

ITALY

Early Childhood Education and Care ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report authors

Mariacristina Picchio

Institute for Cognitive Sciences and Technologies, National Research Council of Italy

Chiara Bove

University of Milan-Bicocca,
Department of Human Sciences and Education “R. Massa”

The authors would like to express their warm thanks to **Silvia Cescato**, who co-authored the previous commissioned report for the SEEPRO-r study with Chiara Bove in 2017. They also extend grateful thanks to **Tullia Musatti**, who acted as a consultant for this report.

Citation suggestion:

Picchio, M., and C. Bove. 2024. “Italy – ECEC Workforce Profile.” In *Early childhood workforce profiles across Europe. 33 country reports with key contextual data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich: State Institute for Early Childhood Research and Media Literacy. www.seeepro.eu/English/Country-Reports.htm

Funded by:



Federal Ministry for
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,
Women and Youth



State Institute for Early Childhood
Research and Media Literacy



Contents

- 1. ECEC governance in Italy 4
- 2. Who belongs to the early years workforce? 5
 - 2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision 5
 - 2.2 Centre leader..... 7
 - 2.3 Centre-based posts of responsibility 7
 - 2.4 Co-ordinating and supervisory staff..... 8
 - 2.5 Specialist support staff..... 9
- 3. Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity..... 10
- 4. Initial professional education (IPE) 11
 - 4.1 Initial qualifying routes (higher education and vocational)..... 11
 - 4.2 Competences, curricula and pedagogic-didactic approaches in IPE programmes..... 15
 - 4.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability..... 19
- 5. Guided workplace experience (practicum) in the initial professional education of core professionals 20
- 6. Continuing professional development (CPD) of ECEC staff 23
- 7. Working conditions and current workforce issues 29
 - 7.1 Remuneration and working hours 29
 - 7.2 Full-time and part-time employment in ECEC provision 30
 - 7.3 Support measures in the workplace for newly qualified and newly appointed staff..... 31
 - 7.4 Non-contact time 31
 - 7.5 Current staffing issues..... 32
- 8. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to staffing and professionalisation issues 32
- 9. Recent country-specific research focusing on ECEC staff..... 36
- 10. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment 41
- References..... 43



Glossary

EQF – *European Qualifications Framework*

Outcomes based (knowledge, skills, competences), eight-level reference tool to enable qualification comparisons between countries.

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/european-qualifications-framework-efq>

ECTS – *European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System*

A system for enhancing student mobility through the Europe-wide recognition of credit transfers and credit accumulation in higher education

https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system-ects_en

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 and 2011.

<http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/international-standard-classification-of-education-isced-2011-en.pdf>

About the authors

Mariacristina Picchio, PhD in Education, is a researcher at the Institute for Cognitive Sciences and Technologies of the National Research Council of Italy (ISTC-CNR). Her research is mainly focused on socialisation processes in early childhood, evaluation of ECEC services, and initial training and continuing professional development of ECEC professionals. She is country coordinator for the European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA).

Chiara Bove, PhD, is a Full Professor of General and Social Pedagogy at the Department of Human Sciences for Education, University of Milan-Bicocca, where she currently coordinates the PhD “Education in Contemporary Society”. Her research mainly concerns early childhood education, school and family relationships, diversity/intercultural education and continuing professional development of ECEC professionals. She is country coordinator for the Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA). She has authored books as well as articles in national and international journals.



1. ECEC governance in Italy

In Italy, early childhood education and care (ECEC) is currently organised within the ‘Integrated System of Education from birth to six years’ (*Sistema integrato di educazione e istruzione dalla nascita ai sei anni*), which was established by Law 107/2015 (The Good School – *La Buona Scuola*), and it has been regulated by a subsequent Act (Law Decree 65/2017). This newly Integrated System, from now on referred to as “Integrated System 0–6”, overcomes the previous split system between childcare (0–3) and early education (3–6) which has existed since the 1960s.

The Integrated System 0–6 is part of the national education system under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and is composed of two sectors according to the children’s age:

- (1) The sector of “educational services for early childhood” (*servizi educativi per l’infanzia*), from now on referred to as “educational services 0–3 years”¹ comprises a variety of provisions for infants and toddlers up to age 3. These include: nurseries (*nidi or micronidi*, depending on their capacity) and integrative services (*servizi integrativi*) such as centres for children and families (*centri per bambini e famiglie*) and playgroups (*spazi gioco*) for children from 12 to 36 months for up to a maximum of 5 hours per day. Also included are so-called “spring sections” (*sezioni primavera*) for children aged 24–36 months, usually located in pre-primary schools. These services are provided by local municipal authorities or by the private sector, according to general criteria defined at the regional level. Attendance at educational services 0–3 years requires families to pay fees (*nidi* are on-demand services – *servizi a domanda individuale*);
- (2) The provision for children aged 3–6 years consists of *scuole dell’infanzia* (lit. schools of early childhood), from now on referred to as “pre-primary schools”, which can be provided by the state, municipalities or the private sector. Within the private sector, there are “recognised” private sector schools (*scuole paritarie*), most of which are managed by a catholic non-profit organisation (FISM)–and are normally subsidised through national or regional funds. There are also some “non-recognised” private schools. Attendance at state-maintained and municipal pre-primary schools is free of charge (families pay a fee only for lunch and the school bus), while confessional schools may charge modest participation fees.

The enactment of Law Decree 65/2017 has been driving a process of integration between the two sectors (Art. 4 “Institution of the integrated system from birth to six years”) in terms of both governance and educational continuity (see *Chapter 8*). It has designed a complex governance of the Integrated System 0–6 within an articulated framework of interaction and cooperation between State, Regional governments, and Local authorities:

- The Minister of Education steers, plans, and coordinates actions for the progressive extension and qualification of the integrated system in collaboration with regional governments and has recently defined and drawn up Pedagogical Guidelines for the Integrated System 0–6 (*Linee Pedagogiche per il Sistema Integrato Zerosei*) (Ministerial Decree-DM 334/2021).

¹ **Editors’ note:** International data sources use varying ways of presenting the age range of children enrolled in ECEC settings. We have chosen the following age-inclusive format for the SEEPRO-3 reports: **0–2** years for countries with a school starting age at 6: **0–2** years for children **up to** 3 years of age and **3–5** years for 3, 4 and 5 year-olds. In the case of Italy, however, in compliance with Italian legislation and regulations, the authors of this report have chosen the age formats: **0–3** years for settings for children up to 3 years of age and **3–6** years for pre-primary settings.

- Regions define the structural, organisational and quality standards of educational services 0–3 years, plan and develop the Integrated System 0–6 according to the specific needs of their areas, support the professionalism of ECEC staff and promote local pedagogical coordination in agreement with the *Uffici Scolastici Regionali* (Regional Ministry School Offices) and representatives of the local authorities.
- Local authorities have specific competences in managing (directly or through agreements with the private sector) and monitoring the educational services 0–3 years according to regional regulations and, in some cases, a number of municipal pre-primary schools. They also have the important tasks of promoting the quality of the Integrated System 0–6, by providing continuing professional development initiatives for professionals, and activating the local pedagogical coordination of all the educational services 0–3 years and pre-primary schools in their areas.

The implementation of this complex system of governance is currently an ongoing process and is supported by the National Multiannual Implementation Plan (*Piano di Azione Nazionale Pluriennale per la Promozione del Sistema Integrato di Educazione e Istruzione*) that defines actions and financial resources for developing and qualifying the system (see *Chapter 8*).

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

The staff categories currently working directly with children in the Italian ECEC provision are:

Educatori/educatrici (Educators), who are qualified professionals working with under 3 year-olds in nurseries (*nidi*), integrative services and spring sections (*sezioni primavera*). Upon the approval of the Law Decree 65/2017, from 2019/2020 onwards, a Bachelor's degree in Educational Science (*Scienze dell'Educazione*) with a specific pathway in Early Childhood Education or a 5-year degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education, plus a 60 ECTS credits additional module in Early Childhood Education, have become the mandatory requirements for working in an educational service 0–3 years.

Insegnanti (Teachers), who are qualified professionals working with children aged 3–6 years in pre-primary schools (*scuole dell'infanzia*). Their teaching qualification is a 5-year university degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria*), which makes them eligible to teach in both primary and pre-primary settings.

Ausiliari/ausiliarie or **operatori/operatrici** (auxiliary staff), who are responsible for cleaning, preparing lunch and providing practical backup for educators and teachers as necessary, for example by clearing up materials and tidying the room. They are not “teaching assistants” (this category does not exist in Italy) and do not assist teachers in delivering educational activities. The minimum qualification requirements for auxiliary staff are defined at the regional level but usually include having successfully completed compulsory education (*diploma di scuola dell'obbligo*).

Table 1 outlines the profiles and minimum qualification requirements of core practitioners working directly with children, who are categorised according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (*Box 1*).



Table 1

Italy: ECEC staff in centre-based settings

Job title	Main ECEC work-place settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age-range focus of initial professional education	Minimum qualification requirement ECTS credits EQF level ISCED level
<p>Educator <i>Educatore/educatrice</i></p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>	<p><i>Nido</i> Nursery 0–3 years</p> <p><i>Servizi integrativi</i> Integrative services, including: <i>Centro per bambini e famiglie</i> Centre for children and families 0–3 years <i>Spazio Gioco</i> Playgroup 18–36 months</p> <p><i>Sezione Primavera</i> “Spring section” 2–3 years</p>	Core practitioner	All age groups, including 0–3 years	<p>Bachelor’s degree in Educational Science (<i>Scienze dell’Educazione</i>) with a specific pathway in Early Childhood Education</p> <p>ECTS credits: 180 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2011: 64</p> <p>or</p> <p>5-year university degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education (<i>Scienze della Formazione primaria</i>), plus a 60 ECTS postgraduate University module in Early Childhood Education</p> <p>ECTS credits: 300 +60 EQF: level 7 ISCED 2011: 74</p>
<p>Pre-primary Education Teacher <i>Insegnante di scuola dell’infanzia</i></p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional</p>	<p><i>Scuola dell’infanzia</i> Pre-primary school 3–6 years</p>	Core practitioner (class teacher)	3–11 years	<p>5-year university degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education (<i>Scienze della Formazione Primaria</i>)</p> <p>ECTS credits: 300 EQF: Level 7 ISCED 2011: 74</p>
<p>Auxiliary Staff <i>Ausiliario/ausiliaria</i></p> <p><i>or</i></p> <p><i>Operatore/operatrice</i></p>	<p><i>Nido</i> Nursery 0–3 years</p> <p><i>Servizi integrativi</i> Integrative services, including: <i>Centro per bambini e famiglie</i></p>	Co-workers without specialist qualification	Not applicable	<p>Not applicable</p> <p>A compulsory school leaving certificate is usually required for employment.</p>

Job title	Main ECEC work-place settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age-range focus of initial professional education	Minimum qualification requirement ECTS credits EQF level ISCED level
	<p>Centre for children and families 0–3 years <i>Spazio Gioco</i></p> <p>Playgroup 18–36 months</p> <p><i>Sezione Primavera</i> “Spring section” 2–3 years</p> <p><i>Scuola dell’infanzia</i> Pre-primary school 3–6 years</p>			

Box 1

SEEPRO profile categories for ECEC core professionals (adapted from Oberhuemer, Schreyer, and Neuman 2010)

- **Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional** (specialist focus, 0–6/7 years)
- **Pre-primary Education Professional** (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- **Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional** (focus on pre-primary *and* primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- **Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional** (mainly broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- **Social Care/Health Care Professional** (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

2.2 Centre leader

Dirigenti scolastici (School Heads) are qualified professionals who have management and educational responsibilities for state-maintained pre-primary schools or *istituti comprensivi* (groups of pre-primary, primary and lower-secondary schools under one head). They hold a relevant third-level qualification (a 5-year university degree/Master’s degree) and are recruited from among former teachers who have worked in schools for at least five years. They are in charge of managing the human and financial resources of schools; they usually do not have a specific pedagogical competence in early childhood education.

For information on the management of nurseries and other services for under 3 year-olds, see *Chapter 2.4*.

2.3 Centre-based posts of responsibility

In state-maintained pre-primary schools (*scuole dell’infanzia*), Teachers can take on the role of managing, organising or coordinating specific projects aimed at implementing the quality of



ECEC provision, such as activities for promoting the inclusion of children with disabilities, continuity between educational services 0–3 years, pre-primary schools and primary schools or evaluation according to the national guidelines and procedures (INVALSI 2016). This role – called “instrumental function” (*funzione strumentale*) – has to be performed outside working hours and is remunerated with a fixed fee of €1,400 for each project plus an extra fee that varies according to the number of children attending the pre-primary school.

In some state-maintained pre-primary schools, a Teacher with a high level of seniority may be appointed as Referent for the coordination of pre-primary schools at the discretion of the School Head.

2.4 Co-ordinating and supervisory staff

Coordinatori pedagogici (Pedagogical Coordinators, called *pedagogista* in the municipality of Reggio Emilia) are qualified professionals with management and educational responsibilities in the municipal ECEC system for 0–6 year-olds. This professional role was created in the 1980s and 1990s by local governments in the cities that had invested in ECEC provision areas (Baudelot, Rayna, Mayer, and Musatti 2003; Catarsi, 2010; Musatti, Mayer, and Braga 2003). Over the past 20 years, the number of Pedagogical Coordinators has increased significantly in the cities of the central and northern regions.

Pedagogical Coordinators are key figures in the Integrated System 0–6 approach to education. In municipal ECEC provision, they are responsible for a number of ECEC centres (usually both educational services 0–3 years and pre-primary schools) according to regional regulations. The presence of a Coordinator is a basic requirement for private providers of educational services 0–3 years to obtain public funding and is widespread in municipal pre-primary schools, while the role in state pre-primary schools is still to be defined.

No competence profile for Pedagogical Coordinators exists at national level, but most regional regulations have a job description for them. Although these descriptions may vary, the overall profile is found to be quite homogeneous: supporting educators’/teachers’ reflection on their practice; monitoring educational practices sometimes documenting and evaluating ECEC quality; encouraging pedagogical continuity; promoting and caring relationships between the educational services 0–3 years/pre-primary schools and the municipal administration; promoting CPD initiatives specifically addressing ECEC core practitioners; and contributing to orienting and planning policies for early childhood and families at the local level (Campioni 2022). The crucial role of Pedagogical Coordinators is emphasised in the Pedagogical Guidelines of the Integrated System 0–6 (see *Chapter 8*), recently approved by the Minister of Education.

In most medium-sized and large cities (such as Reggio-Emilia, Milan or Rome) (see *Box 2*), Pedagogical Coordinators form a team at the municipal level (*coordinamenti pedagogici municipali*). Some regions (Tuscany, Emilia-Romagna and Umbria) have established a stable network of Pedagogical Coordinators at the regional or district level (*coordinamenti pedagogici regionali, coordinamenti pedagogici provinciali and coordinamenti pedagogici zionali*), which brings together all municipal pedagogical coordinators of the area (even from small towns). The team is responsible for research and innovation and thus for constantly revising the values underlying the overall educational programme, as well as directing and guiding everyday educational activities (Lazzari, Picchio, and Musatti 2013; Murphy, Ridgway, Cuneen, and Horgan 2016).

Italy: The role of the Pedagogical Coordinator in the ECEC system*Three examples:*

In **Milan**, a large and cosmopolitan city with about 300 ECEC services directly under the management of the city council, Pedagogical Coordinators (called *posizioni organizzative*) play a crucial role as trained professionals with education and management responsibilities. They work to improve the quality of ECEC provision and are each responsible for three to four ECEC services in one of the city's nine zones. At present, 68 Pedagogical Coordinators (*posizioni organizzative*) are employed in ECEC provision in the city of Milan. They are key figures within the integrated 0–6 approach that characterises the city's early education system. Each *Posizione Organizzativa* coordinates educational services, pre-primary schools and spring sections of the same "educational unit" in the logic of an integrated 0–6 system. Their role includes pedagogical, managerial and administrative tasks (*Linee Pedagogiche*, Comune di Milano 2016).

In **Reggio Emilia**, the role of Pedagogical Coordinator – called in this municipality *pedagogista* – is embedded in a system of relationships with educators, teachers, other school staff, parents, citizens, administrators, public officials and external audiences. *Pedagogisti* are organised in a Pedagogical Coordinating Team, form their own collaborative working group and interface with the educational services 0–3 years and pre-primary schools' teams (educators, teachers, *atelieristi*, mentor teachers, auxiliaries, cooks and other staff) as well as with administrators, officials and public bodies who are stakeholders in the Reggio Emilia ECEC system.

The municipal ECEC system of **Rome** consists of a large number of ECEC services. 400 educational services 0–3 years and 317 *scuole dell'infanzia* are managed directly by the municipality, while 173 educational services 0–3 years are subsidised by the municipal administration on the basis of specific agreements and quality requirements. In 2001, the municipality of Rome introduced the professional profile of Pedagogical Coordinator and employed a considerable number of coordinators (more than 200) in order to qualify the whole ECEC system in the city. Each of them, who was responsible for both municipal educational services 0–3 years and *scuole dell'infanzia*, supports staff practice and promotes its improvement. Subsidised educational services 0–3 years were also requested to employ Pedagogical Coordinators. Municipal Pedagogical Coordinators were grouped into district teams (*coordinamenti pedagogici municipali*) in order to network the ECEC services of the same area. A central coordination team (*coordinamento centrale*) at the city Department of Education coordinated their activities and organised CPD initiatives. In recent years, the number of Pedagogical Coordinators has decreased substantially due to many retirements, causing an overload for the coordinators still in service. In 2021, a decree of the Lazio Region (DR 61/2021) defined the professional profile of Pedagogical Coordinators and their workload. Currently, the municipal administration of Rome is discussing how to hire new staff and reorganise the pedagogical coordination teams in the different areas of the city according to the recent regional decree.

