

GREECE

Early Childhood Education and Care ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report author

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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-eqf>

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 author

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1. ECEC governance in Greece

A split system

In Greece, early childhood education and care is not organised as a unified system. There are two main types of institution that serve the needs of children from 6 months up to 6 years: on the one hand, nurseries, extended-age nurseries and childcare centres for the younger children; on the other hand, kindergartens or pre-primary units in schools for 4 and 5 year-old children. Nurseries are attended by children aged 6 months to 2½ years, sometimes up to 4 years, while childcare centres admit children from 2½ years up to enrolment in compulsory education at age 4. In certain cases, infants as young as 2 months old may be admitted to a nursery if the board of directors of the setting or, in the case of municipal services, the municipal council, agrees to this (MD/2808 / 1997; Government Gazette 4249 / 05-12-2017).

At the local level, both public and private (MD D22 / 11828 / 293/2017) childcare centres fall under the jurisdiction of local government. At the national level, public childcare settings come under the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior (Law 2880/2001; Law 3801/2009) and private settings under the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MD C2b 1570/1999). Kindergartens come under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and are part of the primary education system. There are also private kindergartens which come under the supervision of the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs 2022). Attendance is obligatory for 4 and 5 year-olds (Law 4521/2018).

2. Who belongs to the early year’s workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

Table 1 shows ECEC staff working in direct contact with children in centre-based settings and also categorises the core professionals (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 at end of this chapter).

Table 1
Greece: ECEC staff in centre-based settings

Job title	Main ECEC workplace 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
Kindergarten Teacher <i>Nipiagogos</i> Profile:	<i>Nipiagogeio</i>	Core practitioner with group responsibility	4–5 years	University degree (4 years) awarded by the School of Education Early Childhood Department



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
Pre-primary Education Professional	Kindergarten (public, private) 4–5 years ¹ May also work in public and private childcare centres with 4–5 year-olds	Kindergarten principal <i>Proistamenos/Proistameni</i>		ECTS credits: 240 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2011: 6
Nursery and Childcare Teacher <i>Vrefonipiokomos</i> <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional	<i>Vrefikos stathmos</i> Nursery Mainly from 6 months (in specific cases from 2 months) up to 2½ years <i>Vrefonipiakos stathmos</i> Extended-age nursery 6 months (in specific cases from 2 months) up to 4 years <i>Pedikos stathmos</i> Childcare centre 2½–3 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility Centre head <i>Diefthin-tis/Diefthintri a</i>	2 months-3 years	4-year degree at University of Applied Sciences, awarded by Department of Early Childhood Care and Education (formerly Technological Education Institute (TEI) until reform in 2019) ECTS credits: 240 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2011: 6
Nursery and Childcare Teaching Assistant <i>Voithos vrefonipiokomou</i>	<i>Vrefikos stathmos</i> Nursery Mainly from 6 months (in specific cases from 2 months) up to 2½ years <i>Vrefonipiakos stathmos</i> Extended-age nursery 6 months (in specific cases from	Qualified co-worker	2/6 months–3 years	Certificate/Diploma as Nursery/Childcare Teaching Assistant (3 years) ECTS credits: n/a ² EQF level: 4/5 ISCED 2011: 3/4

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 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 Greece the corresponding formats are **0–3** and **4–5** years.

² Not applicable

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
	2 months) up to 4 years <i>Pedikos stathmos</i> Childcare centre 2½–3 years May also work as a self-employed family day carer (also in: maternity clinics, summer camps, family planning centres)			

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

Kindergarten settings 4–5 years

In public kindergartens, fully qualified Kindergarten Teachers may be appointed to the post of Kindergarten Principal, based on certain criteria and subject to an evaluation process (Law 4327/2015). In order to apply for a position as head of a kindergarten, a teacher must have reached a certain point on the salary scale (in Greece, PE60). Kindergarten Principals are granted a position allowance. There are no required training programmes either before or after taking up their appointment to this position and their continuing professional and educational development is not mandatory.

The specific position of Kindergarten Principals depends on the size of the setting. Kindergartens with one to three groups or classes have their own Principal. The head of kindergartens/pre-primary units with four or more classes is the Primary School Director. Management staff are appointed for a four-year term.

