricultrices*). Important investments are therefore made to establish a shared culture among qualified and low-qualified workers, including a common body of knowledge on child development, a shared vision on parent participation and shared methods, such as observation. During the sessions of the *analyse de pratique* (a method of analysing pedagogical practice), the different professionals are supported to share the same professional language. The low-qualified workers, however, experience some difficulties in fitting into this professional culture. The challenge for the years to come will be to integrate the low-qualified workers into this professional culture. In the pre-primary school (*école maternelle*) another challenge is apparent. The assistants (*ATSEM)* and teachers (*professeurs des écol*es) have different employers (the Ministry of Education and the municipality): teachers are employed by the education ministry, whereas the ATSEM are employed by the municipality. Common training and sessions of analysis of practice are very difficult to organise between core practitioners and assistants.

As teamwork among teachers and assistants calls for a common understanding of the work, competences need to be revised and more emphasis put on communication skills, interaction and working with others. This focus on teamwork exists in the profile for the Slovenian early childhood assistants (*Pomočnik vzgojitelja)* and the Dutch assistants of the pre-primary professional (*Onderwijsondersteuner)*, and to a lesser extent in the competence profile for initial training of the Slovenian pre-school teachers (*Vzgojitelj*). In Swedish services, teamwork is traditionally democratic, but sometimes this leads to blurred roles.

In Denmark, working as an assistant can also be seen as an important recruitment base for future pedagogue students. No formal professional education is required for assistants (*Pædagogmedhjælpere)*. Most of them are young people between 19 and 25 s who want to spend a year or two working before beginning their studies. The job is quite popular with young people because it is well-paid and it is a responsible job with children. Some of the assistants begin pedagogue education. In fact, most pedagogue students have been pedagogue co-helpers before taking up their studies. In 2009 a survey concluded that work experience motivates people for education: a pedagogue co-helper is five times more likely to start pedagogue education than a person without work experience in an ECEC institution.[43]

It should be noted that even in cases where regulations or workplace conditions give recognition to the position and competences of the assistant, the risk remains that assistants are perceived as being only technical workers. For these reasons, it is often stressed in Slovenia that teamwork, starting from a shared pedagogical vision, needs to be developed further in the future.

In conclusion, it is important to note that a large part of the early years workforce is often absent from international overviews and reports. In many cases these invisible assistants are framed in technical caring tasks, which not only devalues the educational side of care, but also narrows down education to learning. When they are denied equal chances of continuous professionalisation, as is often the case, they are also denied social mobility. The growing number of assistants may also pose a threat to the professionalisation of the workforce in general, especially in times of budgetary restraints. In response to this challenge, in some countries the systemic team aspects are emphasised; collaboration of teachers and assistants and shared training initiatives are seen as crucial.

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[43] http://www.ftf.dk/magasinet-resonans/nummer/artikel/arbejdserfaring-giver-motivation-til-uddannelse-2/

4.5 Conclusions

The early education workforce has long been in search of coherence and unity in terms of its professional definition and scope and level of training. This chapter demonstrates the diversity of approaches across Europe, which relate to a range of historical and contemporary national positions and debates that cover the complex terrain of how childhood is valued (Moss & Petrie, 2002). This study makes visible various fields of tensions and challenges in the early workforce:

- Most official competence requirements neglect the importance of a reciprocal relationship with parents, whereas in the CoRe case studies this is considered as a crucial competence in order to achieve high-quality, inclusive ECEC services.

- In developing competence profiles, we should keep in mind, as experts point out, that overly narrow, detailed and prescriptive profiles may also jeopardise the local dynamics that are essential to quality. When competence profiles are considered as broad areas, including a body of knowledge, some basic skills as well as shared values and reflective and reflexive competences, local ECEC settings and training institutions will emerge from these common areas but are free to develop and discuss the competences with students or professionals in their specific social context. When teams of professionals actively collaborate on competence profiles and competence development, professionals tend to be more internally motivated to grow and improve the quality of ECEC than contexts where professionals are obliged to follow prescriptive, top-down competence profiles (Hjort, 2008).

- Preferably, competence profiles should be co-constructions, involving practitioners, experts and policymakers. When the participation procedures are both very formal and comprehensive, however, the result may be that they are too time-consuming, leading to a lack of flexibility.

- Becoming an early childhood professional is mostly seen as an individual responsibility; the quality of practice rests with them. When systems and institutions share this responsibility, improvements can be implemented and sustained more easily.

- It appears that legal regulations regarding competence profiles do not suffice to enhance the quality of institutions. Other investments are necessary to accompany the implementation of competence profiles. They include support for teachers of future professionals, stimulating the policymaking capacity of ECEC settings and leadership, personnel, time for shared reflection, coaching, career counselling, and support for training institutions to develop their own interpretations and to support the teachers of future educators.

- There is a tension between the instrumental labour market demands for early childhood professionals and the furthering of knowledge in educational institutions such as universities required to develop the profession. Simply deciding what is competent and good enough for the market is unlikely to result in a developing and innovative profession fit for today's and tomorrow's children and families. The right balance will have to be struck between demands of the labour market (and of employers) and the role of training institutes as places of

research, critical reflection and innovation in society. This requires an interactive and co-constructive approach between training institutions and workplaces.

- An important finding of this survey is that large parts of the workforce are often absent from international literature or comparative reports. The invisible assistants may comprise up to 50% of the workforce. These – often unqualified – workers are predominantly assigned caring tasks. As a result of their different status and the split tasks, care may be separated from education, resulting in a narrow concept of education; and care may be regarded as "inferior" to learning. Moreover, the difference in status may deny assistants opportunities for professional development, which in turn can contribute to the perpetuation of their inferior position. It is a challenge in many countries to value assistants' role without devaluating professional status and the importance of qualifications. The survey reveals that options to meet this challenge may include shared training and team meetings to build up a common culture and language, as well as investing in pathways that enable assistants to obtain some form of qualification at their own pace.

5 Seven European case studies

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5.1 Introduction – case studies in the context of the CORE project

The seven cases of systemic approaches to professionalism and competence development portrayed in this chapter form an integral part of the overall project. The individual case studies presented and discussed in this chapter have been conducted by a group of internationally renowned researchers based in the countries of the respective cases. They are familiar with both the local and European context and the wider international picture.

The purpose of the case studies in the context of CORE is to cast light on illustrative examples and practices that support the development of competence and professionalism in early childhood. In the context of the project, the case studies complement the discussion on competence requirements and professional preparation across Europe in the previous chapter. The chapter is structured in four sections:

- Sample for the case studies
- Methodological considerations
- Thematic analysis of the data
- Discussion of findings

As the aim of the case studies is to gain in-depth understanding of the background, dynamics, success factors and challenges of *specific* practices in their specific context – rather than comparing cases cross-nationally – both the thematic analysis and the discussion of findings are oriented towards highlighting the diversity of processes and approaches in early childhood professionalism.

5.2 Sample for the case studies

The following cases, situated in seven European countries, form the sample for the study:

- *Professional preparation of Éducateurs Jeunes Enfants (EJE) and apprenticeship for auxiliaires de puériculture*
  Ecole Santè Social Sud Est - Lyon, France
- *The Integrated Qualifications Framework and the Early Years Professional Status: a shift towards a graduate led workforce*
  England
- *Pedagogical Guidance as pathway to professionalisation*
  City of Ghent, Belgium

- *Inter-professional collaboration in pre-school and primary school contexts*
  Slovenia
- *The Danish Pedagogue Education: principles, understandings and transformations of a generalist approach to professionalism*
  Paedagoguddanelsen JYDSK, VIA University College - Denmark
- *Origins and evolution of professionalism in the context of municipal ECEC institutions*
  City of Pistoia, Italy
- *Professional and competence development in the context of the "Where there are no preschools" (WTANP) project*
  Poland

Building a sample is by definition a selective process. It involves making informed choices about what is to be included in the study. It is, inevitably, an *exclusive* process, too, as not all of the multitude of interesting examples can be studied.

For the CORE case studies, which have been conducted in seven European countries, a *purposive sample* (Robson, 2002) was built. The selection of cases was framed by three parameters:

(a) Cases were selected that are considered to provide *interesting practices of high quality* by experienced professionals, international experts, international reports and literature.

(b) Selected cases furthermore represent different approaches to organising early childhood services and different understandings of early childhood professionalism across Europe (e.g. *split* or *integrated* systems, *generic* or *specific* professions, different *levels of formal qualification*, different *support systems*).

(c) Cases have been selected to build a geographically balanced sample, ensuring participation from countries in Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western Europe.

The proposed selection of cases covers a wide range of institutional models and understandings / visions of professionalism and competences. In order to handle the complexity, categories have been identified according to a variety of factors that influence the degree of professionalism and competence levels reached in ECEC services across Europe. According to recent studies (Oberhuemer, 2005; Oberhuemer et al., 2010; OECD, 2006; Peeters, 2008) three main dimensions have been identified:

1. ECEC services tend to be organised in either *split* or *integrated* systems. In split systems services for the youngest children (childcare, usually from birth to three or four years old) are separate from pre-school or early education programmes, usually under the auspices of different government departments (social welfare / education). Other countries have integrated services for children under compulsory school age either in the education system or in a broader pedagogical system (Bennett, 2005). Professionalism in ECEC flourishes in integrated systems, yet there are interesting examples in some split systems, too (e.g. the *éducateur jeunes enfants* in France).

2. Countries tend to take two distinct approaches to defining professionalism in ECEC. Across Europe there is, broadly, a choice between a *generic* or a *specialist* conceptualisation of

professionalism (Cameron & Moss, 2007). *Generic* professionalism is based on holistic approaches to working with young children, and it usually emphasises interactional, situational and relational aspects of the work instead of the performance of concrete tasks (e.g. as defined in prescriptive curriculum). Generic ECEC professionals are often prepared and qualified to work with a wide age range and in various institutional contexts. The Danish *Pedagog* is a very good example of the concept of generic professionalism. In the *specialist* model, practitioners are trained and qualified to work with specific age groups in specific institutional settings (e.g. crèche, pre-school, *école maternelle*). Often, specialist professionals are supported by assistants who are qualified at a lower level (and, in some cases, have no formal qualification at all).

3. Formal qualification levels and requirements differ, too. There are examples of high-quality services with staff qualified at secondary level – usually in a system of continuous professional guidance and/or development – e.g. in the northern Italian cities of Reggio Emilia and Pistoia, where specifically qualified *pedagogistas* provide continuous in-service support. Similar approaches have been introduced in a number of countries / regions, e.g. in Ghent (*accompagnement*) and Germany (*fachberater*). Other countries have been seeking to link quality improvements to higher (tertiary) levels of qualification. Some examples are the Swedish *teacher*, the Danish *pedagog*, the Belgian *kleuterleider*, the Slovenian *vzgojitelj*. Some countries (e.g. France, England) are actively opening qualification pathways for practitioners with lower qualifications, in order to enable them to acquire secondary or tertiary (BA) levels within the European Qualification Framework.

We consider the diversity of models across Europe, and the wealth of experience in largely different social and institutional contexts to be a major asset for the future development of high-quality services for children and young families (Urban, 2010b). The picture is, however, complex and therefore forbids simplistic comparison. The selected cases are by no means part of a representative sample. They do, however, represent social constructions and understandings that need to be contextualised and *localised* in order for us to learn from their success (Rosenfeld & Sykes, 1998). In other words, any research in highly complex systems, aiming at developing an understanding of *what is actually going on*, and *why*, and *for whom* needs to embrace rather than avoid the *messiness* of its subject and reflect the *spatialised* nature of knowledge in this field which is, in fact, "motley" (Urban, 2006, 2007a, 2007b).

Although the cases are *situated* in their specific country contexts, they are not the object of our study. We are interested in the particularities of the individual examples instead. For example, a case may be situated in France – and we need some understanding of the French ECEC context in order to understand it – but it is by no means representative of the French early childhood system in general.

Therefore the case studies that will be presented in this report have been selected because they offer different examples – with rather different descriptions – of how competence of ECEC staff could be enhanced through professionalisation initiatives undertaken:
- within ECEC institutions (as in the case of Slovenia, Ghent and Pistoia) and at the level of networks of institutions (as in the case of the WTANP project led by the Comenius Foundation in Poland)

- within training institutes (as in the case of ESSSE in Lyon) and university colleges (Paedagoguddanelsen JYDSK – VIA University College in Denmark)
- at policy level (early years professional status in England).

5.3 Methodological considerations

5.3.1 Framing the CORE case studies

Ethnographers since Clifford Geertz (1973, 1983) have seen *comparisons* in stark contrast to studying the particularities of the individual case, as comparative studies tend to "obscure case knowledge that fails to facilitate comparison" (Stake, 2003, p. 148). In order to handle the inevitable dilemma between describing the rich individual case knowledge, the "thick of what is going on" (Stake, 2003, p. 148), and the necessity to draw generalisable conclusions, the project group together with the facilitators of the case studies have developed and shared common perspectives on the individual cases. Thus we are conceptualising them as free-standing, but related cases (Urban, 2007a). By asking similar questions (without expecting similar answers) we will be able to construct a "structural equivalence" (Burt, 1982) allowing us to analyse diverse findings in a shared framework:

- At each location, relevant policy documents have been analysed (e.g. local regulations, curricula, etc.), semi-structured expert interviews conducted and focus group discussions facilitated.

- Framing the data from the individual cases, the individual case reports focus on

    o Local policies regarding high-quality ECEC in a historical and present context
    (*Why are things the way they are – how come things are the way they are?*)

    o Qualifications, training, continuous professional development
    (*What is actually happening in training / qualification programmes? What is the local conceptualisation of the ECEC practitioner/professional? Why is this considered to be important / effective by local actors?*)

    o Practitioners' perspectives and perceptions
    (*Doing the right things; doing things right from a practice perspective*)

Analysing the experiences from the seven individual cases in one shared framework, then, allows us to address more general and transferable aspects of effective high-quality ECEC practice, such as the relationship between theory/knowledge and professional practice, gender and equity issues within the workforce and conceptualisations of professionalism. In this framework, the analysis of the experiences from the case studies helps us to gain a better understanding of the interrelation between pre- and in-service qualification and training. Finally, the focus on the common values across the participating countries and cities has contributed to the understanding of professional development opportunities for the ECEC workforce across Europe with respect to the diversity of possible approaches.

5.3.2 Specific focus points and data collection

A briefing document outlining guidelines for conducting the case studies has been produced by the core team following discussion with the expert advisory team (see Appendix 7). The briefing document was circulated among the case study researchers and subsequently discussed individually (through e-mails and internet telephony) with each researcher during May 2010.

In the briefing document, three *axes* for developing the data collection in the case studies were identified:

I. Professional knowledge, theory-and-practice

II. Critical reflection / transformative practice

III. Structural aspects of professional practice and their implications

The methodology for gathering practitioners' perspectives was specifically defined by each researcher for their respective case study, according to the possibilities and particularities of the different contexts (e.g. focus group, in-depth interview of key informants, discussion of documentation, observation). Employing the methodological concept of a shared *frame of reference*, we emphasise that the seven individual case studies are based on a shared interest rather than on strictly identical methods.

5.4 Data analysis

5.4.1 Introduction

The analysis of the case studies has been carried out at three levels.

The first level analysis looked at each case as *free-standing*, considered as a source of interesting practices. At this stage an in-depth analysis of the meanings and understandings emerging *within* each case was carried out in order to contextualise practices. Therefore the first level analysis aimed at identifying key issues emerging within each individual case study and at outlining patterns of interrelationship among them by coding text units of each report as exemplified below.

The second-level analysis looked at the case studies *as related*. At this stage all the text units – extracted from different reports – that were coded under the same theme were grouped into descriptive categories as reported in the example below.

Professional learning from practice to theory

The merit education as pedagogue is a special study route and study programme to become a pedagogue, addressed towards experienced untrained workers at the pedagogic labour market. It is a fully competence giving pedagogue education, so after the study they are awarded the pedagogue title. [...]The background for this study route is to offer people who have been working as untrained, a chance to become an educated pedagogue.
[The Danish Pedagogue Education – Denmark, p.22-23]

In this vision on learning for practitioners, increasing the competencies starts from practice, rather than from theory. By reflecting on concrete situations with parents and children new pedagogical knowledge can be build. The aim of this learning process is that practitioners can argue why they made certain choices. One counsellor expressed it as follows: 'From practice they must be able to go to theory'. The task of the pedagogical counsellor is to help the practitioners to translate theoretical insights into practice and to stimulate them to express their theoretical insights.
[Pedagogical Guidance as pathway to professionalization – City of Ghent, p. 18]

As most of these initiatives [in-service training] are organised on a group basis and involve all the professionals of the service, they contribute to build up a collective set of competences and knowledge [...] Actually, most initiatives have been and are aimed to analyse and discuss educational practices more than to transmit theoretical or practical knowledge
[Origins and evolution of professionalism in the context of municipal ECEC institutions – City of Pistoia, p.6]

Afterwards, all the descriptive categories formed through the analysis of the case studies excerpts were framed within the three macro-areas that were used for organising data collection:
    I. Professional knowledge, theory and practice
    II. Critical reflection / transformative practice
    III. Structural aspects of professional practice and their implications

The third-level analysis searched for patterns, tensions and fractures emerging from the analysis of the interrelationship among descriptive categories within each macro area. At this stage an interpretative narrative was constructed by articulating those descriptive categories in a coherent whole framing the discussion on key issues emerging from the case studies.

5.4.2 Summary of individual case descriptions

Note on terminology: *As the case studies are not by any means intended to be comparative, rather than using the English translation of key terms in the reports, the meaning of the key terms has been explained at the beginning of each report and then the terms in their original language have been used. This has been done to retain important nuances related to the different understandings that underpin the key terms describing ECEC institutions, professionals and professional practices.*

Professional preparation of *Éducateurs Jeunes Enfants* (EJE) and apprenticeship for *auxiliaires de puériculture* (Ecole Santè Social Sud Est - Lyon, France)

By Dr Marie Paule Thollon Behar (Ecole Rockefeller de Lyon - Université Lumière Lyon 2) and Myriam Mony (Ecole Santè Social Sud Est - Lyon)

This case study has been chosen to shed light on possible professionalisation devices that enable formally unqualified individuals from specific target groups to choose childcare as a career through a special form of training called *contract de qualification*. With the aim of promoting both social and professional development to compensate for the lack of qualified professionals, these special training programmes elaborated within the *South-Eastern Regional Social Services* **Training** *School* of Lyon allow the professionalisation of low-qualified people working in childcare centres. "Employed students" are both paid by their employer and recognised as "students" at a training centre. For example, student educators might spend three weeks a month at work and one week a month in the training centre. The entry selection process of the training programme is specific to this training but the qualification is the same as in conventional training.

The case study will focus specifically on two formative paths, one that allows auxiliaries to be trained at Bachelor level to become educators and another that allows unskilled individuals to become auxiliaries: in each case students are paid by an employer. Therefore in the report two different devices will be described and analysed:
- Training of *éducateurs de jeunes enfants* in employment
- Apprenticeship training of *auxiliaires de puériculture*

These pathways to professionalisation are of particular interest as they are based on a principle of alternation between work experience and courses in training centres. Consequently, pedagogy relies heavily on field experience gained in the setting of ECEC institutions. "Paid students" are accompanied by a teacher from the training centre and a mentor, an educator from their work team. In the training centres, group analysis of practice and time for reflection on professional practice are offered after each period of internship. The case study focuses in particular on the construction of knowledge and practices within these devices, on their transformational effects on both ECEC institutions and training centres and on the conditions of success of such formative paths.The methods adopted for carrying out the case study comprise interviews and open-ended questionnaires involving students (EJE and AP), tutors at ECEC institutions, EJE and AP teachers in training institutes and employers.

From the analysis of the case study it emerges that the elements that guarantee the success of these programmes are the means given to the students to reflect on their own experiences: specifically the

opportunity given to each student to exchange views with other students in "reference" groups (*analyse de pratique*) and the support offered by their teacher and their mentor. The main obstacle identified by the author is the significant investment required by paid students: working for their employer and doing their "homework" in their free time, often in conjunction with their family commitments. Another challenge is the question of work team relationships owing to the absence of "student colleagues" during the week in the training centre and the need to readmit them afterwards and accept their new ideas on work practices.

Overall, the study suggests that practitioners with a low academic level and low financial resources could successfully qualify at tertiary level if given the opportunity to embark on training that facilitates the acquisition and integration of knowledge through learning from practical experience. Successful implementation of this programme, however, requires specific conditions to be met, namely: the real support of the employer (to replace the student employee during their training), the accompaniment and support of the team (exchanges during meetings and analysis of work practices…), as well as an available and trained tutor for the paid student.

The Integrated Qualifications Framework and the Early Years Professional Status: a shift towards a graduate-led workforce (England)

By Prof. Linda Miller (Open University, Milton Keynes) and Dr Claire Cameron (Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London)

The England case study is an account of developments in relation to the early childhood education workforce (ECEC) since the mid-1990s. The aim is to describe and evaluate the introduction of two methods addressing the improvement of the "competence" of the ECEC workforce: (i) the introduction of an **Integrated Qualifications Framework** (IQF), which aims to provide a structure of equivalence for qualifications across work with children and young people; and (ii) the introduction of a graduate professional status (not a qualification) for those working in ECE called the **Early Years Professional Status** (EYPS).

Sources of data for the case study were literature and statistics on key policy and practice developments and findings from two focus groups consisting of practitioners with, or working towards, EYP status.
Although both initiatives (introduction of IQF and EYPS) are still, at the time of writing, in the early stages of implementation and the literature evaluating the success or otherwise of these developments is relatively sparse, the case study analyses the possibilities and challenges offered by their implementation. The case study therefore focuses on recent policy-led developments in the context of ECE in England and in particular on the implementation of the EYP status.
In 2006 the OECD noted "tremendous progress" in England since its 1999 review of early years provision, mostly in relation to government investment, including expansion of children's centres offering holistic provision. The 2006 report showed that spending on children's services in the UK quadrupled between 1997 and 2007, rising from GBP 1.1 billion in 1996/7, to GBP 4.4 billion by 2007/8.

As part of a process of workforce reform England has introduced major policy changes to work towards a common core of skills and knowledge for all professions working with children and young people in an integrated system.

The first policy objective of introducing an *Integrated Qualification Framework* was uncontroversial, although difficult, given the wide range of qualifications already in existence. The framework has been in development since 2005, and is similar to the *European Qualification Framework*. The IQF offers clear pathways of training and enhances employment opportunities as it clarifies qualifications, expectations and competence requirements at various levels of the ECEC system. The intention is that it will support the vision of having one children's workforce and the culture of integrated working, in which the common core of skills and knowledge is embedded. Since the advent of the coalition government in 2010, however, there has been very little work on the IQF and it is unclear what role it will have in future.

Since the 1980s there have been several initiatives in England to develop graduate and leadership roles within the ECEC sector, such as Early Childhood Studies Bachelor Degrees and a National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership (NPQICL) to support leaders in children's centres. The **Early Years Professional Status** has therefore been chosen as *one* model of professionalisation that is considered to be quite influential on professionalisation policies promoted at European level. The EYP initiative, introducing a graduate level status parallel to the existing teacher qualification, was welcomed by the sector as it offered a career route for established practitioners. Around 10,000 practitioners hold or are working towards EYP status, which is gained through a mixture of formal study and assessed practice, offered through four training pathways. Candidates for EYPS must show that 39 standards of professional practice are met. In 2009, about a quarter of relevant settings employed an EYP.

The EYP role is intended to achieve graduate leadership across early years services in the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector. The EYP is seen as a "change agent" who will raise standards in early years settings. Initial evidence from the first national longitudinal survey of those holding the award found that overall EYPs felt positive about the impact of this role. They thought it had increased their professional confidence and sense of status as practitioners, although there was still uncertainty about the new role. Most EYPs were heavily involved in mentoring and supporting colleagues and were able to identify areas for change in the workplace, although they found staff were reluctant to change and engage with new ideas. Engaging with parents was also a challenge. The survey concluded that EYPS has had the most positive impact on early career professionals and those working in PVI settings (http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/assets/0001/1377/First_National_Survey_of_Practitoners_with_EYPS.pdf accessed 16/3/11).