The Law Decree 65/2017 (see *Chapter 8*) confirms the importance of these key figures: it considers that establishing local pedagogical coordination is a strategic part of implementing the Integrated System 0–6 and states that Regions are expected to promote and Local governments to activate *coordinamenti pedagogici territoriali* in their areas; these will include Pedagogical Coordinators of municipal and private educational services 0–3 years and municipal, private and state-maintained pre-primary schools.

2.5 Specialist support staff

Insegnanti di sostegno (Special Needs Teachers) are qualified professionals working in pre-primary and primary schools. Their teaching qualification is a 5-year university degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria*) plus a 1-year course (60 ECTS credits = 1,500-hour course) on inclusion and teaching methods and approaches for children with special needs and disabilities.

A Special Needs Teacher usually works in a pre-primary school when a child with special needs attends it. Their role is not only supporting the child for a certain number of hours a day, but



also promoting processes of inclusion and integration within the group of children. The overall idea (pedagogy) is to respond to children’s needs by fostering inclusion through personalised interventions as well as a suitable organisation of space and activities within the group of peers. When a child with special needs attends an educational service 0–3 years, no Special Needs Teacher is required but either the number of children in the group is decreased or the number of Educators (*educatori/educatrici*) is increased.

3. Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

It is difficult to source data concerning the structural composition of the Italian ECEC workforce for a number of reasons. Firstly, as stated above, the reformed Italian ECEC system has not yet been fully implemented as a unitary system in terms of organisation and governance. Furthermore, multiple institutions are involved in gathering data related to 0–3 and 3–6 ECEC services in the public (municipal and state) and private sectors. Data are thus fragmented and collected according to different criteria. The most reliable sources are the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT), the *Istituto degli Innocenti* (the first secular institution dedicated to taking in children, studying children’s living conditions and promoting their rights and culture) and the Ministry of Education, which do not systematically collect data on the structural composition of the ECEC workforce.

Currently, the only data compiled by the Ministry of Education are related to the gender of teachers who work in pre-primary schools run by the state and the percentage of Special Needs Teachers in these schools. However, the implementation of a national information system for the Integrated System 0–6, envisaged by Law Decree 65/2017, should provide more information on the structural composition of the Italian ECEC workforce in the near future.

Table 2

Italy: Structural composition of ECEC workforce in state-maintained pre-primary education (3–6)

Staff category	Year/provision/proportion of workforce
Staff with specialist higher education degree	<i>No national statistical data available</i>
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	<i>No national statistical data available</i>
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary)	<i>No national statistical data available</i>
Staff with non-specialist qualification (other qualification)	<i>No national statistical data available</i>
Unqualified staff	<i>No national statistical data available</i>
Specialist support staff (e.g. Special Needs Teachers)	2021: State maintained pre-primary schools (3–6): 18.2%
Male staff	2021: State maintained pre-primary schools (3–6): 0.8%
Staff with a background of migration	<i>No national statistical data available</i>

Source: Ministry of Education database (Ministero dell’Istruzione 2022a)

4. Initial professional education (IPE)

4.1 Initial qualifying routes (higher education and vocational)

Educators (*educatori/educatrici*)

The Law Decree 65/2017 states that, from 2019/2020, two qualification alternatives are mandatory requirements for working in 0–3 settings. One is a Bachelor's degree in Educational Science (*Scienze dell'Educazione*) with a specific pathway in Early Childhood Education; these are differently named from university to university – such as *Educatore di Nido e di Comunità Infantili* (Educator for Nurseries and Early Childhood Communities), *Scienze dell'Infanzia* (Early Childhood Studies) or *Educatore della Prima Infanzia* (Early Childhood Educator). The other is a 5-year degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria*, supplemented by a module of 60 ECTS credits in Early Childhood Education).²

Before the approval of Law Decree 65/2017, only three universities (the University of Bologna, University of RomaTre and IUL Online University) had already implemented a 3-year Bachelor's degree in Educational Science focused on early childhood education, while, following the approval of the Law Decree, an increasing number of universities (currently 33³) are activating a specific pathway in Early Childhood Education (55 ECTS credits) within the 3-year Bachelor's Degree in Educational Science.

To date, only a few universities have introduced the supplemented postgraduate module addressing Pre-primary Education Teachers, which enables them to work in educational services 0–3 years. This is due to a lack of applications by teachers.

Pre-primary Education Teachers (*insegnanti*)

The entry requirements for teachers working in pre-primary schools are established at the national level. Since 2010 (Ministerial Decree-DM 249/2010), these teachers have been required to hold a 5-year university degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria*), which qualifies them for posts in both pre-primary schools (3–6 years) and primary schools (6–11 years). This course of studies is not organised consecutively with a Bachelor's and a Master's degree but is a unified course. It is therefore termed a 'continuous cycle' degree. The universities chosen to provide this 5-year course (one per region and two each in Lombardy and Lazio), the syllabus and the entry criteria (number of students and tests) are decided each year by the Ministry of Universities and Research.

Special Needs Teachers (*insegnante di sostegno*)

Candidates wishing to work as a Special Needs Teacher (*insegnante di sostegno*) in pre-primary education settings have to complete the 5-year university degree in Primary and Pre-primary

² In Note 14176/2018, the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR 2018a) stated that, in this transition phase, a Bachelor's degree in Educational Science (without a specific focus on early childhood education), a 5-year degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education or any other qualifications required by regions that have not yet updated their laws on the basis of Law Decree 65/2017 (such as a Secondary School Diploma in Education/Human Science) can also still be accepted.

³ Sources: *Universitaly* database (<https://www.universitaly.it>) and university sites (last consultation May 2022).



Education (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria*) plus a 1-year postgraduate course (60 ECTS credits) on 'inclusion and educational approaches' to work with children with special needs and disabilities (*diploma di specializzazione per l'attività di sostegno didattico agli alunni con disabilità*).

Auxiliary staff (*personale ausiliario*)

The minimum entry requirements for auxiliary staff working in educational services 0–3 years and pre-primary schools are set at regional level. Typically, auxiliary staff are required to have successfully completed compulsory education (i.e. lower-secondary school prior to 2003; currently at least the first two years of upper-secondary school, given that compulsory schooling now ends at the age of 16).

School Heads (*dirigente scolastico*)

State-maintained pre-primary schools (*scuole dell'infanzia*) are under the direction of *dirigenti scolastici* (school heads), who are responsible for the *istituti comprensivi* (group of pre-primary, primary and lower-secondary schools) to which *scuole dell'infanzia* belong. These heads hold a relevant third-level qualification (a 5-year university degree/Master's degree), and they are recruited from among former teachers who have worked in pre-primary, primary or secondary schools for at least five years.

Pedagogical Coordinators (*coordinatori pedagogici*)

The minimum qualification requirements for Pedagogical Coordinators (*coordinatori pedagogici*) with managerial, organisational and educational responsibilities in municipal ECEC settings are locally defined via regional legislation and vary across regions (see *Chapter 2.4*); however, a Master's Degree in Education, Psychology, Sociology or Social Work is usually requested.

Two examples follow: In the Lombardy region (e.g., in the city of Milan), a Pedagogical Coordinator (called *posizione organizzativa*) may hold a Bachelor's or Master's degree in Education, Psychology, Sociology or Social Work or a Master's degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education. It is also possible to work in this position at a lower level with 5 years of prior work experience in educational services 0–3 years, while, in the Emilia-Romagna region, a Master's degree in Education is required.

Some universities provide a Master's degree in Planning and Management of Educational Services (*Laurea Magistrale in Programmazione e Gestione dei Servizi Educativi*), which is aimed at training qualified professionals with competences in planning, managing and coordinating a variety of services, such as educational and socio-educational services, socio-cultural services, school and out-of-school services, integration and cultural mediation services for all ages, training agencies and so on. Other universities provide a 1-year Master's course (60 ECTS credits) specifically aimed at training Pedagogical Coordinators of ECEC services. For instance, since 2006, the University of Florence has been providing the first Master's degree course in "Pedagogical Coordination of Early Childhood Education and Care", instituted by Enzo Catarsi, professor of general pedagogy at the University of Florence (Silva 2019).

The following tables summarise the initial qualifying routes for ECEC staff.



Table 3

Italy: Educator

Job title in Italian: <i>Educatore/educatrice</i> Profile: Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional
<p>The following qualification routes are the current <i>requirements</i> for core professionals (Educators) for working in educational services 0–3 years.</p> <p><i>Route 1</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: General university entrance qualification (<i>Diploma di istruzione secondaria superiore</i>); individual university selection procedures</p> <p>Professional studies: 3-year university degree programme</p> <p>Award: Bachelor’s degree in Educational Science (<i>Laurea triennale in Scienze dell’Educazione</i>), with a specific pathway in Early Childhood Education.</p> <p>ECTS credits: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2011: 64</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Nursery centres (<i>Nidi</i>) 0–3 years; Spring section (<i>Sezioni Primavera</i>) 2–3 years; Integrative services such as Centres for children and families (<i>Centri per bambini e famiglie</i>) 0–3 years; Playgroups (<i>Spazi Gioco</i>) 18–36 months; other educational and social and settings, such as social-care services (across the lifespan), residential care for minors, international cooperation, etc.</p> <p><i>Route 2</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: 5-year university degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education (<i>Scienze della Formazione Primaria</i>) (equivalent to Master’s degree)</p> <p>Professional studies: An additional 1-year postgraduate module in Early Childhood Education.</p> <p>Award: Postgraduate diploma in Early Childhood Education (<i>Educatore della prima infanzia</i>)</p> <p>ECTS credits: 300 (degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education) + 60 ECTS credits (module in Early Childhood Education)</p> <p>EQF level: 7 ISCED 2011: 74</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Nursery centres (<i>Nidi</i>) 0–3 years; Spring section (<i>Sezioni Primavera</i>) 2–3 years; Integrative services such as Centres for children and families (<i>Centri per bambini e famiglie</i>) 0–3 years; Playgroups (<i>Spazi Gioco</i>) 18–36 months; Pre-primary schools (<i>Scuole dell’infanzia</i>) 3–6 years.</p>

Table 4

Italy: Pre-primary Education Teacher

Job title in Italian: <i>Insegnante di scuola dell’infanzia</i> Profile: Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional
<p>Entry requirements: General university entrance qualification (<i>Diploma di istruzione secondaria superiore</i>); individual university selection procedures. Criteria for access (number of students and tests) are decided each year by the Ministry of Universities and Research.</p> <p>Professional studies: 5-year university route in <i>Scienze della Formazione Primaria</i> (degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education)</p> <p>Award: <i>Diploma di laurea magistrale a ciclo unico per insegnante di scuola dell’infanzia e primaria</i> (5-year university degree equivalent to Master’s degree)</p> <p>ECTS credits: 300 EQF level: 7 ISCED 2011: 74</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Pre-primary schools (<i>Scuole dell’infanzia</i>) 3–6 years.</p>

Table 5

Italy: Special Needs Teacher

Job title in Italian: <i>Insegnante di sostegno</i>
<p>Entry requirements: 5-year university degree in <i>Scienze della Formazione Primaria</i> (degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education)</p> <p>Professional studies: An additional 1-year post-graduate course in special needs education with a final examination</p> <p>Award: Postgraduate diploma in special needs education for the early years, <i>Insegnante di sostegno</i></p> <p>ECTS credits: 300 (degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education) + 60 ECTS credits (course in special needs education)</p> <p>EQF level: 7</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 74</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Pre-primary schools (<i>Scuole dell'infanzia</i>), 3 to 6 year-old children with special needs.</p>

Table 6

Italy: Auxiliary Staff

Job title in Italian: <i>Ausiliario/ausiliaria</i> or <i>operatore/operatrice</i>
<p>The following qualification route is the usual <i>current</i> requirement for auxiliary staff in ECEC settings and may vary from municipality to municipality.</p> <p>Entry requirements: Completion of primary school</p> <p>Professional studies: Compulsory education: lower secondary school (before 2003), or (after 2003) at least the first 2 years of upper secondary school.</p> <p>Award: Compulsory school leaving certificate (<i>Diploma di scuola dell'obbligo</i>)</p> <p>ECTS credits: not applicable</p> <p>EQF level: not applicable</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 2 or 3</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Nurseries (<i>Nidi</i>) 0–3 years; Spring section (<i>Sezioni Primavera</i>) 2–3 years; Integrative services such as Centres for children and families (<i>Centri per bambini e famiglie</i>), 0–3 years; Playgroups (<i>Spazi gioco</i>) 18–36 months; Pre-primary schools (<i>Scuole dell'infanzia</i>) 3–6 years.</p>

Table 7

Italy: School Head of state-maintained pre-primary schools

Job title in Italian: <i>Dirigenti scolastici</i>
<p>Centre Heads of state-maintained pre-primary schools are recruited from among former teachers who have worked in pre- primary, primary or secondary schools for <u>at least five years</u>. The following qualification route is the usual current requirement for the role of school head.</p> <p>Entry requirements: General university entrance examination (<i>diploma di istruzione secondaria superiore</i>), individual university selection procedures.</p> <p>Professional studies: 5-year university degree in <i>Scienze della Formazione Primaria</i> (Primary and Pre-primary Education) or Master's degree in Education, Psychology, or other human or scientific sciences.</p> <p>Award: Master's level degree in <i>Scienze della Formazione Primaria</i> (Primary and Pre-primary Education) or Master's degree in Education, Psychology or other human or scientific sciences. Qualified Teacher Status for pre-primary, primary or secondary education.</p> <p>ECTS credits: 300</p> <p>EQF level: 7</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 74</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Primary and lower secondary schools (<i>Scuole primarie e scuole secondarie di primo grado</i>) 6–13 years; Pre-primary schools (<i>Scuole dell'infanzia</i>) 3–6 years.</p>



Table 8

Italy: Pedagogical Coordinators 0–6 sector

Job title in Italian: <i>Coordinatore pedagogico</i>
<p>The following qualification route is the usual current requirement for the Pedagogical Coordinators of municipal nurseries (<i>nidi</i>), integrative services (<i>Centri per bambini e famiglie</i> and <i>Spazi gioco</i>), Spring sections (<i>Sezioni primavera</i>) or pre-primary schools. They can also be recruited among former Pre-primary Teachers or Educators (with a Bachelor's degree in Education, Psychology, Sociology, etc.) who have many years of professional experience in working in nurseries or pre-primary schools.</p> <p>Entry requirements: General university entrance qualification (<i>diploma di istruzione secondaria superiore</i>); individual university selection procedures.</p> <p>Professional studies: Three options are possible:</p> <p>(1) 5-year university degree in <i>Scienze della Formazione Primaria</i> (Primary and Pre-primary Education);</p> <p>(2) Master's degree in Education, Psychology, Sociology, Social work;</p> <p>(3) Bachelor's degree in Education, Psychology, Sociology, Social work plus a Professional Master qualification specifically aimed at training Pedagogical Coordinators of educational services 0-3 years and pre-primary schools.</p> <p>Award: See the three options above.</p> <p>ECTS credits: 180/300</p> <p>EQF level: 6/7</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 64/74</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace (it depends on qualification held): Nurseries (<i>Nidi</i>) 0–3 years; Spring sections (<i>Sezioni Primavera</i>) 2–3 years; Integrative services such as Centres for children and families (<i>Centri per bambini e famiglie</i>) 0–3 years, Playgroups (<i>Spazi gioco</i>) 18–36 months; Pre-primary schools (<i>Scuole dell'infanzia</i>), 3–6 years; Primary and secondary schools (<i>Scuole primarie e secondarie</i>), 6–13 years</p>

4.2 Competences, curricula and pedagogic-didactic approaches in IPE programmes

Educators (*educatori/educatrici*)

The 3-year Bachelor's degree in Educational Science (*Laurea Triennale in Scienze dell'Educazione*) with a specific pathway in Early Childhood Education

As stated above, with the approval of Law Decree 65/2017 from 2019–2020, a 3-year Bachelor's Degree in Educational Science (*Laurea Triennale in Scienze dell'Educazione*) with a *specific pathway in Early Childhood Education* became a mandatory requirement for working in ECEC centres for children aged 0–3 years.

By Ministerial Decree DM 378/2018, the Ministry of Education, University and Research defined that the *specific pathway in Early Childhood Education* should consist of at least 55 ECTS credits on specific content concerning early childhood articulated as follows:

- at least 10 ECTS credits in general and social education (*pedagogia generale e sociale*)
- at least 10 ECTS credits in the methodology of education
- at least 10 ECTS credits in psychology (with a specific focus on early childhood)
- at least 5 ECTS credits in sociology (with a specific focus on early childhood)
- at least 5 ECTS credits in medical and health sciences (with a specific focus on early childhood)
- at least 5 ECTS credits in workshops connected with the above subjects
- 10 ECTS credits in internship/*tirocinio*.