Kindergarten Principals and School Directors are recruited through an announcement on the website of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs or the Regional Primary Education Directorate at least three months before the end of term. In the case of larger kindergartens

applicants must have had at least twelve years of professional experience, in the case of smaller kindergartens at least eight years. They must also possess a Level A certification for Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Decisions about the placement of Kindergarten Principals and School Directors are made by the Regional Director of Education on the advice of a local selection board. Exceptions may be made to the requirements concerning the length of service or the ICT certification if no other suitable candidates are available.

The selection criteria include the candidate's scientific-educational background and training, administrative and teaching experience as well as their contribution to the field and personal qualities (Sakellariou, Strati, and Anagnostopoulou 2018). This latter criterion is assessed orally in an interview with the selection board. Both the candidate's abilities as well as personal qualities exhibited during the kindergarten's daily routine, e.g. ethos, integrity, sense of justice, democratic behaviour, professional development and consistency, are evaluated. Required competences include, indicatively, the ability to communicate and collaborate; to undertake initiatives and to support problem solving, especially with respect to teaching; administrative, organisational and operational issues and the ability to create an appropriate and inspiring environment for the kindergarten staff. Also taken into consideration the points awarded from the relevant Regional Primary Education Service Council, as well as other supportive information such as: studies in a different field; training and retraining; organisation of educational conferences, seminars and training programmes, including participation as group rapporteur; being a member of a scientific team or a trainer; published and research work; initiatives in education; carrying out educational programmes and implementing innovations; administrative or instructional experience; participation in councils, committees or work groups; social and union action; participation in administrative bodies of scientific and educational organisations or in local participation bodies and official awards (Doliopoulou 2018). The candidates are evaluated based on the points they are awarded according to the above criteria.

Kindergarten Principals and School Directors have a dual role of teaching and administrative duties (Law 1566/1985), without these duties being described in detail. They are not only teachers with full responsibility for a class of children, but also managers and supervisors of the kindergarten unit with considerable administrative tasks; there is no kind of secretarial support.

Kindergarten Heads are responsible for the planning, organisation, management and supervision of the setting. In general, Kindergarten Teachers are not strongly motivated to take on this position. This is mainly due to the large workload of bureaucratic administration in parallel with the work in the classroom and across kindergarten classes (Government Gazette 1340/2002). Overtime compensation is not provided, neither for Kindergarten Principals nor for teachers. A reduction of total contact hours is only awarded to School Directors; the allowance granted to Kindergarten Principals does not compensate for this wide range of required duties.

The position involves guiding the kindergarten community to set high goals and ensuring the conditions for achieving them under democratic working conditions. Tasks include guiding and assisting particularly younger teachers in their work, undertaking educational and pedagogical initiatives and acting as a role model. Furthermore, the Kindergarten Principal is responsible for ensuring that the workplace is a place for professional development in administrative, pedagogical and scientific matters. In general, in the larger kindergartens, where a reduction of teaching hours for management purposes is more likely, leadership duties tend to be primarily administrative rather than pedagogical (Sakellariou, Strati, and Anagnostopoulou 2018).



Nurseries/childcare centres

Childcare centres and nurseries fall under the jurisdiction of local authorities. They operate as legal entities, based on the "Standard Regulations for the Operation of Municipal Childcare Centres and Nurseries", the provisions of which constitute the framework for the operation of ECEC settings. A decision of the municipal councils determines these Regulations, which constitutes minimum operating conditions of municipal nurseries (Law 4368/2016). For Childcare Centres and Nurseries, standard operating regulations come under decision No. 16065 of the Ministers of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralisation - Health and Welfare (Government Gazette 497 / 22.4.2002 and the Government Gazette 4249 / 5.12.2017).

The administrative management structure of the public and municipal childcare centres and nurseries is as follows:

- Director of the childcare centres in the municipality
- Director of each childcare centre and nursery
- Deputy director and
- Head of each group unit.

The administrative work of childcare settings is performed by the person in charge of the centre, who is appointed by the Head of the municipal department and with the consent of (a) the Directorate of childcare settings in the specific municipality and (b) the Chairman of the municipal council.

The work schedule is eight hours and is adjusted according to the needs of the childcare centre by the Directorate. The person in charge is usually from among the Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional staff, but it could be any municipal employee. For this reason, the working hours vary. If the person in charge is an Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional and acts as a Director as well as teaching, the work schedule is set at six hours.