Both study informants and available literature point to the following key challenges of implementing the EYP status:

- the model does not address the question of parity of pay and conditions for EYPs and teachers. Theoretical equality is not matched in practice; although the sector welcomed the EYP development, and the policy attention to early years curricula, the implementation was overly governed by targets and prescriptive standards and not enough by listening to stakeholders and practitioners.

Overall the case study analysis suggests that future development of the early childhood workforce should build on what is available, using a willingness to learn from other countries, and integrating quality systems. ECEC workers should be seen as engaging in lifelong learning around a common culture of ECEC values. So far, overhasty government-led implementation within a regulated private market that fails to address key difficulties has led to an exacerbation of serious problems within the ECEC workforce. The government was trying to address too many policy objectives with one measure, leaving the early childhood sector still with a highly differentiated workforce: the tensions between the workings of the private market and the strong evidence base around qualifications for ECEC staff are not yet resolved.

Pedagogical Guidance as pathway to professionalisation (City of Ghent, Belgium)

By Steven Brandt and Dr Jan Peeters (University of Ghent, Department of Social Welfare Studies)

This case study has been chosen as an interesting example of a localised professionalisation initiative supporting the professional learning of low-qualified practitioners at the level of ECEC institutions. In the three Communities of Belgium the practitioners working with the youngest children are trained to secondary vocational level. In the municipality of Ghent, this low level of initial training has been supplemented for more than 30 years with intensive advice from pedagogical coordinators, resulting in innovative practice regarding outreach to families in poverty, ethnic minority families and families with children with special educational needs. The Pedagogical Advisory Centre (PBD) has developed during this long period a coherent policy that aims to increase the competencies on individual and team or/and institutional level. For the case study three centres that work successfully around diversity (poverty, ethnic minorities, children with special needs) were selected. This choice of childcare centres working on diversity issues is based upon literature showing that high-quality ECEC can break the circle of disadvantage (Eurydice, 2009). In the case study these professionalising initiatives are critically analysed. The case study draws on data collected through focus groups and in-depth interviews involving a key informant from the PGC, pedagogical counsellors and practitioners from three ECEC centres.

The analysis of the interviews showed that the experienced childcare workers reached a high level of professionalism and had an open approach towards parents. The difference in interpretation of professionalism by more experienced workers who had a broad vision of their profession and less experienced workers who described their profession in a more technical way can be explained as the effect of the long-term pedagogical counselling organised by the childcare team of PBD for more than 30 years. In this sense a continuous investment in a coherent and diversified policy towards professional development, developed by specialised staff over long periods of time and implemented in such a way that the members of the staff have the ownership of the change, i.e. are the actors of change, has been identified by the authors as one of the key success factors for staff professional development within ECEC institutions. The study, while discussing in detail the critical success factors for competences development at individual, team and institutional level, also identifies some key challenges. In fact, if the positive effects on the enhancement of practitioners' competences are the result of long-term investment by the city in a coherent approach towards professional development, the challenge will be to use the system of pedagogical advice in different contexts which lack that long investment in professional development.

Overall, this case study suggests that in order to enhance practitioners' competence at individual and team level a learning community should be created within ECEC institutions. Such a learning community should be sustained by:

- a common culture inside the service that is underpinned by a common vision and by a *system of ethical values* in work with parents, children and neighbourhoods and by a *strong commitment* towards each child and parent,
- a vision of learning starting from practice that creates opportunities for *peer coaching.*

Inter-professional collaboration in pre-school and primary school contexts (Slovenia)

By Dr Tatjana Vonta (DRCEI-Lublijana), Fanika Balič (Vrtec Pobrežje Maribor), Jerneja Jager (Educational Research Institute), Sonja Rutar (Educational Research Institute and Faculty of Education Koper)

The Slovenian case study has been chosen to analyse the relationships between different professional roles that are operating with diverse responsibilities across a variety of pre-school institutions (children from one to six years of age) and in the first grade of primary school institutions. In the case of Slovenia, various professionals and semi-professionals – with different levels of formal education – are included in these processes: pre-school teachers, pre-school teachers' assistants, primary school teachers, Roma assistants**.** Their formal education varies. The study aims to investigate how educational responsibilities are distributed and negotiated among different professional roles within different settings. The data were collected in three public pre-schools and one primary school through guided interviews, questionnaires and observations intended to obtain the perspective of all actors involved in ECEC services: head teachers, pre-school and primary school teachers, teachers' assistants , Roma assistants, parents and children.
In particular the case study investigates:

- the role, relations and responsibilities the actors have in different educational contexts;
- the role and division of work among professional staff who work together in different environments and under different conditions in the process of planning educational work, critical analysis of work performed, cooperating with families and in the process of their professional development;
- the opinions of staff with regard to joint work;
- perceptions by parents and by children of the different professional roles;
- opinions of school directors (to gain better insight into various contexts), who also submitted some general information on the policy of their institution in respect of quality assurance and concern for professional development.

The report discusses the potentialities and problematic issues for professional development emerging from the analysis of the data collected across different settings. In particular, the study identifies the presence of school-based professional development initiatives supported by school directors as a critical factor determining the quality of inter-professional collaboration and the enhancement of pedagogical competence of teams at school level. The main challenges that the authors have identified in relation to their study are:

- relatively scarce attention to critical reflections in some environments in which staff are not given enough time for meetings

- relatively new profile of staff within the already established institutional frameworks (preschool teacher in first grade or Roma assistant) who are less involved in the process of common planning and reflection; therefore their competences are not used as much as they should be and at the same time they are not as involved and exposed to professional development built on cooperation with colleagues (fewer opportunities for professional development)
- the difference in salary among staff in the same classroom is considerable. Teacher's assistants receive almost half as much as pre-school teachers, so it is difficult to understand their willingness to carry out such extensive and demanding tasks.

By focusing the analysis on the systemic conditions that – across different settings – contribute or rather hinder professional development of staff, this case study suggests that professional development on the school level has to be supported both from inside school (initiatives undertaken by school directors) and from outside school (at the level of policymaking). As some competences can be developed by staff only in the process of lifelong learning and while they are working together and learning from each other the conditions provided within institutions are extremely important in maintaining this process.

The Danish Pedagogue Education: principles, understandings and transformations of a generalist approach to professionalism
(Paedagoguddanelsen JYDSK, VIA University College – Denmark)

By Dr Jytte Juul Jensen (College of Pedagogy Århus, Denmark)

From the early twentieth century Denmark has adopted a pioneering role with regard to developing broad competences for professionals working with young children. The country has been able to maintain this lead role until today (OECD, 2006). The Danish case study was chosen to provide an example of the integration of childcare and pre-school into a wider social welfare system. Training for the Danish *Pedagog* is generic and unfolds around a creative conceptualisation of professionalism. It emphasises creativity and aesthetics and outdoor activities and adopts a co-constructive approach to the curriculum. This case study focuses on the description and analysis of the *Pedagog* education at Bachelor level (*pædgogoguddannelsen*) that is rooted in a long-standing tradition. The aim of the case study is to explore the principles and understandings of professionalism which underpin the generalist approach in terms of its origin and transformation over the years. A particular emphasis is put on the description and analysis of training methods by focusing on the process of transformation that connects the broad training received by students at the university and the educational practices implemented by them in early childhood educational settings. Therefore the analysis of pedagogue education is carried out both in the context of training institutes and in the context of ECEC institutions.

The case study draws on policy documents, relevant literature and research, data gathered through interviews of key informants and the expertise provided by the researcher as a pedagogue teacher in training college. In particular, the discussion presented in the report focuses on the following aspects:
- understanding professional learning within the space of practical education and activity-and-culture subjects (drama, music movement),
- inclusiveness of training routes that are able to attract males and ethnic minority students,
- internationalisation of training for development of intercultural competence,

- relationships between pedagogues and pedagogues co-helpers' education and work.

The author concludes that the key factors that have facilitated the success of the pedagogue training are the following:
- extensive public commitments to pedagogue education and ECE institutions
- the close link between the pedagogue education and welfare institutions: pedagogues are key workers in ECE and other welfare institutions
- training at BA level attracting students
- the generalist approach gives the pedagogue possibilities for job mobility, attracts more male workers and qualifies for new types of work areas
- inclusive entry routes
- the specific pedagogical thinking including the weight on activity and culture subjects (different from, for example, teacher training)
- the close interplay between practical education and college education.

Origins and evolution of professionalism in the context of municipal ECEC institutions (City of Pistoia, Italy)

By Dr Tullia Musatti, Dr Maria Cristina Picchio, Dr Susanna Mayer (ISTC-CNR-Rome, Italy)

This case has been chosen because it provides an example of inspiring practices developed within local initiatives for increasing the competence level of practitioners. Specifically, the case study describes the origin, evolution and key aspects of staff professionalism within the context of ECEC municipal institutions in the city of Pistoia. In Pistoia, in fact, as in many other Italian cities, ECEC provision has been conceived as a major investment by the city to answer families' needs and ensure children's right to early education. Over more than forty years, the Pistoia municipal administration has paid special attention to the quality of the ECEC provision and realised a system of educational services of good quality and many services of excellence. In the last few years, ECEC provision has faced new challenges because of a dramatic generational turnover among ECEC professionals and important social changes in families. Although the Pistoia experience has been forged in a particular social and cultural climate and nourished in the encounter with a particularly dynamic management, its analysis allows us to identify some basic that ingredients could be implemented in other contexts. Therefore the aim of the study is to analyse the actions by which the local municipality implemented continuous investment in the qualification of its ECEC professionals.

The study draws on policy documents, relevant literature and recent action research carried out by pedagogical coordinators, educators and CNR researchers. The study sheds light on how the processes of reflexivity of ECEC professionals can be activated and sustained in particular conditions and suggests some procedures for ensuring them and anchoring them to the innovation of educational practice. Therefore the focus of the analysis lies on the systemic aspects that enhance educators' professionalism such as:
- paid time for sharing reflexivity in the group of professionals for planning, discussing, and analysing practices,
- an organised framework of in-service training on a group basis, provided by the municipal administration,

- a pedagogical coordination team that supports the professionals in their practice and their search for its continuous improvement,
- the activation and continuous support of networking and collegiality processes,
- the use of systematic procedures by the professionals for documenting, analysing and evaluating the outcomes of pedagogical choices on children's experience.

The case study discussion ends with a reflection on context-specific aspects and on the potential of these processes to be implemented in other contexts. In particular, the authors conclude that basic elements that have qualified the experience of ECEC municipal institutions in Pistoia could be usefully implemented in other contexts according to their specific culture and resources. From this perspective, they make specific recommendations for continuous support of professionalism, such as:
- pedagogical coordinators,
- paid working hours for in-service training on a group basis,
- systematic opportunities for shared reflexivity among professionals,
- systematic procedures for documenting, analysing and evaluating the outcomes of pedagogical choices on children's experience.

Professional and competence development in the context of the "Where there are no pre-schools" (WTANP) project (Poland)

By Monika Rosciszewska Wozniak (Comenius Foundation for Child Development) and Dr Olav Zylicz (Warsaw School of Psychology)

Poland provides a good example of a post-communist country in transformation. This case study offers an interesting example because ECEC institutions are now being set up by various actors in a country with a largely underdeveloped public ECEC infrastructure. Even before 1989, the system of ECEC in Poland was never as universally developed as it had been in other Eastern European countries. This may be read as a form of resistance to the influence of the Soviet Union by Roman Catholic conservatives. Large state-run pre-schools exist in urban areas but there is a dramatic lack of provision in rural Poland. The study describes and analyses the experience of one particular NGO (Comenius Foundation for Child Development) that runs a programme – supported by the European Social Fund – for setting up educational services for children and families and local communities in rural areas with the aim of providing equal opportunities. From this perspective the investigation of their project "Where There Are No Pre-schools" (WTANP) offers interesting insights into the process of systemic professionalisation of the ECEC workforce outside the public sector. Within a comprehensive approach to ECEC, the Comenius Foundation – which has been running the WTANP programme since 2003 - has elaborated a framework for teachers' professional development which is tailored to the needs of local rural communities. Building on a qualitative evaluation of the WTANP programme that involved various stakeholders (kindergarten and primary school teachers, parents and representatives of local authorities), and on an earlier report produced for Education International (Urban, 2009), the case study analyses how the competence of teachers qualified at tertiary level can be enhanced through professional development initiatives carried out by the Comenius Foundation:
- provision of training modules for teachers, parents and local authorities,

- implementation of a system of educational supervision (providing mentorship, counselling and methodological consultancy to teachers),
- elaboration of work plans for teachers and pre-school centres,
- creation of educational materials for teachers and parents.

The analysis carried out within the study focuses in particular on the systemic conditions that facilitate the process of competence development of teachers working in rural areas. Particular attention is paid to cooperation with parents and local governments that allows teachers to build social support for their educational action. In this context parents' involvement, support of local communities and partnership with other NGOs that has led to the amendment of national educational legislation through political consultation processes have been identified by the authors as key factors in the success of the programme. On the other hand, the strong opposition of teachers' unions at national level – which see the inclusion of ECEC teachers in a compulsory school teachers' union as potentially undermining the process of teachers' professionalisation – has been identified as one of the main challenges to the professionalising initiatives carried out by the Comenius Foundation. The analysis of this case suggests that the implementation of professionalising initiatives in ECEC systems that are perceived as stagnant requires close collaboration and open communication with all stakeholders. In particular:
- new programmes should be piloted in consultation with local authorities, teachers and parents,
- the effects of the new programmes should be evaluated in collaboration with academic institutions,
- the good practices elaborated within these innovative programmes should be disseminated through conferences and production of educational materials,
- a broad coalition of supporters – e.g. non-governmental organisations, academics and representatives of local municipalities - should be established in order to advocate for and sustain these innovative initiatives.

5.5 Thematic analysis

5.5.1 Professional knowledge, theory and practices

Relating theory and practice

The interaction between theory and practice varies according to the conditions under which professional learning takes place. In fact, professional learning could take place across a variety of settings (training institutions or workplace), according to different modalities (analysis of practice, small group workshops, project work, fieldwork, work placement) and in relation to different personal background and motivations. The relation between theory and practice can therefore be played out differently according to the different combinations of all these aspects as the descriptions provided by the case studies show.

From theory to practice: this modality of professional learning – that starts from the acquisition of theoretical knowledge to be put into practice – seems to be predominant among students in their first experience in the field. For example, in the case of ESSSE (Lyon), the _auxiliaires de puericulture_ apprentices – who do not have any previous working experience in early childhood – begin from

theoretical preparation in the training institutions and then establish a connection with practices within employment. In this way, theory is elaborated within educational practices over the long term, allowing the consolidation of professional knowledge.

From practice to theory: conversely, a process of professional learning that moves from practice to theory seems to be predominant, and more congenial, among experienced practitioners. This approach is privileged by many professional development programmes and could take place both in training institutions and in the workplace.

With regard to professional preparation within the employment of the *éducateurs de jeunes enfants*, for example, the theoretical content of the courses is made available to student practitioners through reflection on concrete situations experienced in practice. In this sense, it is precisely the reference to practices that allows practitioners to make sense of theoretical concepts during the courses attended at the training institutions. Conversely, the theoretical concepts that have been interiorised by student practitioners during training sessions allow them to deepen their reflection on practices once they are back in the workplace. In this way, theory and practice mutually inform each other and student practitioners' professionalisation is achieved through a recursive interactive process that is facilitated and supported by trainers (*formatrices*) during the training sessions. [*Professional preparation of EJE and apprenticeship for ADP* – ESSE, Lyon; p.8] . The fact that special qualifying routes and study programmes should be put in place for experienced untrained practitioners is supported also by the Danish case study. The merit education pedagogue provides another interesting example of how untrained ECEC workers can be given the opportunity of becoming qualified pedagogues through a study route that recognises previously acquired learning from practice. In order to undertake this route students are required to have five years' full-time experience working as untrained co-helpers in the pedagogic field: this gives a credit that exempts them from taking the two semesters of practical training. In addition, they are required to fulfil the same admission criteria as for the ordinary pedagogue education. If the criteria are not met, however, students can ask for a "real competence" assessment to see if dispensation can be given [*The Danish Pedagogue Education – Denmark;* pp.22-23] . In the context of professional development initiatives carried out within ECEC institutions, the implementation of a vision of learning that increases practitioners' competence by starting from practice rather than theory is exemplified in the case studies of Ghent and Pistoia. In the case of Ghent, this process is facilitated by pedagogical counsellors who support practitioners to translate theoretical insights into practice and encourage them to express their theoretical insights. Theoretical insights are generated by practitioners through the reflection on concrete working situations that involve children and parents: in this context the role of pedagogical counsellors is to support practitioners in the process of becoming aware of the motivations that drive their educational choices. This learning process, by facilitating practitioners' reflections on their everyday experiences with children and parents, leads to a democratic co-construction of new pedagogical knowledge [*Pedagogical guidance as a pathway to professionalization* – City of Ghent; p. 18]. In the case of f Pistoia, the reciprocal link between theory and practice is realised within continuous professional development initiatives whose most salient characteristic is to be situated: "*in the double sense of being strictly influenced by the local culture expressed by the city and its services and of being contextually bound to the concrete matters of the service/s involved in the training*" [*Origin and evolution of professionalism in the context of municipal ECEC institutions* – City of Pistoia; p.6] For this reason most of these initiatives are organised on a group basis and involve all the professionals of the service in the analysis and

discussion of educational practices. In this way a collective set of competences and knowledge is built up from pedagogical reflection on concrete matters and thus induces innovation of educational practices.

Regardless of the different understandings that characterise the relationship between theory and practice in different settings and cultural contexts, a clear reference to the link between these two aspects of professional learning emerges in all the cases analysed. In particular, the concept of *praxis* as a feature of professional learning and development seems to be crucial in the construction of competence regardless of the different approaches adopted.

Sustaining the relationship between theory and practice in professionalising initiatives carried out within training institutions

When training programmes are carried out within universities/training institutions /colleges the aspect of **differentiation of learning pathways** seems to be very important to guarantee plural approaches to professionalisation according to personal background and motivations of students/practitioners (see Danish inclusive approach p.23). **However** professional learning may be taking place within training programmes (mainly from theory to practice or vice versa), **critical reflection plays a crucial role** in making the relationship between theory and knowledge reciprocal and, therefore, meaningful for developing **professional competence**. In order to sustain the reciprocal link between theory and practice that promotes competence development, it is not sufficient to provide training opportunities to practitioners or work placement to students: it is necessary also to elaborate specific training strategies that enhance reflectivity for the co-construction of pedagogical knowledge. These could consist, for example, of analysis of practices within reference groups in the college [*Professional preparation of EJE and apprenticeship for ADP* – ESSE, Lyon; p.12] or tutoring of students on work placement [*The Danish Pedagogue Education* – Denmark; pp.28-29].

From this perspective, designing **specific formative projects within a close collaboration between training and ECEC institutions** seems to be of fundamental importance in guaranteeing the reciprocal interaction between theory and practice in both learning environments.

Consistently with the aims of the formative project elaborated by training institutes and ECEC institutions, specific "training devices" can be co-constructed: e.g. descriptions of placements offered by local ECE institutions, elaboration of training objectives by the student with the tutor and the supervisor, forms of documentation such as a diary or portfolio, discussion and exchanges with peer groups for analysis of practices, meetings with tutor and supervisor, visit of supervisor on placement…) [case studies of Denmark and Lyon].

PROBLEMATIC ISSUES: when a conceptualisation of professionalism based on an "expert-knowledge" model is underpinning programmes for the further professional development of experienced practitioners in academic contexts it could be argued that practitioners' reflexivity in educational practices tends to be hindered rather than enhanced. Assuming academic knowledge as "absolute truth" might in fact inhibit questioning one's own practice according to different contextual conditions and therefore contribute to devaluing professional experience:

Having completed the EYP, practitioners thought it had benefits in terms of their own knowledge. They thought they understood theorists better and how theory was applied in practice. For example, they could identify stages of children's development taking place once they had studied the subject. They said they felt better equipped to explain development to parents once they had acquired the language of theory. Such knowledge made it easier and more enjoyable to work with parents.
[*The IQF and EYP status* – England, p.24]

Being able to enter the EYP with a degree (on the 12 month pathway) that is irrelevant to young children and their development devalues the profession overall. One EYP said 'just because you have attained a degree does not mean you can transfer it to early years'. Members of this group thought it would be more appropriate to have a degree and two years experience of relevant practice before doing the EYP pathway.
[*The IQF and EYP status* – England, p.24]

Sustaining the relationship between theory and practice in professionalisation initiatives within ECE institutions

At the level of institutions, according to the different conditions in which they have originated and developed, several initiatives have been elaborated to support the co-construction of knowledge within practitioners' teams. Those initiatives, which are rooted in different traditions of educational practices, translate into a multiplicity of opportunities for practitioners' professional development such as:
- action research programmes carried out by practitioners and researchers collaboratively [case studies of Ghent and Pistoia]
- peer groups: networking and exchanges among practitioners working in different services [case studies of Ghent, Pistoia and Poland]
- pedagogical guidance on the job: pedagogista [Pistoia], pedagogical counsellor [Ghent], mentor/adviser [Slovenia] and consultants [Poland]
- school-based professional development initiatives: pedagogical conferences [Ghent], school training on specific tools or framework that could enhance reflectivity [e.g. ISSA and professional portfolio in Slovenia and DECET in Ghent]
- joint work (co-presence, inter-vision, peer coaching, joint planning, documenting, evaluating, reporting) [case studies of Slovenia, Pistoia and Ghent]
- parent-teacher committees [Pistoia], dialogue with parents as a source of professionalisation [Ghent], informative and formative training modules dedicated to teachers and parents [Poland]
- networking with ECEC institutions and research institutes abroad [in the case of Slovenia and Pistoia].

Furthermore, in the specific context of the collaboration between ECE institutions and practitioners' training institutes/colleges, interesting experiences of professional development are – more or less informally – realised in the co-penetration between the two learning environment:
- professional preparation of students' placement supervisors [case study of Denmark]
- team meetings with student on placement: "keeping an 'open mentality' by questioning our own practices" [case studies of Lyon and Ghent]

- access to updated research in ECEC [case studies of Lyon and Denmark]
- enhance institutional reflexivity in terms of its pedagogical identity (elaboration of placement offer) [case study of Denmark].

Different professionalisation routes are more or less developed in different contexts as rooted in local political, social, historical and economic conditions and traditions. The different forms in which professional learning takes place in institutional settings (ECEC institutions, training institutions) appear to reflect a localised conceptualisation of professionalism. There are, however, identifiable common traits in the patterns of construction of these localised conceptualisations that situate them in a more global discourse on ECEC professionalism.

What is seen as relevant professional knowledge?

In the reports produced by the case study experts several areas of professional knowledge could be identified as relevant to early childhood professionalism by local actors (e.g. students, practitioners, practitioners' teachers, pedagogical counsellors/coordinators/policymakers and researchers):
- Holistic knowledge of children's development in their living context [case studies of Denmark, Slovenia and Pistoia]
- Knowledge and understanding of child psychology [case study of Poland]
- General knowledge about socio-political issues in contemporary society (social justice, inclusion of diversity, democratic participation…) [case studies of Ghent, Pistoia, Slovenia and Denmark]
- Knowledge about "methodological aspects" that refer to the "use" of tools around which reflexivity is organised: planning (constructing the curriculum by taking into account children's needs in relation to their living environment), observing, documenting, reporting, analysing, evaluating (case studies of Slovenia, Pistoia, Ghent, Poland and Denmark).

It is important to stress that the knowledge about methodological aspects of educational work could not be interpreted as technical knowledge as such as the actions of planning, observing, analysing and evaluating are not seen by practitioners as technical tasks. On the contrary, such methodological tools, by deepening practitioners' reflectivity on their own practice, facilitate the creation of new pedagogical knowledge. Furthermore, the awareness of the tools used for facilitating reflection on practice produces a meta-reflection which allows the further elaboration and improvement of the same tools.

What is seen as relevant professional competence? How is professional competence conceptualised?