The pathway is inscribed within the 3-year university course in Educational Science (*Laurea triennale in Scienze dell'Educazione*) aimed at training a socio-educational educator (*Educatore professionale socio-pedagogico* – see *Chapter 8*), who is qualified to carry out educational work in settings aimed at people of all ages, primarily in the following areas: educational and training; school; social welfare and health, limited to the socio-educational aspects; childhood, parenthood; cultural; judicial; environmental; sports and motor; integration and international cooperation. The course lasts three years and it provides for 180 ECTS.

Competences: The general course in Educational Science (*Scienze dell'Educazione*) is aimed at developing students' knowledge and competence in the areas of education methods/didactic approaches, educational and communication dynamics within an educational setting, teaching and learning processes, in order to prepare professionals to work with people of all ages and at all life stages, whether in conditions of 'normality', disadvantage, marginalisation, vulnerability or cultural diversity. Interdisciplinary activities and practical workshops are key coursework components (the workshops are designed to help students translate theory into practice). The basic goal underpinning the course is to foster the development of a professional with the ability to transfer and adapt a multidisciplinary approach to educational practices in different contexts (Mantovani 2007).

The degree course in Educational Science provides a *specific pathway* in Early Childhood Education.

The competences that graduate students are expected to have acquired through this *pathway* to become *educatore* in educational services 0–3 years are the following: cultural and psycho-pedagogical competences (knowledge about the pedagogical, sociological, psychological, anthropological, historical, philosophical and institutional aspects of the early education of children aged 0–3 years and their parents' needs); methodological competences (such as programming, observing, documenting and evaluating ECEC quality); technical and professional competences (setting up the environment, schedule and play materials according to children's developmental needs and capabilities, etc.); relational competences (for example listening and communicating empathically with children and parents or promoting children's well-being); and reflexive competences.

Curricular areas: The 3-year course is mainly focused on the human sciences (education, psychology, sociology, philosophy, intercultural education, anthropology, etc.), which are taught alongside the relevant curricular disciplines (languages, history, music, technology, etc.). Modules in special education and the psychology of disability and inclusion are also provided. A minimum level of competence in a foreign language (English, French, German or Spanish) is an obligatory entry requirement.

Pedagogic–didactic approaches: Coursework comprises lectures, workshops and internship (*tirocinio*) aimed at integrating theory and practice. Internship (*tirocinio*) is obligatory for all students and is carried out during the second and third years. The number of hours dedicated to this activity and their distribution over the years are established by the individual university. The practical work may take place in a variety of social and educational settings addressed to people of all ages. According to Decree DM 378/2018, which regulates the content of the *specific pathway in Early Childhood Education*, a minimum of 10 ECTS credits must consist of internship and at least half of its hours must be carried out in educational services 0–3 years.

The additional 1-year Module in Early Childhood Education (60 ECTS credits) for graduates with a degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria*)

To work in educational services 0–3 years, graduates who hold a 5-year university degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria*) can integrate their initial



training by obtaining 60 ECTS credits in Early Childhood Education. Through Decree DM 378/2018, the Ministry of Education, University and Research defined the content and articulation of this module:

- Between nine and 12 ECTS credits in education of early childhood (pedagogical, sociological, anthropological, historical, philosophical and institutional aspects of the early education of children from 0 to 3 and their parents' needs, etc.)
- Between nine and 12 ECTS credits in methodological approaches (methodologies of play and inclusion, procedures of programming, observing, documenting and evaluating ECEC quality, etc.)
- Ten ECTS credits in psychology (child development, families' relational dynamics, etc.)
- Two ECTS credits in the sociology of childhood and families
- Two ECTS credits in medical and health disciplines (paediatrics, health education, etc.)
- Two ECTS credits in sciences concerning children with special needs
- Between ten and 12 ECTS credits interdisciplinary workshops on various topics, such as welcoming practices in educational services 0–3 years, planning care and play activities, relationships with families, observing and documenting children's experience in the ECEC context, evaluating the quality of ECEC settings and so on
- Nine ECTS credits in direct and indirect internship (*tirocino*) in educational services 0–3 years
- Two ECTS points in a final work project.

This module has not yet been initiated in any Italian university due to a lack of applications from postgraduates in Primary and Pre-primary Education, who seem to prefer to be employed in pre-primary and primary schools rather than 0–3 services (Restiglian 2021).

Pre-primary Teachers (*insegnanti*)

The 5-year university degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria*)

Since 2010, teachers working in pre-primary schools are obliged to hold a single-cycle 5-year university degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria*) that makes them eligible to teach in either pre-primary (3–6 years) or primary schools (6–11 years).

Competences that graduate students are expected to acquire by the end of this course are:

- Cultural pedagogical and psychological competences (knowledge in the field of educational science, with a focus on psycho-pedagogic and methodological competencies as well as didactic competences)
- Multidisciplinary competences related to pre-primary and primary education
- Basic knowledge related to children with learning disabilities and their welcoming into the school environment, with a focus on personalised didactic approaches and intervention
- Informatics/technological competences.

This course seeks to develop teachers with all-round professional competence who are capable of fostering children's motivation, creativity and identity development while constructing flexible and complex learning programmes for the different subject areas, with a strong emphasis on transversal learning objectives. Students also receive training in the contents and methods of teaching of the subjects listed in the National Curricular Guidelines for Pre-primary and Primary Schools (*Indicazioni Nazionali per il Curricolo della Scuola dell'Infanzia e del Primo Ciclo di Istruzione and Indicazioni Nazionali e Nuovi Scenari*, Ministerial Decree DM 254/2012, MIUR 2018b).



Curricular areas: The course offers advanced theoretical and practical training in the areas of pedagogy, history of pedagogy, didactic, special pedagogy, developmental and educational psychology, teaching methodologies, technology and research, which together make up the professional profile of Pre-primary and Primary School Teachers. The curriculum balances the human sciences (education, psychology, sociology, anthropology and pedagogy) with relevant curricular disciplines (languages, history, geography, mathematics, sciences, art, music, etc.). Candidates also receive training and specific preparation for the inclusion of students with disabilities. The curriculum requires participation in workshops and internships. During the workshops (or lab work), students are usually split into small groups to share practical learning experiences and simulations of their plans for their teaching practice internships. The internship begins in the second year and lasts for a total of 600 hours (equivalent to 24 ECTS credits) divided between the years. The individual university decides how to distribute the hours over the years.

As specified in the current legislation (Ministerial Decree DM 249/2010), the following components are an integral part of initial professional education:

- a) English language competence – at least Level B2 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages adopted in 1996 by the Council of Europe. To qualify as teachers, undergraduates must either sit an examination or present certificates to prove that they have attained the required level of proficiency.
- b) Digital competence as outlined in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council, 18 December 2006. It is particularly important that teachers possess the ability to use multimedia languages to represent and communicate knowledge and to create simulated environments and virtual laboratories.
- c) Educational/didactic competence in fostering the inclusion of students with disabilities, in line with the provisions of Law 104/1992 and its subsequent modifications and additions.

Pedagogic–didactic approaches: The professional study routes for student teachers developed in recent decades are characterised by a multidisciplinary approach; the integration of theory and practice; and partnerships with pre-primary/primary schools. Experienced teachers play an active part in the delivery of these studies. The overall goal is to promote the development of all-round knowledge of the curriculum for pre-primary and primary practitioners.

At the end of this university route, there is also a final exam, known as VIVA, which consists of a written dissertation and oral defence about a teaching project carried out in a host school. Successful completion of the VIVA exam means that candidates have earned qualified teacher status for pre-primary and primary schools.

Special Needs Teachers (*insegnante di sostegno*)

To work as a Special Needs Teacher in pre-primary schools, graduates with a 5-year degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria*) are required to attend an additional 1-year postgraduate course in Special Needs Education (60 ECTS credits).

Competences: The course content is specific to either pre-primary or primary school education, as relevant, and is aimed at helping teachers to develop the educational competences required to foster the inclusion of children with special needs (children with cognitive, sensorial or learning disabilities). In particular, students attending this course are expected to acquire the following competences:

- Managing a class group that includes children with special needs
- Planning the “individual educational plan” (*PEI – Piano Educativo Individuale*)
- Legal/juridical knowledge related to the integration of children with learning disabilities



- Using cooperative methods
- Psychological and psycho-pedagogical knowledge related to disabilities (neuropsychiatry)
- Relational competences (with children and families).

Curricular areas: The course includes lectures in different disciplines aimed at covering interdisciplinary professional preparation (for example, students are expected to attend lectures on the pedagogy of supportive relationships; child neuropsychiatry; metacognitive and cooperative teaching methods; and school legislation); nine workshops/education laboratories (also focused on how to use technologies when working with children with special needs); and an internship (at least 300 hours, for which 12 ECTS credits are awarded). A project is also included to obtain the title of “Special Needs Teacher”.

4.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

Until the beginning of 2000, Italy was one of the few countries in the European Union that did not offer standard university-level pre-service training to Educators and Teachers at all levels of the school system. Up to 2003, the basic professional education of Pre-primary and Primary School Teachers was at the upper secondary level. A school-leaving diploma in an occupationally relevant area of study (a diploma from a vocational secondary school specialising in primary teaching training – *istituto magistrale* – or in education/human sciences – *liceo psicopedagogico*; *liceo delle scienze umane*) was the only qualification required to teach at these levels.

Similarly, up to 2017, the initial professional education for Educators working in educational services 0–3 years was the same vocational secondary school diploma as described above or a shorter vocational course of studies (such as the 3-year vocational school programmes entitled *tecnico dei servizi sociali* or *assistente di comunità infantile*).

For these reasons, a significant number of Educators and Pre-primary teachers who already held permanent posts prior to the changes, who nowadays work in educational services 0–3 years or in pre-primary schools, have a qualification at the upper secondary level and over the years have upgraded their knowledge and competences through professional development courses.

Educators in educational services 0–3 years with a Bachelor’s degree in Educational Science can enrol in the third year of a 5-year degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education to obtain the qualification of Pre-primary Teacher, while Pre-primary Teachers can extend their initial training by obtaining an additional 60 ECTS credits in Early Childhood Education, enabling them to work in educational services 0–3 years as well (see *Chapter 4.2*). This means that, to obtain both the qualification of Educator and that of Pre-primary School Teacher, students need to study for a total duration of 6 years.

There are no alternative pathways to the required university degrees described above (see *Chapters 4.1* and *4.2*) for working as an Educator in educational services 0–3 years or as a Pre-primary Teacher.

The only type of progression in the career path of an Educator or Pre-primary Teacher is linked to the length of service, which is evaluated in competitive exams to become a School Head (at least 5 years) or a Pedagogical Coordinator. In state-maintained pre-primary schools, the teacher with the highest level of seniority may be appointed Referent for coordination at the discretion of the school head.



5. Guided workplace experience (practicum) in the initial professional education of core professionals

Internship (guided workplace experience) is viewed as a key component of the initial professional education of Italian ECEC core practitioners. The number of hours devoted to internships is defined nationally for the 5-year degree programme in Primary and Pre-primary Education (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria*), while it varies locally for the Bachelor's degree in Educational Science (*Scienze dell'Educazione*). The following describes the current situation concerning workplace-based learning in the IPE routes of ECEC core practitioners.

Educators (*educatori/educatrici*)

Practica/internships within the 3-year Bachelor's degree in Educational Science (*Laurea Triennale in Scienze dell'Educazione*) with a specific pathway in Early Childhood Education

Regulation

For the 3-year degree course in Educational Science (*Scienze dell'Educazione*), workplace experience (referred to as *tirocinio*/internship) is obligatory for all students and is carried out during the second and third years of study. It is the responsibility of individual universities to organise these work placements.

Aims and goals

The goals of the internship are the following: promoting the integration of the theoretical knowledge that the student is gradually acquiring with hands-on experience of workplace settings; ensuring a healthy balance between theory, practice and reflection on experience; training students in the use of observation and documentation tools; and providing students with a framework for reflecting on practice.

Length of time spent in the workplace and number of ECTS credits

As Ministerial Decree DM 378/2018 states, students who choose the 3-year degree course in Educational Science (*Scienze dell'Educazione*) with a specific pathway in Early Childhood Education must obtain at least 10 ECTS credits in internships (*tirocinio*) and at least half of the hours must be spent in educational services 0–3 years.

Each university establishes the number of hours that students must spend in relevant workplace settings and the distribution of hours among the three years.

Structure of time blocks

The structure of time blocks varies across universities; for the most part, internship includes direct and indirect activities. The indirect (or preparatory) activities usually include formative group meetings and analysing the students' professional interests and aptitudes, identifying the setting in which they will carry out their internship and setting up an agreement between the university and the host organisation. Direct activities are those that are carried out by the students in the workplace setting (under the guidance of their supervisor, who will meet them periodically to discuss how the practicum is proceeding and encourage them to analyse and reflect on the practical experience gained to date). During the internship, students alternate observation, documentation and participation in the everyday functioning of the host organisation/service, with reflection and discussion with other students/interns and the supervisor.

Supervisors/mentors

Supervisors play a crucial role in the internship experience for all undergraduate students. For each degree programme, an internship board defines the criteria for selecting and recruiting supervisors. No "standard" criteria have been provided at the national or the local level, nor



have any minimum requirements been established (Lichene, Molina, Restiglian, and Sannipoli 2020).

Each supervisor could be responsible for a group of students whose number may vary from university to university. Group sessions alternate with individual meetings between student and supervisor. Supervision focuses on the students' observations and documentation and on analysing the practices that they have implemented in the field.

Self-evaluation and external evaluation

The methods used to evaluate the internship are also at the discretion of the individual university. However, assessment is usually continuous and generally involves both 'external' evaluation provided by the supervisor and critical evaluation and analysis on the part of the students themselves, such as self-evaluation based on the analysis of learning outcomes, self-observation and own appraisal of practical teaching experience. This formative evaluation model (*valutazione formativa*, Bondioli and Ferrari 2004) foregrounds the active involvement of the student. As recent research promoted by the *Gruppo Nazionale Nidi e Infanzia* has highlighted (see *Chapter 9*), the quality of direct and indirect internship and of supervision activities is strictly related to the capability of each university to build significant relationships with local socio-educational services. In particular, the recent implementation of the specific pathway in Early Childhood Education within the 3-year course in Educational Science, as well as the module of 60 ECTS credits in Early Childhood Education for Pre-primary Teachers, raised the issue of how to construct ongoing relationships between universities and educational services 0–3 years that could foster meaningful and fruitful exchanges for both institutions. In Italy, this issue is part of the current debate on the initial professional education of Educators for 0–3 year-olds.

Pre-primary Education Teachers (*insegnanti*)

Practica/internships within the 5-year university degree course in Primary and Pre-primary Education (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria*)

Regulation

Since 2010 (Ministerial Decree DM 249/2010, Art. 3), in the context of an overall redefining of IPE requirements for teachers, the government has made internship an obligatory part of the 5-year degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria*).

Aims and goals

The goals of the internship are to promote the integration of the theoretical knowledge that the students are gradually acquiring with hands-on experience of workplace settings; to ensure a healthy balance between theory, practice and reflection on experience; to train students in the use of observation and documentation tools; and to provide students with a framework for reflecting on practice.

Length of time spent in the workplace and number of ECTS credits

Internship experience begins in year two and lasts a total of 600 hours (corresponding to 24 ECTS credits) over years 2–5. National legislation requires the placements to be designed to earn a progressively higher number of ECTS credits in each successive year up to the final year. Each university decides how to distribute these hours over the years.

Structure of time blocks

Guided workplace experience comprises direct and indirect activities. Direct activities are carried out in pre-primary and primary schools, and student teachers are supervised by experienced Pre-primary or Primary School Teachers. There is an orientation phase, an observation phase in schools, a phase for the preparation of a specific project and a final phase for the implementation of the project. The host teacher in the primary or pre-primary school cooperates with the



university tutor in supervising and evaluating the teaching practice. Thus, the curriculum is implemented in collaboration with schools: each university is responsible to work with schools in the surrounding area. School teachers and principals therefore work directly with students; they are assigned part time or full time to universities to supervise students in planning, carrying out, analysing and discussing their teaching practice assignments.

Supervisors/mentors

Supervisors are recruited via a selection process to work at the university for a few years. There is approximately one supervisor per 20–25 students. The relevant Ministerial Decree DM 178/2011 distinguishes between three different tutorial positions: Trainee Tutors (*tutor dei tirocinanti*) and Coordinating Tutors (*tutor coordinatori*), who both play the role of supervisor, and Organising Tutor (*tutor organizzatori*), with no hours of actual supervision. Article 11 states that those appointed as “supervisor tutors” must have worked for at least five years as teachers or head teachers within the Italian national school system. The appointment (role) must be either reconfirmed or terminated each year by the board of the university department employing the tutor. The posts of Coordinating Tutor may only be assigned for a 4-year period, may not be reassigned immediately to the same person and may be extended for a maximum of one additional year. The university department employing the tutors is responsible for selecting and recruiting them. In the course of their everyday duties, tutors/supervisors report to the degree programme board.