The manager of each childcare setting conducts the administrative work of the setting (correspondence, implementation of circulars, operating regulations, etc.) and informs the staff about any changes, as well as the parents/guardians. Also, once a month the manager discusses and informs the staff about general issues related to the childcare setting. Another task is to oversee the supply of materials for the administrative and pedagogical activities, as well as the preparation of meals for the children. The manager also informs the municipality's legal entity of any technical problems (MD 41087, 2017).

For each privately run (for-profit and non-profit) **childcare unit**, the person in charge is required to have a degree awarded by a

- Specialist University Department of Early Childhood Education or a Pedagogical Department of Primary Education
- Specialist University of Applied Sciences Department of Early Learning and Care, Social Work or Home Economics.

For the **nursery unit** Director is required to have a degree awarded by a specialist department at a University of Applied Sciences (Early Childhood Education and Care, Obstetrics) or by a Higher School of Midwifery or equivalent in Greece or abroad (Law 3801/2009).

It is possible that in nursery and childcare centres which come under the responsibility of the municipalities and are governed by an internal regulation of the board of directors that no centre leaders will be appointed. Due to the varying internal regulations, there is no uniform operating procedure throughout the country.



2.3 Centre-based posts of responsibility

In Greek **kindergartens** there are no designated centre-based posts of responsibility. Regular teaching staff are responsible for specific tasks which may arise. These may include guiding the internships of students from abroad, taking on a mentoring role for students during their practicum, or informing parents about the kindergarten programme. For most administrative and operational issues, the Kindergarten Supervisor or the School Director is responsible.

At a more general level, there is a provision for someone to be responsible for managing violence within schools, for civil protection in cases of critical situations, such as floods, earthquakes, etc. where all school teachers take on specific roles (such as pharmacy manager). Also, due to the pandemic and within the framework of the health protocols that are observed in the schools, there is a person responsible for COVID-19 within each kindergarten unit. There is no extra pay for these roles.

In the case of **nurseries and childcare centres**, there is no legal framework for assigning centre-based posts of responsibility.

2.4 Co-ordinating and supervisory staff

Kindergarten units 4–5 years

School Counsellors (formerly known as **Educational Project Coordinators**) are assigned to teachers in the kindergarten sector. The selection is made by a five-member regional council (one regional director, three faculty members, one director of primary education). Each Educational Project Coordinator has the scientific and pedagogical responsibility for the issues relating to all school units located in the Regional Centre of Educational Planning (Law 4823/2021).

Although the duties, responsibilities and tasks of School Counsellors are wide-ranging and supportive (see below), for kindergartens the number of such Counsellors is insufficient. The settings for which they are responsible may be spread over two prefectures, making cooperation and communication and supporting them difficult. Implementing the position of School Counsellors in recent years has highlighted the complexity of these structures as well as the cumbersome procedures. In contrast, for primary schools, there may be several School Counsellors even in the same prefecture, meaning they can share the school units with each other, something that facilitates their work.

School Counsellors are selected from teachers of the relevant branches with at least fifteen years of educational service and who also have knowledge of a foreign language to at least the B2 level of proficiency. Duties and responsibilities of School Counsellors are the pedagogical and scientific guidance of teachers and special education teachers and auxiliary personnel. These include training, the development of innovative educational initiatives, as well as the evaluation of the teachers and special education staff. Duties also include participation in the process of collective planning and self-evaluation of the work of the kindergarten/school unit and the relevant support structures.

In particular, the tasks of School Counsellors are to monitor and support teaching and educational needs, to monitor and support school laboratories and libraries and their utilisation, to initiate subject-specific improvements, to ensure the quality of the educational work and the overall smooth operation of the kindergarten/school unit. This includes cooperating with the teaching and special education staff of the school units for which they are responsible, their directors and supervisors and the parents' and guardians' associations on all matters concerning the effective operation of the school units (Law 4823/2021).



Pedagogical coordinators in the childcare sector

There is no provision for pedagogical coordinators to work with nursery and childcare centres. For any problems that may arise, the employees address these to the centre manager in the legal entity of the municipality.