- Openness to dialogue [case studies of Ghent and Pistoia]
- Building positive relationships with children and engaging with them in activities that foster their interest and promote their full development through active learning [case studies of Denmark, Pistoia, Slovenia and Poland]
- Dealing with unpredictability [case studies of Ghent, Poland and Slovenia→in the latter dealing with unpredictability is addressed as a difficult point]: listening to children in order to understand and address their needs
- Demonstrating that secure knowledge and understanding underpin practice and inform leadership [case study of England]

- Active engagement in democratic society: pedagogue as community work, need to be aware of political discourses and when they are inconsistent with values and norms of the profession [case study of Denmark]
- Intercultural competences [case studies of Denmark, Ghent and Slovenia]
- Cooperating with colleagues [case studies of Slovenia, Pistoia and Lyon]
- Cooperating with parents and families (the nature of cooperation varies across different contexts):
  → in the Slovenian case study the educational roles of teachers and parents are conceptualised as separate but complementary
  →in the case study of Ghent and Pistoia a high level of involvement of parents in the life of ECEC institutions emerged
  →in the case study of WTANP in Poland teachers work in permanent cooperation with parents (partnership) that, in some cases, might involve the participation of parents in pre-school activities (assisting teachers and offering support with carrying out logistic tasks).

It is important to point out that some of the competences reported above are referred to, by the actors involved, as constructed in the context of working experience and of collective reflectivity:

- Cooperation with colleagues – actors involved: pre-school teachers' and assistants' competences that relate to the sphere of interpersonal relationships (such as, for example, establishing working relationships based on trust and acceptance of ideas / feelings) or to the sphere of interpersonal communication (such as respecting other people's points of view and negotiating/sharing tasks and responsibilities) are seen by the actors involved as developed to a great extent through joint work. In this sense providing practitioners with opportunities for joint work (co-presence, team meeting, working groups…) within ECEC institutions is crucial for sustaining the development of staff competences in these domains. [*Inter-professional collaboration in Pre-school and Primary School contexts* – Slovenia; p.42]

- Being able to involve parents and actively supporting them in promoting children's development-actors: newcomers and experienced practitioners

  The competences related to parents' involvement and support seem also to be developed by practitioners in the context of relationships with parents within ECEC settings. In this regard the case study of Ghent offers interesting insights, as below.

  Less experienced colleagues focus on practical technical aspects of the work, they emphasise mainly organisational, hygienic and care aspects. For younger practitioners working with parents means communication about practical information: sleeping times and food habits. If parents ask questions in the *evening when they come to collect their child, the less experienced practiti*oner will give information about these technical aspects. More experienced practitioners seem to "forget" to mention the more technical aspects. If the interviewer asks explicitly if those aspects are important they agree that they are, but for them these items are merely a way of opening communication with the parents. They are more interested in the signals that the parents give. The communication with parents about technical aspects, such as sleeping and eating habits, *receives other meanings with the years of experience growing, and become ways of building relationships, rather than the transfer of factual knowledge. They are sensible to what parents wish to communicate, to what bothers*

them, and they focus on a more in-depth conversation with the parents. […] A counsellor puts it this way: "It takes a long time before younger colleagues can recognise the signals parents give, a few young practitioners are able to construct a real relationship with parents, most of them have experience in youth work, but these competences are not learned at school, but are learnt in working with parents".
[*Pedagogica*l guidance *as a pathway to professionalisation* – City of Ghent; p. 17]

- Developing intercultural competence through experiencing cultural differences in practice during placement abroad, fieldwork in intercultural projects, exchange with ethnic minority students – actors: pedagogues' teachers.

  The Danish case study in particular offers inspiring practices for the development of intercultural competence of pedagogues within initial professional preparation. On the one hand, students are encouraged to take part in mobility initiatives and to undertake fieldwork in intercultural projects (both in Denmark and abroad) in order to experience contact with other cultures and to strengthen international solidarity. On the other, the inclusive training routes that have been designed for facilitating social integration of students from ethnic minorities provide a space for reflecting on intercultural matters through exchange of views and perspectives among students from different backgrounds. Both these experiences contribute to deepening students' understanding of diversity and, therefore, to enhancing their intercultural competence [*The Danish Pedagogue Education* – Denmark; pp. 39 and 46].

- Sense of belonging and commitment to the institution by participating in the improvement of educational practices – actors: practitioners, researchers, pedagogues' teachers

  In Pistoia ECE professionals are present contemporarily in the classroom for a certain amount of their working time as two (in scuola dell'infanzia) or three (in nido) of them share the responsibility of the same group of children. Over the years, this fact has been explicitly elaborated in the Pistoia ECE experience and it now represents the basis for a shared understanding of children's needs and for a shared planning of the educational actions. Furthermore, , the in-service training initiatives, the regular meetings among professionals at different levels of grouping (classroom, service, same type of services, etc.) in order to analyse, discuss and plan their practice are usual in Pistoia. All this has resulted in a particular stress on the collegiality […]. Probably, the development of this dimension of collegiality, which includes all the ECE professionals (educators, cleaners, and cooks) has been promoted also by a strong feeling of belonging to an innovative social experience that has characterised the history of municipal ECE provision in Italy.
  [*Origin and evolution of professionalism in the context of municipal ECEC institutions* - City of Pistoia; p.16]

  Ce positionnement spécifique de l'apprentie, faisant partie de l'équipe par son statut de salarié, mais pas encore diplômée, présente des avantages en favorisant la construction de compétences comme nous l'avons vu plus haut. Il alimente également le sentiment d'appartenance des apprenties vis-à-vis d'un service et pas seulement d'une équipe, d'après l'un des employeurs d'un service municipal petite enfance (CR apprentissage).
  [*Professional preparation of EJE and apprenticeship for ADP* – ESSE, Lyon; p.15]

- Professional ethos – actors: placement supervisors

Vasai-Blom (2007) [in her research] has been reading many written approvals and finds that besides the approval of the student's learning objectives, other competencies are evaluated, too. The placement supervisor talks about that the student possesses a 'sense of occasion, congenital talent and the capability to read, weigh and act in relation to a lot of considerations and interests at the same time'. She goes back to Aristotle's knowledge philosophy and his phronesis as an "ethos of the situation" to find an academic concept which can categorise the above competencies. This competence is according to Vafai-Blom much overlooked.
[The Danish Pedagogue Education – *Denmark;* p.35]

All the excerpts reported above might suggest that there are some aspects of professional competence – related for example to normative and ethical dimensions of pedagogical work – that could only be developed within the context of professional practices in which meanings and values can be confronted, shared and negotiated collectively.

Furthermore, from the case studies analysed, it emerges that the process of developing competences cannot be represented as a linear and sequential path, but rather as a process of construction, de-construction and re-construction that implies a constant questioning of one's own practices in relation to the ever-changing contexts in which they take place. Especially in the contexts of training on the job, the construction of competences always involves a phase of instability, in which knowledge or previous experience is questioned and new meanings created [Professional preparation of EJE and apprenticeship for ADP ‑ ESSE, Lyon; p.9]. This attitude toward questioning therefore seems to be crucial in defining the meaning of critical reflection that links theory to practice for developing professional competence.

5.5.2   Critical reflection / transformative practices

What is critical reflection? Considerations on terminology

The ability of practitioners to reflect on their own practices is often reported in policy documents regulating practitioners' training or in research evaluating training programmes as an essential component of professionalism: however, in these contexts what reflection actually means and how it can be sustained it is not explicitly stated. But reflection is often mentioned also by the different actors involved in ECEC work in the context of ECEC institutions (practitioners, head teachers, pedagogical counsellors, researchers) or training institutions (students, supervisors). In these cases **the term *reflection* is frequently associated with different kinds of methodological tools that facilitate the action of *making sense* of pedagogical practices** such as:

- A professional portfolio of teachers' competences [*Inter-professional collaboration in preschool and primary school contexts* – Slovenia; ,p. 17] or practice document that is used by students to document – and reflect on – their learning experience on work placement [*The Danish Pedagogue Education* – Denmark; p.25]

- reporting: using the action of writing for "constructing narratives" that express relations among events and make the meaning of practices explicit [case studies of Slovenia and Pistoia]

- adoption of frameworks to reflect on practices within a particular shared vision (e.g. ISSA in the case study of Slovenia and DECET in the case study of Ghent)

- methodological devices such as planning, observing, documenting, evaluating [case studies of Slovenia, Pistoia and Poland].

Furthermore, in most of the cases analysed, the action of reflecting on practice is associated with opportunities for discussion, sharing and exchanging ideas in a collective dimension: seldom do practitioners refer to reflection as an act to be carried out in isolation. In fact, **the group dimension facilitates critical reflection as it drives practitioners to question their practices** and beliefs on the basis of confrontation with experiences of others.

In this sense, **at the very core of reflection lies an attitude of constant questioning as opposed to an attitude of taking for granted:** the **importance of collective confrontation** therefore resides in allowing different points of view and different interpretations to emerge. In the cases in which practitioners' professionalisation takes place within training institutions, this attitude of questioning seems to be facilitated by the changing role in which student practitioners position themselves across the two different learning environments (university/college and ECEC institutions). Being a "student on practicum" within ECEC institutions or a "practitioner in training" within college creates the conditions for constantly challenging one's own perspective on practices. This benefits not only student practitioners but also their teams of colleagues working within ECEC institutions: the new perspectives brought in by students in fact drive practitioners to rethink their practices in order to improve them.

In the context of professional development within ECEC institutions the attitude of questioning seems to be sustained in particular by the participation of parents in the life of the services and in the process of decision-making, by collaborative research carried out together with universities or pedagogical centres, by opportunities for networking with other services at local level, by the possibility of carrying out professional exchanges with ECEC institutions in other cities/countries [case studies of Ghent and Pistoia]. In short, the attitude of questioning in which critical reflection is rooted at level of ECEC institutions seem to be sustained by an inclusive approach to professionalism in which different needs and visions of early childhood education are played out in a setting of collective discussion.

How do the actors involved in the different cases understand and build a relationship between their profession, their practices and the social, cultural, political and economic contexts that are children's, families' and communities' real life situations?

From the analysis of the case studies it emerged that reflection and transformative practices are inextricably linked: how they relate to the wider social, cultural and political context depends very much on the conceptualisation of professionalism underpinning reflection on educational practices within institutions. In this regard, two positions emerge:

(a) Exclusive professionalism: this understanding of practitioners' professionalism relies on an "expert model" in which transformative practices are mainly directed from "above" according to a hierarchical structure. The decision-making processes tend to be controlled by practitioners whose expertise is institutionally recognised, usually because of a higher qualification rather than being negotiated within the team. The pitfall of this model could be "segregation" of practitioners whose expertise is not institutionally recognised [case study of Slovenia] and resistance to implementation of change [case study of England].

> *The first-grade pre-school teacher and the Roma assistant were in our cases a lot less involved in the critical analyses and work planning processes. In both cases we can speak about a relatively new profile of staff within the already established institutional frameworks. They should be given more attention and their existing advantages and strong points could be used to a greater extent. The person who is the least involved in the processes of the critical analysis is the Roma assistant who has to adjust to the new obligations every day. The advantages that are being brought into the established patterns of the institutional activities by the new profiles (the Roma assistant and the first-grade pre-school teacher) are certainly not being used as much as they could be. An analysis of their competences and their willingness to be actively included in the educational process shows that their competences are not being used as much as they could be, especially in the case of the first-grade pre-school teacher. At the same time, they cannot strengthen their competences because they are not included in the planning and critical reflexion processes.* [*Inter-professional collaboration in pre-school and primary school contexts* – Slovenia; p.42]

> *[…]recently Simpson (2010:12), has added to the debate* [on ECEC professionalism in England]*, using data from a study of 8 EYPs, arguing that they have a "bounded agency" and a "reflexive professionalism' […]. One EYP working with qualified teachers in a maintained school, however, noted a more subtle resistance to her new professional status, which she described as more like "cotton wool" than a "stone wall", as the two teachers she was working with ignored plans she had prepared. She said, "It erodes your self esteem"(Simpson 2010:10). […]As a final note Simpson's (2010) study of eight EYPs found that the "change agency" role envisaged in policy documents was not generally taking place.* [*The IQF and EYP status* – England, p.22]

(b) Inclusive professionalism: this understanding of practitioners' professionalism relies on a "participatory model" in which transformative practices are mainly negotiated within the team according to an equal structure which include – to diverse extents – parents, children, the wider community and, more generally, society [case studies of Pistoia, Ghent and Denmark].

> *For the four counsellor heads of centres the most critical factor is the creation of a **common culture** in the institution. This culture is underpinned by a clear vision and a system of values on the work with parents, children and the neighbourhood. […]The most important value for this culture of openness towards parents and children is that **one can make the difference for children, parents and also for colleagues**. This strong belief is related to the fact that early childhood education can make a significant contribution to disadvantaged children and parents if the staff is committed to do so. The pedagogical counsellors also argue, however, that in this culture of hope within the institution, there must also be a place for despair.*

Practitioners have the possibility to talk openly about their doubts and their fears towards the situations in which children and adults may be forced to live.
[*Pedagogical guidance as a pathway to professionalisation* – City of Ghent*; p.14*]

An inclusive conceptualisation of professionalism increases the <u>sense of agency</u> of all actors involved because transformative change is produced reciprocally from within ECEC institutions toward society and from within society (needs of parents, children, local communities) toward ECEC institution. A necessary condition for reciprocity in this relation, however, is the presence of a "support structure" that makes "change from within" possible.

At the level of ECEC institutions, or at the level of networks of institutions as in the case of rural Poland, it is important that transformational practices are supported through:

- opportunities for joint work in a context of equal relationships (*shared educational responsibility*) [case study of Pistoia]
- time and space for dialogue and reflection[case studies of Ghent, Slovenia and Pistoia]
- initiatives supporting professional development of staff by sustaining shared thinking ("vision", "culture of childhood", "identity of the service") and decision-making (collegiality, peer groups) [case studies of Ghent and Pistoia]
- institutional actions supporting innovation (*transformative practices*) through collaboration among ECEC institutions (*networking*) and between institutions and local governmental bodies developing educational policies [case studies of Ghent, Pistoia and Poland]

With regard to the latter, the presence of a structure that allows transformative practice developed within institutions to affect ECEC policy is an absolutely necessary element in sustaining the sense of agency of all actors involved and therefore in making "change from within" possible. The Centre for Pedagogical Guidance (PBD) in the case of Ghent and the municipal pedagogical coordination in Pistoia offer two different examples of how "inter-institutional collaboration" could facilitate this process according to different approaches originated in different contexts. Specifically, in the case of Ghent, the Centre of Pedagogical Guidance adopts a strategy aimed at making directors responsible for pedagogical counselling and the professional development of practitioners within the ECEC institutions they are working in. This increases the sense of agency of pedagogical counsellors who see themselves as protagonists of change in their own institutions. In this way the CPG, rather than driving change from above, implemented a strategy that sustained transformational change from within institutions by empowering the role of pedagogical counsellors. [*Pedagogical guidance as a pathway to professionalisation* – City of Ghent; p.15]. In the case of Pistoia, a crucial role in supporting change from within ECEC institutions is played by pedagogical coordinators. The Italian pedagogical coordinators are in charge of a small number of ECEC services: *nido*, other services for the under-threes and *scuole dell'infanzia*. They are organised in coordinated teams at municipal or inter-city level. Their function is to support educational practices, promote and organise in-service training, interface the tensions between educational services and administrative bureaux in the municipality and promote networking among services and other initiatives for young children and families in the city. By orienting/monitoring educational practices and coordinating educational services with municipal administration, the pedagogical coordinators play a crucial role in shaping policymaking for early childhood and families at local level [*Origin and evolution of professionalism in the context of municipal ECEC institutions* – City of Pistoia; p. 6-7]

In the case of the rural communities in Poland – where the ECEC infrastructure is largely underdeveloped – transformative practices addressing local societal needs are sustained by a close cooperation between teachers, parents and municipalities. In this context building a network of social support for the implementation of early childhood educational initiatives at local level becomes the responsibility of individual teachers running pre-schools in rural communities. Teachers however are not left to accomplish this demanding task alone as the Foundation that is responsible for the WTANP project offers them on-going support. The main sources of support provided to teachers working in rural areas are professional networks and a system of mentoring.

> *As these teachers are to be leaders of change they must to learn how to cope with often unfavourable environments, how to build social support for the undertaken actions (local governments, schools, educational councils, and the like). Owing to the above-described often undesirable situation teachers must now how to look for help and support, including emotional support. One of the sources of support is contact with other WTANP teachers on different occasions and with representatives of the Comenius Foundation.*
> [*Professional and competence development in the WTANP project* – Poland**;** p.11]

The initiatives promoting interagency collaboration undertaken by teachers at local level are accompanied by the engagement of the Foundation in political consultation at national level. In this way networking actions – which are taking place at different levels of the system (multi-layered inter-institutional collaboration) and which involve non-governmental organisations, academics and local municipalities' representatives – create the conditions for sustaining and nurturing educational change within local communities. Besides driving the development "on the ground", the Comenius Foundation is constantly engaging with education policymaking at national level. Part of this advocacy work is the Foundation's campaign to include adequate quality-ensuring provisions" in the regulations issued by the Polish Ministry of Education. [*Professional and competence development in the WTANP project* – Poland**;** *EI report*, p.74]

5.5.3   Structural aspects of professional practice and their implications

Parity of status and pay among the workforce within institutions

In cases in which there is a **parity of status and pay** among staff, the work within ECEC institutions tends to be characterised by a more **equal sharing of educational responsibilities**. These conditions, provided in the context of public institutions presented so far, concur to:
- Create relationships among staff in which newcomers are considered as equal to more experienced staff. This contributes to an "open mentality" toward learning among practitioners working in the services, instead of producing a system in which newcomers tend to learn by imitation from practitioners in higher positions [case study of Ghent]
- Facilitate democratic decision-making and collaboration among practitioners for improvement of the pedagogical practices at team level [case studies of Ghent and Pistoia]
- Promote a co-constructive approach toward construction of knowledge within institutions [case studies of Ghent and Pistoia]

The conditions of parity of status and pay among staff on their own, however, do not suffice to generate the effects illustrated above, as the case of pre-school and primary school teachers working

in the first grade of primary schools in Slovenia shows. In this case, despite the equal status and pay conditions the relationships among primary and pre-school teachers tend to be characterised by the same unequal sharing of responsibility as in the relationship between teacher and assistant: this is owed to the different recognition attributed to their professional knowledge in the context of the primary school and by the lack of opportunity for joint work (such as planning, analysing and evaluating practices) [case study of Slovenia, p.41].

In cases in which there is a **disparity of status** (e.g. teachers and assistants) **and pay** the **sharing of educational responsibility is more likely to be unequally distributed**, helping to perpetuate the split between educational tasks (usually carried out by teachers) and care tasks (usually carried out by assistants) [case study of England and Slovenia]. Furthermore, disparity of status tends to make processes of decision-making less democratic and this could have counterproductive effects such as segregation and resistance. This does not always happen, however, and the conditions of disparity of status and pay have very different implications in different settings. In the case of Slovenia, for example, the relationship between pre-school teachers and assistants in certain conditions – such as an "informal" equal sharing of educational tasks/responsibilities (joint planning, observation, analysis of practices, relationship with parents) and similar length of work experience – has characteristics that are more similar to a relationship among professionals with equal status. Given the discretionality of such conditions, however, reflexive and transformative practices are often relegated in the context of single tandems and do not affect the culture of school overall: in this sense, the knowledge that ingenerate transformative practices within institutions tend to be dissipated.

The case of Denmark could be considered another exception: because of a strong tradition of democratic decision-making that characterises the history of ECEC institutions and because of mobility (hierarchical structures do not have the chance to stagnate) the relationship between pedagogues and pedagogues' co-helpers tends to be quite equal. In this case also, however, we are witnessing a hierarchisation of decision-making processes that tend to be concentrated in the hands of pedagogues: in this way, more implicit descriptions of the functions have come about, although they are not official state or municipal regulations [*The Danish Pedagogue Education* – Denmark; p.10].

How does working in the context of diversity (e.g. that of practitioners, children, families and communities) affect professional practices?

From the cases analysed it emerged that working in contexts of diversity increases reflexivity and competence within the team as it fosters an attitude of openness toward the other and toward questioning one's own perspective [case studies of Ghent and Denmark]. In the cases analysed the aspect of diversity is mostly addressed through intercultural issues, which seem to be receiving particular attention in contemporary society. In both cases [Ghent and Denmark] working with diversity seems to be nurturing a more democratic and inclusive conceptualisation of ECEC professionalism

> *The childcare workers suggested that **openness to dialogue** is a crucial competence: openness to children facilitates openness to parents and to colleagues and vice versa. It is remarkable that several of the practitioners say that this culture of openness in the institution has positive effects on their personal growth. When you come as a new practitioner in a team*

where this culture of openness to dialogue is common, you get the freedom to experiment and your colleagues reflect on your pedagogical interventions. These reflections of colleagues in a safe atmosphere are a source of learning for new colleagues. "That feeling of being accepted increases your self-confidence and this helped me to communicate better with the parents and this again reinforced my self-confidence". Another practitioner talks about openness to parents that gives her the feeling of "really having lived in a group". When we asked her what she meant by that, she answered: "To be myself, and at the same time to make a difference to others, to accept in a relation the other as being different". [*Pedagogical guidance as a pathway to professionalisation* – City of Ghent; p. 14]

How do different forms of governance (local/national; public/private) affect transformative change in early childhood education and society?

Even though in the cases analysed no direct evidences were produced in this regard, certain patterns can be identified. From the discussion so far it seems clear that a necessary condition supporting transformative change "from within" is the provision of structures that allow a **reciprocal collaboration among institutions based on a process of constant negotiation**. This element emerges quite strongly in relation to practitioners' professional development carried out both in the context of training institutions and in the context of ECEC institutions.

In some cases transformative change in early childhood education can be promoted through a support structure that enables constant exchange among training and ECEC institutions in the context of local and national policy agreements achieved through processes of consultations with stakeholders [case studies of France and Denmark]. In Denmark, for example, the Ministerial Order regulating the pedagogue study programme (*Bekendtgørelse om uddannelsen til professionsbachelor som pædagog,* 2007) was rooted in previous research on pedagogues' competency profile (*Pædagogers Kompetenceprofil,* 2004*)* carried out by a group representing the main actors involved in the pedagogic field (different Ministries, associations of local and regional municipalities, several trade unions, training colleges…) [*The Danish Pedagogue Education* – Denmark; p.18]. In the case study of ESSSE - Lyon, the special training arrangement of *contract de qualification* has been made possible within local agreements aiming at promoting both social and professional development of low-qualified practitioners.

In other cases transformative change in early childhood education can be sustained by structures of local governance which promote partnership with children's parents within institutions, networking among different ECEC services and among institutions and research centres (including documentation centres, pedagogical guidance centres,…) and responsive policymaking [case studies of Ghent and Pistoia]. Finally, in cases in which ECEC infrastructures are extremely underdeveloped – as in the case of rural Poland, for example – a professionalising system based upon reciprocal collaboration among institutions (pre-schools, universities and local municipalities) can be built up starting from the local initiative of non-governmental organisations that receive support at national (Ministry of Education) or international (European Social Fund) level.

Furthermore, from the analysis of the case studies it emerged that the structures supporting this inter-institutional collaboration are mostly set up in contexts of public management of the ECEC sector, as links between training institutes, early childhood education services and political institutions were more likely to be established and policymaking processes were more likely to be

committed to consultation with stakeholders. Instead, in contexts where ECEC was highly marketised, fragmentation of interests and lack of political commitment were more likely to undermine any attempt at formulating coherent policy in early childhood education and care which would be taking societal needs seriously into account.