The function of Trainee Tutors (*tutor dei tirocinanti*) is to monitor the students’ teaching activities during their periods of teaching practice and to help them manage their teaching processes. Coordinating Tutors (*tutor coordinatori*) are responsible for guiding and managing the regular tutors, assigning the students to classes and schools, formally drawing up a teaching practice plan for each student, catering for the training needs of the group of students under their supervision, monitoring and assessing the teaching practice placements and guiding the student teachers in writing their final reports. Organising Tutors (*tutor organizzatori*) organise and manage the relations between the university, schools and school heads and supervise all the administrative procedures involving the coordinating tutors and the regional education authorities. They also have responsibility for assigning a group of students to each coordinating tutor.

In general – independent of the supervisors’ specific role – their job is to make sure that student teachers receive an adequate amount of feedback and guidance when carrying out their specific teaching practice assignments. Supervisors also help students to reflect on and organise their own knowledge, to appreciate the relationship between theory and practice, to apply formal learning to occupational roles and to become familiar with the running of schools and the different activities and practices implemented in the classroom.

With regard to remuneration, tutors are subject to the contractual conditions laid down by the relevant national wage agreement.

Evaluation

Evaluation and monitoring throughout the internship are the basis for intermediate and final assessments. At the end of each year of the internship, students submit project documents, including teaching materials, and a final report.

Special Needs Teachers (insegnante di sostegno)

Regulation

Ministerial Decree DM 249/2010 defined the *Linee Guida Nazionali Ministeriali* (National Ministry Guidelines) for the teaching practice component of the 1-year postgraduate course in special needs education that may be completed by graduates in Primary and Pre-primary Education (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria*) or by recognised Primary Teachers.



Length of time spent in the workplace and number of ECTS credits

Students must complete 300 hours of internship experience (12 ECTS credits). Individual universities are free to decide how these hours will be distributed as long as they meet the national requirement for the teaching practice to take place in primary or pre-primary schools over a period of no longer than 5 months.

Content structure of time blocks

The placement comprises both indirect and direct components. The indirect component involves critical analysis of the teaching practice experience by the student teachers themselves and the design of interactive teaching activities for implementation with children with disabilities. The practical activities include the application of digital technologies (ICTs) to special needs education. The exact type of teaching experience provided can vary and is defined by the local university in collaboration with the host schools.

Supervisors/mentors

During the direct activity phase of the placement, the student is supervised by a practicum tutor (*tutor dei tirocinanti*) chosen from among the teaching staff of the host school, who must have at least seven years' teaching experience.

Evaluation

Assessment of the teaching practice is both external and internal (self-evaluation). The former is based mainly on tutors' evaluation of students' performance/progress during the placement. This is followed by the students' own critical assessment of their practical teaching experience at both the personal and the professional level.

6. Continuing professional development (CPD) of ECEC staff

Legislation and regulation

In Italy, the CPD provision for ECEC staff working in the Integrated System 0–6 varies according to the ECEC provider.

CPD for ECEC staff working in municipal provision

Continuing professional development for ECEC staff working in municipal and subsidised educational services 0–3 years or in municipal pre-primary schools is planned and implemented by local authorities with the support of regional governments and varies significantly across the country (there is a large gap between northern and southern regions).

CPD for teachers working in state-maintained pre-primary schools

CPD for teachers working in state-maintained pre-primary schools is regulated at the national level. A national framework and new guidelines for the CPD of pre-primary, primary and secondary school teachers were drawn up following the approval of Law 107/2015. The Law (Art. 1 paragraph 124) defined CPD as “compulsory, permanent and structural” and specified that in-service training activities should be planned by each school according to the priorities indicated in the National Teacher Professional Development Plan (*Piano per la Formazione dei Docenti*) elaborated every 3 years by the Ministry of Education (Ministerial Decree DM 797/2016, Ministero dell'Istruzione 2021). The law introduced an annual €500 bonus for teachers called

‘Teacher’s Card’ (*Carta del docente*). This card must be used exclusively to purchase accredited CPD courses, to cover the expenses of training activities and/or to buy books.⁴

Towards a common framework for CPD in the Integrated System 0–6

With the implementation of Law Decree 65/2017, the Italian government acknowledged – including in economic terms – its crucial role in promoting and sustaining CPD activities to ensure the full professional development of ECEC staff across the 0–6 sector. To overcome the lack of a common framework for CPD provision and guarantee equal opportunities for ECEC staff across the country, Law Decree 65/2017 – which explicitly states that the CPD of *all ECEC staff* working in the Integrated System 0–6 is a strategic goal for qualifying the system (Art. 4 paragraph 1.f) – defines the tasks to be performed by the state, regional governments and local authorities in the field of CPD:

- The State has the task of implementing actions aimed at promoting the CPD of all ECEC staff of the Integrated System 0–6 in line with the framework of the National Teacher Professional Development Plan (Art. 5 paragraph 1.c).
- Regions define guidelines for supporting the professionalism of ECEC staff of the Integrated System 0–6 at the regional level in line with the framework of the National Teacher Professional Development Plan (Art. 6 paragraph 1.b).
- Local authorities plan and implement the CPD initiatives for ECEC staff of the Integrated System 0–6 in their areas in line with the framework of the National Teacher Professional Development Plan (Art. 7 paragraph 1.f).

As detailed in *Chapter 8*, the implementation of Law Decree 65/2017 is supported by a National Multiannual Implementation Plan (*Piano di Azione Nazionale Pluriennale per la Promozione del Sistema Integrato di Educazione e Istruzione*), which defines actions for and allocates financial resources to developing and qualifying the Integrated System 0–6. The most recent 5-year National Implementation Plan (2021–2025) established that each region should devote at least 5% of the resources to promoting CPD initiatives addressed to ECEC staff and/or local pedagogical coordination (DCM 706/2022).

Main forms

The main forms of CPD for ECEC staff (Educators, Teachers, Pedagogical Coordinators and School Heads) are workshops, conferences, local seminars, research projects (action research, intervention research, participatory research, etc.) and exchange programmes. In the best Italian ECEC experiences, CPD is aimed at fostering critical thinking and reflexive practices and encouraging shared learning and ‘learning by doing’ within communities of practice and of learners (Lave and Wenger 1991), rather than transmitting theoretical knowledge that is scarcely connected with practice.

It is important to stress that, since 1970/80, the administrations of some northern and central regions – such as Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany and Umbria – have consistently and systematically invested in CPD initiatives for ECEC staff (Musatti, Picchio, and Mayer 2016; Bove, Jensen, Wysłowska, Iannone, Mantovani, and Karwowska-Struczyk 2018) that have contributed not only to improving the quality of ECEC provision at the local level but also to developing and spreading a “culture of early childhood” across the country within a “situated systemic framework” (Mantovani 2010).

⁴ The Plan provides for an investment of 325 million euros for in-service teacher training plus 1.1 billion euros for financing the Teacher’s Card, amounting to a total of 1.4 billion euros over the period 2016–2019.



These administrations set up partnerships with universities or research institutes aimed at developing a consolidated set of professional practices based on action research, practices of teamwork or co-constructed project work focused on working with families and the community (*partecipazione*). Participatory processes, the involvement of Pedagogical Coordinators, the designing of experiential learning processes, the focus on community-based learning, the role of documentation and the partnership with universities and research centres have been key elements in the implementation of high-quality CPD (Lazzari, Picchio, and Musatti 2013).

Collegiality is also a main feature of continuing professional development in Italy. Indeed, CPD is conceptualised as a collegial process aimed at constructing and implementing shared knowledge and practice at the team level and within the wider ECEC professionals' community. Collegiality is the context in which ECEC professionals have the opportunity to analyse and discuss the processes that take place in educational contexts and the impact of their practices on children's and parents' experience and to discuss their points of view on challenges that arise in their daily work. From this perspective, collegiality is the process by which the attitude towards research and reflexivity, now widely recognised as an essential component of ECEC professionalism, is nurtured (Picchio, Giovannini, Mayer, and Musatti 2012).

Most CPD initiatives are based on the use of procedures of observation and documentation aimed at connecting the pedagogical reflection to concrete matters and supporting the analysis of practices (Rinaldi 2001, 2006).

In some municipalities (e.g., Milan, Reggio Emilia and Pistoia), CPD is based on the synergy between staff meetings at educational services 0–3 years and pre-primary schools and broader training opportunities provided at the local, national and international levels. Moreover, bottom-up networks have traditionally played a crucial role in the CPD of Italian ECEC staff (see *Box 3*).

Box 3

Italy: Example of an influential professional network

The *Gruppo Nazionale Nidi e Infanzia* (GNNI), founded in 1980, is a large network whose members are researchers, managers, decision makers, Educators, Teachers and Pedagogical Coordinators from different regions. It plays an important role in the development of quality educational services 0–3 years and pre-primary schools, promotes advocacy initiatives and periodically organises conferences and workshops on early childhood education at the local and national levels, which are attended by a large number of delegates. Today, the GNNI is one of the most authoritative voices in the Italian ECEC sector.

<http://www.grupponidiinfanzia.it/>

All the components of CPD described above reflect the broader Italian discourse on in-service professional development (*formazione-in-servizio*), which is particularly strong in municipal educational services 0–3 years and municipal pre-primary schools.⁵

CPD providers

Local authorities are the main providers of CPD activities targeting ECEC staff working in municipal – and often subsidised – educational services 0–3 years and in municipal pre-primary schools. They fund and plan CPD activities – usually on an annual basis – and negotiate the contents and modes of organisation with universities, research centres and external training agencies or use internal resources. CPD activities are carried out within a collegial framework. All

⁵ It is important to stress that the term '*formazione*' conveys a very different meaning from the English word 'training'. It comes from *forma* (structure, shape) and means 'taking rather than being given a form' (Nigris 2007, 1146). This requires investment at many levels and a bottom-up participatory perspective on professional development as a dynamic, multimethod approach of reviewing practices within a community of learners.



ECEC staff of the educational services 0–3 years or pre-primary schools are involved on a team basis.

At the local level, some city/town administrations (e.g. Reggio Emilia, San Miniato, Pistoia and Modena) have set up other types of institution (e.g. documentation centres), which provide professional development activities for Educators and Pre-primary Teachers.

The Ministry of Education and external training agencies are the main providers of CPD targeting teachers of state-maintained pre-primary schools through funds allocated to schools and used for financing the annual “Teacher’s Card”. Each school draws up a professional development plan. Teachers can individually choose activities among a range of training courses accredited by the Ministry of Education.

According to Law Decree 65/2017, the private sector, which runs educational services 0–3 years and pre-primary schools, should guarantee CPD activities for their ECEC staff. However, the opportunity for staff to benefit CPD depends on the allocation of paid non-contact time (see *Chapter 7.4*).

Leave entitlement, access to CPD and funding support

Traditionally, in municipal ECEC provision, CPD has been considered both a “right” and a “duty” of Educators (0–3) and Pre-primary Teachers (3–6). Both professions have been guaranteed between 120 to 200 hours per year to attend professional development initiatives, collegial meetings with or without the supervision of Pedagogical Coordinators and meetings with parents and to carry out documentation activities.

In order to promote a sharing reflection on daily practices, in some municipalities, auxiliary staff participate in CPD initiatives together with Educators, Teachers and Pedagogical Coordinators.

In state-maintained pre-primary schools, regulations allow 80 hours per year to be devoted to teamwork planning, meetings with parents and CPD activities. Regional Ministry School Offices (*Uffici Scolastici Regionali*) may be more or less stringent in terms of monitoring how these hours are actually invested, allowing a lesser or greater proportion to be used for *auto-aggiornamento* (self-organised professional development), which may include individual study. A rough estimate of the time devoted annually to CPD is between 12 and 15 hours.

In the private sector, the access to CPD opportunities for Educators (0–3) and Teachers (3–6) varies significantly according to working contract agreements. For example, two leading providers – the PAN (a consortium of social entrepreneurship networks) in the 0–3 sector and the FISM (*Federazione Italiana Scuole Materne*) in the 3–6 sector – guarantee a minimum of 12 paid working hours per year for CPD activities, while, in other cases, the amount of paid working hours is fully absorbed by the work with children.

CPD and career advancement

Participation in CPD activities is not formally recognised in terms of career advancement.

Options for supplementary/additional study routes

Educators (0–3) and Teachers (3–6) who decide to pursue supplementary study routes or training courses are required to pay for these courses themselves. All employed Teachers and Educators have the right to benefit from paid study leave (*diritto allo studio* – the right to education), pending on the formal approval by the School Head/Pedagogical Coordinator. Recognised further study routes include PhD programmes, Master’s degree programmes and so on. The amount of paid time available for achieving these additional formal qualifications depends on the contract of employment (public versus private, etc.). Despite the differences, it usually corresponds to an average of 150 paid hours per year.



Key content focus of CPD for core practitioners

In municipal ECEC provision, topics of CPD activities are defined at the local level, taking into account the needs of ECEC professionals working in the local ECEC system. In state ECEC provision, each pre-primary school defines the topic of CPD activities autonomously. However, in recent years a number of shared topics have emerged:

- Constructing a unitary and holistic approach to early childhood education across the 0–3 and 3–6 sector (Bondioli, Savio, and Gobetto 2018; Lazzari, Pastori, Sità, and Sorzio 2020). In a recent note (Ministero dell’Istruzione 2022b), the Ministry of Education requested all Regional Ministry School Offices (*Uffici Scolastici Regionali*) to promote joint professional development initiatives addressed to both Pre-primary Teachers and Educators of educational services 0–3 years, in collaboration with local authorities, aimed at discussing the Pedagogical Guidelines of the Integrated System 0–6 (*Linee Pedagogiche per il Sistema Integrato Zerosei*, Ministerial Decree DM 334/2021) and the National Guidelines for Educational Services 0–3 (*Orientamenti Nazionali per i Servizi Educativi per l’Infanzia*, Ministerial Decree DM 43/2022) (see *Chapter 8*). These initiatives are also meant to deepen issues related to educational continuity between the educational experiences offered to children from the first months of life to their entry into primary school at the age of 6 years, such as relationships with families, organisation of inclusive educational contexts, role of digital technologies for the healthy growth of children in educational and family contexts, observation, planning, documentation, evaluation and self-evaluation.
- Rethinking and promoting parents’ participation in ECEC services, even considering needs expressed by parents during the pandemic period and the growing social, cultural and economic changes in communities (Bove 2020; Mantovani, Bove, Ferri, Manzoni, Cesa, Bianchi, and Picca 2021).
- Outdoor education (Malavasi 2019; Schenetti, and Guerra 2018), which has become a widespread topic within the initiatives because of the experience of the pandemic.

Research

At the national level, no large-scale research projects on the CPD of ECEC staff have received funding over the last 5 years, even taking the pandemic into account. However, in the following, we report a significant example of a study on the CPD of ECEC staff in Italy carried out in the last decade.

Italian case study in innovative PD practices in ECEC services in Europe – European CARE project

Source: Bove, Jensen, Wysłowska, Iannone, Mantovani, and Karwowska-Struczyk 2018 (see *References* for further details).

Aims: The Italian case study on “Innovative practices in the in-service professional development of ECEC practitioners” is part of the Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of the European Education and Care (CARE <https://ecec-care.org/>) project, funded by the European Union under the Seventh Framework Programme. The Italian case study was part of the work package on Professional Development – Impact and Innovation and involved in-depth exploration and analysis of two innovative approaches to professional development at the city level, which could act as models for PD at the national level. These were the cases of “Reggio Emilia: a model of diffused pedagogy” (Giudici and Castagnetti 2016) and “Milano: fostering innovation in a big city. Continuity and change” (Mantovani, Bove, Cescato, and Braga 2016).



More specifically, the aims of the study were to describe how innovative frameworks for the CPD of ECEC practitioners at the macro (city) level, typical of both the selected case studies, are transferred and further implemented at the micro (school) level; to explore which types of professional development are most effective in enhancing the quality of ECEC; to analyse how practitioners perceive and interpret the impact of innovation on their educational practices and on ECEC quality; and to investigate teachers' perceptions, views, ideas and beliefs about developing their professional competence within a qualitative–ethnographic framework.

Procedures: The research was designed as a 'Holistic Case Study' (Yin 2009) with embedded sub-case studies at both sites. After a preliminary narrative review of the concepts of "innovation" and "innovative PD practices in Early Childhood Education and Care", the case study was conducted by combining multiple and diverse sources of data. Existing/documentary data and new/empirical data were both viewed as the key to contextualising and analysing the two case study sites and their embedded sub-case studies in depth. In Milan, three sub-case units were involved: two nursery centres 0–3 and a pre-primary school 3–6; in Reggio Emilia, two sub-case units were involved: a nursery and a pre-primary school.

A total of 30 semi-structured interviews were conducted with a range of informants (stakeholders, Educators, Teachers, Education Coordinators and Researchers). In addition, three focus group discussions were conducted in Milan with Educators from the educational services 0–3 years involved in the study.

The interviews and focus group discussions were audio recorded and fully transcribed. The data were analysed qualitatively using content analysis methodology (Berg and Lune 2012), combining categories drawn from the literature with "bottom-up categories". Documentary sources (PhD and Master's theses, publications, documentation, etc.) on the history of the ECEC settings and their staff's in-service PD were analysed and compared with the interview data.