2.5 Specialist support staff

Kindergarten units 4–5 years

Within the regular classes in a kindergarten unit, in addition to the Kindergarten Teachers there may also be a Nurse, a Psychologist and a Social Worker from the Committee for Diagnostic Educational Evaluation and Support assigned to each group of schools (Law 4115/2013) in order to support children with special needs or children with health problems such as diabetes. Each school unit belongs to such a committee (MD 17812 / C6 / 2014). Since the school year 2021/22, English language teachers are employed for two hours per week in each kindergarten class. Also, in cases of children with disabilities or special educational needs attending a regular kindergarten class, provision is made for their support by a Kindergarten Teacher specialising in special education, both within and parallel to the kindergarten teacher.

Law 4547/2018 ensures the right of *all* children, including SEND children, to education and establishes Schools of Educational Support Networks), which consist of School Units of Special Education and Educational Centres across the entire education system.

Diagnostic, evaluative and supportive bodies that investigate and ascertain the special educational needs of children with disabilities and special educational needs, are the Centres for Interdisciplinary Assessment, Counselling and Support, the Special Diagnostic Evaluation Committee and Education Medical-Pedagogical Centres of other ministries.

Regarding special education and training units, apart from the Special Educators, additional services are provided by specialist support staff including: School Nurses, Occupational Therapists, Speech Therapists, Physiotherapists, Psychologists, Social Workers, Professional Counsellors, sign language of deaf students, specialists in the orientation, mobility and daily living skills of blind students (Law 2817/2000; Law 3699/2008).

Nurseries/childcare centres

For the childcare centres and nurseries, special support staff are provided. These may be a Social Worker, who contributes to the prevention or treatment of problems of the children in each group and their families if requested or if considered necessary. Social Workers may carry out research in collaboration with the pedagogical staff, with whom they are in constant contact, while also collaborating with the Paediatrician of the childcare centres and nurseries. A Psychologist provides counselling services for the psychological support of children and parents in close cooperation with the Paediatrician, Social Worker and pedagogical staff. They also support the pedagogical staff in improving their work through lectures, discussions and special meetings. The Paediatrician visits each childcare centre and nursery at least once a week, examines and monitors the children's health and development, noting observations on the individual card of each child. Paediatricians are also responsible for advising on general health and hygiene measures in the settings. In each setting there are basic medicinal and first aid resources. In the case of an emergency, the Paediatrician is expected to be at the centre as soon as possible.

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

Kindergarten units 4–5 years

The Hellenic Statistical Authority publishes annual statistics on the workforce of public and private kindergartens in Greece. The data for the public schools are taken from the MySchool platform of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, which is constantly updated. This platform collects data on schools related to staff, infrastructure and timetables. Data collection for private schools is compiled through printed questionnaires.

The statistical unit for Primary Education aims at compiling statistics on an annual basis regarding the number of school units and number of teaching staff in Kindertartens and Primary Schools. These surveys are conducted on an annual basis in all Member States of the European Union, using common standards and methods. The legal framework governing investigations is Regulation 452/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council and the implementing Commission Regulation 912/2013. The reference unit is the school unit of education (kindergarten and primary school).

Table 2a

Greece: Structural composition of ECEC workforce in the education sector (4–5 years), 2019-2020

Staff categories	Year / proportion of workforce
Staff with a pre-primary and primary education higher education teaching degree	All core pedagogues employed in kindertartens have at least a four-year higher education (university) degree. 5.97% of staff in public kindertartens and 1.58% of staff in private kindertartens have postgraduate or other higher education studies. In the case of public sector teaching staff: 0.44% hold a doctoral degree 5.11% a postgraduate diploma and 0.41% another higher education degree
Staff with a specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary, post-secondary)	Not applicable
Unqualified staff	Not applicable
Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists) who work on site on a regular basis	Not applicable in regular kindertartens. Such services are available only in special education settings.
Male kindergarten teachers	Public sector: 1.23% Private sector: No statistics available
Staff with a minority ethnic background	No national statistics available

Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority 2019

Nurseries/childcare centres

There are no such data for childcare centres and nurseries. There is a provision by the Statistical Authority to collect data and relevant forms are provided on its website. However, these are not completed. It should be noted that it is the responsibility of the municipalities to submit these data to the Statistical Authority.