> *Overall, the story is one of a slow shift towards recognition of the importance of formal training and education for ECE work that took hold in the 1980s until, by the present day, virtually all scholars in the field agree that early childhood work is complex, combines care, education, play and health knowledge and requires a higher level of formal education than hitherto accepted. At the same time, there have been (at least) two major barriers to pursuing a high level of formal education as preparation for ECE work. First, the early years field was and still is not united behind a single concept or organisational body. Was provision there to support the labour market? To provide substitute mothers? To educate? Different representative bodies had different ideas about this and a lack of unity hampered acceptance of one route to professionalisation. The second barrier was the way policy is made. Despite the findings of powerful studies around the level and content of appropriate knowledge for early years work, policymakers are deeply pragmatic and, as we document below, preferred solutions that diffused the findings of studies and found ways of "trading up" qualifications while disrupting the private market employers as little as possible.*
> [*The IQF and EYP status* – England, p.2]

5.6   Discussion of findings

5.6.1   Defining professional competence

The case studies analysis carried out in the first part of this document highlights that the definition of professional competence in ECEC is highly complex and dynamic. Professional competence seems to be conceptualised, by all actors who were involved in the case studies taking place in different locations, as the product of a continuous process of learning that accompanies practitioners from the moment in which they first enter the profession – either as a students in training institutes or as untrained workers in ECE institutions – to the end of their career. The case studies carried out within this research project illustrate different ways in which this process of professionalisation – conceptualised as progressive acquisition of professional competence that increases practitioners' expertise – could be sustained at different levels: at individual level, at institutional level, at inter-institutional level and at the level of systems of governance. Considering the acquisition of professional competence as an ongoing learning process that increases practitioners' expertise in fact implies a rigorous analysis of all the factors that are involved in this process and that could possibly sustain – or hinder – practitioners' professionalisation. In this regard, the adoption of a shared methodological framework for the conducting of the case studies in different locations allowed us to carry out a rigorous multilayered analysis through which key success factors and challenges were identified. From this perspective, the discussion of findings presented in this section aims at outlining possible directions for the formulation of policy recommendations. For reasons of clarity this section will be organised in four parts: within each part the elements sustaining practitioners' professional competence will be discussed in relation to the different systemic levels identified through the case study analysis. However – as the case study descriptions show – each

layer of the system reciprocally interacts with all the others, and therefore the factors discussed within each section should not be considered in isolation but within interdependent systemic relationships.

5.6.2 Individual level

Professional competences, as conceptualised by the actors involved in the case studies (students, practitioners, practitioners' educators and pedagogical counsellors), are developed within a reflective process that allows practitioners to critically connect knowledge, practices and values. Far from being described as a sequential and linear path, the process of developing competences is described as a process of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction that implies a constant questioning of one's own practices and beliefs in relation to an ever-changing context. In this sense **competences are conceptualised as the product of a continuous learning process that needs to be sustained through critical reflection along three axes: knowledge, practice and values.**
In relation to **knowledge** three key areas have been identified:
- Holistic knowledge of how to support children's development and learning (derived both from pedagogical, psychological, anthropological and didactic studies and from reflection on educational practices)
- General knowledge for interpreting socio-political issues in contemporary society and for relating these issues to early childhood education practices (derived from historical and socio-political/philosophical studies addressing questions of social justice, inclusion of diversity and democratic participation)
- Knowledge about the use of methodological tools (planning, observing, documenting, reporting, analysing, evaluating) for improving educational practices

In relation to **professional practices** the key areas identified cover:
- work with children
    - willingness and ability to engage in social interaction (listening to children)
    - ability to engage in practical activities that stimulate children to participate and - therefore - to actively learn (being able to co-construct knowledge together with children)
    - dealing with unpredictability: being able to question one's own practice and to learn from it
- work with colleagues within ECE institutions → being able to work in a context of collegiality that implies sharing responsibilities and collective making
- work with parents → being able to involve parents in the life of ECEC institutions so that real cooperation based on reciprocal dialogue can be established
- work within the community
    - being able to work in contexts of diversity
    - being actively engaged with the wider community.

In relation to **professional values** the key areas identified were:
- establishing relationships based on trust, respect and acceptance of "the other"
- being committed to the institution (sense of professional belonging), which implies contributing to the improvement of educational practices
- professional ethos (developing understanding of complex situations, being able to taking into account the different points of view of all the subjects involved in

exercising discretionary judgment)
- respecting cultural differences and promoting intercultural dialogue for the creation of a more inclusive and democratic society.

Interestingly, from the case studies analysed it emerges that some aspects of professional competences – such as, for example, those related to the ethical dimension of pedagogical work – could only be developed within the context of professional practices (work experience or placement) in which meanings and values can be confronted, shared and negotiated collectively.

5.6.3 Institutional level

As all the cases clearly demonstrate, practitioners' professional competences are enhanced across a wide range of settings – training institutions, workplace – and in an even broader range of learning arrangements – systematic and reflective analysis of learners' practices, project work, learning and coaching in small groups and individual study What seems to be successfully enhancing practitioners' competence – regardless of the different modalities according to which training programmes are implemented – is a reciprocal and recursive interaction between theory and practice. In this regard it is important to highlight the institutional conditions that, in both professionalising environments (training institutes and ECE institution), enhance practitioners' competences by sustaining a reciprocal interaction between practising and theorising.

Elements that increase students' level of competence in training programmes within universities/colleges:
- differentiation of learning devices: not only lectures but also small group workshops (e.g. *activity and culture subjects*), project work, work placement within ECEC institutions – devices that aim at promoting situated learning through shared participation in professional activities
- tutoring (both on work placement and at college) supporting students' individual reflection on their own professional learning path (needs, weaknesses and strengths)
- collective reflectivity within reference groups that promotes sharing and exchanging of professional experiences (successes achieved and challenges encountered) among students (e.g. *analysis of practices on practicum*)…
- inclusive training routes that: → allow the professionalisation of low-qualified staff through the recognition of prior learning
  - o allow people with low financial resources to enter into training
  - o access of people from ethnic minorities to training and therefore the creation of an ECEC workforce that encompasses diversity and supports social inclusion

Qualifying elements that increase practitioners' competence within ECE institutions:
- systematic opportunities (time and space) for shared reflectivity available to all members of staff
- ongoing pedagogical support (pedagogical coordinators) that not only provides pedagogical counselling but also sustains the creation of pedagogical culture within the institution
- adoption of systematic procedures for documenting and analysing pedagogical practices and for evaluating the outcomes of pedagogical choices on children's

experience within ECEC institutions: all these elements enhance practitioners' reflective competence at team level and improve the quality of educational practices at institutional level

- opportunities for horizontal career mobility (differentiation of roles and responsibilities valuing practitioners' individual competences in a context of professional equality)
- opportunities for vertical career mobility for low-qualified staff
- an organised framework for continuous professional development provided by institutions' administration and involving all members of staff
- diversification of in-service training opportunities, such as:

  o experience-specific professional development: in-house team development, practitioners' research, *analyse des pratiques*…

  o investing in methods that facilitate intergenerational transmission of competences and mutual cooperation, using each other's strong points, respecting and accepting other profiles, enabling others to assert knowledge and competences

  o peer learning approaches and reflective methodologies

    • by using the team meetings as lifelong learning places for all the staff (non-qualified, low-qualified and high-qualified)
    • by analysing, evaluating and documenting pedagogical practices

  o exchange of practitioners inside Europe

  o action research programmes carried out by practitioners and researchers collaboratively / dissemination conferences organised by ECEC institutions

  o participating in communities (e.g. parent-practitioner committees,…)

5.6.4 Inter-institutional level

All the case studies carried out in the CoRe project proved that inter-institutional collaboration among training institutes (universities/colleges), ECEC institutions and local authorities responsible for policymaking is fundamental for guaranteeing the success of the initiatives presented above. At the same time, however, it needs to be said that inter-institutional collaboration has turned out to be the terrain on which most challenges are encountered. These considerations lead us to the conclusion that more attention needs to be focused on this systemic level in order to increase the impact of practitioners' professionalisation on the qualification of ECEC systems. The success factors that the analysis of the case studies highlighted in this regard refer to four key areas in particular:

- professionalisation of low-qualified staff → a high degree of collaboration between employers/directors of ECEC institutions and training institutes (universities/university colleges…) promotes the successful realisation of inclusive training routes and provides conditions for vertical mobility
- practitioners' initial training → the formulation of agreements that bind university/colleges and ECEC institutions to a common, intentional project promotes the realisation of professional learning paths which bridge theory and practices according to the principle of alternation (bringing practical education within training

institutes/universities and production of theoretical knowledge within ECEC institutions)

- policymaking → the elaboration of long-term, coherent and diversified policies towards professional development – which are implemented in such a way that members of staff have the ownership of change (increasing the sense of agency of all actors involved) – is promoted within a framework of consultation with ECEC institutions (pedagogical coordinators, counsellors,…): in this regard a crucial role is played by structures of pedagogical coordination that link educational and administrative institutions sustaining innovation through responsive policymaking.

5.6.5 Systems of governance

The analysis of the case studies shows that a close inter-institutional collaboration – which allows the qualification of ECEC staff and institutions – is better fostered within public systems of governance: in fact, the experiences studied in the cases analysed happened within systems of governance that promote substantial investments in ECEC public provision. From the analysis of the data collected through the case studies it could be gathered that within public systems of governance policymaking processes tend to be characterised by a high degree of consultation with stakeholders:[44] this allows educational policymaking to address responsively the needs of children, families and communities in ever-changing societal contexts. It should be noted that in cases in which the ECEC sector is strongly marketised, the consultation processes that lead to educational policymaking tend to be less influenced by stakeholders' perspectives (because of fragmentation of interests) and more influenced by regulatory intentions. In particular, in the second case it could be seen that there was:

(a) a certain discontinuity between professionalising initiatives carried out within training institutions (leading practitioners to achieve a qualified status) and working conditions in which practitioners are operating within the ECEC sector (an increased qualification does not lead to better pay or working conditions) which tend to have negative effects on the quality of practitioners' work

(b) a low level of consultation with stakeholders which results in prescriptive rather than responsive policymaking.[45]

Therefore from the data analysed it can be concluded that the professionalising initiatives carried out in the context of a highly marketised sector tend to have a lower impact on practices, transformation and real change.

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[44] The case studies of Pistoia [p.5], Ghent [p. 11] and Denmark provide explicit reference to systems of governance and to the challenges that systems of public governance have to face in this particular historic period (how the decrease in public funding is affecting the role of the *pedagogista* [Pistoia, p.7], and the new public management paradigm undermining the professional autonomy of pedagogues developed over 125 years of pedagogical tradition [p.12])

[45][*From England case study summary: Key challenges*] Study informants and the available literature point to the following key challenges in implementing the EYP status:

(a) The model did not address the question of parity of pay and conditions for EYPs and teachers. Theoretical equality is not matched in practice.

(b) Although the sector welcomed the EYP development, and the policy attention to early years curricula, the implementation was overly governed by targets and prescriptive standards and not enough by listening to stakeholders and practitioners. The sector has a rich and varied history and a wealth of experience that was/is in danger of being ignored rather than used as a source of learning.

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7   Appendices

Appendix 1:

Semi-structured interview for ECEC experts

Appendix 2:

Competence profiles for core practitioners, assistants and family day carers in 15 countries

Appendix 3:

Table *Typology competence profiles*

Appendix 4:

Table *Definition of competences and place of body of knowledge*

Appendix 5:

Table *Competences oriented towards whom?*

Appendix 6:

Table *Systemic aspects core practitioner and assistant*

Appendix 7:

Briefing document for CORE case studies

7.1 Appendix 1: *Semi-structured interview for ECEC experts*

For each country, we would wish to receive one *concise* report per profession. For each report (thus for each type of professional), we ask you to answer on the following 3 series of questions.

1. Professional competence profiles

By "professional competence profiles" we mean more or less formal descriptions of the job, including listings of competences needed to do this job.

1.1. Does a professional competence profile" exist for this profession?

1.2. If yes, please attach the competence profile, when available in either English, French, Dutch, German or Italian. If it does not exist in these languages, we would be grateful if you could translate it into one of these languages.

1.3. If yes, who established the profile (local, national government, which Ministry, …) and what is its legal status (recommendation / compulsory / nationwide / local variations…)

1.4. If yes, is it in any formal way related to the European Qualification Framework and if so, on what level is it to be situated?

1.5. If a professional competence profile for this profession does not exist, are there alternative job descriptions you can provide (in that case, please inform us also on the legal status of these documents and join the documents to the report).

1.6. Finally, please write in 1 to 2 pages maximum, what – according to you – are the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of this profession.

2. Competence profiles for initial training

By "Competence profiles for initial training" we mean lists of competences that serve as guidelines for training institutions delivering the professionals. This does not include curricula, listing the subjects that students follow, but rather the competences that are assessed when evaluating students.

2.1. Does a "Competence profile for initial training" exist for this profession?

2.2. If yes, please attach the competence profile, when available in either English, French, Dutch, German or Italian. If it does not exist in these languages, we would be grateful if you could translate it into one of these languages.

2.3. If yes, what who established the profile (local, national government, which Ministry, …) and what is its legal status (recommendation / compulsory / nationwide / local variations…)

2.4. If yes, are training institutions accredited, assessed or otherwise evaluated on how they actually prepare students to fulfil the competence profile?

2.5. If a professional competence profile for this profession does not exist, are there alternative descriptions you can provide, such as curricula or lists of subjects (in that case, please inform us also on the legal status of these documents and join the documents to the report).

2.6. Finally, please write in 1 to 2 pages maximum, what – according to you – are the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of this competence profile for initial training.

3. Systemic aspects of this profession

From our literature review, we concluded that quality is not just a matter of individual competences of professional educators, but also of their *capabilities*, i.e. of the contextual factors that enable them (or disable them) to develop these competences. In other words, competences should be considered in systemic ways. Therefore, we ask you to give a *brief* account of the systemic aspects of this profession, by answering the following questions.

3.1. Adult/child ratio's

Is there a general regulation about adult/child ratio's for this professional group? If so: what is the ratio?

3.2. Support

Is there a structural regulation for providing support on the job for this professional group (intervision, supervision, team meetings, mentoring, on-the-job training, …)

If so: what is the regulation?

3.3. Hours without children

Is there a structural regulation allowing this professional group to spend some (paid) time without the children (e.g. for training, pedagogical documentation, etc). If so: what is the regulation?

3.4. Salaries

What is the gross monthly salary (in Euro) for a starting professional of this group ?

3.5. Unions and other professional organizations

Is there a union or are there other professional organization for this group? If so, can you *briefly* describe their mission and give an estimation of the percentage of professionals that adhere to the union/organization?

3.6. Structural quality regulations

If national or local quality regulations exist, have these professionals been consulted in a democratic process of developing them? If so: how did this happen?

3.7. SWOT

Please give a short account of what – according to you – are the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of the systemic, social and societal contexts in which this professional group works.

7.2   Appendix 2: *Competence profiles for core practitioners, assistants and family day carers in 15 countries*[46]

To contextualize the competence profiles of each country, we use the data that Pamela Oberhuemer and colleagues have collected for the SEEPRO project[47]. Each overview includes bullet points about the characteristics of the general early childhood system and the characteristics of the professional education/training and workforce issues in a specific country. The local experts of Croatia provided us the Croatian bullet points as Croatia is a candidate member state and not included in the SEEPRO project.

1)   Belgium

*Three language Communities (Flemish, French, German-speaking) each with responsibility for education and childcare services.
*Almost two third of mothers with children under 2 years of age in labour force
*A long tradition of publicly funded centre-based settings for 3 to 6 years olds
*A split system of responsibilities for pre-primary schooling and services for children under 3 and out-of-school provision
*Entitlement to full-day pre-primary education for children aged 2 ½ to 6 years
*Compulsory education begins at 6

* One form of professional training for work in pre-primary education
* Multiple qualification routes for work in the childcare sector
* No formal qualification requirements for the fast-growing private childcare sector in Flanders
* Same salary status for pre-primary and primary school teachers
* Family day care personnel often unqualified
(Oberhuemer, et al., 2010, p. 31, 44)

	Professional Competence profile	Training Competence profile
CP	Pre-primary professional: 2,5-6 years	Pre-primary professional: 2,5-6 years
	Belgium Flemish community	*Belgium Flemish community*
	Kleuterleid(st)er (early childhood teacher) Professional competence profile (pre-primary, primary and secondary education) (5 pg's) & basic competences for starting teachers (15pg's): compulsory by Ministry of Education of the Flemish Community , regulates private and public institutions. Besluit van de Vlaamse regering betreffende de basiscompetenties van de leraren (B.S. 17/01/2008)	*Kleuterleid(st)er* (early childhood teacher) Training institutions compile own training competence profile based on the professional profile & basic competences for starting teachers. ISCED 5B

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[46] N.I. = No Information

CP = Core Practitioner / **AS** = Assistant / **FD** = Family Day Carer

[47] Oberhuemer, P., Schreyer, I., & Neuman, M. J. (2010). *Professionals in early childhood education and care systems. European profiles and perspectives.* Opladen & Farminghton hills: Barbara Budrich Publishers

http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/wetwijs/thema.asp?id=25 Besluit van de Vlaamse regering van 05/10/2007 betreffende de beroepsprofielen van de leraren. (B.S.29/11/2007) http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/wetwijs/thema.asp?id=15	
Belgium French community	*Belgium French community*
Instituteur/institutrice préscolaire Professional competence profile (pre-primary, primary, secondary education), compulsory by the Ministry of Education of the French Community, regulates private and public institutions *Décret du 12 décembre 2000, définissant la formation initiale des instituteurs et régents.*	***Instituteur/institutrice préscolaire*** Training profile compulsory by the Ministry of Education and Research of the French community (AGERS : Administration générale de l'enseignement et de la Recherche scientifique) ISCED 5B *Arrêté du gouvernement de la Communauté française du 7 juin 2001 fixant les grilles de référence de la formation disciplinaire et interdisciplinaire prévue dans le décret du 12 décembre 2000 définissant la formation initiale des instituteurs et des régents.*
Belgium German community	*Belgium German community*
Kindergärtnerin: N.I.	***Kindergärtnerin:*** N.I. ISCED 5B
Infant-toddler professional: 0-3 years	Infant-toddler professional: 0-3 years
Belgium Flemish community	*Belgium Flemish community*
Begeleid(st)er Kinderopvang/Kinderverzorger (childcareworker) Professional competence profile (44 pg's): recommendation by Socio-economic Board of Flanders SERV, oriented on private and public institutions. SERV (2001) *Beroepsprofiel Kinderopvang begeleid(st)er* http://www.serv.be/competentieteam/publicatie/beroepsprofiel-begeleid ***Verantwoordelijke Kinderopvang/Kinderverzorger*** (coordinator) Professional competence profile (46 pg's): recommendation by Socio-economic Board of Flanders SERV, oriented on private and public institutions. SERV (2008) *Beroepsprofiel Kinderopvang Verantwoordelijke* http://www.serv.be/competentieteam/publicatie/beroepsprofiel-verantwoordelijke-kinderopvang-herwerkte-versie **(Since 2011)* **Bachelor pedagogie van het jonge kind** (Pedagogue for young children) (Still under development) Professional profile, recommendation by Child & Family (Flemish governmental agency with responsibility for young children and families) (1 page) *Beroepsomschrijving bachelor in de Pedagogie van het jonge kind*, goedgekeurd en positief geadviseerd door het Raadgevend Comité van Kind&Gezin op 16 December 2009	***Begeleid(st)er Kinderopvang/Kinderverzorger*** *Training competence profile adult education (36 pgs), compulsory by Ministry of Education of the Flemish Community ISCED 3B Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap (2006) *Studiegebied personenzorg. Secundair volwassenenonderwijs. Modulaire opleiding. Begeleider in de kinderopvang BO PZ 108* http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/dvo/volwassenen/inhouden/svwo/personenzorg/BVR_BO%20PZ%20108_01-09-2006.pdf *Secondary education: Learning goals of initial training (eindtermen) defined by Ministry of Education. Based on the learning goals Umbrella organizations (State, Catholic, …)developed their own learning plan (including competences) ISCED 3B **(Since 2011)* **Bachelor pedagogie van het jonge kind** (Pedagogue for young children) (Still under development) Training competence profile (1 pg), compulsory since 2010 ISCED 5B

	Belgium French community	*Belgium French community*
	Puéricultrice (Childcare worker) Professional competence profile (« profil de qualification, 15 pg's), determined by the CCPQ, Commission Communautaire des professions et labour office qualifications (1997) Qualifications recognized by *Arrêté du Gouvernement de la Communauté Française , Relatif à la reconnaissance des formations et qualifications du personnel des milieux d'accueil prévu par l'arrêté du Gouvernement de la Communauté Française du 27 février 2003 portant réglementation générale des milieux d'accueil (5 mai 2004)*	***Puéricultrice*** (Childcare worker) Training profile, compulsory by the Ministry of Education and Research of the French community (Ministère de la Communauté française. Département Enseignement Recherche) ISCED 3B
	Auxiliaires de l'enfance Professional competence profile (1p) determined by the « Conseil supérieur de l'Enseignement de Promotion Sociale, 24 mai 2007 Qualifications recognized by *Arrêté du Gouvernement de la Communauté Française , Relatif à la reconnaissance des formations et qualifications du personnel des milieux d'accueil prévu par l'arrêté du Gouvernement de la Communauté Française du 27 février 2003 portant réglementation générale des milieux d'accueil (5 mai 2004)*	***Auxiliaires de l'enfance*** Training profile, compulsory by Ministry of the French community, General Administration of Education and Scientific Research. Social promotion Education (Ministère de la Communauté française. Département Enseignement Recherche) (the family day carer training included as a first step in a modular process), 5 juin 2008
	Belgium German Community:	*Belgium German Community:*
	Kinderpflegerin: N.I.	***Kinderpflegerin:*** N.I.
AS	<u>3-6 years</u>	<u>3-6 years</u>
	Belgium Flemish community	*Belgium Flemish community*
	Begeleid(st)er Kinderopvang/Kinderverzorger Works as an assistant of the pre-primary professional. Although they have a professional profile to work with 0-3, they don't have a professional profile to work with 3-6.	***Begeleid(st)er Kinderopvang/Kinderverzorger*** *Training competence profile adult education (36 pgs), compulsory by Ministry of Education of the Flemish Community. ISCED 3B Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap (2006) *Studiegebied personenzorg. Secundair volwassenenonderwijs. Modulaire opleiding. Begeleider in de kinderopvang BO PZ 108* http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/dvo/volwassenen/inhouden/svwo/personenzorg/BVR_BO%20PZ%20108_01-09-2006.pdf *Secondary education: Learning goals of initial training (eindtermen) defined by Ministry of Education. Based on the learning goals Umbrella organizations (State, Catholic, …)developed their own learning plan (including competences) ISCED 3B
	Belgium French community	*Belgium French community*
	*** Puéricultrice*** Works as an assistant of the pre-primary professional (as described in the "profil de qualification")	***Puéricultrice*** Training profile, compulsory by the Ministry of Education and Research of the French community (Ministère de la Communauté française. Département Enseignement Recherche)
	Assistant aux Instituteurs Préscolaires	***Assistant aux instituteurs maternels***

	Competence profile established by the Forem	/ No training (ISCED 3B)
	Belgium German Community:	*Belgium German Community:*
	N.I.	N.I.
	<u>0-3 years</u>	<u>0-3 years</u>
	Belgium Flemish community	*Belgium Flemish community*
	Doelgroepwerknemer Works as an assistant of the infant-toddler professionals in community-based childcare centres. No national profile. Yet the Umbrella organization for community-based childcare centers recommends a profile based on the profile of the childcareworker. Koepel BND, Vlaams subsidieagentschap Werk en Sociale Economie & Ecce ama! (2004) Actieplan flexibele en occasionele kinderopvang. Info voor kandidaat gemandateerde voorzieningen en lokale diensten buurtgerichte kinderopvang [www.kindengezin.be/.../personeelsbeleidgemandateerdeenlokalediensten_ tcm149-50757.doc](http://www.kindengezin.be)	**Doelgroepwerknemer** These employees are not in possession of any diploma or certification of higher secondary education. Within six years after the start of their employment they need a qualification certificate issued by the Flemish minister responsible for assistance to individuals.
	Belgium French community	*Belgium French community*
	/	**/**
	Belgium German Community:	*Belgium German Community:*
	N.I.	N.I.
FD		
	Belgium Flemish community	*Belgium Flemish community*
	Onthaalouder Professional competence profile (8 pg's), recommendation by Child & Family (Flemish governmental agency with responsibility for young children and families) Kind & Gezin (2005) Competentieprofiel van een onthaalouder http://www.kindengezin.be/Images/CompetentieprofielOnthaalouder_tcm149-44517.pdf	**Onthaalouder** No training profile
	Belgium French community	*Belgium French community*
	Accueillant-es- d' enfants à domicile / No official Professional profile, yet profile defined by the Forem (Rome)	**Accueillant-es- d' enfants à domicile** 2 training profiles : one is defined by IFAPME (region Wallonne) & INFAC (Brussels) . The second one is compulsory by the Ministry of the French community, the General Administration of Education and Scientific research, Social Promotion Education (first level of the training of auxiliaire de l'enfance)
	Belgium German Community:	*Belgium German Community:*
	N.I.	N.I.