Findings: The results suggested a high level of consistency between the macro and the micro level, represented by the existing/documentary sources and the interviews with participants, respectively. More specifically, continuing professional development was not conceptualised as an optional extra but as "embedded in the services/in place". The accounts of Teachers/Educators, coordinators and stakeholders all reflected a shared perception of how innovation occurs in practice. The key themes concerning innovation and efficacy in PD are a good balance between theory and practice; the connection between research and PD; the impact (of PD) as "change in action"; the importance of workshops and opportunities for "learning by doing"; the need for reflexivity and opportunities for shared learning/teamwork; the key role of the education coordinator as a "driver of innovation"; and the use of new technologies (ICT) as a component of innovation.

In addition, there was widespread interpretation of innovation in PD as a participatory process, which not only includes workshops, action research, analysis of practice and video observations but also involves parents and children where possible. As a 'catalyst for adults to meet' (New, Mallory, and Mantovani 2001), CPD is viewed as a key means of developing a shared vision of early years education.

The study contributes to developing insights/perspectives for the future: the need for a better balance between pre-service and in-service PD practices; the need to reduce both intergenerational differences among staff and the rigid use of human and financial resources that is typical of the Italian public administration system; the need to bridge multiple perspectives within ECEC (by creating and combining real and virtual communities of learners); the need to invest in the training of key figures as multipliers of innovation; and the need to promote collaboration be-



tween policymakers, practitioners, researchers and parents to develop a common understanding of PD. In a word, there is a need to keep the rights of children in view as the compass ultimately directing our action.

Current debates

The current debates in Italy regarding the continuing professional development of ECEC staff include the following main issues:

- Reserving a portion of the new financial resources devoted to ECEC provision in the last years (Gruppo CRC 2021) for guaranteeing equal CPD opportunities for ECEC staff working in the Integrated System 0–6 across the country, reducing the gap between the quality of the ECEC services and capitalising the CPD best practices developed in municipal ECEC provision since the 1970s
- Planning and implementing systematic and sustainable joint CPD activities aiming to attract both 0–3 Educators and 3–6 Teachers through close cooperation between state, regions and local authorities to promote a common culture and a shared holistic approach to early childhood education and support practices of horizontal and vertical continuity
- Strengthening the role of local pedagogical coordination (*coordinamenti pedagogici territoriali*) in planning, promoting and monitoring CPD initiatives at the local level
- Revising employment contracts, in particular in the private sector, to ensure that all Educators and Teachers have an appropriate number of paid hours allocated to CPD activities
- Creating opportunities for inter-generational professional exchanges between newly recruited and senior ECEC practitioners
- Introducing new contents/topics into the CPD initiatives to meet the challenges of an increasingly diverse, complex and intercultural society that requires inclusive practices
- Encouraging inter-professional CPD initiatives to increase the capacity of ECEC professionals to act systemically in collaboration with other professional figures working with children and families (networking and multi-sectorial collaboration).

7. Working conditions and current workforce issues

7.1 Remuneration and working hours⁶

In Italy, the salaries and working conditions of Educators of 0–3 year-olds and Pre-primary Teachers vary significantly according to the setting providers (Mari 2016, 2021).

Educators of 0–3 year-olds and Pre-primary School Teachers working in municipal provision fall under the C category of workers under the terms of the National Wage Agreement/regional and local authorities and are entitled to an annual gross⁷ salary of €22,039 per year for 36 working hours per week (usually 30 working hours with children and 6 hours devoted to collegial meet-

⁶ Sources: National collective contract AGIDAE 2022; National collective contract ANINSEI 2022; National collective contract FISM 2016; National collective contract relating to the staff of the local functions sector, three-year period 2016-2018; National collective contract for staff in the education and research sector, three-year period 2016-2018; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2021.

⁷ It should be considered that ECEC professionals pay taxes of about 25% on their remuneration.



ings, meetings with parents, documentation activities and attendance at professional development initiatives). However, both the salary and the working conditions vary across cities/towns and across Regions as a function of local wage agreements.

The annual gross salary of teachers working in state-maintained pre-primary schools – who are in the direct employment of the Ministry of Education – is €24,297 for 25 weekly working hours with children.

The salaries and working conditions of Educators of 0–3 year-olds or Pre-primary Teachers working in subsidised or private educational services 0–3 years or in private or recognised pre-primary schools vary according to the national agreement applied by the providers (FISM, AGIDAE, ANINSEI social cooperatives, private health enterprises, etc.). The gross salaries amount to a minimum of €17,680 and a maximum of €21,526 per year and the weekly working hours vary between 31 and 38.

The remuneration and working conditions of Pedagogical Coordinators also vary according to the type of provider and the number of hours worked per week. Full-time employed Pedagogical Coordinators can earn a gross salary between €20,709 (in private, subsidised or recognised early educational services 0–3 years and private and recognised pre-primary schools) and €24,895 (in municipal ECEC provision) per annum, while Heads of state-maintained schools may earn from €69,700 upwards according to the whole school size.

It is difficult to say in “absolute and general terms” whether it is possible to live on the salary of an Educator/Teacher in Italy today. The relationship between salary and standard of living is influenced by many factors (such as the average cost of living in one’s city or region of residence, family circumstances, age, number of children, etc.). The economic crisis and the effects of the pandemic certainly had a strong impact on the purchasing power of ECEC professionals. Furthermore, it should be considered that the salary of ECEC professionals varies according to their length of employment by the same provider, though significantly long periods are needed to achieve modest salary increases.

ECEC professionals employed in the public sector enjoy long-term economic security, and this contributes to the perception of these occupations as being of a better quality. This is especially the case at the present time, when the long-term jobs and permanent positions previously expected by young graduates are become extremely difficult to attain. Educators, Teachers and Pedagogical Coordinators working in private ECEC provision not only face more variable working conditions but also enjoy less job security over the long term. Most of them are employed on the basis of fixed-term or discontinuous contracts and, even in state-maintained pre-primary schools, some teachers are employed temporarily (15.6%) (Ministero dell’Istruzione 2022a).

7.2 Full-time and part-time employment in ECEC provision

As described above, the number of working hours of full-time ECEC professional staff varies according to the type of agreement applied. All professionals (Educators 0–3, Pre-primary Teachers and Pedagogical Coordinators) in municipal educational services 0–3 years and municipal pre-primary schools work 36 hours per week, while professionals in private or subsidised educational services 0–3 or private or recognised pre-primary schools work from 31 to 38 hours. Instead, teachers working in state-maintained pre-primary schools work 25 hours.

There are no data available concerning the number of part-time employees in either the 0–3 sector or the 3–6 sector.



7.3 Support measures in the workplace for newly qualified and newly appointed staff

A probationary year for novice qualified Pre-primary Teachers and School Heads of state-maintained pre-primary schools is required.

The probationary period – defined by Ministerial Decree DM 850/2015 – is considered as part of newly qualified Teachers’ ongoing training and professional development. During this period, Teachers are engaged in specific training activities: workshops and visiting innovative schools (12 hours), peer-to-peer meetings (12 hours), collegial meetings (6 hours) and individual online training activities (20 hours) for a total of 50 hours. During the probationary year, novice teachers are assigned to a Teacher Tutor, who plays an active and specific role in the training process and provides a final evaluation (which has to be submitted to the School Head) at the end of the year. The tasks of Teacher Tutors are welcoming, supporting, tutoring and supervising new entrants as well as evaluating their competences.

A similar path is provided for newly employed School Heads. It consists of a probationary year, during which they have to spend 25 hours on peer tutoring and 50 hours on training activities, such as workshops, case studies, analysis of practices, problem-solving activities and so on. They are assigned to a school Head Tutor, who makes a qualitative assessment of the competences acquired by the novice at the end of the probationary period (Ministerial Decree DM 956/2019). Similar programmes are also implemented for Educators working in municipal educational services 0–3 years, but these measures are defined at the local level. For example, in Milan, newly recruited Educators are required to complete a 6-month probationary programme before being definitively employed (as established by the National Wage Agreement). During these six months, would-be employees work alongside the other Educators of the service and their work is observed by them. At the end of the probationary period, the Pedagogical Coordinator of the service is required to produce a full evaluation report.

At the national level, Law 107/2015 introduced new suggestions by stressing the relevance of a greater emphasis of *on-site mentoring* in schools. It defines the new role of “mentor-teachers” (chosen by the school’s internal evaluation committee), who are required to conduct evaluations, coordinate training and peer tutoring, supervise the training of their colleagues and provide support for interns.

Some training programmes implemented in municipal educational services and pre-primary schools – for example the Milano-Bambini (MIBA) project (Bove et al. 2018; Premoli and Zaninelli 2020; see *Chapter 9*) – are also examples of how to develop, at the local level, innovative forms of *on-site training* that alternate in-service professional development with in-service supervision and are based on the professional knowledge of experienced ECEC staff.

7.4 Non-contact time

Educators and Pre-primary Teachers working in municipal provision (both educational services 0–3 years and pre-primary schools) are paid for an important amount of non-contact time (120 to 200 hours per year) to be spent on planning, staff meetings, meetings with parents, documentation and continuing professional development.

Teachers in state-maintained pre-primary schools have 80 hours per year of non-contact time. The Regional Educational Departments have stricter or looser policies concerning how these paid hours may be spent.

Non-contact time for Educators and Teachers working in educational services 0–3 years and pre-primary schools managed by non-public providers varies greatly according to their employment agreement (from 25 to 100 per year).



7.5 Current staffing issues

During the last decade, the Italian ECEC system has faced a major turnover in staff due to the retirement of professionals who entered the ECEC system during its years of expansion, and a similar upheaval is expected in the next decade. This poses a further challenge for the professional development of ECEC professionals.

Two main critical issues in the recruitment of ECEC staff are emerging: the very limited number of graduates who to date have the specific qualification required by the regulations for working in educational services 0–3 years (see *Chapter 4*); a shortage of Pre-primary Teachers – especially in the central and northern regions, where pre-primary provision is more widespread – due both to the established annual limited number of places on 5-year university courses in Primary and Pre-primary Education provided by universities and to the predominant choice of many graduates to work in primary schools rather than pre-primary schools (Gruppo CRC 2022).

In the coming years, these critical issues are bound to become dramatically more relevant in connection with the expected increase of ECEC provision for children aged 0–6.

8. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to staffing and professionalisation issues

Two core national policy reforms relating to ECEC staffing are highlighted in this chapter.

(1) Law 107/2015 and Law Decree 65/2017

As elaborated in *Chapter 1*, the National Law 107/2015 introduced a set of guidelines for a comprehensive reform of the Italian school education system at all levels (ECEC, primary, middle and high school). The main reform goals referred to:

- The introduction of merit-based components for teacher salaries
- Teacher recruitment (on a permanent basis)
- School autonomy
- The curriculum
- Digital and language skills
- Work-based learning
- Continuing professional development; and the previously mentioned
- Integrated System of education from birth to six years of age.

Teachers' professionalism is being taken seriously and new funds have been allocated to support the CPD of all teachers across the education system.

Two points are particularly relevant to the ECEC sector:

- The guarantee of “compulsory, permanent and structural continuing professional development for teachers at all school levels”
- The development of the “Integrated System of education from birth to six years” (Law 107/2015, Article 1, paragraph 181) that aims at overcoming the previous split system between the provision for children under 3 years of age (0–3) and the pre-primary sector (3–6).

In 2017, the Italian Parliament approved Law Decree 65/2017, which regulates the implementation of the integrated system in detail. The Law Decree does not aim to achieve uniform management, organisation procedures or educational practices but rather intends to bring all the



provision into an integrated system unified by shared standards of acceptability in terms of organisational and educational quality. It provides for the redefinition of roles and responsibilities among the regional and local authorities, the setting up of “hubs for 0–6 year-olds” (*poli per l’infanzia*) and the introduction of a new financing system based on co-funding by the state, regional governments and local authorities. Moreover, in line with most European countries, the Decree introduced – for the first time at the national level – the upgrading of initial professional education to a university degree for 0–3 Educators. Additionally, it sustains the development of a more inclusive system of early childhood and education and equal educational opportunities for all children and families by extending the ECEC provision across the country, enhancing the quality of educational services through CPD for both Educators and Pre-primary teachers and developing a system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of the ECEC system.

The main elements of the Decree are summarised in *Box 4*.

Box 4

Italy: Law Decree 65/2017: Establishment of an Integrated System of education from birth to 6 years

1. Ensuring equal educational opportunities, overcoming economic and cultural barriers to access (Art. 1, paragraph 3.b), encouraging inclusion (Art. 1, paragraph 1) and in general ensuring more accessible services for all families, especially the most vulnerable ones
2. Encouraging educational continuity between educational programmes for children aged 0–3 and 3–6 (Art. 1, paragraph 3.a)
3. Enhancing the quality of educational services 0–3 years by ensuring adequate initial professional education for ECEC professionals working in these services. Tertiary-level education is required: either a Bachelor’s Degree in Educational Science with a specific pathway in Early Childhood Education or a 5-year degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education, supplemented by a 60 ECTS credits module in Early Childhood Education (Art. 4, paragraph 1.e)
4. Ensuring continuing professional development opportunities for all ECEC staff (Art. 1, paragraph 3.g) and delivering targeted in-service training programmes for ECEC staff working within the Integrated 0–6 years system (Art 4, paragraph 1.f; Art. 5, paragraph 1.b)
5. Defining criteria for monitoring and evaluating the quality of the educational programmes provided within the Integrated system 0–6 (Art. 5, paragraph 1.d)
6. Ensuring the pedagogical coordination of educational services 0–3 years and pre-primary schools at the local level (Art. 1, paragraph 3.g)
7. Establishing *poli per l’infanzia* (hubs for 0–6 year-olds), which unite educational services 0–3 and pre-primary schools in the same building (or in the same area) to enable more coherent local planning of the Integrated System 0–6 and ensure pedagogical continuity (Art. 3)
8. Consolidating, expanding and improving accessibility to educational services 0–3 years to ensure coverage of 33% of children under 3 and at least 75% of Italian municipalities (Art. 4, paragraphs 1.a and 1.b)
9. Defining multi-level governance of the Integrated System 0–6 (see *Chapter 1*) based on an articulated framework of interaction and cooperation between the state, regional governments and local authorities (Art. 5, Art. 6 and Art. 7)
10. Defining the National Pedagogical Guidelines of the Integrated System 0–6 and National Guidelines for Educational Services 0–3 (coherently with the existing National Curricular Guidelines for pre-primary and primary schools)
11. Establishing an Expert Committee, appointed by the Ministry of Education, with counselling tasks (Art. 10)
12. Establishing a National Multiannual Implementation Plan defining the distribution of the available financial resources for consolidating, expanding and enhancing the Integrated system 0–6 (Art. 8)
13. Setting up a National Fund for the development of the Integrated System 0–6 via investment in constructing, renovating and maintaining educational services 0–3 years and pre-primary schools, providing CPD for ECEC staff and establishing local pedagogical coordination (Art. 12)
14. Defining an upper limit to the contribution that may be asked of families to cover the cost of running educational services 0–3 years (Art. 9, paragraph 1) and prompting local authorities to offer reduced fees, fee exemptions and economic incentives to families with a low income.



The implementation of Law Decree 65/2017, as stated in *Chapter 1*, is supported by the National Multiannual Implementation Plan (*Piano di Azione Nazionale Pluriennale per la Promozione del Sistema Integrato di Educazione e Istruzione*), which defines actions and financial resources – the National Fund for the Integrated System (see Gruppo CRC 2021) – for developing and qualifying the Integrated System 0–6 (Art. 8). The fund is assigned to municipalities following the directions of regional governments, which are mandated to match the funds at an established rate as well as to programme the extension of ECEC provision in their area and interventions for its qualification (Art. 12).

The National Fund is dedicated to:

- Building and qualifying structures of both educational services 0–3 and pre-primary schools
- Covering part of the management costs of educational services 0–3 as well to reduce families' fees
- Expanding and consolidating the provision of municipal and subsidised private pre-primary schools
- Supporting the qualification of ECEC staff through CPD initiatives and promoting local pedagogical coordination.

The most recent 5-year National Implementation Plan (2021–2025) (DCM 706/2022):

- Specifies that regional co-financing should not be less than 25% of the resources allocated by the state and that at least 20% of the whole Fund⁸ will be allocated to those regions where the availability of places in educational services in relation to the population of children under 3 years of age is lower than the national average
- Increases the number of the spring sections to counteract the early enrolment of children under the age of 3 in pre-primary schools (which is particularly widespread in southern regions where the provision for under 3 year-olds is still lower than the national average)
- Establishes that each regional government should devote at least 5% of its resources to the implementation of CPD initiatives addressed to Educators and Pre-primary Teachers, in line with the framework of the National Professional Development Plan (see *Chapter 6*), and/or promote local pedagogical coordination.

During the past two years, as required by Law Decree 65/2017 (Art. 10), the Expert Committee appointed by the Ministry of Education developed two important pedagogical documents:

- Pedagogical Guidelines of the Integrated System 0–6 (*Linee Pedagogiche per il Sistema Integrato Zerosei*, Ministerial Decree DM 334/2021)
- National Guidelines for Educational Services 0–3 (*Orientamenti Nazionali per i Servizi Educativi per l'Infanzia*, Ministerial Decree DM 43/2022).