Table 2b

Greece: Structural composition of ECEC workforce – Childcare sector (0–3 years)

Staff categories	Year / proportion of workforce
Staff with a specialist three-year (or longer) early years higher education degree	There are no national statistics available. However, key professionals have a specialist four-year degree from the Early Years Learning and Care Department of a University of Applied Sciences/Higher Education Institution
Staff with a specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	No national statistics available
Staff with a specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary)	No national statistics available
Non-qualified or minimally qualified staff	No national statistics available
Specialist support staff (e.gg speech therapists) who work on site on a regular basis	No national statistics available
Male practitioners	No national statistics available
Staff with a minority ethnic background	No national statistics available

4. Initial professional education (IPE)

4.1 Initial qualifying routes (higher education and vocational)

According to the National Agency for Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (NACQVG), the Greek National Qualifications Framework (NQF) corresponds with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in the following way:

The degrees of Kindergarten Teachers and Nursery and Childcare Teachers are classified at EQF level 6. The vocational award of Nursery and Childcare Assistants is classified at level 5 or at level 4, depending on whether they graduated from a post-secondary Vocational Training Institution or from an upper secondary Vocational High School.

In terms of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), the degrees of Kindergarten Teachers and Nursery and Childcare Teachers are likewise classified at level 6, while the Nursery and Childcare Assistants' vocational qualification is classified at level 4 if they graduated from a Vocational Training Institution and at level 3 if they graduated from Vocational High School (NACQVG 2022).

The initial professional education routes of Kindergarten Teachers, Nursery and Childcare Teachers and Nursery and Childcare Assistants are briefly outlined in the following tables.

Table 3a

Greece: Kindergarten Teacher

Job title in Greek: <i>Nipiagogos</i> Profile: Pre-primary Education Professional
Entry requirements: Higher school leaving certificate (<i>lykeio</i>); national entrance examination (<i>genikes exetaseis</i>) for university candidates (General Panhellenic Examination)
Professional studies: Four years at university (School of Education, Department of Early Childhood Education), specialising in pre-primary education

Job title in Greek: <i>Nipiagogos</i> Profile: Pre-primary Education Professional
Award: University degree in Early Childhood Education (there are no Bachelor degrees in Greece) ECTS credits: 240 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2011: 6 Main ECEC workplace: Kindergarten (4–5 years)

The qualification requirement for work as a Kindergarten Teacher in both public and private kindergartens is a degree from one of the nine Greek University Departments of Early Childhood Education. To be accepted for a degree course, students must have completed their high school diploma and have gained the required grade in the General Panhellenic Examination (held annually in June). Each student is required to complete eight semesters (four years) of coursework and to accumulate 240 ECTS credits. A full academic year corresponds to 60 credits and a full semester to 30 credits. The ECTS credits correspond to the workload that has been determined by each university for each course in order to be considered acquired knowledge. The University degree corresponds internationally to EQF level 6 and ISCED level 6.

Each university department develops its own curriculum. This includes compulsory courses, optional compulsory courses and also elective courses. Course content is compiled by a committee of teaching and research staff, put forward for approval to the General Assembly of the Department and the Dean of Faculty, and finally for approval by the Dean of the University. Learning goals and competences are defined for the overall curriculum and for each course unit (seminar, project, workplace-based learning etc.). The credits and level of skills correspond to international standards (Sakellariou 2010; Doliopoulou 2018).

Although the ratio of supply and demand in the field of public education is considered discouraging, a graduate of the Department of Early Childhood Education has opportunities to work in other areas. Specifically, graduates can also work as scientific/research staff or as a provider of private ECEC settings.

There is also the possibility of studying for other degrees, such as second degree, postgraduate or doctoral diploma, seminars, specialisations, foreign languages, giving them the opportunity to develop vertically in the administrative hierarchy.

Table 3b:

Greece: Nursery and Childcare Teacher

Job title in Greek: <i>Vrefonipiokomos</i> Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional
Entry requirements: Higher school leaving certificate (<i>lykeio</i>) or vocational certificate; entry waiver defined by the respective University of Applied Sciences Professional studies: Four years at a University of Applied Sciences (School of Social Sciences, Department of Early Years Learning and Care), specialising in early childhood education and care Award: Degree / University of Applied Sciences (there are no Bachelor degrees in Greece) ECTS credits: 240 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2011: 6 Main ECEC workplace: Nursery/extended-age nursery (0–2 or 0–3 years) or childcare centre (0–3 years or 2½–3 years)



The qualification requirement for work as a Nursery and Childcare Teacher in both public and private ECEC settings is the completion of a degree from one of the three Departments of Early Years Learning and Care at a University of Applied Sciences. Entry requirements are a secondary education (Lyceum) leaving certificate and the required grade in the General Panhellenic Examination. Admission to these departments may also occur through qualifying examinations of candidates for holders of other university degrees. The duration of studies is eight semesters. During the first seven, students attend theoretical courses and participate in workshops. During the final (eighth) semester of studies, there is the possibility of preparing a thesis or two additional compulsory courses. The completion of an internship is a necessary condition for obtaining the degree, whereas the dissertation is optional.