2) Croatia

Candidate European member state
Unitary system

Till 1979 professionals were educated at secondary level. From 1979 till 2005 initial training for pre-primary professionals was organized as a 2-year university specialist study. Since 2005 initial training was organized as a 3-year university specialist study, as a result of the Bologna process. In 2009 two Universities started 3+2 university program. The other Universities who are still offering a 3-year specialist study, are also preparing for a 3+2 study.
Professional development is obligatory for all practitioners

	Professional Competence profile	Training Competence profile	Other relevant documents
CP	Pre-primary and primary school professionals: 0-6 ***Odgajatelj/odgajateljica*** (pre-school teacher) National professional competence profile is described in 'program guidelines for pre-school education, recommendation by Ministry of Education Ministar Prošvjete I Sporta (1991) *Programsko usmjerenje odgoja i obrazovanja predskolske djECEC.* National professional competence profile is also described in 'national pedagogical standard of preschool education', compulsory by Ministry of Education Ministar Prošvjete I Sporta (2008) **Drzavni pedagoski standard predskolskog odgoja i obrazovanja.** http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?sec=2195	Pre-primary and primary school professionals: 0-6 ***Odgajatelj/odgajateljica*** Universities decide individually on competence profiles for initial training and is influenced by the professional profile. ISCED 5-6	Regulation on teacher's advancement (9 pg's), obligatory by the Ministry of Education Ministar Prošvjete I Sporta (1997) *Pravilnik. O na činu I uvjetima napredovanja u struci I promicanju u polo žajna zvanja odgojitelja i stručnih suradnika u dječjim vrtićima.*
AS	/ No assistants in ECEC	/ No assistants in ECEC	
FD	/ No formal organized daycare	/ No formal organized daycare	

3) Denmark

Unitary system: Early childhood care and education for children aged 6 months to 6 years (dagtilbud) located within the social welfare system
Ministry of the Interior and Social Affairs responsible at the national level, municipalities at the local level
Female employment rate significantly higher than the EU average, and maternal employment rate among the highest
Optional kindergarten classes in schools for 6 year olds became part of the compulsory school system in 2009
Compulsory school starting age 6 years (since 2009)

• Core practitioners (pædagoger) with broad-based social pedagogy professional qualification at higher education level
• Education/training prepares for work with children, young people and adults in a wide range of settings outside the education system
• Pedagogues constitute 60 per cent of the early childhood workforce
• Majority of pedagogues are members of the trade union organisation BUPL
(Oberhuemer, et al., 2010, p. 99, 108)

	Professional Competence profile	Training Competence profile	Other relevant documents
CP	Social-pedagogy professional: 0-6 ***Pædagog (Pedagogue)*** No national competence profile. Yet a competence profile, developed in 2004 by BUPL (trade union of pedagogues) in cooperation with employers association KL, Ministry of Education, University colleges and other relevant partners. http://www.bupl.dk/iwfile/BALG-82XKAL/$file/Pedagogicalprofile.pdf http://www.bupl.dk/iwfile/BALG-7X4GBX/$file/The%20work%20of%20the%20pedagogue.pdf	Social-pedagogy professional: 0-6[48] ***Pædagog (Pedagogue)*** National training profile, compulsory by the Ministry of Education ISCED 5 A/B Undervisningsministeriet (2007) *Bachelor in Social Education.* Copenhagen. www.uvm.dk http://eng.uvm.dk/~/media/Files/English/Fact%20sheets/080101_fact_sheet_social_education.ashx	Day-care facilities act (26 pg's), Act. No. 501 of 6 June 2007, Ministry of social affairs http://english.sm.dk/MinistryOfSocialWelfare/legislation/social_affairs/Day-Care%20Facilities%20Act/Sider/Start.aspx
AS	***Pædagogmedhjælper (Pedagogue assistant)*** No national professional profile The collective agreement on the pedagogue assistant only mentions that persons need to be at least 17 years old.	***Pædagogmedhjælper (Pedagogue assistant)*** No national training competence profile There is a new vocational training for pedagogue assistants PAU: the training is alternating between periods at school and periods in practice.	Day-care facilities act (26 pg's), Act. No. 501 of 6 June 2007, Ministry of social affairs http://english.sm.dk/MinistryOfSocialWelfare/legislation/social_affairs/Day-Care%20Facilities%20Act/Sider/Start.aspx Family day care: act 21 & 22
FD	No professional profile	No training competence profile The vocational training for pedagogue assistants is also offered to family day carers, yet this is not obligatory	

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[48] The Ministry of Education uses the term Social Educator whereas the Danish trade union BUPL uses the term Pedagogue Professional. Therefore we use the term as described in the book of Pamela Oberhuemer and colleagues

4) France

Long tradition of public early education and care services for young children

A split system of responsibilities for pre-primary schooling and services for children under 3

Widespread acceptance of the école maternelle as an educational institution for 3 to 6 year olds

Legal entitlement to a place in école maternelle for children aged 3 years up to school entry age

at 6; almost all 3, 4 and 5 year olds and a fifth of 2 year olds attend

Extended paid parental leave and new paternity leave

Teachers in the écoles maternelles (professeurs des écoles) trained to work with children from age 2/3 to 11 in schools; two-year postgraduate preparation following three-year university degree

Training for work with younger children still predominantly in the paramedical tradition, but increasing emphasis on pedagogical and social issues

(Oberhuemer, et al., 2010, p. 147, 158)

	Professional Competence profile	Training Competence profile
CP	Pre-primary and primary education professional (2,5-6): **Professeur des écoles** (School teacher) National professional competence profile (pre-primary and primary education), obligatory by Ministry of Education. Ministère de l'Education Nationale, *Les compétences professionnelles des maîtres* Bulletin Officiel n°1 du 04 – 01 – 2007 complété par le Bulletin officiel n° 32 du 3 septembre 2009, circulaire n° 2009-098 du 17 – 8 – 2009. http://sceco.paris.iufm.fr/IMG/pdf/Recapitulatif_des_ompetences_profs_2007_.pdf Early childhood professional/social pedagogy professional (0-6): **Éducatrice/éducateur de jeunes enfants** (Educator of young children) National professional competence profile, obligatory by the state *Référentiel professionnel des éducateurs de jeunes enfants.* Arrête du 16 novembre 2005 relatif au diplôme d'état d'éducateur de jeunes enfants http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000634091&dateTexte Health/care professional (0-4): ***Puéricultrice** (Paediatric nurse) A new professional profile is discussed on Ministry level ***Auxiliaire de puériculture** (Assistant child nurse) National professional competence profile, compulsory by the Ministry of Health and Solidarity. Ministry of Health and Solidarity (2006) *Arrêté du 16 janvier 2006 relatif à la formation conduisant au diplôme professionnel d'auxiliaire de puériculture* http://admi.net/jo/20060201/SANP0620362A.html	Pre-primary and primary education professional (2,5-6): **Professeur des écoles** (School teacher) ISCED 5A Due to current reorganization not clear, professional profile is used as a reference Early childhood professional/social pedagogy professional (0-6): **Éducatrice/éducateur de jeunes enfants** (Educator of young children) National training competence profile, obligatory by the state *Référentiel de certification.* Arrête du 16 novembre 2005 relatif au diplôme d'état d'éducateur de jeunes enfants http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000634091&dateTexte ISCED 5B Health/care professional (0-4): ***Puéricultrice** (Paediatric nurse) The current national training competence profile is dated: 1986. A newer profile will be made after the new professional profile is developed. ISCED 5B ***Auxiliaire de puériculture** (Assistant child nurse) (0-4) National training competence profile, compulsory by the Ministry of Health and Solidarity. Ministry of Health and Solidarity (2006) *Arrêté du 16 janvier 2006 relatif à la formation conduisant au diplôme professionnel d'auxiliaire de puériculture* http://admi.net/jo/20060201/SANP0620362A.html ISCED 4B

| AS | *ATSEM Agent territorial specialisé des écoles maternelles* (2,5-6)
National professional competence profile
Décret ministériel n°92-850 du 28 août 1992 *portant statut particulier du cadre d'emplois des agents territoriaux spécialisés des écoles maternelles.* Version consolidée par le décret du 22 décembre 2006.
http://dcalin.fr/textoff/atsem_1992_mod.html

* *Assistant with Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle CAP petite enfance* (0-3) (assistant)
National professional competence profile, compulsory by the Ministry of Education
Ministère de l'Education Nationale (22 novembre 2007) *Référentiel d'activités du CAP Petite Enfance.*
http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000017644429&dateTexte | *ATSEM Agent territorial specialisé des écoles maternelles* (2,5-6)
National training competence profile, compulsory by the Ministry of Education
Since 1992 ATSEM need to achieve a CAP certificate with a specialisation in early childhood: Ministère de l'Education Nationale (22 novembre 2007) *Référentiel de certification.*
http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000017644429&dateTexte
ISCED 3

* *Assistant with CAP petite enfance* (0-3) (assistant)
National training competence profile, compulsory by the Ministry of Education
Ministère de l'Education Nationale (22 novembre 2007) *Référentiel de certification.*
http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000017644429&dateTexte
ISCED 3 |
| FD | *Assistante maternelle*
National professional competence profile, compulsory by the Ministry of Education
Ministère de l'Education Nationale (22 novembre 2007) *Référentiel d'activités du CAP Petite Enfance.*
http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000017644429&dateTexte | *Assistante maternelle* (0-3)
National training competence profile, compulsory by Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Civil service.
Code de l'action sociale et des familles ,articles D. 421-44 - D. 421-52, the 1st of January 2007.
Ministère de l'Education Nationale (22 novembre 2007) *Référentiel de certification.*
http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000017644429&dateTexte

ISCED 3 |

5) Greece

A parallel system of pre-primary education for 4 to 6 year olds (Ministry of Education) and infant-toddler and early childhood centres for 0 to 6 year olds (Ministry of Health and local authorities), with different structural features and different systems of professional education/training
Comparatively low rate of maternal employment (ranked in lower third of EU statistics)
Compulsory pre-primary year in kindergarten for 5 year olds since 2007
School starting age: 6 years

Three different professional study routes for staff who work with 4 to 6 year olds in kindergartens and those working with children aged 3 months to 6 years in infant-toddler/early childhood centres
(Oberhuemer, et al., 2010, p. 191)

		Professional Competence profile	Training Competence profile	Other relevant documents
CP		Pre-primary professional (4-6):	Pre-primary professional (4-6):	*Papaprokopiou, N. and A. Kammenou (2010). "Infants' And Toddlers' Reception In Greece: Parents' And Educators' Attitudes". Paper included in the minutes of the conference *Early Childhood Curriculum, Policy and Pedagogy in the 21st Century: An International Debate*. Anglia Ruskin University, UK. March 25-27, 2010.
		Nipiagogos (Kindergarten pedagogue)	**Nipiagogos** (Kindergarten pedagogue)	
		No professional profile.	No national official training competence profile: some educational institutions prescribe certain competences but dependant on personal preference teacher	
		Only formal qualifications requirements: defined by Hellenic Ministry of Interior, Decentralisation and E-government. Some local governments have a clear professional competence profile, yet their role remains less specified in a national level.	ISCED 5A	
				*Papaprokopiou, N. (1988). Les structures d'accueil pour les enfants de moins de trois ans en Grèce. Réflexions critiques et perspectives d'Avenir. PhD thesis, Université René Descartes Paris V/Sorbonne.
		Early childhood professional (0-6):	Early childhood professional (0-6):	
		Vrefonipiokomos (Early childhood educator)	**Vrefonipiokomos** (Early childhood educator)	
		No professional profile.	No national official training competence profile: some educational institutions prescribe certain competences but dependant on personal preference teacher	*Greek National Gazette (FEK) Issue A/39/5-3-2001
		Only formal qualifications requirements: defined by Hellenic Ministry of Interior, Decentralisation and E-government. Some local governments have a clear professional competence profile, yet their role remains less specified in a national level.	ISCED 5A/B	*Greek National Gazette (FEK)
AS		**voithos nipiovrefokomou / voithos vrefonipiokomou / voithos pedagogou** (Early Childhood educator assistant/0-6)	**voithos nipiovrefokomou / voithos vrefonipiokomou / voithos pedagogou** (Early Childhood educator assistant/0-6)	Issue A/315/31-12-2003 (Amendment)
		National professional qualifications profile: defined by Hellenic Ministry of Interior, Decentralisation and E-government.	Vocational Training Institutes provide training.	*Greek National Gazette (FEK) Issue A/63/9-3-2005

		No national official training competence profile	(Amendment)
	The assistants have not yet established their professional rights.	ISCED 4	*Greek National Gazette (FEK) Issue A/115/9-6-2006 (Amendment)
	Some local governments have a clear professional competence profile, yet their role remains less specified in a national level.		*Greek National Gazette (FEK) Issue A/185/3-8-2007 (Amendment)
FD	/ No formal organized daycare	/ No formal organized daycare	

6) Ireland

A tradition of clear demarcation between childcare services and pre-primary education, with trends towards greater co-ordination
Significant increase in female employment rates over the past two decades – participation rate currently somewhat above the EU average
Main responsibility for early childhood provision now lies with two ministries: Department of Health and Children and Department of Education and Science
Statutory school starting age 6 years

Primary-trained teachers work with 4 to 6 year olds in the infant classes of primary schools
Heterogenous qualification requirements in the childcare sector, with little regulation
Childcare workers have low status and less favourable work conditions compared with teachers in the school system
(Oberhuemer, et al., 2010, p. 223, 232)

	Professional Competence profile	Training Competence profile	Other relevant documents
CP	Pre-primary and primary school professional (0-4): **Primary school teacher** N.I.	Pre-primary and primary school professional (0-4): **Primary school teacher** ISCED 5A/B N.I.	Minister for Education and Science (2009). *Developing the workforce in the early childhood care and education sector. Background Discussion Paper.* Dublin: Minister for Education and Science.
	Early childhood professional (0-5) **Basic practitioner in early childhood education/care, Level 5** **Intermediate practitioner in early childhood education/care, Level 5** **Experienced practitioner in early childhood education/care, Level 6** **Advanced practitioner in early childhood education/care, Level 7** **Expert practitioner in early childhood education/care**	Early childhood professional (0-5) **Intermediate practitioner in early childhood education/care, Level 5** ISCED 4C **Experienced practitioner in early childhood education/care, Level 6** ISCED 4C and/or 5B **Advanced practitioner in early childhood education/care, Level 7** ISCED 5B (Level 7) 5A (Level 8) **Expert practitioner in early childhood education/care** ISCED 5A (Master's) ISCED 6 (PhD)	Minister for Education and Science (2009). *Developing the workforce in the early childhood care and education sector. Report on the findings from the consultative process.* Dublin: Minister for Education and Science.
	No professional competence profiles There is a competence profile but not formalised yet, nor requirement in the sector, yet supported by the government (department of justice, equality, and law reform): Government of Ireland (2002) *Quality childcare & lifelong learning. Model framework for Education, Training and Professional Development in the Early Childhood Care and Education Sector.* This document can influence individual job descriptions ECECservices prescribe.	National training competence profiles for FETAC Level 5 and 6	
AS	**Basic practitioner in early childhood education/care, Level 4** Assistant role, working under direct supervision at all times. /No professional competence profiles. There is a competence profile but not formalised yet, nor requirement in the sector, yet supported by the government (department of justice, equality, and law reform): Government of Ireland (2002) *Quality childcare & lifelong learning. Model framework for Education, Training and Professional Development in the Early Childhood Care and Education Sector.* This document can influence individual job descriptions ECECservices prescribe. **Worker – Community Employment Scheme**	**Basic practitioner in early childhood education/care, Level 4** No formal training requirements, recommendation is ISCED 3A/3C **Worker – Community Employment Scheme** The individual worker on a community employment scheme has an Individual Learner Plan,	

	No professional competence profile	piloted in FÁS (Irish national training an employment authority) allows for CE supervisors (can be on site or off site)and participants to identify the training and development needs of the individual learner (i.e. what FETAC level is suitable for the learner) and then to review the participants' progress. It also provides a stage-by-stage structure for planning, implementing, reviewing and recording all of the learning activities undertaken by CE participant, including childcare training.	
FD	(0-3) / No professional competence profile	/ No training requirements	

7) Italy

* A split system of ministerial responsibility for pre-primary education (3 to 6 year olds) and early childhood services for the under-threes

*Employment rates for mothers with children below 6 years of age somewhat below the EU average in official statistics

*Regional disparities in organisation and levels of provision, particularly regarding services for the under-threes

*Compulsory school starts at age 6

*Split system of professional qualification requirements for work with children below school age

*Four-year university degree as requirement for core practitioners working in the scuoledell'infanzia

*Upper secondary specialist diploma as requirement for work in infant-toddler centres

*Pedagogical co-ordinators (pedagogisti) play key networking role between centres

*Equal salary status for teaching staff in kindergartens and primary schools

(Oberhuemer, et al., 2010, p. 239, 252)

	Professional Competence profile	Training Competence profile
CP	Pre-primary professional (3-6): **Insegnante di scuola dell'infanzia** (Early childhood education teacher) National professional competence profile, compulsory by Ministry of Education and signed by trade unions *Decreto Ministeriale 26 maggio 1998*, http://attiministeriali.miur.it/anno-1998/maggio/dm-26051998.aspx Infant-toddler professional (0-3): ***Educatrice/Educatore** (Educator) / No national professional competence profiles. Some municipalities have job descriptions. Every municipality has a competence profile for the service, oriented to children, parents, colleagues & community. ***Coordinatore pedagogico** or **psicopedagogico** or **pedagogista** (pedagogical coordinator) / No national professional competence profiles, Half of regional laws have a profile in terms of tasks	Pre-primary professional (3-6): **Insegnante di scuola dell'infanzia** (Early childhood education teacher) ISCED 5A National training competence profile for both pre-school, primary and secondary school teachers *Decreto Ministeriale 26 maggio 1998*, http://attiministeriali.miur.it/anno-1998/maggio/dm-26051998.aspx Infant-toddler professional (0-3): ***Educatrice/Educatore** (Educator) ISCED 3A: / no national training competence profile For specific program in early childhood: competence profile per university, yet common competences, accents are different. ***Coordinatore pedagogico** or **psicopedagogico** or **pedagogista** (pedagogical coordinator) / No national training profile. qualification route is encouraged for centre directors and pedagogical co-ordinators: ISCED 5A Competence profile per university, yet common competences, accents are different. Universities are requested to specify formative objectives in terms of expected competences with reference to the Dublin descriptors and to identify corresponding job profile.
AS	/	/
FD	/ No national professional competence profiles	/ No training requirements, no training competence profile

8) Lithuania

*European Union member since 2004

*Third highest maternal employment rate in Europe

*Predominantly public early education/care system under auspices of Education

*Extensive kindergarten provision, but limited services for under-threes

*Universal but not mandatory transition class for 6 year olds

*Compulsory school begins at age 7

*Integrated professional profile for pedagogical work with children aged 1 to 7 years, supported by specialists and assistants

*Both universities and vocational higher education institutions train staff for work in early education/care

*98 per cent of core practitioners (group and centre leaders) have a higher education degree

(Oberhuemer, et al., 2010, p. 274, 284)

	Professional Competence profile	Training Competence profile
CP	Early childhood professional (1-6): ***Auklètojas/auklètoja*** (Pre-school pedagogue) National professional competence profile, compulsory by Ministry of Education and Science Ministry of Education and Science (15 January 2007). *Order No ISAK-54 on the approval of the description of professional competences of teachers.* Vilnius.	Early childhood professional (1-6): ***Auklètojas/auklètoja*** (Pre-school pedagogue) ISCED 5A/5B National training competence profile, compulsory by Ministry of Education and Science Ministry of Education and Science (15 January 2007). *Order No ISAK-54 on the approval of the description of professional competences of teachers.* Vilnius.
AS	*Auklètojos padèjèja* (Teacher assistant*)* / No national professional competence profile	*Auklètojos padèjèja* (Teacher assistant*)* / No national training competence profile
FD	/ No formal organized daycare	/ No formal organized daycare

9) The Netherlands

• High rate of part-time working mothers compared with other EU countries

• Pre-primary provision for 4 to 5 year olds integrated into primary school (Basisschool)

• Compulsory schooling at age 5

• No entitlement to a place in an early childhood centre for children under 4 years of age

• 2005 Childcare Act: demand-driven expansion of private and mixed economy childcare with only limited quality control

• Relatively strong involvement of employers in funding and providing early childhood education/care

• As from 2007: all centre-based provision under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education

• Different systems of professional preparation for work with 0 to 4 year olds and 4 to 5 year olds

• A great variety of training schemes at different levels qualify for work in childcare services

• Education/training as Basisschool teacher qualifies for the age-group 4 to 12 years, but students specialise either on working with children 4 to 8 years or 9 to 12 years

• Long-standing debate about the status of early childhood education within the teacher education system

(Oberhuemer, et al., 2010, p. 319, 330)

	Professional Competence profile	Training Competence profile
CP	Pre-primary and primary school professional (4-12): ***Leraar basisonderwijs*** (Teacher) National competence profile, compulsory by Ministry of education www.lerarenweb.nl Infant-toddler professional (0-4): ***Groepsleidster Kinderopvang*** (Childcare worker) National competence profile, recommended by NIZW NIZW beroepsontwikkeling (2006) *Groepsleidster kinderopvang.* Utrecht: NIZW http://www.competentieweb.nl/eCache/DEF/1/16/451.html Professionals with a broad pedagogical, socio-pedagogical or socio-cultural vocational qualification: ***Pedagogisch Medewerker*** National competence profile by Calibris Colo & Calibris (2009-2010) *Kwalificatiedossier Pedagogisch Werk*	Pre-primary and primary school professional (4-12): ***Leraar basisonderwijs*** (Teacher) Training institutions compile own training competence profile based on the professional profile. www.lerarenweb.nl ISCED 5A/5B Professionals with a broad pedagogical, socio-pedagogical or socio-cultural vocational qualification: ***Pedagogisch Medewerker*** Training institutions compile own training competenceprofile based on the professional profile. ISCED 3/4 *New Bachelor pedagogisch management* (pedagogical management) ISCED 5A

AS[49]	***Groepshulp*** (0-4) / Solely description job CAO (collective labor agreement), http://www.fcb.nl/Content/paginas/CAO%20Kinderopvang/CAO%202010-2011/Inhoud/Bijlagen/Bijlage%205%20Functieboek/01%20Groepshulp.aspx ***Onderwijsondersteuner*** (assistant of education) (4-12) National professional competence profile, compulsory by Calibris, SBL en LPBO SLB & Calibris (2008) *De onderwijsondersteuner: competentieprofielen en bekwaamheidseisen.* LPBO (2007) *Beroep: onderwijsondersteuner.* Utrecht: LPBO Wet BIO, 30 juni 2004	***Groepshulp*** (0-4) ISCED 2 ***Onderwijsondersteuner*** (assistant of education) (4-12) National training profile, compulsory by Calibris, SBL en LPBO SLB & Calibris (2008) *De onderwijsondersteuner: competentieprofielen en bekwaamheidseisen.* LPBO (2007)*Toetscriteria voor competentieprofielen en bekwaamheidseisen.* Utrecht: LPBO ISCED 4
FD	***Gastouder*** National competence profile, compulsory by MO groep kinderopvang, branche vereniging ondernemers in de kinderopvang, BOinK http://www.databankkinderopvang.nl/download/?noGzip=1&id=10866630	***Gastouder*** National training competence profile, compulsory by CALIBRIS ISCED 3

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[49] In the Netherlands the 'assistants' represent a very small part of the workforce. The *onderwijsondersteuner* (4-12-year-olds) represent only 2.76 % of the workforce in pre-primary and primary schools. No statistics can be found for the *Groepshulp.* It is estimated that this percentage is very low.