The Pedagogical Guidelines of the Integrated System 0–6 define both the cultural and the pedagogical framework of the system, proposing a unitary and holistic approach to the education of children from birth up to 6 years of age, and the institutional and organisational framework of the system, describing the responsibilities and tasks of the state, regional governments and local authorities. The guidelines emphasise the key role of CPD and local pedagogical coordination in implementing the Integrated System 0–6 (Cerini and Spinosi 2021). The guidelines outline the basic elements of the educational competences of all professionals (Educators, Teachers and Pedagogical Coordinators) coherently with the existing National Curricular Guidelines for Pre-

⁸ The fund consists of 307 million euros for the year 2021 and 309 million euros for the years 2022 and 2023, respectively.



primary and Primary Schools (*Indicazioni Nazionali per il Curricolo della Scuola dell'Infanzia e del Primo Ciclo di Istruzione* updated with *Nuovi Scenari* – Ministerial Decree DM 254/2012, MIUR 2018b).

The National Guidelines for Educational Services 0–3 years represent the first national pedagogical framework for the 0–3 sector. The guidelines were inspired by the “culture of childhood” (*cultura dell'infanzia*) elaborated in municipal educational services 0–3 years over many years. The guidelines provide a framework for planning and implementing high-quality educational contexts for children under 3 years of age. They are an open document aimed at promoting reflections and discussions on children’s care and education in the first 3 years of life by all the actors involved in the 0–3 sector. In this document, the relevance of appropriate initial and in-service professional development of ECEC staff is also stressed.

Before being approved by the Minister of Education both documents were submitted to a broad consultation involving a great number of stakeholders: regional governments and local authorities, private providers, trade unions, ECEC professionals, professional associations and universities.

(2) Law 205/2017 (paragraph 594, 601) 29 December 2017

Law 205/2017, which was approved in 2017 and came into force on 1 January 2018, defines – in line with European and international standards – the occupations of Professional Educator (*educatore professionale*) and *pedagogista* and specifies the professional identity, academic qualifications and lines of work of both professionals.

The knowledge, skills and competences of Professional Educators correspond to EQF Level 6. More specifically, the law provides for two different types of Professional Educator: (1) Professional Educator - healthcare sector (*educatore professionale socio-sanitario*), who is eligible to work in healthcare contexts, and (2) Professional Educator – social and education sector (*educatore professionale socio-pedagogico*), who is eligible to work in educational and socio-educational services such as schools, social care services (across the lifespan), residential care for minors, family support, international cooperation and so on. Educators working in educational services 0–3-years are included in the second type of Professional Educator.

The former must hold a Bachelor’s degree (3 years’ full-time study) in the area of Health and Healthcare and the latter a Bachelor’s degree in Educational Science. As described in *Chapter 4*, a Bachelor’s degree in Educational Science plus a specific pathway on Early Childhood Education became a mandatory requirement for working in educational services 0–3 years.

The knowledge, skills and competences of a *pedagogista* correspond to EQF Level 7. They must hold a Master’s degree (Planning and Management of Educational Services, Lifelong Learning Education, Educational Science or Theories and Methodologies of e-Learning and Media Education). Their role is to design, plan, organise and coordinate educational services from birth to adulthood and to manage, monitor, evaluate and supervise the educational quality of public and private education and training systems. In this perspective, their profile does not include either mainly or exclusively professionals working as pedagogical coordinators. *Pedagogisti* may also act as supervisors, teachers' trainers, consultants and so on, at all levels of education.



9. Recent country-specific research focusing on ECEC staff

InTrans – Sustaining inclusive transitions across the early years

Sources: Lazzari, Balduzzi, and Serpioni 2022a; Lazzari, Balduzzi, and Serpioni 2022b (see *References* for full details).

Aims: In the context of the reform on the Integrated System 0–6 (Law 107/2015), the continuing professional development (CPD) of Educators, Pre-primary Teachers and Pedagogical Coordinators has gained renewed attention. As educational services 0–3 years and pre-primary schools in Italy previously fell under the responsibilities of different Ministries at national level – and were regulated and funded by different bodies at regional and local levels – institutional splits as well as differences in pedagogical approaches and educational practice across the 0–3 and 3–6 services are posing major challenges to the implementation of the reform. In such a fragmented landscape, investing in CPD initiatives aimed to foster inter-professional learning communities across the 0–3 and 3–6 sectors – as well as across state-maintained, municipal and private provision – has become paramount for sustaining the development of a unitary pedagogical vision, promoting the continuity of educational approaches and practices from 0 to 6 (Law Decree 65/2017). Against this background, the research and development initiatives undertaken within the Erasmus+ KA3 project *InTrans* – *Sustaining Inclusive Transitions across the Early Years* (2020–2022) in the Italian context aimed to support the process of reform implementation by influencing the ECEC systemic conditions so that innovative educational continuity practices could be disseminated and upscaled.

Procedures: As part of the *InTrans* consortium⁹, the research and development initiatives carried out in the Emilia-Romagna region by the University of Bologna (Department of Education) included the design, piloting and roll-out of an intensive CPD programme that involved approximately 50 participants, including Pedagogical Coordinators working in municipal and private ECEC services as well as pedagogical leaders operating in state-maintained pre-primary schools. The CPD programme, which was developed in collaboration with regional and local authorities, included both a theoretical and a practical component. The first was focused on raising awareness about the importance of sustaining inclusive transitions by drawing on international research findings. The latter was focused on providing participants with methodological tools to review critically the strengths and weaknesses of the transition practices implemented in their services by targeting their reflection on the experiences of children and families in transitions. At the end of the programme participants were asked to co-design small-scale transition projects to be piloted in their local context. To facilitate the implementation and follow-up of such initiatives, CPD activities were carried out mostly in “mixed groups” representing state-maintained, municipal and private provision on a territorial basis.

Findings: The results from focus groups carried out with participants after 6 months revealed that the successful outcome of experimentations was related both to the characteristics of the

⁹ The *InTrans* project was coordinated by VBJK - Centre For Innovation in the Early Years, the University of Ghent (Centre for Diversity and Learning and Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy) in Belgium; the University of Bologna (Department of Education) in Italy; Tampere University (School of Education) in Finland; the Education Research Institute (ERI) in Slovenia; the Danish Union of Early Childhood and Youth Educators (BUPL) in Denmark; and the International Step by Step Association (ISSA). The Ministry of Education and Culture (FI), the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (SL), the Ministry of Education & Training and the Child & Family Agency (BE), as well as the Emilia-Romagna Regional government (IT) were involved as associated partners in the project.



CPD programme (i.e. developing a shared pedagogical vision by combining research and practice; sustaining the development of inter-professional networks at local level) and to the characteristics of the local context (i.e. support provided by school heads and/or local authorities to ensure the sustainability of experimentations; the possibility to rely on established pedagogical coordination networks to upscale innovative practice).

Implications: In this sense, the findings from the *InTrans* project reveal that joint CPD initiatives can contribute significantly to sustaining the process of reform implementation from a grass roots perspective, but only if they are combined with policy advocacy initiatives influencing the systemic conditions in which ECEC educational services 0–3 years and pre-primary schools operate at the local level.

The role of internship in the initial professional education of Educators working with 0–3 year-olds

Sources: Cecotti and Sannipoli 2021; Garbarini, Terzi, and Campioni 2020; Lichene, Molina, Restiglian, and Sannipoli 2020; Marchesi and Vassuri 2020 (see *References* for full details)

Aims: Following the enactment of Law Decree 65/2017, the *Gruppo Nazionale Nidi e Infanzia* (GNNI) promoted working groups and in-depth studies on various aspects concerning the implementation of Integrated System 0–6, including exploratory research on the internship in initial professional training for Educators for 0–3 year-olds, which is considered to be a fundamental element for harmonising codified knowledge on early childhood and the reality of educational services 0–3 years. The aim of the study was mainly to analyse the connections between universities and providers of educational services and to investigate how direct and indirect internship are organised.

Procedures: A computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI) survey was carried out through the Google Forms function by administering two questionnaires (February–June 2019) with structured and semi-structured questions that, despite the specificity of the two target groups (university and providers), would allow data comparison.

Questionnaires were sent to Italian universities in which the *specific pathway in Early Childhood Education* was implemented within the Educational Science course (*Scienze dell’Educazione*) (39 out of 51). A total of 17 questionnaires (44%) were collected by universities located in different areas of the country, and 18 questionnaires were collected by educational services 0–3 years located in the centre and north of Italy and managed by different providers (municipalities and the private sector). A focus group was conducted in the city of Bologna to gather the voices of students, Educators and Pedagogical Coordinators involved in the internship experience with different roles.

Findings: Some main issues emerged from the data collected. The procedures for planning and accompanying students’ internship, as well as the number of hours dedicated and their distribution during the three years, vary significantly across universities. Although indirect internship is not implemented by all universities, it is gaining ground alongside direct internship and is designed for supporting students in developing knowledge of educational contexts and accompanying reflection on their experience. The supervising tutor emerges as a key figure for scaffolding students during their internship. It is important that universities invest in this role and define the criteria for recruitment, which are not set by regulations as in the course of Primary and Pre-primary Education (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria*). Internship is viewed as a key component of the initial training of Educators by both students and providers as well as ECEC professionals who are already working in educational services 0–3 years, who consider internship as an opportunity to reflect on their practices.



Implications: Internship represents an important opportunity for universities and the ECEC sector to enter into dialogue and construct a shared view on the professionalism of educators of children up to 3 years of age.

Promoting shared reflection and collegiality among ECEC professionals through observation, documentation and evaluation practices

Sources: Picchio and Giandomenico 2021; Di Giandomenico and Picchio 2022 (see *References* for full details)

Aims: Law Decree 65/2017 calls for new attention to be paid to the issue of ECEC quality evaluation. The decree explicitly states that local authorities have the responsibility for both monitoring and assessing the quality of all educational services 0–3 years located in their area and for promoting their continuous improvement. Sharing evaluation activities provides an important opportunity for networking ECEC services managed by different providers in the same area and for promoting the Integrated system.

Quality evaluation projects, which have been carried out since the 1990s by some regional and local governments in cooperation with research agencies, showed that ECEC professionals should be considered the main actors of ECEC quality evaluation. This activity should be integrated into their current professional practice, taking into account their specific stance on direct participants in the educational context.

From the same perspective, an action research project financed by the Region of Tuscany was carried out by the Institute of Cognitive Sciences and Technologies – National Research Council (ISTC-CNR) in collaboration with the Municipality of Pistoia between January 2019 and January 2021. The project involved 140 professionals (Educators and Pedagogical Coordinators) of 35 municipal and private educational services 0–3 years located in a district of Tuscany (which includes seven municipalities) and aimed at implementing professionals' competences in observing, documenting and evaluating the quality of children's experience during daily life in ECEC services; supporting ECEC professionals' reflexivity and promoting it within collegial meetings that brought together professionals from different services; and promoting the elaboration of a common educational approach between professionals working in both municipal and private ECEC services.

Procedures: In the action research project, the educational team of each ECEC service was requested to use procedures for observing, documenting and analysing children's experience during daily life in ECEC services, taking into account their different aspects (well-being, sociality and participation in play and care activities) and their evolution over the months; to produce written narrative documentation systematically integrating photos; and to evaluate jointly the impact of their educational practices on the quality of children's experience.¹⁰

The documentation and reflections produced by each team were presented and discussed with Educators from other ECEC services, researchers and Pedagogical Coordinators within periodical meetings organised at different levels of collegiality (between professionals working in municipal and private ECEC services of the same municipality, between professionals working in municipal and private ECEC services located in different municipalities and between all the ECEC professionals involved in the project).

¹⁰ These procedures were validated in previous action research initiatives in other Italian sites and were contextualised by taking into account the documentation practices and collegial work modalities usually implemented in the ECEC services involved (Picchio, Di Giandomenico, and Musatti 2014).



A total of 36 meetings were held, and the discussions among professionals during these meetings were recorded and fully transcribed. The transcriptions and documentation produced periodically by each team of professionals were analysed by researchers to verify whether and how the procedures proposed sustained professionals' reflexivity, collegiality and the improvement of educational practices and reinforced the network between ECEC services in the district.

Findings: The study highlighted that the systematic use of procedures of observation and documentation enhanced ECEC professionals' competences in grasping and understanding the complexity of children's experience and the ongoing processes that take place over time during daily life in ECEC services. Narrative documentation provides a useful tool for anchoring discussions to concrete matters, sharing judgements within and between ECEC services on the impact of current professional practices on children's experience and, accordingly, identifying elements that would improve them. In particular, during the pandemic, these procedures supported ECEC professionals in sharing reflections on the impact of practices implemented to maintain meaningful relationships with both children and parents during the lockdown period and then in introducing innovations into the procedures of *ambientamento* – that is, the children's gradual transition from home to ECEC service (Bove 2007) – on the reopening of the ECEC services in September 2020.

Implications: Sharing reflection among ECEC professionals at different levels of collegiality can be an important opportunity for empowering professional competences, improving daily practices and reinforcing feelings of belonging to an ECEC system.

Reforming the 0–6 educational system through research-training projects with children and adults: the case of Milan (Lombardy)

Source: Premoli and Zaninelli 2020 (see *References* for full details).

Aims: Since 2012, to date, the Research Centre on Intercultural Relations of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart of Milan (under the supervision of Milena Santerini), and the Research group of ECEC pedagogy of the University of Milan-Bicocca (under the supervision of Susanna Mantovani) have designed and managed two large research-training projects – called *Milano-Bambini* (Milan-Children) and *Didattica Inclusiva e Flessibilità* (Inclusive and flexible education. From teaching for a few to teaching for all) - for the ECEC's sector of the Municipality of Milan. Both projects were financed with funds pursuant to law 285/1997 (with public competitive process), and each lasted two years and were then extended for a further year for a total of six years (2012/13-2018/19). They were managed in the form of a temporary Association of Purpose (ATS), with the two Universities of Milan (Catholic University and Bicocca University) alternately in the role of leader. In the second three-year period, six social enterprises and local associations were also part of the ATS (Aldia Social Cooperative, CIDI association, Social Consortium ConOpera, the Orsa Cooperative, Pianeta Azzurro social cooperative, Social Consortium SIS). A group of researchers were involved in the two projects. Among them, Silvio Premoli, Monica Amadini, Alessia Todeschini (Catholic University); Francesca Zaninelli, Agnese Infantino, Giulia Pastori, Piera Braga (Bicocca University).

Procedures: Within the first project (Milano-Bambini, MIBA) a joint proposal was submitted which went beyond the traditional forms of ECEC professional development in Milan to include laboratories/workshops that were piloted and implemented in schools and open to families, as well as other forms of innovation such as the production of materials and the activation of participatory processes with the involvement of parents and children. Five sub-projects were funded within the city's ECEC settings over the years of the programme (2011-2013). Each covered the need for CPD of a significant number of ECEC professionals and produced a wide range



of documentation, which is of ongoing value at a number of levels. The programme involved 36 municipal ECEC services (educational services 0-3 years, pre-primary schools, integrative services) spread across the city of Milan, 300 ECEC practitioners and 12 coordinators, plus an additional 252 educators who took part in seminars conducted during the second year. The main actors in the project were Milano City Council (0-6 system), the Catholic University of Milan, Milan-Bicocca University and ECEC practitioners. Families and children were involved in the workshop phase of the project, based on experiential learning.

The second project (*Didattica Inclusiva e Flessibilità*) involved 150 ECEC services, with the additional involvement in transversal activities of almost all ECEC practitioners (3300) employed in the Milan's municipal services. In addition, a number of actions involved the pedagogical coordinators of all the ECEC services in Milan.

The main goal was to promote innovation at a methodological, pedagogical, didactical level through research training actions on key issues such as: intercultural education and family's participation in the first project (Milano-Bambini); inclusive education, with a focus on pedagogical continuity, well-being, parent-educator co-responsibility, and documentation in the second project (*Didattica Inclusiva e Flessibilità*).

Findings: Both projects have promoted innovative work logics through research-training courses and learning by doing processes, aimed at introducing and experimenting new activities with children who attend an ECEC services in Milan. Basically, action research interventions were activated and applied as a main professional development strategy, through the use of reflexive approaches for the exploration of implicit pedagogies/practices and theories. This approach highlighted the importance of recognising existing research studies and potentials as a starting point to promote innovation and to open spaces of possibility and change in working with children and with families. A main result is the impact of pedagogical research as a key tool to promote innovation and update practitioner's skills and competences, and the role of Pedagogical Coordinators as key figures. A huge investment was devoted to the involvement of the Pedagogical Coordinators as key figures or "*multipliers*" of the innovative actions introduced in the ECEC's settings (Bove, Mantovani, et al. 2016; Bove, Jensen, et al. 2018).

Among the results are:

- (1) The *Linee di Indirizzo Pedagogiche dei Servizi all'Infanzia 0–6 del Comune di Milano* (Pedagogical Guidelines for Milan's ECEC services) written and established at the end of the first project through a participatory process involving all professionals involved in the ECEC services (Mantovani and Premoli 2020). The pedagogical guidelines are founded on the history and tradition of the City and at the same time aim to introduce pedagogical innovation.
- (2) A tool for self-assessment of the quality of infant-toddler centres and pre-primary schools (Pastori, Morgandi, and Ripamonti 2020) developed and tested during the second project through a research-training (2018) on the quality of ECEC service. 78 Pedagogical Coordinators plus four central coordinators were involved in the participatory construction of the tool for the observation and improvement of educational quality.