Educational activities correspond to 30 credits per semester and 240 ECTS credits overall. The ECTS credits correspond to the workload that has been determined by each university for each course in order to be considered acquired knowledge. Learning outcomes and skills provided correspond to the requirements of the National and European Qualifications Frameworks. The University of Applied Sciences degree is placed at EQF level 6 and ISCED level 6.

The curricula of the Departments for Early Years Learning and Care are compiled by a special committee of faculty set up by the head of the department. The courses of study include compulsory, optional compulsory and also elective classes. Student education focuses on acquiring tools that will support the understanding of the importance of the child's early experiences and the application of developmentally appropriate practices and multidisciplinary approaches during the early stages of human development, from birth to compulsory education.

Graduates are qualified to work either in municipal or private day nurseries and childcare centres or to be self-employed as home-based carers of children aged from a few months old up to their enrolment in primary school. Furthermore, they may set up and operate nursery or childcare centres, as well as practise any other professional activity associated with their educational qualifications, including the entire range of administrative posts related to their field of expertise. They may work in all countries of the European Union and are accepted by universities in Greece, Europe and the USA for postgraduate and doctoral studies (MD 119730/2021).

Table 3c

Greece: Nursery and Childcare Assistant

Job title in Greek: Voithos Vrefonipiokomou
<p>Entry requirements: Completion of first year of Lyceum (high school)</p> <p><i>Route 1</i></p> <p>Professional studies: Three years at Vocational High School, starting from the second year of High School and specialising in early childhood education and care</p> <p>Award: Certificate as Nursery and Childcare Assistant</p> <p>ECTS credits: not applicable</p> <p>EQF level: 4</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 3</p> <p>ECEC workplaces: Nursery/extended-age nursery (0–2 years or 0–3 years) or childcare centre (0–3 or 2½–3 years)</p> <p><i>Route 2</i></p> <p>Professional studies: 2 years at a Vocational Training Institute, following successful completion of the certificate course above. Specialisation in early childhood education and care</p> <p>Award: Diploma as Nursery and Childcare Assistant</p>



Job title in Greek: *Voithos Vrefonipiokomou*

ECTS credits: not applicable

EQF level: 5 after the successful participation in exams conducted by National Agency for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance.

ISCED 2011: 5

ECEC workplaces: Nursery/extended-age nursery (0–2 years or 0–3 years) or childcare centre (0–3 or 2½–3 years)

Route 1: Vocational High Schools (*Epagelmatiko Lykeio*) offer a specialisation to become a Nursery and Childcare Assistant which starts during the second year of high school. The duration of studies is three years (Law 3475/2006). The graduate of a Vocational High School receives two awards: (1) a certificate as a "Nursery and Childcare Teaching Assistant" and (2) a Higher School Leaving Certificate/Diploma. The specialised qualification (certificate) awarded corresponds to Level 4 of the National and European Qualifications Frameworks. The certificate also corresponds to a general school leaving certificate for admission to tertiary education through the process of the General Panhellenic Examination.

The Nursery and Childcare Assistant can work as an auxiliary member of staff in nurseries and childcare centres, in maternity clinics, camps, family planning centres, or as a freelancer taking care of infants and children at home.

Route 2: Those with a Vocational High School award are authorised to enrol in a **Vocational Training Institute** (*Institouto Epagelmatikis Katartisis*) in a course related to the specialism of their leaving certificate. The diploma they receive falls under EQF level 5 and ISCED level 4. The study programme is determined either at the central level by legislation for Vocational High Schools or by the Vocational Training Institute itself and is accredited by a central authority such as the National Agency for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance.