10) Poland

European Union member since 2004
Employment rate of mothers with children below statutory school age slightly below the EU average
A split system of early childhood provision for the under-threes (Ministry of Health) and the 3 to 6 year olds (Ministry of Education)
Very low levels of provision for the under-threes
No entitlement to a place in kindergarten for the 3 to 6 year olds
Statutory school age 7 years

Kindergarten staff and primary school teachers (up to grade 3) share a common study route but with field-specific specialisations and awards
Two thirds of the kindergarten workforce has a tertiary level qualification
Healthcare qualification for personnel working with under-threes
Practically no male staff in early childhood centre
(Oberhuemer, et al., 2010, p. 338, 347)

	Professional Competence profile	Training Competence profile
CP	Pre-primary professional (3-6): ***Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego*** (Pre-school teacher) / No national professional competence profile Health/care professional (0-3): ***Opiekunka dziecięca*** (Childcare worker) / No national professional competence profile	Pre-primary professional (3-6): ***Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego*** (Pre-school teacher) ISCED 5A/B Before 1992, ISCED 4A National training competence profile for all teachers, compulsory by Ministry of Education Ministry of Education (2004) *regulation standards for teacher training* http://bip.men.gov.pl/index.php?option=com_wrapper&view=wrapper&Itemid=50 http://bip.men.gov.pl/men_bip/akty_pr_1997-2006/rozp_302_1.doc Health/care professional (0-3): ***Opiekunka dziecięca*** (Childcare worker) ISCED 4A/4C & 5B /no national training competence profile
AS	***Pomoc nauczyciela*** (3-6) (Teacher assistants) **/** No national professional competence profile	***Pomoc nauczyciela*** (3-6) (Teacher assistants) / No training requirements, no national training competence profile
FD	/ No formal organized daycare	/ No formal organized daycare

11) Romania

- *European Union member since 2007*
- *Split system of ministerial responsibility for pre-primary education (3 to 6/7 years) and provision for the under-threes*
- *Proposed Education Act envisages comprehensive reform of the education system, including early childhood education and care*
- *No legal entitlement to a place in an early childhood centre*
- *Compulsory enrolment in preparatory classes for 5 to 6 year olds since 2008*
- *Statutory school entry age 6 or 7 years, depending on parents' preference*

- *Required qualification for work in kindergartens (3 to 6 years) and primary schools is university level degree (Bachelor) since 2005*
- *Formal qualifications for work in infant-toddler centres at lower level (since 1990) but with proposals for upgrading to higher education level*
- *Very few male workers in early education/care provision*

(Oberhuemer, et al., 2010, p. 366, 375)

	Professional Competence profile	Training Competence profile
CP	Pre-primary and primary school professional (3-7): *profesori pentru învăţământul preşcolar şi primar, Institutori învăţământ preşcolar* National professional competence profile, compulsory by Ministry of Education	Pre-primary and primary school professional (3-7): *profesori pentru învăţământul preşcolar şi primar, Institutori învăţământ preşcolar* / No national training competence profile. Training institutes are expected to use the professional competence profile as a frame of reference ISCED 5A/5B
	Pre-primary professional (3-7): *Educatoare* (Educator) National professional competence profile, compulsory by Ministry of Education	Pre-primary professional (3-7): *Educatoare* (Educator) / No national training competence profile. Training institutes are expected to use the professional competence profile as a frame of reference ISCED 5B
	Health/care professional (0-3): *Asistente de pediatrie* (Paediatric assistant) / No national professional competence profile	Health/care professional (0-3): *Asistente de pediatrie* (Paediatric assistant) ISCED 4A Before 1990: ISCED 3A / No national training competence profile
AS	*Ingrijitoare* (caregivers, nursing assistant) / No national professional competence profile	*Ingrijitoare* (caregivers, nursing assistant) / No national training requirements, short-term in-service training is sometimes required by some municipalities.
FD	/ No formal organized daycare	/ No formal organized daycare

12) Slovenia

• *Independent state since 1991*
• *European Union member since May 2004*
• *Co-ordinated system of publicly funded early education/care under the Ministry of Education*
• *High employment rates for mothers with young children*
• *Statutory school entry age lowered from 7 years to 6 years in 1997*

• *Core professional works with children across the early years (0 to 7)*
• *Professional education/training for early childhood teachers raised to three-year tertiary level in 1995*
• *Both university-trained staff and qualified pedagogical assistants work in early childhood centres*
• *A highly structured system of continuing professional development which opens up possibilities for promotion*
(Oberhuemer, et al., 2010, p. 397, 407)

	Professional Competence profile	Training Competence profile
CP	Early childhood professional (0-7): ***Vzgojitelj*** (*Early childhood educator*) / No national professional competence profile	Early childhood professional (0-7): ***Vzgojitelj*** (*Early childhood educator*) ISCED 5A National training competence profile, Not identical but similar per university. Each University is obliged to prepare a description of general and subject-specific competences. This profile is acknowledged by Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for higher education under the scope of Ministry of Higher education, Science and Technology.
AS	***Pomočnik vzgojitelja*** (Early childhood assistant) (0-7) National professional competence profile, obligatory by the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (this sectoral group is appointed by the Minister for Labour, Family and Social Affairs) *Professional standard* (OJ RS, No. 85/07) https://www.nrpslo.org/ris/preview.aspx/14300010	***Pomočnik vzgojitelja*** (Early childhood assistant) (0-7) ISCED 4A Before 1995: 3B/3C National training competence profile, obligatory by Institute of the republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and training and Expert Council of the republic of Slovenia, appointed by the Minister for Labour, Family and Social affairs http://www.cpi.si/srednje-strokovno-izobrazevanje.aspx
FD	/ No national professional competence profile	/No national training competence profile

13) Spain

- *Successive decentralization policies since 1975*
- *17 regional governments (autonomous communities), each with its own constitution and with responsibility for schools and early childhood education*
- *Since 1990 both the education/care of under-threes and of 3 to 6 year olds have been integrated into the education system (Educación infantil) and organised in two cycles*
- *Below-average rate of maternal employment in the EU and comparatively high level of mothers working full-time*
- *Compulsory schooling begins at age 6*

- *Three-year university study route for staff working with 3 to 6 year olds who may also work with children under 3*
- *Post-secondary route is main professional education/training for work with the under-threes*
- *Specially designed transition courses for in-service practitioners without the legally required minimum qualification*
- *Certificated courses can result in salary increments within the system of public centres*

(Oberhuemer, et al., 2010, p. 414, 418)

	Professional Competence profile	Training Competence profile
CP	Early childhood professional (0-6): ***Maestro/maestra especialista en educación infantile*** (Teacher in early childhood education) National professional competence profile, based on the 2006 Ley Orgánica de Educación, LOE (Act on Education), compulsory by Ministry of Education, Social Policy and Sport http://sauce.pntic.mec.es/~jsanto5/legisla/legislatio/loe.htm Infant-toddler professional (0-3): ***Técnico/técnica superior en educación infantile*** (Senior specialist in early childhood education) National professional competence profile, compulsory by Ministry of Education, Social Policy and Sport. (Autonomous Communities can adapt and expend some issues in order to reflect the diversity of each region through the different Councils or Departments of Education) *Third article of the Royal Decree 1394/2007, of 29 october, that established the title of Técnico Superior en Educación Infantil fixing the basis of the training7, 29-10-2007, 1394, BOE 24-11-2007.* http://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2007/11/24/pdfs/A48140-48177.pdf	Early childhood professional (0-6): ***Maestro/maestra especialista en educación infantile*** (Teacher in early childhood education) ISCED 5A National training competence profile, based on the 2006 Ley Orgánica de Educación, LOE (Act on Education), compulsory by Ministry of Education, Social Policy and Sport http://sauce.pntic.mec.es/~jsanto5/legisla/legislatio/loe.htm Infant-toddler professional (0-3): ***Técnico/técnica superior en educación infantile*** (Senior specialist in early childhood education) ISCED 4A National training competence profile, compulsory by Ministry of Education, Social Policy and Sport *Third article of the Royal Decree 1394/2007, of 29 october, that established the title of Técnico Superior en Educación Infantil fixing the basis of the training7, 29-10-2007, 1394, BOE 24-11-2007.* http://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2007/11/24/pdfs/A48140-48177.pdf *Royal Decree 942/2003, of 18 july, that set up the conditions of the test to obtain the vocational qualification titles of Técnico y Técnico Superior de Formación Profesional Específica. (Real Decreto): 18-07-03, 942, BOE 31-7-2003.*
AS	***Técnico/técnica Educador o Asistente en educación infantil*** / No national professional competence profile	***Técnico/técnica Educador o Asistente en educación infantil*** /No national training competence profile
FD	/ No formal organized daycare	/ No formal organized daycare

14) Sweden

• European Union member since 1995

• High employment rate for mothers with children below compulsory school age compared with EU average

• Responsibility for education and care services outside the compulsory school system transferred from the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Science in 1996

• Comprehensive system of parental leave and family benefits

• Municipalities obliged to offer three free hours of provision daily as from the age of 4

• Compulsory school starting age: the autumn of the year children turn 7 Unified system of professional education/training since 2001 for all staff working with children aged 1 to 18 within the education system (including early childhood centres)

• Professionals specialising in early years pedagogy also work in pre-school class in schools and alongside teachers in compulsory school (classes 1 to 4)

• Government commission proposal to revert to previous system of separate courses by 2010 and to reduce professional education/training from three and a half years to three years (Oberhuemer, et al., 2010, p. 428, 440)

		Professional Competence profile	Training Competence profile
CP		Early childhood professional (1-7): **Lärare för yngre åldrar** *(Teacher of young children – title since 2004)* / No national professional competence profile	Early childhood professional (1-7): **Lärare för yngre åldrar** *(Teacher of young children – title since 2004)* ISCED 5A National training competence profile for all degrees in higher education including Bachelor in Education/Master in Education (Lärarexamen), compulsory by National government. *Degree Ordinance by the Government, p. 9* http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/08/45/66/ae3126e1.pdf New national training competence profile especially for teachers of young children, compulsory by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education. http://www.hsv.se/download/18.d4c7e6a128941e891580005426/Forskollararexamen.pdf
AS		**Barnskötare** (Childcare worker/pedagogical assistant) / No national professional competence profile	**Barnskötare** (Childcare worker/pedagogical assistant) ISCED 3A / No national training competence profile
FD		/ No national professional competence profile	/ No national training profile, in some municipalities training requirements

15) United Kingdom

Four constituent countries, each with independent early education and childcare systems

A legacy of fragmentation in administration and delivery of early childhood services

Since 1997: Over a decade of wide-reaching early education and care policy initiatives aiming initially to combat child poverty and to improve co-ordination of services

England: Early education and childcare now embedded within the wider remit of the overarching child and youth policy agenda Every Child Matters

Statutory school age: 5 years in England, Wales and Scotland, 4 years in Northern Ireland

* In all four countries: Great variations in terms of requirements for professional work in public and voluntary or private sectors*

Qualified Teacher Status required for group and centre leaders in maintained education sector provision (nursery schools, nursery classes)

Level of required training for work in childcare services remains low, perpetuating the low status of the profession

England: Each Sure Start Children's Centre to be graduate-led by 2010

Radical re-structuring of qualifications framework in England for work with children and young people 0 to 18 within the Every Child Matters agenda

(Oberhuemer, et al., 2010, p. 449, 462)

	Professional Competence profile	Training Competence profile
CP		
	England and Wales	*England and Wales*
	Pre-primary professional or Pre-primary and primary school professional: **Early years teacher** with QTS status	Pre-primary professional or Pre-primary and primary school professional (3-5): **Early years teacher** with QTS status ISCED 5A
	N.I.	N.I.
	Early childhood professional: **Early Years Professional** with EYP status Professional competence profile, compulsory by the Children's Workforce Development Council http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/eyps http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/assets/0000/9008/Guidance_To_Standards.pdf Professional competence profile, compulsory by government agency *Early years foundation stage (EYFS) framework (0-5 years)* http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/earlyyears	Early childhood professional (0-5): **Early Years Professional** with EYP status ISCED 5 Training institutions need to meet the standards of the professional competence profile. http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/eyps http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/assets/0000/9008/Guidance_To_Standards.pdf Each training institution have to prove how they meet the professional competence requirements as described in EYFS http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/earlyyears
	Early Years Childcare Practitioner (various job titles: nursery nurses/ childcare workers/ support workers) Professional competence profile, compulsory by government agency *Early years foundation stage (EYFS) framework (0-5 years)*	**Early Years Childcare Practitioner** (various job titles: Nursery nurses/ childcare workers/ support workers) ISCED 3 Each training institution have to prove how they meet the professional competence requirements as described in EYFS

<table>
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</table>

	http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/earlyyears		http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/earlyyears
	Scotland:		*Scotland:*
	Pre-primary and primary school professional**:** ***Teacher*** (preschool and primary) Early years professional**:** ***Early years lead practitioner/manager & Early years and daycare practitioner*** N.I. yet similar to the region of England		Pre-primary and primary school professional**:** ***Teacher*** (preschool and primary) Early years professional**:** ***Early years lead practitioner/manager & Early years and daycare practitioner*** N.I. , yet similar to the region of England
	Northern Ireland:		*Northern Ireland:*
	Pre-primary and primary school professional: *Teacher* (preschool and primary) **Early years professional:** *Childcare centre leader/practitioner* N.I. yet similar to the region of England		**Pre-primary and primary school professional:** *Teacher* (preschool and primary) **Early years professional:** *Childcare centre leader/practitioner* N.I. yet similar to the region of England
AS			
	England and Wales		*England and Wales*
	Nursery assistants/teaching assistants / No professional competence profile		***Nursery assistants/teaching assistants*** ISCED 2 / No training competence profile
	Scotland:		*Scotland:*
	N.I. yet similar to the region of England		N.I. yet similar to the region of England
	Northern Ireland:		*Northern Ireland:*
	N.I. yet similar to the region of England		N.I. yet similar to the region of England
FD			
	England and Wales		*England and Wales*
	/ No professional competence profile		/ No training competence profile, no training requirements
	Scotland:		*Scotland:*
	N.I. yet similar to the region of England		N.I. yet similar to the region of England
	Northern Ireland:		*Northern Ireland:*
	N.I. yet similar to the region of England		N.I. yet similar to the region of England

7.3 Appendix 3: *Table Typology competence profiles*

Country	A: Training comp profiles deducted from professional profiles	B: Professional profiles but no training profiles	C: Training profiles but no professional profiles	D: No professional profiles and no training profiles
Belgium (French and Flemish community)	**CP** Pre-primary professional: 2,5-6 years *Kleuterleid(st)er* (early childhood teacher) (Fl) *Instituteur/trice préscolaire* (early childhood teacher) (Fr) **CP** Infant-toddler professional: 0-3 years *Begeleid(st)er Kinderopvang/Kinderverzorger* (childcareworker) (Fl)Katrien *Puéricultrice* (Childcare worker) (Fr) **CP** Infant-toddler professional/ social pedagogogy professional: 0-12 years *(Since 2011)* **Bachelor pedagogie van het jonge kind** (Pedagogue for young children) (Fl) *Auxiliaires de l'enfance* (Fr)	**FD** *Onthaalouder* (family day carer) (Fl) **AS** **Assistant aux instituteurs préscolaires** (2,5-6) (Fr)	**AS** *Begeleid(st)er Kinderopvang/Kinderverzorger* (assistant, 3-6) (Fl) *Assistante Institutrice – Puéricultrice* (assistant, 3-6) (Fr) **FD** *Accueillant-es- d' enfants à domicile* (family day carer) (Fr)	**AS** *Doelgroepwerknemer* (0-3) (Fl)
Croatia		**CP** Pre-primary and primary school professionals: 0-6 *Odgajatelj/odgajateljica* (pre-school teacher)		
Denmark			**CP** Social-pedagogy professional: 0-6 *Pædagog (Pedagogue)*	**AS** *Pædagogmedhjælper (Pedagogue assistant)* **FD** *Family day carer*
France	**CP** *Auxiliaire de puériculture* (Assistant child nurse) (0-4) **CP** Early childhood professional /social pedagogy professional (0-6): *Éducatrice/éducateur de jeunes enfants* (Educator of young children) **CP**			

	(Health/care professional (0-4): **Puéricultrice** (Paediatric nurse)[50] **CP** Pre-primary and primary education professional (2,5-6): **Professeur des écoles** (School teacher) **AS** **CAP petite enfance** (assistant) **AS** **ATSEM Agent territorial specialisé des écoles maternelles** (2,5-6) **FD** **Assistante maternelle** (family day carer)			
Greece				**CP** Pre-primary professional (4-6): **Nipiagogos** (Kindergarten pedagogue) **CP** Early childhood professional (0-6): **Vrefonipiokomos** (Early childhood educator) **AS** **Voithos nipiovrefokomou / voithos pedagogou** (Early Childhood educator assistant/0-6)
Ireland			**CP** Early childhood professional (0-5) **Intermediate practitioner in early childhood education/care, Level 5** **Experienced practitioner in early childhood education/care, Level 6** **Advanced practitioner in early childhood education/care, Level 7** **Expert practitioner in early childhood education/care**	**AS** **Basic practitioner in early childhood education/care, Level 4** **AS** **Worker – Community Employment Scheme** **FD** **Family day carer**

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[50] Currently the profiles of the **Puéricultrice** (Paediatric nurse) are in a reformation process.

Country				
Italy	**CP** Pre-primary professional (3-6): ***Insegnante di scuola dell'infanzia*** (Early childhood education teacher) ISCED 5A			**CP** Infant-toddler professional (0-3): ***Educatrice/Educatore*** (Educator) **CP** Infant-toddler professional (0-3): ***Pedagogista (***centre directors or pedagogical co-ordinators) **FD** ***Family day carer***
Lithuania	**CP** Early childhood professional (1-6): ***Auklètojas/auklètoja*** (Pre-school pedagogue)			**AS** ***Auklêtojos padêjêja*** (*Teacher assistant)*
The Netherlands	**CP** Pre-primary and primary school professional (4-12): ***Leraar basisonderwijs*** (Teacher) Professionals with a broad pedagogical, socio-pedagogical or socio-cultural vocational qualification (0-4): ***Pedagogisch medewerker*** **AS** ***Onderwijsondersteuner*** (assistent of education) (4-12) **FD** ***Gastouder***		**AS** ***Groepshulp*** (0-4)	
Poland			**CP** Pre-primary professional (3-6): ***Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego*** (Pre-school teacher)	**CP** Health/care professional (0-3): ***Opiekunka dziecięca*** (Childcare worker) **AS** ***Pomoc nauczyciela*** (Teacher assistants) (3-6)
Romania		**CP** Pre-primary and primary school professional (3-7): ****profesori pentru învăţământul preşcolar şi primar*** ****Institutori învăţământ preşcolar*** **CP** Pre-primary professional (3-7): ***Educatoare*** (Educator)		**CP** Health/care professional (0-3): ***Asistente de pediatrie*** (Paediatric assistant) **AS** ***Îngrijitoare*** (caregivers, nursing assistants)

Slovenia	**AS** *Pomočnik vzgojitelja* (Early childhood assistant) (0-7)		**CP** Early childhood professional (0-7): *Vzgojitelj* (*Early childhood educator*)	**FD** *Family day-carer*
Spain	**CP** Early childhood professional (0-6): *Maestro/maestra especialista en educación infantile* (Teacher in early childhood education) **CP** Infant-toddler professional (0-3): *Técnico/técnica superior en educación infantile* (Senior specialist in early childhood education)			**AS** *Técnico/técnica Educador o Asistente en educación infantil* (assistant)
Sweden			**CP** Early childhood professional (1-7): *Lärare för yngre åldrar* (*Teacher of young children – title since 2004*)	**AS** *Barnskötare* (Childcare worker/pedagogical assistant) **FD** *Family day-carer*
United Kingdom (England and Wales)	**CP** Early childhood professional: *Early Years Professional* with EYP status **CP** Early childhood professional: *Early Years Childcare Practitioner*			**AS** *Nursery assistants/teaching assistants* **FD** *Family day-carer*

7.4 Appendix 4: *Table Definition of competences and place of body of knowledge*

Professional competence profiles

Country	Profile	How are competence requirements described?	Knowledge
Belgium Flemish Community	**CP** Pre-primary professional: 2,5-6 years *Kleuterleid(st)er* (early childhood teacher)	For the professionals 10 roles or function-entities are prescribed: Each role contains the required general tasks and supportive knowledge. 8 general attitudes are stated separate from the roles.	Supportive knowledge for starting teacher linked to the 10 main roles: teacher as guiding learning and development processes, teacher as educator, teacher as expert regarding content, teacher as organisator, teacher as innovator and researcher, teacher as partner of parents, teacher as a member of the school team, teacher with external partners, teacher as member of the educational community, teacher as participator in culture. Note that according to the profile, an experienced teacher doesn't need knowledge. The knowledge should be already acquired.
	CP Infant-toddler professional: 0-3 years *Begeleid(st)er Kinderopvang/Kinderverzorger* (childcareworker)	Competences is a coherent pack of knowledge, skills and attitudes that is been show in concrete actions and tasks of the childcare worker. The profile has therefore indicators The childcare worker needs to have general job knowledge, key skills, and physical conditions in order to do the job.	General professional knowledge and practical knowledge of pedagogy, developmental psychology, group dynamics, play activities, communication, quality, ECEC system, ECEC policy, hygiene and safety, deontology, rights of the child.
	CP Infant-toddler professional/ social pedagogy professional: 0-12 years *(Since 2011)* **Opvoeder van het jonge kind** (Pedagogue for young children)	The professional profile is still under development: in terms of 10 general capabilities	/
	FD *Onthaalouder* (family day carer)	Competences is the concrete and individual capacity of applying practical knowledge, skills and attitudes in practice, in order of a concrete, daily, and constantly changing work situation and in order of personal and societal activities. The family day carer needs to have general practical job knowledge, and key skills. The competences are written in terms of very concrete tasks.	A family day carer needs practical knowledge (not theoretical knowledge!) about pedagogy, developmental psychology, activities with a small group of children, communication, quality, ECEC system, hygiene and safety, deontology, juridical framework.
Belgium French Community	**CP** Pre-primary professional: 2,5-6 years *Instituteur/trice préscolaire*	13 general competences	Knowledge linked to six axes : teacher as social actor, as a researcher, as an educated person ; as a person in relationship, as a pedagogue, as a practitioner
	CP Infant-toddler professional: 0-3 years *Puéricultrice* (Childcare worker)	In terms of 7 main functions: educating and socializing children /health and prevention care / organising and planning /administration /social and communication/ deontology /capacity of analyzing themselves.	Theoretical knowledge of different disciplines: education and socializing children, health and prevention, organising and planning, administration,
	CP *Auxiliaires de l'enfance* (0-12)	In terms of general tasks	/
Croatia	**CP** Pre-primary and primary school professionals: 0-6 *Odgajatelj/odgajateljica* (pre-school teacher)	Document starts with description of humanistic-developmentally appropriate practice, children's rights, goals of preschool, cooperation with parents,… Competences are indirectly detailed described in terms of tasks	Professional knowledge about early childhood development and children's learning. Teachers should be professional autonomous and acquire knowledge that are relevant for improving his/her kindergarten experience.
France	**CP**	10 general competences. Each competence area contains knowledge, capacities in order	Knowledge of the values of the French state republic; children rights; regulations