An in-depth description of all the research-intervention projects developed at a city level is included in the Special Issue, METIS (Premoli and Zaninelli 2020).

Zero to six (*Zerosei*) in the face of the COVID emergency: experiences, research and pedagogical reflections

Source: Falcinelli and Mignosi 2022 (see *References* for full details)

Aims and background: The pandemic has had a significant impact on ECEC services in a number of ways; however, despite the incredible difficulties and challenges caused by the pandemic, in



most cases, Educators/Teachers and Pedagogical Coordinators in Italy acted as key responders in the crisis and “not only displayed a noteworthy capacity to keep the education system alive (an ability that has also been defined as “collective agentic action”, Campbell 2020, 340)” (cited in Bove 2021) but also tried to transform these challenges into resources or lessons learned.

Procedure: In so doing, they reacted as a community of practice, developing small research projects (mainly qualitative or small-scale quantitative studies) in their settings, often in collaboration with local universities, with the goal of creatively re-inventing their practices to face the many challenges introduced by the pandemic. Examples of these studies are included in the book edited by Falcinelli and Mignosi (2022); they are local, mostly qualitative or quantitative studies using small samples and mainly concern issues emerging from the field, for example:

- New forms of parent–teacher communication, introducing flexible modes of remaining in touch despite the challenges involved in educating children remotely
- Innovative solutions for caring relationships with children despite the limitations due to the pandemic (LEAD – Educational Connections at Distance)
- Children’s experience during the lockdown
- New media education
- Inclusion.

In addition, the book includes a national survey regarding the experience of the re-opening of educational services 0–3 years and pre-primary schools after the pandemic emergency promoted by the *Gruppo Nazionale Nidi e Infanzia* (Garaffo, Lichene, Molina, Porcheddu, Sannipoli, and Savio 2022).

Findings: Among the main findings are the following:

- The great commitment of all ECEC professionals in coping with the emergencies by guaranteeing children the possibility to continue attending the ECEC services
- Increased attention to everyday routines such as sleep and meals
- Different ways of dealing with the sizes of groups of children.

10. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

As in other European countries, a growing consensus in Italy on the importance of investing in the professionalism of ECEC staff and general acknowledgement of their role in supporting the quality of ECEC is emerging among ECEC professionals, policy makers and researchers (Bove et al. 2018; Peleman *et al.* 2018; Vandenbroeck, Urban, and Peeters 2016).

As we have shown, following Law Decree 65/2017, a major process of change is underway to implement an integrated system of education from birth to 6 years of age. The changes concern aspects of governance, educational quality and continuity, and workforce qualification. This process is posing some major workforce challenges that need to be faced in the near future and from a long-term perspective:

- (1) Developing a more coherent and unified approach to the initial professional education of Educators (0–3) and Pre-primary School Teachers (3–6).** The IPE for educators of 0–3 year-olds has been upgraded from the secondary to the tertiary level through the introduction of a Bachelor’s Degree in Educational Science with a specific pathway in Early Childhood Education. Although this was an important step in qualifying the professionalism of the

ECEC workforce, a major gap remains regarding the qualification required for Pre-primary Teachers, that is, the 5-year degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria*), the curriculum of which emphasises a narrow subject-oriented approach to teaching over a broader pedagogical approach to learning and which makes graduates eligible to teach in both primary and pre-primary settings (see *Chapter 4*).

The current splitting of the two IPE routes risks enlarging the traditional gap between the professional profiles, identities and perceived and actual professional status of Educators 0–3 and Teachers 3–6. It might also hinder the development of a shared educational approach that could ensure a smooth transition and continuity in children’s experience in ECEC from birth to 6 years of age (Balduzzi, Restiglian, and Zaninelli 2021).

The professional profile of ECEC core practitioners working in the Integrated System 0–6 emerging from the Pedagogical Guidelines of the Integrated System 0–6 (*Linee Pedagogiche per il Sistema Integrato Zerosei*) recently approved by the Ministry of Education (Ministerial Decree 334/2021) provides a reference for reconsidering the IPE pathways of both university courses.

- (2) Developing a common framework for CPD for ECEC professionals of both sectors (0–3 and 3–6) and ensuring equal CPD opportunities across the country through close cooperation between the state, regional governments and local authorities.** In the coming years, systematic and sustainable joint CPD initiatives including both 0–3 Educators and 3–6 Teachers working in ECEC provision managed by different providers need to be implemented to promote a common culture and a shared holistic approach to early childhood education between ECEC professionals, support practices of horizontal and vertical continuity, and provide coherent responses to the new needs of children and their families in contemporary society by ensuring quality and inclusive education (Child Guarantee 2022). These initiatives might be driven by the CPD best practices and organisational expertise developed in municipal ECEC provision over the years (collegial work, peer learning exchanges, the use of observation and documentation, analysis of practices and collaboration with universities and research centres). However, this perspective needs to reconsider the conditions, procedures and content of CPD provided to teachers of state-maintained pre-primary schools (currently the choice of CPD activity is left to the individual teacher) to increase their participation in systematic shared CPD activities and promote opportunities for dialogue and cooperation between different pre-primary schools (see *Chapter 6*).
- (3) Reviewing the employment agreements applied by ECEC providers** to reduce inequality between ECEC professionals’ salaries and working conditions (stability, contact and non-contact time, paid hours specifically allocated to CPD activities, etc.). Often such differences tend to have negative effects on their professional development and living conditions, as well as on the quality of ECEC provision (Mari 2021). It should be noted that over the years, the difference in salaries between the public and the private sectors have led many local authorities to outsource the management of educational services 0–3 years rather than opening and managing services directly, with the consequent risks of lowering the educational quality of ECEC provision and weakening their governance of the local ECEC system as a whole (see *Chapter 7*).
- (4) Institutionalising and spreading a system of territorial pedagogical coordination (*coordinamenti pedagogici territoriali*) across the country.** As presented in *Chapter 2.4*, the crucial role of Pedagogical Coordinators and local pedagogical coordination (a stable network of Pedagogical Coordinators at regional, district or municipal level) in promoting and supporting the quality of ECEC services, as well as the whole ECEC local system, is widely recognised. However, to date, Pedagogical Coordinators are mostly present in the central



northern areas, where local authorities have traditionally invested in quality ECEC provision (such as in the Umbria, Emilia Romagna, Tuscany and Lombardy regions), and this important role is not yet defined in state-maintained pre-primary schools. Law Decree 65/2017 (see *Chapter 8*) states that establishing and expanding territorial pedagogical coordination – a team that will include Pedagogical Coordinators of municipal and private educational services 0–3 years and municipal, private and state-maintained pre-primary schools working in the same area – are strategic actions for implementing and qualifying the Integrated System 0–6 across the country. Some major challenges need to be faced: defining the competence profile of Pedagogical Coordinators; providing pre-service and in-service training in order to support their qualification; promoting their dissemination in local ECEC systems across the country; and identifying ECEC professionals who may function as coordinators in state-maintained pre-primary schools.

References

- Balduzzi, L., E. Restiglian, and F. L. Zaninelli. 2021. “Le sfide della formazione iniziale di educatori e insegnanti” [The challenges of initial training for educators and teachers]. In *Per i prossimi 40 anni* [For the next 40 years], edited by Gruppo Nazionale Nidi e Infanzia, 25-37. Città di Castello, PG: Zero-seiup.
- Baudelot, O., S. Rayna, S. Mayer, and T. Musatti. 2003. “A comparative analysis of the function of coordination of early childhood education and care in France and Italy”. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 11(2): 105-116.
- Berg, B. L., and H. Lune. 2012. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, 8th Edition. Pearson.
- Bondioli, A., and M. Ferrari (Eds). 2004. *Verso un modello di valutazione formativa* [Towards a model of formative evaluation]. Bergamo: Junior.
- Bondioli, A., D. Savio, and B. Gobetto. 2018. *TRA 0-6. Uno strumento per riflettere sul percorso educativo 0–6* [Between 0 and 6. A tool for reflecting on 0-6 educational pathway]. Bergamo: Zeroseiup.
- Bove, C. 2007. “Parent involvement”. In *Early Childhood Education: An International Encyclopedia*, edited by R. S. New and M. Cochran, vol. 4, 1141–1145. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Bove, C. 2020. *Capirsi non è ovvio. Dialogo tra insegnanti e genitori in contesti educativi interculturali* [Understanding each other is not obvious. Dialogue between teachers and parents in intercultural educational contexts]. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Bove, C. 2021. “Rethinking professional roles in contemporary ECEC by reducing the gap between health and education. Lessons learned from the pandemic”. In *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference of the Journal Scuola Democratica Reinventing Education*, edited by A.A.V.V., 427-440. Rome: Associazione “Per scuola democratica”.
- Bove, C., S. Mantovani, B. Jensen, M. Karwowska-Struczyk, and O. Wysłowska. 2016. *CARE – Curriculum quality analysis and impact review of European ECEC: D3.3. Report on “good practice” case studies of professional development in three countries*. Report, 248 p. https://ecec-care.org/fileadmin/careproject/Publications/reports/CARE_WP3_D3_3_Report_on_good_practice_case_studies_of_professional_development_in_three_countries.pdf
- Bove, C., B. Jensen, O. Wysłowska, R. L. Iannone, S. Mantovani, and M. Karwowska-Struczyk. 2018. “How does innovative continuous professional development (CPD) operate in the ECEC sector? Insights from a cross-analysis of cases in Denmark, Italy and Poland”. *European Journal of Education*, 53(1): 34-45, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12262>
- Campioni, L. 2022. “Realizzare il sistema integrato 0-6: quali le funzioni del coordinatore pedagogico?” [Implementing the integrated system 0-6: what are the functions of the pedagogical coordinator?].

- In *Coordinatore e coordinamento territoriale. Realizzare il sistema integrato 0-6* [Coordinator and local coordination. Implementing the integrated system 0-6], edited by M. A. Nunnari, 15-20. Città di Castello, PG: Zeroseiup.
- Catarsi, E. 2010. *Coordinamento pedagogico e servizi per l'infanzia* [Pedagogical coordination and ECEC services]. Azzano San Paolo: Edizioni Junior.
- Cecotti, M., and M. Sannipoli. 2021. "A proposito di tirocini 0-3 anni. La realizzazione del percorso di tirocinio" [About internship 0–3 years. The implementation of internship programme]. *Zeroseiup*, 1, 32-36.
- Cerini, G., and M. Spinosi (Eds). 2021. *Le linee pedagogiche per il sistema integrato 0-6. Documenti, commenti, normativa* [Pedagogical guidelines for the integrated system 0–6. Documents, comments, regulations]. Napoli: Tecnodid.
- Child Guarantee. 2022. National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Child Guarantee (NAP). Italy report April. <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1428&langId=en>
- Comune di Milano. 2016. *Linee di Indirizzo Pedagogiche dei Servizi all'infanzia 0-6* [Pedagogical Guidelines for ECEC services 0–6]. <https://www.comune.milano.it/aree-tematiche/scuola/educatori/linee-di-indirizzo-pedagogiche-dei-servizi-infanzia-0-6>
- [DCM] Deliberation of Council of Ministers 706/2022. *Piano di azione nazionale pluriennale per il Sistema integrato di educazione e istruzione dalla nascita ai sei anni per il quinquennio 2021-2025* [National Multiannual Plan for the implementation of the integrated system of upbringing and education from birth to six years, 2021-2025]. <https://www.miur.gov.it/web/guest/-/piano-di-azione-nazionale-pluriennale-2021-2025>
- Di Giandomenico, I., and M. Picchio. 2022. "Children's transition between home and ECEC services: Innovative practices during the COVID-19 pandemic". In *Early Childhood Education and Care in a Global Pandemic: How the Sector Responded, Spoke Back and Generated Knowledge*, edited by L. Henderson, H. Ebrahim and K. Bussey, 44-56. London and New York: Routledge.
- European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice. 2021. *Teachers' and School Heads' Salaries and Allowances in Europe – 2019/20. Eurydice Facts and Figures*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. https://eurydice.indire.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Teacher_salaries_2019_20_report.pdf
- Falcinelli, F., and E. Mignosi (Eds.). 2022. *Lo zerosei di fronte all'emergenza Covid. Esperienze, ricerche e riflessioni pedagogiche* [0-6 system in the face of the Covid emergency. Experiences, Research and Pedagogical Reflections]. Città di Castello: Zeroseiup.
- Garaffo, T., C. Lichene, P. Molina, A. Porcheddu, M. Sannipoli, and D. Savio. 2022. "Fotografie della riapertura: i primi risultati dell'indagine promossa dal Gruppo Nazionale Nidi e Infanzia" [Pictures of reopening: the first results of the survey promoted by the Gruppo Nazionale Nidi e Infanzia]. In *Lo zerosei di fronte all'emergenza COVID: esperienze e riflessioni pedagogiche*, [0-6 system in the face of the Covid emergency. Experiences, Research and Pedagogical Reflections], edited by F. Falcinelli, and E. Mignosi, 137-155. Città di Castello: Zeroseiup.
- Garbarini, A., N. Terzi, and L. Campioni. 2020. "A proposito di tirocini 0-3 anni. Passato, presente e futuro nella voce di Enti gestori e Università. La proposta del Gruppo Nazionale Nidi e Infanzia" [About internship 0–3 years. Past, present and future by the voices of ECEC providers and universities. Proposal of the Gruppo Nazionale Nidi e Infanzia]. *Zeroseiup*, 4, 35- 36.
- Giudici, C., and M. Castagnetti. 2016. "The Italian case - Reggio Emilia: a model of diffused pedagogy". In *CARE. Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European ECEC. Report on "good" practice case studies of professional development in three countries*, edited by C. Bove, S. Mantovani, B. Jensen, M. Karwowska-Struczyk, and O. Wysłowska, 93-140. <http://ecec-care.org/resources/publications/>
- Gruppo CRC. 2021. "Le risorse per il sistema di educazione e di istruzione dalla nascita ai sei anni" [Resources for the integrated system of education from birth to six years]. In *Le risorse dedicate all'infanzia e all'adolescenza in Italia* [The resources allocated to childhood and adolescence in Italy], edited by Gruppo CRC, 49-71.
- Gruppo CRC. 2022. "Educazione, gioco e attività culturali" [Education, play and cultural activities]. In *12° Rapporto di aggiornamento sul monitoraggio della convenzione sui diritti dell'infanzia e dell'adolescenza in Italia* [12th Update Report on the Monitoring of the Convention on the Rights of Child and Adolescent in Italy], edited by Gruppo CRC, 125-150.
- INVALSI. 2016. *Rapporto di Autovalutazione Scuola dell'Infanzia – Fascicolo completo* [Pre-primary school Self-evaluation Report. Complete Dossier].