Studies at the Vocational Training Institute are for five semesters in total, divided into four semesters of theoretical and laboratory training (1,200 hours) and one semester of Internship or Apprenticeship (960 hours). The graduates of the specialty "Nursery and Childcare Assistant" after the successful completion of their studies receive a Vocational Training Certificate. Following successful participation in exams conducted by National Agency for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance they are awarded a level 5 Diploma of Vocational Specialty Education and Training.

Graduates can work in public and private childcare centres, settings related to the care and education of children up to 4 years of age, Ministry of Housing and Social Insurance, municipal and community nurseries and childcare centres and a variety of further qualification-relevant options.

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

Kindergarten Teacher

Competences: Upon completion of the Department's Undergraduate Studies Programme graduates are expected to:

- Have acquired a strong background in the Sciences of Education and Education as well as excellent knowledge in specific fields of these
- Substantiate their opinions with data by developing arguments and causal reasoning



- Have acquired primary experiences
- Be familiar with reflective and metacognitive processes
- Have acquired critical, creative thinking, solving skills problem solving, decision making, while developing their imagination and their empathy to be able to respond to children's special needs
- Have developed the ability to continue their studies further with a large degree of autonomy as required in responsible research and innovation
- Have acquired a balanced development in the fields of the social sciences and humanities for their role as responsible educators and citizens
- Act in the context of the educational community for its goals of sustainable development (environment, climate change, place, time, social exclusions, inequalities, state participation, health and well-being) (University of Ioannina 2022, a).

Curriculum: Prospective Kindergarten Teachers must complete their four-year initial professional education at one of the nine Greek University Departments of Early Childhood Education. The curriculum is organised in four modules: Pedagogy; Social Sciences in Education; Positive Sciences and their Teaching; Speech, Art and Education, which correspond to the learning areas of the kindergarten curriculum. Learning activities include attending lectures, seminars, assignments, internships, personal study and exams. 60 ECTS credits correspond to the workload of a full year of formal full-time learning (academic year) and related learning outcomes. In most cases, the student workload ranges from 1,500 to 1,800 hours for an academic year, where one credit equals 25 to 30 working hours (University of Ioannina 2022a).

Pedagogical-didactic approaches: The courses include lectures, tutorial exercises, seminars or workshops or a combination of these. In the lectures an area of the subject matter and the related concerns are supervised. The tutoring exercises aim at providing or consolidating basic or general knowledge and are carried out, as far as possible, in small groups. In the seminars, the students research a special topic with the help of the relevant scientific literature. In the laboratories, applications of theoretical teaching are made (University of Ioannina 2022a).

While the above refers to the University of Ioannina Department Early Childhood Education, a similar structure is followed by other Departments across Greece.

The Department of Early Childhood Education in Ioannina has the following laboratories that enhance the scientific and professional dimension of the student: laboratory of special and therapeutic education; psychology; pedagogy; new technologies and distance education; human rights and interpersonal relationships in education; teaching and teaching sustainability; intercultural education and diversity pedagogy.

In addition to undergraduate studies, students can participate in training activities, in summer and winter schools, in international student mobility partnerships (ERASMUS+ Programmes), in research programmes, in conferences and workshops and in internships. By participating in all of the above, studies and activities within the university community, students essentially build the profile of a modern educator who can teach in the classroom or continue at a research level. The degree awarded by Departments of Early Childhood Education is uniform. However, the modules may differ from university to university.

Some examples of units in the four modules are summarised below:

- **Pedagogy:** Organising and implementing play, rhythm and movement in kindergarten: planning and evaluation of activities; introduction to intercultural education and the teaching of Greek as a second language; preschool pedagogy; modern teaching approaches in preschool education; teaching Greek as an additional language in modern (primary) school education;



- language education in kindergarten and communication approach; philosophical and pedagogical anthropology, modern preschool education programmes
- **Social Sciences:** motivational psychology; psychophysiology I; cognitive psychology I; clinical psychology; the dynamics of family systems through children's drawing; counselling in special education; elements of paediatrics; sociology of Greek education; adult psychology
- **Positive Sciences and their Teaching:** Introduction to informatics and education – new technologies; introduction to computational statistics; basic mathematical concepts in kindergarten; teaching of mathematics II; teaching the concepts of natural sciences
- **Speech, Art and Education:** Modern Greek poetry; theory of literature 1; the international fairy tale; dramatisation and theatrical expression; rhythm and movement; themes of philosophy of education; creative music education; painting; Greek language and education; special themes of visual arts – applications; drama
- Foreign languages: English, French, German
- Internship issues (University of Ioannina 2022a).