	Pre-primary and primary education professional (2,5-6): *Professeur des écoles* (School teacher)	to act upon the knowledge and professional attitudes.	educational system and policy; history educational system; methods of language stimulation; psychology of the child; didactics; learning methods; sociology to take into account different cultures of children; evaluation methods, ICT, principles of parental boards; pedagogy; ECEC research Teachers innovate their practice by keeping their professional knowledge up to date.
	CP Early childhood professional/social pedagogy professional (0-6): *Éducatrice/éducateur de jeunes enfants* (Educator of young children)	In terms of the social-pedagogical role of the EJE, different functions and 4 general domains of competences: welcome and accompanying young children and their families, educational actions directed by children, professional communication, (inter) institutional dynamics. Each function contains different general activities	Knowledge and ethics are required to approach children and parents
	CP Health/care professional (0-4): *Auxiliaire de puériculture* (Assistant child nurse)	In terms of general tasks	/
	AS *ATSEM Agent territorial specialisé des écoles maternelles (assistant)* (2,5-6)	In terms of general tasks	/
	AS *CAP petite enfance* (assistant & assistante maternelle/family day carer)	In terms of 4 main functions: welcome and communication, organisation, achievements related to basic needs of children, accompanying children in daily activities and their education. Each function includes several clear technical and non-technical activities.	/
Italy	**CP** Pre-primary professional (3-6): *Insegnante di scuola dell'infanzia* (Early childhood education teacher)	In terms of general, non-technical tasks (*implement the process of teaching/learning aimed to favor the human, cultural, civil, and professional development of pupils*), autonomies (cultural and professional autonomy), cooperation with colleagues and individual engagement in professional development.	General knowledge
Lithuania	**CP** Early childhood professional (1-6): *Auklètojas/auklètoja* (Pre-school pedagogue)	Competences is an overall term for knowledge, skills, capabilities, value attitudes and other personal qualities. Cultural, professional , general and special competences	Cultural, professional, general and special competences includes cultural, professional, general and special knowledge.
The Netherlands	**CP** Professionals with a broad pedagogical, socio-pedagogical or socio-cultural vocational qualification: *Pedagogisch medewerker*	In terms of core tasks: developing activities and a plan, educating and supporting the development of children, executing organizational tasks, Each core task is linked to different competences. Each competence contains knowledge and skill requirements and performance indicators.	Psychological developmental theories, society, target public, disabilities, behavior problems, language, pedagogy, dynamics of groups, legislation concerning safety, nutrition, quality and ecology, conflict management, first aid, ECEC system,
	CP Infant-toddler professional (0-4): *Groepsleidster Kinderopvang* (Childcare worker)	In terms of 3 competence areas: care & education, pedagogical support, daily activities. Profile clarified by general professional context and mission (complexity, responsibility, independency, transversality) , core tasks, fields of tensions and competences. The required competences helps the professional to execute the core tasks and to deal with fields of tensions. Competences is an overall term for knowledge, skills, attitudes and	Living environment of children and parents, social welfare system, psychological developmental theories, pedagogy, care, behavior problems, dynamics of group

		other personal qualities. The profile contains generic and context specific competences.	
	CP Pre-primary and primary school professional (4-12): *Leraar basisonderwijs* (Teacher)	In terms of 7 competence areas: didactics, pedagogy, interpersonal competences with students, colleagues, surrounding and themselves, organisation.	/
	AS *Onderwijsondersteuner* (assistant of education) (4-12)	In terms of 7 competence areas: didactics, pedagogy, interpersonal competences with pupils, colleagues and surrounding, organisation, reflection and professional development. Each competence area contains behaviour requirements, indicators to evaluate this behaviour and knowledge requirements.	Languages, mathematics, curriculum development, ICT, cultural differences, didactical methods, psychological developmental theories, living environment of pupils, (intercultural) communication theories, conflict management, group management.
	FD *Gastouder*	In terms of 6 competence areas: caring of children, accompanying the individual child, accompanying a group of children, dealing with parents and mediators, planning and organising, working towards quality. Each competence area contains, the core activities, results and indicators for successful practice.	Needs to be able to search for relevant general knowledge
Romania	**CP** Pre-primary and primary school professional (3-7): **profesori pentru învăţământul preşcolar şi primar* **Institutori învăţământ preşcolar* **Educatoare* (Educator)	Professional competence profile in terms of standards. Standard contains out 6 domains of general competences with sub-domains competences in terms of general tasks: Communication, curriculum, professional development, evaluation, children's learning, family-kindergarten-society relationship	Curriculum as general main competence area: knowledge about learning materials
Slovenia	**AS** *Pomočnik vzgojitelja* (Early childhood assistant) (0-7)	Professional competence profile in terms of standards. Standards contains clear specific tasks.	Knowledge is not explicitly mentioned. But in order to execute some tasks , knowledge is needed (e.g. uses modern information and communication technology, communicates in a foreign language, uses modern pedagogical methods,…)
Spain	**CP** Early childhood professional (0-6): *Maestro/maestra especialista en educación infantile* (Teacher in early childhood education)	Competences in terms of roles and duties of a teacher. These role starts from the right of children to educational and professional guidance.	/
	CP Infant-toddler professional (0-3): *Técnico/técnica superior en educación infantile* (Senior specialist in early childhood education)	Professional competence profile in terms of general, professional, personal and social competences.	Knowledge of resources and methodologies in order to create an environment of trust Scientific and technical knowledge of professional activities
United Kingdom (England)	**CP** Early childhood professional: *Early Years Professional* with EYP status	Professional competence profile in terms of 39 standards that early years professionals have to meet. Clusters of standards are: knowledge and understanding, effective practice, relationships with children, communicating and working in partnership with families and carers, teamwork and collaboration, professional development	Knowledge and understanding of the principles and content of the Early Years Foundation Stage (curriculum) and how to put them in to practice. Knowledge and understanding of divers ways how children develop and learn and how to enable this. Knowledge and understanding of legal requirements on health and safety and promoting the well-being.

	CP Early childhood professional: *Early Years Childcare Practitioner & Early Years Professional* with EYP status		Required competences are indirectly pointed out trough a national curriculum for young children (EYFS) Competences – derived from the general child-oriented standards are prescriptive and more technical.	The underlying body of knowledge is child development/theories of attachment derived from developmental psychology, added to with theories of learning, and understanding of children's rights to participation and working with parents on a consultative basis. The overall aim of the body of knowledge is development for learning and preparation for school.

Competence profiles for initial training

Country	Profile	ISCED	How are competences defined?	Knowledge
Belgium (Flemish Community)	CP Infant-toddler professional: 0-3 years *Begeleid(st)er Kinderopvang/Kinderverzorger* (childcareworker)	3B	Training profile consists out of 12 transversal general key skills (empathy, flexibility, critical viewpoint,….) and different modules. Each modules prescribes basic competences.	Not explicitly mentioned
	CP Infant-toddler professional/ social pedagogy professional: 0-12 years *(Since 2011) Opvoeder van het jonge kind* (Pedagogue for young children)	5B	The training is based on the different responsibilities professionals have towards children , their families, own team and centre, ECEC sector and broader society. Each responsibility contains 2 clear competence clusters. Moreover 2 transversal competence clusters are described concerning the innovating role and respect for diversity. (10 opleidingscompetenties)	The professional needs to build new pedagogical knowledge by analyzing practice in team and connect this with research.
Belgium (French Community)	CP Infant-toddler professional: 0-3 years *Puéricultrice* (childcareworker)	3B	Based on the professional competence profile: in terms of 7 functions: educate and socialize the child / care, health and prevention of health / organize and plan; administration /social function of the communication / deontology /auto-analyse function	Knowledge of health, medical and psycho pedagogical principles of children and legal regulations of ECEC
	CP *Auxiliaires de l'enfance* (0-12)		Modular training with a progressive approach of competences (level one: family day care or 3-12 centers/level two: all the centers)	Creative activity, team work methodology, psychology, health, educative gestion, deontology, communication
Denmark	CP Social-pedagogy professional: 0-6 *Pædagog (Pedagogue)*	5A/B	For each of the subjects in the education there are 3 dimensions to describe the competences to acquire: 1. description of the subject, 2. professional goals for the competence, 3. central knowledge and skills areas.	For each of the subjects (Educational theory and practice; Danish language, culture and communication; Individual, institution and society; Health, the body and exercise; Expression, music and drama; Arts and crafts, science and technology; Practical training; Specialisation a) Children and young people; b) People with reduced functionality; c) People with social problems; Cross professional cooperation) in the education specific knowledge is required.
France	CP Early childhood professional/social pedagogy professional (0-6): *Éducatrice/éducateur de jeunes enfants* (Educator of young children)	5B	Based on the professional competence profile: in terms of 4 general domains of competences: welcome and accompanying young children and their families, educational actions directed by children, professional communication, (inter) institutional dynamics.	Knowledge and ethics are required to approach children and parents
	CP Health/care professional (0-4): *Auxiliaire de puériculture* (Assistant child nurse)	4B	In terms of general tasks	Knowledge of development of children.

	AS / FD *CAP petite enfance* (assistant & assistante maternelle/family day carer)		Training profile describes one global competence about supporting children's basic needs, children's development, education and socialisation. Based on the 4 main functions of the professional competence profile, 4 capacities are developed: informing, realizing, organizing and communicating, Each capacity contains several final competences and each final competence includes the necessary resources, detailed tasks and evaluation indicators.	Detailed knowledge of following domains: medical-social science; general biology, nutrition, technology. Each knowledge domain contains several evaluation indicators.
Italy	**CP** Pre-primary professional (3-6): *Insegnante di scuola dell'infanzia* (Early childhood education teacher)	5A	Decree in terms of courses: curriculum includes courses that aim to build general competences for teaching as well as courses regarding teaching in specific subjects General teaching competences in pedagogical, psychological, methodological-didactic, socio-anthropological areas	Disciplinary competences: well grounded in general and specific knowledge and the capacity to translate them in inspiring teaching
Lithuania	**CP** Early childhood professional (1-6): *Auklėtojas/auklėtoja* (Pre-school pedagogue)	5A/5B	Competences is an overall term for knowledge, skills, capabilities, value attitudes and other personal qualities. Cultural, professional , general and special competences	Cultural, professional , general and special competences includes cultural, professional, general and special knowledge.
The Netherlands	**AS** *Onderwijsondersteuner* (assistant of education) (4-12)	4	In terms of 7 competence areas: didactics, pedagogy, interpersonal competences with pupils, colleagues and surrounding, organisation, reflection and professional development. Each competence area contains behaviour requirements, indicators to evaluate this behaviour and knowledge requirements.	Languages, mathematics, curriculum development, ICT, cultural differences, didactical methods, psychological developmental theories, living environment of pupils, (intercultural) communication theories, conflict management, group management
Poland	**CP** Pre-primary professional (3-6): *Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego* (Pre-school teacher)	5A/B	Not explicitly in terms of competences but in terms of general skills & non-technical general tasks.	Knowledge of teaching and didactics; foreign languages; information technology; educational laws Pedagogy and psychology is important but not in terms of explicit knowledge requirements
Slovenia	**CP** Early childhood professional (0-7): *Vzgojitelj* (*Early childhood educator*)	5A	General competences and subject-specific competences. Competence as knowledge, understanding, abilities, skills, know how and general non-technical tasks	Basic theoretical knowledge & practical knowledge from individual fields op preschool activities: language, movement, music, fine art, puppetry, film and drama, social environment, biology, science and mathematics. Basic and broadly transferable knowledge that will enable the student to search for sources and other ways of gaining new skills and knowledge (lifelonglearning) Knowledge of pre-school curriculum and methods of educational work Knowledge of various theories about the development and learning of children Knowledge of team-work and cooperation with assistants Knowledge of different types of parent cooperation Understanding of various concepts of childhood and early years education trough history.
	AS *Pomočnik vzgojitelja* (Early childhood assistant) (0-7)	4A	The training profile contains different professional modules: general modules (communication, pedagogy, development and teaching, safe and healthy environment, curriculum) and specific subject modules (games, creative expression, mathematics, children's language expression, natural science, social science, ICT, art, music, …). Per professional module, a set of professional competences are defined. The competences are described in terms of abilities, skills and clear tasks of the student.	Theoretical and practical knowledge about the upbringing of children and particular educational fields But in order to execute the other tasks , knowledge is needed but not explicitly mentioned.
Spain	**CP** Early childhood professional (0-6): *Maestro/maestra especialista en*	5A	Competences in terms of knowledge, abilities and general tasks.	Knowledge of curricular objectives and contents Knowledge of implications that information and communication technologies have (e.g. television,…)

	educación infantile (Teacher in early childhood education)			Knowledge of hygiene and dietary foundations and early intervention Knowledge of organisations of schools Knowledge of quality education improvement models.
	CP <u>Infant-toddler professional (0-3):</u> ***Técnico/técnica superior en educación infantile*** (Senior specialist in early childhood education)	4A	Training profile in terms of general tasks	/
Sweden	**CP** <u>Early childhood professional (1-7):</u> ***Lärare för yngre åldrar*** *(Teacher of young children)*	5A	Degree Ordinance prescribes required general skills and knowledge.	In-depth knowledge of the acquisition of reading and writing skills and of the acquisition of basic mathematical skills. Knowledge of subject areas in teaching

7.5 Appendix 5: *Table Competences oriented towards whom?*

X= present in profile

XX=present & dominant focus in profile

Professional competence profiles

Country	Profile	Child	Parent	Team/colleagues	(Local) society	Professional Self
Belgium (Flemish Community)	**CP** Pre-primary professional: 2,5-6 years *Kleuterleid(st)er* (early childhood teacher)	XX The 4 main roles of a teacher contains 27 child-oriented general tasks: teacher as guiding learning and development processes, teacher as educator, teacher as expert regarding content, teacher as organisator.	X Main role 'teacher as partner of parents or caregivers' contains 6 general tasks concerning informing and communicating	X Main role 'teacher as a member of the school team' contains 5 general tasks concerning communicating about own practice	X 2 Main roles 'teacher as member of the educational community' and 'teacher as participator in culture' contains 3 general tasks.	X Attitude 'eagerness to learn': teacher needs to actively search for situations to broaden their competences
	CP Infant-toddler professional: 0-3 years *Begeleid(st)er Kinderopvang/Kinderverzorger* (childcareworker)	XX Supporting psychological-social and motor development of children Taking care of hygiene	X Daily contact and welcoming parents, contribute to the practice concerning parent participation	X One of the key skills 'Willing to cooperate': professional needs to be oriented on working in team, support the team members and take the same position towards children		X One of the key skills 'Eagerness to learn': Openness for reading books, and participating in in-service training in order to gain new knowledge about children. Professionals need to broaden their competences.
	CP Infant-toddler professional/ social pedagogogy professional: 0-12 years *(Since 2011)* **Opvoeder van het jonge kind** (Pedagogue for young children)	XX Building a pedagogical environment for children and their parents Supporting holistic development of children and stimulating social integration in different	XX Building a pedagogical environment for children and their parents, respecting supporting parents in their role, take care of exchanges between parents, in collaboration with parents being responsible for social and pedagogical approach	XX In team working on a social-pedagogical project of the institution Contribute to further professionalization in team	XX Participate in social initiatives in the neighbourhood in order to realize the social mission of the institution	

		environments Take care of health and safety of children	of children			
	FD *Onthaalouder* (family day carer)	**XX** Deal with children: Activities and caring tasks, safety and hygiene	**XX** Deal with parents: gaining trust of parents, respecting norms and values of parents, welcoming parents and make appointments with parents,			X Developing own expertise, willing to learn
Belgium (French Community)	**CP** Pre-primary professional: 2,5-6 years *Instituteur/trice préscolaire* (early childhood teacher)	X A teacher is a pedagogue / a social person who builds relationships with his /her pupils.	X A teacher is a social person who builds relationships with parents.	X A teacher is a social person who builds relationships with his colleagues and the headmaster	X A teacher is a social person who plays a role in the social environment	X A teacher is a researcher / willing to improve his/her teaching
	CP Infant-toddler professional: 0-3 years *Puéricultrice* (Childcare worker)	**XX** Main functions: educating and socializing children; care, health and health prevention of children	X Information and Communication with parents	X A person who acts in relation with a team, driven by an educational project		X Able to have a reflexive position on work /on functioning /to identify training needs
	CP *Auxiliaires de l'enfance* (0-12)	**XX** Welcoming children, responding to the health and psychological needs of children, supporting development of children, creating dialogue in a group of children	X Assuring a warm welcome for parents	X Working on an educative mission in collaboration with the team, participating in team meetings		X Able to explain the meaning of interventions in connection with the specificities of roles and functions of a childcarer
Croatia	**CP** Pre-primary and primary school professionals: 0-6 *Odgajatelj/odgajateljica* (pre-school teacher)	**XX** Supporting child's holistic development	X Cooperation with parents to insure and improve conditions for development and education of every child	X Cooperation with other professionals to insure and improve conditions for development and education of every child		**XX** Teacher should work on professional autonomy and competence acquirement. Professional development is obligatory: teacher should acquire knowledge and skills that are relevant for improving

						his/hers kindergarten practice. Teacher are reflective practitioners and should keep pedagogical documentation
France	**CP** Pre-primary and primary education professional (2,5-6): *Professeur des écoles* (School teacher)	**XX** Supporting social, civic, language, general competence development of children Respecting each child and create common culture amongst children	X Respecting parents and promote parents who engage themselves in the school	X Working in team	X Share the values of the French republic with children and parents	X Teachers innovate their practice by keeping their professional knowledge up to date. They have to prove their intelligent curiosity by constantly questioning their own teaching methods. Teachers engage themselves to professional development in a lifelonglearning perspective.
	CP Early childhood professional/social pedagogy professional (0-6): *Éducatrice/ éducateur de jeunes enfants* (Educator of young children)	**XX** Accompanying young children and their families. Supporting development of children in their different live environments	**XX** Accompanying young children and their families Establish and elaborate a relationship with parents; pedagogical project is constructed in collaboration with parents	X Professional and his/her team is responsible for a coherent educational project	**XX** Professional as actor of regional social policies. The professional formulates and reviews the needs for childcare, regional development and local partnerships, . He/she promotes and ensures an adequation between social policies and their implementation in the environment that evolves constantly.	
	CP Health/care professional (0-4): *Auxiliaire de puériculture* (Assistant child nurse)	**XX** Supporting and observing development, animating children in group	X Communication with parents	X Communication and working within the team		X Professionalization with support of the puéricultrice (paediatric nurse) and by analyzing practice in team with a psychologist
	AS *ATSEM Agent territorial specialisé des écoles maternelles* (2,5-6)	**XX** Animation and hygiene of very young children, taking care for equipment and class, supporting		X Participating in the educational community.		

		children with special needs				
	AS *CAP petite enfance* (assistant)	XX Dialoguing with children in activities. Accompanying children in daily activities and their education. Responds to basic needs of children: safety, eating, napping, hygiene, equipment environment. Supporting children with special needs.	X Responsible for welcoming parents and listening to parents	X Listening to other professionals and director		
Italy	**CP** Pre-primary professional (3-6): *Insegnante di scuola dell'infanzia* (Early childhood education teacher)	X Supporting the human, cultural, civil, and professional development of pupils		X Cooperation		X Autonomy and engagement in professional development
Lithuania	**CP** Early childhood professional (1-6): *Auklètojas/auklètoja* (Pre-school pedagogue)	XX Teaching of children: use of ICT, creating teaching/learning environment, subject content planning, evaluating pupil's performance and progress, pupil motivation and support	X Evaluating the role of domestic environments and differences in family values in the process of communication with pupils and their parents; cooperate with pupils' parents by acknowledging their role, rights and responsibilities in creating the teaching/learning conditions	X Collaborate with colleagues, assisting personnel, vocational guidance and other specialists in developing teaching/learning prerequisites and evaluating pupils' performance	X Cultural competences: protecting and developing the diverse, enriched with the experience of cultural minorities, culture of Lithuania; participate in creating civic society: comprehend the processes of the democratisation and decentralisation of education, be able to explain the theory and practice of constitutional democracy in the country, promote and uphold respect to legal norms	X Reflective competences and learning to learn
The Netherlands	**CP** Professionals with a broad pedagogical, socio-pedagogical or socio-cultural vocational qualification:	XX Educating children and supporting the development of children	X Informing parents	X Sharing expertise with colleagues.		XX The professional is responsible for his/her own professional development by following training and asking feedback

Country	Profession					
	Pedagogisch medewerker					from colleagues. The professional defines his/her owns professional goals.
	CP Infant-toddler professional (0-4): *Groepsleidster Kinderopvang* (Childcare worker)	**XX** Stimulating children's development, caring and offering interesting activities	**XX** Welcoming & communicating with parents, creating trust and involvement.	X Communicating with colleagues in order to plan the work		X The professional is capable to incorporate new tendencies and to learn from these tendencies.
	CP Pre-primary and primary school professional (4-12): *Leraar basisonderwijs* (Teacher)	**XX** Creating a safe learning environment for children, support the social-emotional development,		X Fine tunes the work with colleagues		X Reflective competences, being able to lifelong learning.
	AS *Onderwijsondersteuner* (assistant of education) (4-12)	**XX** Didactics, pedagogy, interpersonal competences with pupils		X Communicating and collaborating with colleagues		X Reflective competences for professional development
	FD *Gastouder*	**XX** Caring and accompanying individual and a group of children		X Constructive collaboration with mediator of the family day care service		
Romania	**CP** Pre-primary and primary school professional (3-7): *profesori pentru învăţământul preşcolar şi primar* *Institutori învăţământ preşcolar* *Educatoare* (Educator)	**XX** Children's learning and communication as general main competence areas: supporting skills and knowledge development, working on teacher-child communication	X Family-kindergarten-society relationship as general main competence: family involvement and family-kindergarten partnership is mentioned.	X Communication as general main competence area: working in team and teacher-teacher communication is stressed.	X Family-kindergarten-society relationship as general main competence: however not explained how to address this relationship with society	X Professional development as general main competence area
Slovenia	**AS** *Pomočnik vzgojitelja* (Early	**XX** Protection of children's health	X Communication and cooperation	X		X

	childhood assistant) (0-7)	and any form of abuse; Feeding of children, takes care of hygiene and sleep.. Participates in planning and implementing curriculum based on understanding's of child development; encourages development, supports positive behaviour Support for children with special needs. Communication and appropriate relations with child and group of children	with parents in upbringing of a child Using modern pedagogical methods and forms to work with parents	Communication with co-workers Participation in the expert group Using modern pedagogical methods and forms to work with co-workers		Planes and evaluates own work
Spain	**CP** Early childhood professional (0-6): ***Maestro/maestra especialista en educación infantile*** (Teacher in early childhood education)	**XX** Guidance role in integrating the pupil into the group of classmates, the adaptation to school, the prevention of learning difficulties and academic and professional guidance.		X Interdisciplinary teamwork		
	CP Infant-toddler professional (0-3): ***Técnico/técnica superior en educación infantile*** (Senior specialist in early childhood education)	**XX** Educative and social care intervention Creating safe environment for children	**XX** Creating safe environment for children in partnership with family Strategies of intervention with the families, answer divers needs of families, keeping fluent relationships with parents and providing solutions to the conflicts that may appear	X Creating safe environments for children with other professionals Keeping fluent relationships with professionals and providing solutions to the conflicts that may appear	X Participating in an active way in the economical, social and cultural life with a critic and responsible attitude	**XX** Using available resources for life long learning. Managing own professional career, analyzing employment and learning opportunities
United Kingdom	**CP** Early childhood professional:	**XX** Relationships with children and effective practice as 2 main	X Communication with parents as	X Teamwork as cluster of		X Professional development as cluster of standards. (Develop

	Early Years Professional with EYP status		clusters of standards (children's well-being, development, learning)	cluster of standards.	standards.		skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology; reflect on and evaluate the impact of practice, modifying approaches)

Competence profiles for initial training

Country	Profile	ISCED	Child	Parent	Team/colleagues	(Local) society	Professional Self
Belgium (Flemish Community)	**CP** Infant-toddler professional: 0-3 years ***Begeleid(st)er Kinderopvang/Kinderverzorger*** (childcareworker)	3B	**XX** Supporting development of children Taking care of hygiene, nutrition and safety Organizing activities and group atmosphere for children by being sensitive-responsive towards children. Respecting the child in his/her habits	X Being sensitive-responsive towards parents, exchanging experiences, respect the autonomy and educational style of parents, building a trust relation, welcoming and making habituate time for new parents, Contacting parents and social network	X Key skill 'willingness to cooperate' - Working constructively in team		X Student is responsible for own functioning by reflecting, discussing and searching for resources.
	CP Infant-toddler professional/ social pedagogy professional: 0-12 years *(Since 2011)* **Opvoeder van het jonge kind** (Pedagogue for young children)	5B	**XX** Creating positive, safe, healthy, hygienic and structured environment for the individual child and the group. Creates a basic trust feeling for every child. Supports total personality development by creating a rich environment	**XX** Assuring the continuity between home and childcare environment so that parents feel recognized. Build a trust relationship with parent and connects own professional expertise with expertise of the parent.	**XX** Coaching of team members and creating a stimulating learning environment. Constructs a social-pedagogical project of the centre together with the team.	**XX** The professional outreaches in local society and collaborates with external organisations. The professional follows societal evolutions and can see the social relevance of their professional activities.	X
Belgium (French Community)	**CP** Infant-toddler professional: 0-3 years **Puéricultrice** (childcareworker)	3B	**XX** Supporting global development of children,	X Relations with people who are	X Ability to work in a team (sharing practices, negotiating work organization with		X Reflexive professional: autoevaluation, critical analysis of own work, be able