- https://www.invalsi.it/invalsi/documenti/Rav_Infanzia.pdf
- Lave, J., and E. Wenger. 1991. *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lazzari, A., M. Picchio, and T. Musatti. 2013. "Sustaining ECEC quality through continuing professional development: systemic approaches to practitioners' professionalisation in the Italian context". *Early Years*, 33 (2): 2–13.
- Lazzari, A., G. Pastori, C. Sità, and P. Sorzio. 2020. *Prospettive educative per i servizi zero-sei. Itinerari di teoria, pratica e ricerca* [Educational perspectives for ECEC services. Theory, practice and research]. Parma: Edizioni Junior.
- Lazzari, A., L. Balduzzi, and M. Serapioni. 2022a. *InTrans. Policy Baseline Report – Italy (Emilia Romagna Region)*. Erasmus+, KA3 project. <https://www.issa.nl/sites/default/files/u794/InTrans%20Policy%20Baseline%20Report%20-%20ITALY.pdf>
- Lazzari, A., L. Balduzzi, and M. Serapioni. 2022b. "Il coordinamento pedagogico territoriale come snodo del sistema integrato 0-6: il percorso di formazione in servizio realizzato nel progetto InTRANS" [Local pedagogical coordination as a hinge of the integrated system 0–6: in-service training programme carried out within InTRANS project]. In *Coordinatore e coordinamento territoriale. Realizzare il sistema integrato 0-6* [Coordinator and local coordination. Implementing the integrated 0-6 system], edited by M.A. Nunnari, 63-82. Trento: Zeroseiup.
- Lichene, C., P. Molina, E. Restiglian, and M. Sannipoli. 2020. "Il percorso di indagine" [The investigation process]. *Zeroseiup*, 4, 37-39.
- Malavasi, L. 2019. *Educazione naturale nei servizi e nelle scuole dell'infanzia* [(Nature education in educational services 0–3 and pre-primary schools]. Azzano San Paolo, BG: Edizioni Junior.
- Mantovani, S. 2007. "Early Childhood Education in Italy". In *Early childhood education: An international encyclopedia*, edited by R.S. New and M. Cochran, vol. 4, 1110-1115. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Mantovani, S. 2010. "Italy". In *Professionals in early childhood education and care systems. European profiles and perspectives*, edited by P. Oberhuemer, I. Schreyer, M. J. Neuman, 239-259. Farmington Hills, MI: Barbara Budrich Publishers.
- Mantovani, S., C. Bove, S. Cescato, and P. Braga, C. 2016. "Milan: Fostering innovation in a big city: continuity and change". In *CARE. Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European ECEC. Report on "good" practice case studies of professional development in three countries*, edited by C. Bove, S. Mantovani, B. Jensen, M. Karwowska-Strucznyk, and O. Wysłowska, 141-209. <http://ecec-care.org/resources/publications/>
- Mantovani, S., C. Bove, P. Ferri, P. Manzoni, A. Cesa Bianchi, and M. Picca. 2021. "Children 'under lockdown': voices, experiences, and resources during and after the COVID-19 emergency. Insights from a survey with children and families in the Lombardy region of Italy". *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 29(1), 35-50.
- Mantovani, S., and S. Premoli, 2020. "Le nuove linee di orientamento pedagogiche per i servizi educativi 0-6 anni del Comune di Milano: significati, processo elaborativo e principi fondamentali" [The new guidelines for ECEC services 0-6 in the Municipality of Milan]. In *Infanzie e servizi educativi a Milano: Percorsi di ricerca intervento con bambine bambini, e adulti per innovare il sistema 06 comunale* [Early childhood and educational services in Milan: intervention-research with children and adults to innovate the 0-6 municipal educational system], edited by S. Premoli, F.L Zaninelli, 36-51. Bari: Progedit. <http://www.metisjournal.it/index.php/metis/issue/view/21/Infanzie%20e%20servizi%20educativi%20a%20Milano>.
- Marchesi, F., and P. Vassuri. 2020. "Le voci dell'esperienza di tirocinio nei nidi di infanzia" [Voices from the internship's experiences in infant-toddler centres]. *Zeroseiup*, 5, 44-49.
- Mari, A. 2016. "Orientamenti europei sui servizi educativi per l'infanzia" [European Guidelines on ECEC services]. In *Gestire il sistema educativo territoriale integrato* [Managing the integrated territorial education system], edited by Segreteria del Gruppo Nazionale Nidi e Infanzia, 9-16. San Paolo d'Argon, BG: Zeroseiup.
- Mari, M. 2021. "Contrattazione collettiva, condizioni di lavoro e profili professionali nello zerosei: un problema da dipanare" [Employment agreements, working conditions and professional profiles in 0-6 sector: a problem to be solved]. In *Per i prossimi 40 anni* [For the next 40 years], edited by Gruppo Nazionale Nidi e Infanzia, 138-141. Città di Castello, PG: Zeroseiup.
- Ministero dell'Istruzione – Ministry of Education. 2021. *Formazione docenti in servizio a.s. 2020-2021. Assegnazione delle risorse finanziarie e progettazione delle iniziative formative* [Teachers' in-service



- training - 2020-2021. Allocation of financial resources and planning of in-service training initiatives]. (Official Register U. 0037638.30-11-2021).
<https://www.miur.gov.it/-/formazione-docenti-in-servizio-a-s-2020-2021-assegnazione-delle-risorse-finanziarie-e-progettazione-delle-iniziativa-formative-nota-prot-aoodgper-n-37>
- Ministero dell'Istruzione – Ministry of Education. 2022a. *Portale Unico dei Dati della Scuola. Esplora i dati* [Single Portal of School Data. Explore the data.] <https://dati.istruzione.it/opendata/esploraidati/>
- Ministero dell'Istruzione – Ministry of Education. 2022b. *Interventi strategici per la realizzazione del Sistema integrato zerosei - Indicazioni operative per la formazione del personale* [Strategic actions for implementing the Integrated System 0–6 – Guidelines for the in-service training of ECEC personnel] (Official Register U. 0000078.20-01-2022). <https://www.miur.gov.it/-/interventi-strategici-per-la-realizzazione-del-sistema-integrato-zerosei-indicazioni-operative-per-formazione-del-personale>
- [MIUR] Ministry of Education, University and Research. 2018a. *Attuazione articolo 14, decreto legislativo n. 65/2017. Titoli di accesso alla professione di educatore dei servizi educativi per l'infanzia* [Implementation of article 14 of Law Decree 65/2017. Qualifications for access to the profession of educator in educational services 0-3]. (Official Register U. 0014176.08-08-2018).
<https://www.miur.gov.it/web/guest/-/titoli-di-accesso-alla-professione-di-educatore-dei-servizi-educativi-per-infanzia-dlgs-n-65-2017>
- [MIUR] Ministry of Education, University and Research. 2018b. *Indicazioni nazionali e nuovi scenari* [National guidelines and new scenarios].
<https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/0/Indicazioni+nazionali+e+nuovi+scenari/>
- Murphy, R., R. Ridgway, M. Cuneen, and M. Horgan. 2016. "Reggio Emilia". In *The Routledge International Handbook of Philosophies and Theories of Early Childhood Education and Care*, edited by T. David, K. Gooch, and S. Powell, 306-315. Oxon, UK: Routledge.
- Musatti, T., S. Mayer, and P.M. Braga. 2003. "La gestione comunale e il coordinamento dei servizi per l'infanzia in Italia" [Municipal management and coordination of ECEC services in Italy]. In *Il coordinamento dei servizi educativi per l'infanzia: una funzione emergente in Italia e in Europa* [The coordination of ECEC services: an emerging function in Italy and Europe], edited by T. Musatti and S. Mayer, 17-66. Azzano San Paolo: Edizioni Junior.
- Musatti, T., M. Picchio, and S. Mayer. 2016. "Continuous Professional Support and Quality. The case of Pistoia". In *Pathways to Professionalism in Early Childhood Education and Care*, edited by M. Vandenberg, M. Urban, and J. Peeters, 43–56. London: Routledge.
- National collective contract AGIDAE – Associazione Gestori Istituti Dipendenti dall'Autorità Ecclesiastica [Association of Managers of Institutions dependent on Ecclesiastical Authority]. 2022. *Contratto collettivo nazionale di lavoro. Verbale di accordo sul CCNL Scuola 2021–2023* [Minutes of the Agreement of the CCNL Schools 2021-2023]. <https://m.flcgil.it/files/pdf/20220208/ccnl-agidae-2021-2023-del-8-febbraio-2022.pdf>
- National collective contract ANINSEI – Associazione Nazionale Istituti non Statali di Educazione e di Istruzione [National Association of non-State education institutions]. 2022. *Contratto collettivo nazionale di lavoro ANINESEI per il personale della scuola non statale 2021–2023*.
<https://m.flcgil.it/files/pdf/20220214/contratto-collettivo-nazionale-di-lavoro-aninsei-2021-2023-del-14-febbraio-2022.pdf>
- National collective contract FISM – Federazione Italiana Scuole Materne [Italian Federation of Pre-primary Schools]. 2016. *CCNI. FISM. 1.1.2016 – 31.12.2018*. <http://fism.net/ccnl-fism-1-1-2016-31-12-2018/>
- National collective contract relating to the staff of the local functions sector, three-year period 2016-2018, 18 May 2018. *Contratto collettivo nazionale di Lavoro relativo al personale del comparto funzioni locali, triennio 2016-2018, 18 maggio 2018*. https://www.aranagenzia.it/attachments/article/9014/CCNL%20Funzioni%20Locali%202021%20maggio%202018_Definitivo_Sito.pdf
- National collective contract for staff in the education and research sector, three-year period 2016-2018, 19 April 2018. *Contratto collettivo nazionale di lavoro relativo al personale del comparto istruzione e ricerca triennio 2016-2018, 19 aprile 2018*. https://www.aranagenzia.it/attachments/article/8944/CCNL_%20ISTR%20RICERCA%20SIGLATO%2019_4_2018%20DEF_PUBB_2.pdf
- New, R. S., B. Mallory, and S. Mantovani. 2001. "Adult Relations in Italian Early Care and Education". *Innovations*, 8 (2): 8-13.
- Nigris, E. 2007. "Teacher in training". In *Early childhood education: An international Encyclopedia*, edited by R. S. New, and M. Cochran, vol. 4, 1145–1150. Westport, CT: Praeger.

- Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M. J. Neuman. 2010. *Professionals in early childhood education and care systems: European profiles and perspectives*. Opladen and Farmington Hills, MI: Barbara Budrich.
- Pastori, G., T. Morgandi, and D. Ripamonti. 2020. "Osservare e pensare la qualità. La costruzione partecipata di uno strumento di autovalutazione per i nidi e le scuole dell'infanzia del Comune di Milano" [Observing and thinking quality. Participatory construction of a self-assessment tool of infant-toddlers centres and pre-primary schools of the municipality of Milan] *METIS*: 102-123.
- Peleman, B., A. Lazzari, I. Budginaitė, H. Siarova, H. Hauari, J. Peeters, and C. Cameron. 2018. "Continuous Professional Development and ECEC quality: Findings from a European systematic literature review". *European Journal of Education*, 53(1): 9-22.
- Picchio, M., and I. Di Giandomenico. 2021. "Contesti e processi di collegialità per affrontare il cambiamento" [Contexts and processes of collegiality for dealing with changes]. In *Ripartire dall'infanzia. Esperienze e riflessioni nei servizi 0-6 in una prospettiva post-pandemica* [Starting back from childhood. Experiences and reflections in ECEC services 0-6 in a post-pandemic perspective], edited by L. Balduzzi and A. Lazzari, 79-97. Parma: Edizioni Junior.
- Picchio, M., I. Di Giandomenico, and T. Musatti. 2014. "The use of documentation in a participatory system of evaluation". *Early Years. An International Research Journal*, 34 (2): 133-145.
- Picchio, M., D. Giovannini, S. Mayer, and T. Musatti. 2012. "Documentation and analysis of children's experience: an ongoing collegial activity for early childhood professionals". *Early Years: An international Journal of Research and Development*, 32 (2): 59-70.
- Premoli, S., and F. L. Zaninelli, (eds.). 2020. *Infanzie e servizi educative a Milano: Percorsi di ricerca intervento con bambine bambini, e adulti per innovare il sistema 06 comunale* [Early Childhood and educational services in Milan: intervention-research with children and adults to innovate the 0-6 municipal educational system]. Bari: Progedit. <http://www.metisjournal.it/index.php/metis/issue/view/21/Infanzie%20e%20servizi%20educativi%20a%20Milano>.
- Restiglian, E. 2021. "Passano gli anni e qualcosa è cambiato. La formazione iniziale degli Educatori nei servizi per l'infanzia" [Years go by and something changed. The initial training of ECEC educators]. *Zeroseiup*, 4, 33-39.
- Rinaldi, C. 2001. "Documentation and assessment". In *Making learning visible: Children as individual and group learners*, edited by Project Zero, and Reggio Children, 78-89. Reggio Emilia: Reggio Children.
- Rinaldi, C. 2006. *In dialogue with Reggio Emilia. Listening, researching and learning*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Schenetti, M., and E. Guerra. 2018. "Emotion Map Making. Discovering Teachers' Relationships with Nature". *Asia-pacific journal of research in early childhood education*, 12 (2): 31-56.
- Silva, C. 2019. "The professionalization of early childhood education, care educators and pedagogical coordinators: a key issue of adult education". In *Form@re - Open Journal Per La Formazione in Rete*, 19(2), 377-392. <https://doi.org/10.13128/formare-25249>.
- Vandenbroeck, M., M. Urban, and J. Peeters (Eds.). 2016. *Pathways to Professionalism in Early Childhood Education and Care*. New York: Routledge.
- Yin, R. K. 2009. *Case Study Research: Design and Method (4th edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Laws and Decrees in chronological order

- Law 104/1992. *Legge-quadro per l'assistenza, l'integrazione sociale e i diritti delle persone handicappate* [Framework law for assistance, social integration and rights of disabled persons]. (Government Gazette 39/17.01.1992). <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1992/02/17/092G0108/sg>
- Law 285/1997. *Disposizioni per la promozione di diritti e di opportunità per l'infanzia e l'adolescenza* (GU Serie Generale n.207 del 05-09-1997) [Provisions for the promotion of rights and opportunities for children and adolescents]. <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1997/09/05/097G0322/sg>
- [DM] Decreto Ministeriale. Decree of the Ministry of Education, University and Research 249/2010 *Definizione della disciplina dei requisiti e delle modalità della formazione iniziale degli insegnanti della scuola dell'infanzia, della scuola primaria e della scuola secondaria di primo e secondo grado* [Defini-

- tion of requirements and modalities of the initial education for pre-primary, primary, lower and upper secondary school teachers]. http://www.miur.it/documenti/universita/offerta_formativa/formazione_iniziale_insegnanti_corsi_uni/dm_10_092010_n.249.pdf
- [DM] Decreto Ministeriale. Decree of the Minister of Education, University and Research 178/2011. *Disciplina per la determinazione dei contingenti del personale della scuola necessario per lo svolgimento dei compiti tutoriali* [Definition of quotas of the school staff for performing tutorial tasks]. (Government Gazette 117/21.05.2012). https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/atto/serie_generale/carica-DettaglioAtto/originario?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=2012-05-21&atto.codiceRedazionale=12A05643&elenco30giorni=false
- [DM] Decreto Ministeriale. Decree of the Ministry of Education, University and Research 254/2012. *Indicazioni nazionali per il curricolo della scuola dell'infanzia e del primo ciclo d'istruzione* [National Curricular Guidelines for pre-primary and primary cycle of education]. https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/51310/DM+254_2012.pdf/1f967360-0ca6-48fb-95e9-c15d49f18831?version=1.0&t=1480418494
- [DM] Decreto Ministeriale. Decree of the Ministry of Education, University and Research 850/2015. *Periodo di prova e formazione personale docente* [Trial and training period for newly recruited teachers]. <https://www.miur.gov.it/formazione-in-ingresso-neoassunti>
- Law 107/2015. *Riforma del sistema nazionale di istruzione e formazione e delega per il riordino delle disposizioni legislative vigenti* [Reform of the national education and training system and mandate to reorganise the existing legislation]. (GU Serie Generale n.162, 15 July 2015). <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2015/07/15/15G00122/sg>
- [DM] Decreto Ministeriale. Decree of the Ministry of Education, University and Research 797/2016. *Piano nazionale di formazione del personale docente per il triennio 2016-2019 - Piano per la formazione dei docenti 2016-2019 (Allegato)* [National plan for in-service training of teachers in the years 2016-2019 - Teacher training plan 2016-2019 (Annex)]. https://www.istruzione.it/allegati/2016/Piano_Formazione_3ott.pdf
- Law Decree 65/2017. *Istituzione del Sistema integrato di educazione e istruzione dalla nascita sino ai 6 anni* [Institution of an integrated system of education from birth to six years]. (GU n.112 del 16-05-2017 - Suppl. Ordinario n. 23). www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:decreto.legislativo:2017-04-13;65!vig=
- Law 205/2017. Bilancio di previsione dello Stato per l'anno finanziario 2018 e bilancio pluriennale per il triennio 2018-2020 [National estimated budget for the financial year 2018 and multiannual budget for the three-year period 2018-2020] (GU Serie Generale n.302 del 29-12-2017 - Suppl. Ordinario n. 62). <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2017/12/29/17G00222/sg>
- [DM] Decreto Ministeriale – Decree of the Ministry of Education, University and Research 378/2018. *Titoli di accesso alla professione di educatore dei servizi educativi per l'infanzia e attuazione articolo 14 del decreto legislativo n. 65/2017* [Qualifications for accessing the profession of educator in ECEC services and implementation of article 14 of Law Decree 65/2017]. <https://www.miur.gov.it/web/guest/-/titoli-di-accesso-alla-professione-di-educatore-dei-servizi-educativi-per-infanzia-dlgs-n-65-2017>
- [DM] Decreto Ministeriale – Decree of the Ministry of Education, University and Research 956/2019. *Linee operative per la formazione dei dirigenti scolastici neoassunti a.s. 2019-2020* [Operational guidelines for the training of newly recruited school heads - year 2019-2020]. <https://www.miur.gov.it/web/guest/-/linee-operative-per-la-formazione-dei-dirigenti-scolastici-neo-assunti-a-s-2019-2020-assegnazione-delle-risorse-finanziarie-e-progettazione-delle-inizi>
- [DR] Delibera Regionale Lazio – Decree of Lazio Region, 61/2021. *Legge regionale 5 agosto 2020, n.7: Disposizioni relative al sistema integrato di educazione e istruzione per l'infanzia. Istituzione del Coordinatore Pedagogico e dei Coordinamenti Pedagogici Territoriali* [Regional Law 5 August 2020, n.7: Dispositions concerning the integrated system of education for early childhood. Institution of the Pedagogical Coordinator and Territorial Pedagogical Coordination]. <https://www.regione.lazio.it/sites/default/files/documentazione/POS-DGR-61-09-02-2021.pdf>
- [DM] Decreto Ministeriale – Decree of the Ministry of Education 334/2021. *Linee pedagogiche per il sistema integrato zerosei* [Pedagogical guidelines for the Integrated system 0-6]. <https://www.istruzione.it/sistema-integrato-06/linee-pedagogiche.html>
- [DM] Decreto Ministeriale – Decree of the Ministry of Education 43/2022. *Orientamenti nazionali per i servizi educativi per l'infanzia* [National guidelines for educational services 0–3 years]. <https://www.istruzione.it/sistema-integrato-06/orientamenti-nazionali.html>