Country		Level					
			health and quality	confidents of the child	colleagues …) Elaborating an educational project and be able to put it into practice		to construct a professional identity, …
	CP *Auxiliaires de l'enfance* (0-12)		**XX** Supporting global development of children, health and activity	X Communication and building relationships with families	X Be able to share educative practices with colleagues / to set up an educational setting		X Be able to evaluate daily practices and adjust / to analyse proposals linked to the educational project
Denmark	**CP** Social-pedagogy professional: 0-6 *Pædagog (Pedagogue)*	5A/B	**XX** Supporting and caring for child holistic development and learning	X Included in specific subject area 'Individual, institution and society'		X Included in specific subject area 'Individual, institution and society'	X
France	**CP** Early childhood professional/social pedagogy professional (0-6): *Éducatrice/éducateur de jeunes enfants* (Educator of young children)	5B	**XX** Welcoming and accompanying young children and their families	**XX** Welcoming and accompanying young children and their families	X Professional communication, institutional dynamics	X Inter-institutional dynamics and local partnerships	
	CP Health/care professional (0-4): *Auxiliaire de puériculture* (Assistant child nurse)	4B	**XX** Supporting and observing development, animating children in group	X Communication with parents	X Communication and working within the team		X Professionalization with support of the puéricultrice (paediatric nurse) and by analyzing practice in team with a psychologist
	AS /FD *CAP petite enfance* (ATSEM, assistant & assistante maternelle/family day carer)	3	**XX** Supporting basis needs, development, education and socialisation of children.	X Dialoguing with parents and establish a professional relationship with respect for parent's privacy	X Participating in professional network and team, receiving and transferring information from/to colleagues,		

Italy	**CP** Pre-primary professional (3-6): *Insegnante di scuola dell'infanzia* (Early childhood education teacher)	5A	**XX** Disciplinary, methodological, communicational and managerial & organizational competences in order to create a learning process and environment for children			X Ethical competences in order to overcome prejudices and discrimination, trying to develop in the school community a sense of responsibility, solidarity, and social justice	
Lithuania	**CP** Early childhood professional (1-6): *Auklėtojas/auklėtoja* (Pre-school pedagogue)	5A/5B	**XX** Teaching of children: use of ICT, creating teaching/learning environment, subject content planning, evaluating pupil's performance and progress, pupil motivation and support	X Evaluating the role of domestic environments and differences in family values in the process of communication with pupils and their parents; cooperate with pupils' parents by acknowledging their role, rights and responsibilities in creating the teaching/learning conditions	X Collaborate with colleagues, assisting personnel, vocational guidance and other specialists in developing teaching/learning prerequisites and evaluating pupils' performance	X Cultural competences: protecting and developing the diverse, enriched with the experience of cultural minorities, culture of Lithuania; participate in creating civic society: comprehend the processes of the democratisation and decentralisation of education, be able to explain the theory and practice of constitutional democracy in the country, promote and uphold respect to legal norms	X Reflective competences and learning to learn
The Netherlands	**AS** *Onderwijsondersteuner* (assistant of education) (4-12)	4	**XX** Didactics, pedagogy, interpersonal competences with pupils		X Communicating and collaborating with colleagues		X Reflective competences for professional development
Poland	**CP** Pre-primary professional (3-6): *Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego* (Pre-school teacher)	5A/B	**XX** Teaching of students Caring for children in terms of supporting holistic development	X Collaboration with parents and home environment	X Collaboration with colleagues is mentioned	X Teachers have the task to organize social life on the level of class, school and local community by cooperating with the parents and the local community	X Direct his or her own professional and personal development and engage in betterment, also in collaboration with other teachers
Slovenia	**CP**	5A	X	X	X		X

	Early childhood professional (0-7): **Vzgojitelj** (*Early childhood educator*)		Quality educational work with young children Development and learning of children as main aim	Ability to communicate with adults Cooperation with parents as main aim	Ability to communicate with adults Cooperation with co-workers and other experts as main aim		Enable the students to search for sources and other ways of gaining new skills and knowledge in a life-long learing perspective Ability to critically analyze educational work
	AS **Pomočnik vzgojitelja** (Early childhood assistant) (0-7)	4A	XX Subject-specific competences for children's learning and development	X Communication and cooperation with parents	X Efficient communication with co-workers and participates in expert group		
Spain	**CP** Early childhood professional (0-6): **Maestro/maestra especialista en educación infantile** (Teacher in early childhood education)	5A	XX Facilitating learning from a global and integrated perspective of its different cognitive, emotional, psycho-motor and evolutive dimensions Developing (cooperative) learning contexts with respect for diversity.	X Counselling parents in relation to family education		X Teaching performance must keep on improving and adapting to social changes	
	CP Infant-toddler professional (0-3): **Técnico/técnica superior en educación infantile** (Senior specialist in early childhood education)	4A	XX Learning and development of children	X Keeping fluent relationships with parents	XX Establishing and keeping fluent relationships with educative community and team		
Sweden	**CP** Early childhood professional (1-7): **Lärare för yngre åldrar** (*Teacher of young children*)	5A	XX Pupils learning and development	X Parents are informed about pupils learning and development	X Work together to plan, implement, evaluate and develop teaching is mentioned	XX - Impart and establish the basic values of society and democracy - Counteracting discrimination and other degrading	

					treatment of children and pupils	
					- Become familiar with, analyse and take a position on universal matters, ecological living	
					conditions and changes in the world	
					-Realise the importance of gender differences in the teaching situation	

7.6 Appendix 6: *Table Systemic aspects*

This table is based on the data provided by several national ECEC experts and is based on the research work that recently has been conducted by Pamela Oberhuemer and colleagues in the SEEPRO project: Oberhuemer, P., Schreyer, I., & Neuman, M.J. (2010). Professionals in early childhood education and care systems. European profiles and perspectives. Opladen & Farminghton hills: Barbara Budrich Publishers.

Country	Adult/child ratio	Regulation professional support & development	Hours without children	Salaries (gross)	Unions
Belgium Flemish Community	Public 0-3; 1:6,5 Private 0-3: 1:7 for 0-18 months; 1:10 for 18 months-3 year 2;5-6; 16:1 In reality 1:28 average, considered as problematic	0-3: no exact regulation, every subsidized childcare centre needs to give in-service training possibilities to the staff 2,5-6: Support for teachers is structurally provided (educational advisors, guidance centre, school receive funds for in-service training, coaching for young and fresh-started teachers), not for assistants	**CP** Infant-toddler professional (0-3): no regulation Early childhood teacher (2,5-6): 2 hours/week: Preschool teachers have to take extra free time for team meetings, parent meetings and preparation, observation of the lessons **AS:** no regulation	**CP** Infant-toddler professional (0-3): between 1560,85 euro and 1975, 18 (average), depends on organiser Early childhood professional (2,5-6): 2148,05 € (+system of traditional nominations; same as primary and high schoolteacher) **AS:** Assistant of teacher (4-6): 1770,45 euro	0-3: infant-toddler professionals can join general unions 2,5-6: pre-schoolteachers are related to a union for teachers, N.I. on statistics of membership
Belgium French Community	0-3: 1:7	0-3: The centres are organising team meetings and trainings to apply the Quality regulation (Code de qualité) In-service training is obligatory and paid by governmental organisation 2,5-6: all staffmembers have 10 days per year for professional development activities. Support for teachers is structurally provided (educational advisors, guidance centre, IFC ("institut de formation continue interréseaux")	No regulations Approximately 2 hours are forseen for team meetings Early childhood teacher (2,5-6) have to take extra free time for team meetings, parent meetings and preparation, observation of the lessons	**CP** Infant-toddler professional (0-3): Starting salary: 1.768 euro Early childhood professional (2,5-6): 2044 euro **AS:** N.I.	NOE: association of professionals working with children (0-3) Different professional federations: FILE, FIMS Linked with trade unions for school teachers N.I. on statistics of membership
Croatia	Depends on age children and number of children with special needs included	Professional development is obligatory for all teachers. In the professional competence profile, this engagement for professional development is prescribed. Professional development works with a elaborated system of credits! Time for professional development is included in working hours	40 hours per week: 27,5 hours of direct work with children, 10 hours of other work (planning professional development, cooperation with parents,...) and 2,5 hours of break.	Teacher: 1055 euro, the same as a starting primary school teacher	2 unions: 1 for pre-schoolteachers and 1 for teachers, (union of workers in preschool education, 60% of all pre-schoolteachers are members, The education Trade Union of Croatia, 50% of all workers are there members) Besides representing preschool teachers in negotiations concerning their salaries and providing legal support, their activities include promotion of teacher profession.
Denmark	Dependant on municipality, average: 5,3:1 (0-5 year old children) (age-integrated	No national regulations Local regulations may exist Local decision for each municipality.	**CP** No national regulations Local regulations may exist	**CP** Pedagogues: 3.546 €	**CP** BUPL (the Danish National Federation of Early Childhood Teachers and Youth Educators) is the

	centres) and 6,8:1 for 3-5 years (kindergartens)	The variety is quite big. Some municipalities have a well developed administration with pedagogical advisers and consultants mostly organised together with support facilities with the primary school. But you can also find municipalities with almost none supporting service. This is left for the single centre's leader, staff and board of parents. As a rule most pedagogues attend a one-day course two or three times per year, although no official statistics. No professional development for assistants but the pedagogues will supervise the pedagogue assistants.	It's a matter of decision for each individual centre to make but partly regulated by agreements between the local employer (the municipality) and the trade union of BUPL. The weekly full time working hours are 37 hours and include the right to ½ hour lunch break everyday. Typically pedagogues will have approx. a couple of hours every week for meetings and preparation. But it's a local decision to make. **AS** In general the assistants will have little or no time for documentation etc because this is the responsibility of the pedagogues.	**AS** Salary for pedagogue assistant without training: 2.958 € (including 12,5% for pension) Salary for pedagogue assistant with basic pedagogical training: 3.266 € (including 12,5% for pension)	union for pedagogues working in day care facilities, in after school services and youth clubs. Another union of pedagogues is SL (The National Federation of Social Educators) for pedagogues working in residential care. The pedagogues teaching in the kindergarten-class of the primary school are members of DLF (the Danish Union of Teachers). The membership ratio of BUPL is close to 90%. **AS** The pedagogue assistants are together with the family daycarers organized in FOA (Fag og Arbejde) (www.foa.dk). (Trade and Work) This organization also includes nursing assistants and other groups of public employees.
France	0-3 : 1 :5 for young children who don't walk 1:8 for children who can walk 0-6: 26-30 for two professionals (one teacher and one assistant)	0-3: All ECEC staff (core practitioners and assistants) receiving a salary have the right of continuing professional development. 3-6: pre-primary and primary education professional: entitled to 36 weeks of in-service training during their careers.	**CP** Health/care professional (0-4): no regulations pre-primary and primary education professional: no regulations, teachers need to make time on voluntary basis for meetings with team, parents, preparation.	**CP** pre-primary and primary education professional 1300 euro starting salary. Average: 1660 euro (netto) educator of young children EJE : 1500 - 1600euros health care professional: varies on employer, 1500€ à 2300€ **AS** CAP petite enfance : 1345€ dans la fonction publique territoriale.	**CP** pre-primary and primary education professional 1300 euro starting salary: many unions for teachers educator of young children EJE : FNEJE, union for educators of young children health care professional: Association Nationale des Puéricultrices Diplômées et des Etudiantes, union for nurses **AS** / N.I. on statistics of membership
Greece	0-4; 1:7-10 4-6: 1:25	4-6: No national regulations school counsellor responsible for ongoing training, however restricted to thematic periodical seminars. team meetings practically non existent Considered as problematic, only opportunity: possibility for innovation, due to support by counsellors 0-4: No national regulations If there are seminars, result of a few	No national regulations Considered as problematic: results in absence of exchange within institution and exchange with parents.	**CP:** Pre-primary professional: 1100€: Early childhood professional: 1116€: **AS** N.I.	4 different unions N.I. on statistics of membership

		counsellors of the local government organisations or pedagogues. Considered as problematic, only opportunity: possibility for innovation, due to decentralised system.		
Ireland	0-1years: 1:3 1-2 yrs: 1:5 2-3 yrs: 1:6 3-6 yrs: 1:8 2,5-6: 1:10 (max. 20 in a class)	No national regulations	No national regulations	This varies between community, private and statutory services.	Individuals may be engaged in a Union privately Until now there was no specific union which represents ECCE workers. Now they are developing a Professional Association for the sector (embryonic) See www.acp-cork.com
Italy	0-3: vary according region: average: 1/6 3-6 1/25	0-3: paid hours without children to be used for team meetings, and in the job training and they receive support from pedagogista (Group basis) 3-6: under supervision of schooldirector	Infant-toddler professional (0-3): Varies upon service owner (f.e. local authorities: with children: 30. without children, 80 until 240 per year), negotiations with municipality and trade unions Pre-primary professional (3-6): Varies upon service owner: (f.e. local authority: hours with children: 25-without children 80 per year)	Infant-toddler professional (0-3): Varies upon service owner (between 1621, 17 euro and 1221, 86 ero) Pre-primary professional (3-6): Varies upon service owner (between 1610,35 euro and 1352,18 euro) Pedagogista: N.I.	Infant-toddler professional and pre-primary professionals in public service: 50%, Infant-toddler professional and pre-primary professionals: 15-20% This has relevant consequences on the differences in salaries and working conditions private versus public sector
Lithuania	0-1,5 years; 1:10 1,5-3 years; 1-15 3-7 years; 1:20	**CP** Entitled to Professional development: 5 days per year, but not required to take these days **AS** No regulations, taking into account that they are not part of the educational staff.	**CP** Teacher: 3 hours per week without children **AS** No regulations, taking into account that they are not part of the educational staff.	**CP** average 580 € **AS** no official information, estimated average 250 EUR.	**CP** Lithuanian Education Employees Trade Union N.I. on statistics of membership **AS** No union
The Netherlands	0-1 jr. ; 1:4 1-2 jr. ; 1:5 2-3jr; 1:6 3-4jr; 1:8 4-12: autonomous decision of school	4-6: in-service training is offered by teacher education colleges and educational institutions and by Ministry of education 0-4: in-service training by support organizations for day care centres and playgroups No further regulations about professional development		0-3: Childcare worker: Average according to CAO (2008, 2009): €2056	
Poland	3-6 years: 1:25 0-3 years: N.I.	**CP** obliged to devote 1% of total teachers salary budget for supporting teachers professional development – through training or mentoring. It depends on municipality how these funds are spend.	**CP** Pre-primary professional (3-6): 40 hours per week. Teacher's *pensum* for the direct work with children 3-5 years old is 25 didactic (45 minutes) hours per week; for children 6 years old – 22 hours. The rest of the time is supposed to be	**CP** Pre-primary professional (3-6): Between 442 – 588 EUR (depending on qualifications, Ministry of education) Municipalities decide on additional bonuses 3%-20% of basic salary)	**CP** Pre-primary professional (3-6): no specific union, they may join Polish teachers Union. Health/care professional (0-3): trade unions for nursery employees

		Pedagogical supervision is exercised by regional education superintendent *(kurator oswiaty)* **AS** (3-6) no national regulations	devoted for preparing work with children, meeting with parents Health/care professional (0-3): no national regulations **AS** (3-6) no national regulations	Health/care professional (0-3): N.I. **AS** (3-6) Max. 378 euro	N.I. on statistics of membership **AS** (3-6) No unions
Romania	0-3: no regulations 3-7; 1:15-20 In some kindergartens, higher ratio which endangers quality of education.	**CP** pre-primary and primary education professional (3-7): at least once a month a pedagogical meeting Health/care professional (0-3): no regulations **AS** Caring staff (3-7): no regulations, not involved in meetings	**CP** pre-primary and primary education professional (3-7): 20 hours/ per week for training, pedagogical documentation, and scientific activities. (20 hours working with children) Health/care professional (0-3): no regulations **AS** Caring staff (3-7): no regulations	**CP** pre-primary and primary education professional (3-7): 150 euro. Considered as problematic: Low interest for the profession as a low paid job. Health/care professional (0-3): N.I. **AS** Caring staff (3-7): N.I.	**CP** pre-primary and primary education professional (3-7): several in general for teachers. Health/care professional (0-3): No unions **AS** Caring staff (3-7): No unions
Slovenia	1-3; 1:max. 12 3-6; 1:max. 22	**CP** Obligation for min. 5 days of training/year or 15 days every third year **AS** Obligation for min.2 days/ year and six days/every year	**CP** Max. 30 hours with children and 10 hours without children. **AS** Max. 35 hours work with children and 5 hours without children	**CP** 1712,48€ **AS** 1109,92 €	a trade union for education and a trade union for the pre-school community (**CP** + **AS**)
Spain	0-1yr; 1:8 1-2yr; 1:13 2-3yr; 1:20 3-6yr; 1:25 + additional teacher for every 3 groups	**CP** Early childhood professionals (0-6): Continuing professional development is both a right and a duty of all teachers. The continuing professional development is the responsibility of the regional education authorities. Course topics are generally planned on annual basis, however varies from region to region. Infant-toddler professional (0-3): traditionally opportunities for continuing professional development have been less organised and regulated.	**CP** Early childhood professionals (0-6): Varies according employing agency. Teacher in public sector work 35 hours/week, 10 hours without children. 5 hours: for meetings, talks with parents, co-ordinating colleagues 5 hours: preparation at home Infant-toddler professional (0-3): less favourable than early childhood professionals: comparing with the teachers have the same working journey, although they dedicate more time to work directly with the children and they enjoy little time without the children	**CP** Early childhood professionals (0-6): Teacher in public sector: same salary as primary school teachers 982,64 euro/month (2097) Private sector: less, not regulated Infant-toddler professional (0-3): professionals earns less then teachers, infant-toddler professionals work more in the private sector. Can vary depending on type of provision and different administrations. Appr. 683,16 euro's **AS**	N.I.

		AS traditionally opportunities for continuing professional development have been less organised and regulated.	**AS** less favourable than early childhood professionals: comparing with the teachers have the same working journey, although they dedicate more time to work directly with the children and they enjoy little time without the children without the children	Can vary depending on type of provision and different administrations. . Approx. 618,93 euro	
Sweden	No regulation. Education act states that 'groups of children shall be of appropriate composition and size. Reality 2009: average: 1;5.4	No national regulation , local ones may exist	No national regulation. In spite of pressure of the union, employers have no interest in regulations hours without children. Some municipalities have managed local agreements.	Starting salaries are not regulated in central agreements. Local regulations may exist. Average new teacher: between 2280 euro and 2622 euro (20000and 23000 kronor)	union for pre-schoolteacher (**CP**) and union for child carers (**AS**)
United Kingdom	N.I.	N.I.	N.I.	N.I.	N.I.

7.7 Appendix 7: *Briefing document for CoRe case studies*

7.7.1 Introduction

CORE is conducting a comprehensive study of the competences required by staff working in ECEC. The project is grounded in international research on quality, competences and professionalism in early childhood and aims at providing policy relevant information and recommendations. As an integral part of the project (objective 4) we are conducting a series of case studies to cast light on inspiring examples and practices that support the development of competence and professionalism in early childhood. In the context of the project, the case studies will complement the more comprehensive information on competence requirements and professional preparation across Europe which will be provided by Claire Cameron and Pamela Oberhuemer in two separate reports.

The purpose of the case studies is to gain in-depth understanding of the background, dynamics, success factors and challenges of *specific* practices in their specific context. It is *the thick of what is going on (and why, and for whom)*, that we are interested in, not so much the comparison of the cases.

7.7.2 Sample for the case studies

Building a sample is by definition a selective process. It involves making informed choices about what is to be included in the study. It is, inevitably, an *exclusive* process, too, as not everyone of the multitude of interesting examples can be studied.

Our choices for the CORE case studies sample were framed by three parameters:

(d) We wanted to include cases that are considered providing *interesting practices of high quality* by experienced professionals, international experts, international reports and literature.

(e) We furthermore wanted the cases to represent different approaches to organising early childhood services and different understandings of early childhood professionalism across Europe (e.g. *split* or *integrated* systems, *generic* or *specific* professions, different *levels of formal qualification*, different *support systems*).

(f) We have selected cases in order to build a geographically balanced sample, ensuring participation from countries in Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western Europe.

A necessary clarification with regards to (c): Although the cases are *situated* in their specific country contexts, we are not studying these countries. We are interested in the particularities of the individual examples instead. E.g. a case may be situated in France – and we need some understanding of the French ECEC context in order to understand it – but it is by no means representative of the French early childhood system in general.

7.7.3   Framing the case studies

For each individual case, we would ask you to produce a detailed *thick description* of the particular programme, institution or practice you are studying. You may employ different methods to gather the information needed for this description. E.g. in some cases it might be useful to conduct a focus group discussion while others may require talking to 'experts' or carrying out own observations. We are going to discuss and agree the most appropriate approach to each case with you individually.

Having said that, we would ask you to …

- inform your case study by relevant (local) policies/documents, regulations etc.

- provide the present and historical *context* of the practices you are studying: *Why are things the way they are – how have they come about*?

- describe and discuss

  o professional knowledge and the ways it is constructed in your example
  o understandings of 'theory' and 'practice' and how they relate
  o ethical and political aspects of practice

We would also ask you to link your description of *concepts and understandings* of professional knowledge and practice to *contextual*, *structural* and *formal aspects* of early childhood professionalism (such as qualifications, training, continuous professional development etc. – if relevant in your specific example/case):

- What is actually happening in training / qualification programmes?
- What is the local conceptualisation of the ECE practitioner/professional?
- Why is this considered to be important / effective by local actors?

- Please make sure to put an emphasis on practitioners' perspectives and perceptions –

7.7.4   Specific questions and focus points for the case studies

To be even more specific, we would ask you to address the following aspects and questions in your case study. But bear in mind that life – and professional practice – is complex. It will not always be possible to address the questions separately or in this particular order. Most likely, there will be overlaps, and the lines between the different aspects will become blurred. So, please don't follow the questions too slavishly and never, ever attempt to press interesting examples, stories and experiences into a shape that fits the questions. Rather, describe what is going on and why you find it interesting in the context of our project. The questions and aspects below are a starting point for your enquiry – and they will help us analysing the cases.

I. Professional knowledge, theory-and-practice

What is seen as 'relevant' professional knowledge in your example? Are there aspects of professional knowledge that are seen as more important than others?

What are the guiding values, paradigms, theories, thoughts and thinkers, authors in relation to your example?

How come things are the way they are in this particular case: what are the historical, political, ethical, economic etc. roots?

Transformative aspects: how is professional knowledge created and co-constructed in your case? How is this knowledge and its co-construction used to strategically create change?

What supports the co-construction of professional knowledge in your case? Are there spaces (and resources) for practitioner-research, dialogue, shared meaning-making?

II. Critical reflection / transformative practice

Who are the *actors* in your case - and how do they see/understand, and actively build, the relation between their *profession*, their *practices* and the *social, cultural, political and economical context*, that is children's, families' and communities' real-life situations?

What are the relationships between knowledge and practice in your case? Are they reciprocal and equal? Hierarchical?

How are children, families and communities involved in or affected by the practices you describe?

How is critical reflection and transformative practice encouraged and supported? Are there resources (e.g. time and space) for dialogue, discussion, joint planning, experimentation, documentation, critical reflection …

How is practice evaluated and what is the *understanding of evaluation*?

III. Structural aspects of professional practice and their implications

Mobility: what are the implications of the practices you describe for career progression and/or differentiation of roles and responsibilities of educators?

Diversity and Equality: how are issues of diversity and equality addressed, e.g. regarding the diversity of practitioners, children, families, communities?

Gender: how do the practices you describe relate to gender imbalances in the EC workforce?

Pay: do the practices have any impact on the remuneration of individual educators and/or the ECE sector in general. Do they, for instance, increase salaries for individuals? Do they lead to higher (*stratification*) or lower (*pay parity*) degrees of differentiation within the EC workforce and neighbouring professions (e.g. school teachers)?

Autonomy: What is the scope for professional judgement and decision making – individually and collectively?

Time and resources: for preparation, reflection, and evaluation as individuals and with others.