Nursery and Childcare Teacher

Competences: Upon completion of their studies in the Department of Early Learning and Care, graduates are expected to:

- Possess a complete and scientifically proven body of knowledge in the professional field in which they will work
- Recognize the evolutionary and dynamic characteristics of education and care in infancy,
- understand relevant concepts, methods and practical applications
- Critically understand theories, basic principles and methodology related to education and care in early childhood
- Deepen, explore and enrich their knowledge
- Utilise their knowledge in order to respond in a flexible, creative and, above all, scientific way in the context of pre-school education and the needs arising from the special circumstances
- Use scientific sources and manage the data resulting from them in a responsible and critical way
- Design, manage and implement programme interventions aimed at the holistic development and well-being of children and their families
- Apply knowledge, skills and abilities in an environment of constant development and change with professionalism and responsibility
- Adopt a teacher-researcher identity that will allow them to reflect on their role and practice and to utilise data and current developments in order to solve problems, evolve and improve.

Curriculum: The curriculum courses include: Introduction to the sciences of education; education and infant care; Greek language, culture and history; introduction to psychology; health education; music pedagogy; preschool pedagogy; evolutionary psychology; art education and creativity; educational games; nutrition and child development; research methodology in educational sciences; first aid for infants and children; teaching – methodological approaches and preschool education programmes; introduction to children's literature; occupational ethics; innovation; neurodevelopmental disorders; developmental paediatrics; intercultural education - teaching approaches in early childhood; developmental psychopathology; critical review Semi-



nar on developmental frameworks in preschool and early childhood models; counselling psychology; theatrical play and dramatisation; environmental education; preschool management; employment relations; ICT utilisation in preschool education; puppetry; pedagogical resources and applications in early childhood; special education; critical Reflection and personal development.

Pedagogic-didactic approaches: In the majority of courses the teachers use classic teaching methods, such as lectures through PowerPoint presentations and other audio-visual media, case / example analysis, individual or group work, presentation of students' work in the group, use of the internet. The use of new technologies is particularly important, where students have access to teaching materials through online learning platforms such as Moodle (University of Ioannina 2022 d).

Nursery and Childcare Assistant

In order to obtain a vocational award as a Nursery and Childcare Assistant, two paths can be followed, through studies either at a Vocational High School or at a Vocational Training Institute.

Upper secondary route (Vocational High School)

Competence requirements: The graduate of the upper secondary vocational specialist track acquires knowledge and skills for working under the supervision of the Nursery and Childcare Teacher. These include: providing care to the young child; supporting children's comprehensive physical, mental, verbal and motor development through appropriate pedagogical methods; caring for children with special needs; implementing accident prevention measures in any area related to the children's activities; providing first aid and acting appropriately in emergencies; filling in the child's personal card and keeping records; giving advice to the child's parents or guardians.

Specific personal qualities and abilities include love for children, creativity and imagination, patience, responsibility, consistency, ability to follow instructions, composure in difficult situations.

Curriculum: Curricular studies include: elements of anatomy-physiology; hygiene; creative activities in preschool, infant and toddler education; music and movement; principles of general and developmental psychology; adult psychology; pedagogical environment of the nursery/childcare centre.

The curriculum includes common courses for all students, general education courses, orientation courses and elective courses.

Post-secondary route (Vocational Training Institute)

Competence specifications: The graduates of the Vocational Training Institute course of studies: are skilled in the use of materials, techniques and musical instruments in work with infants and toddlers. They are also able to:

- Organise a nursery/childcare centre based on pedagogical principles
- Assist the Nursery and Childcare Teacher in the implementation of appropriate pedagogical intervention in cases of diagnosis of disability, learning difficulties or other adjustment difficulties in supervised infants and toddlers
- Organise and manage space and time appropriately, taking into account the needs and capabilities of infants and children
- Organise and implement activities related to the verbal integration of all infants in the group



- Make puppets and puppet-shadow theatre sets and prepare theatrical performances for infants
- Inform parents daily about the childrens' time at the centre and any specific observations (physical, organic, emotional) made during the day
- Provide first aid in emergencies.

Curriculum: Curricular fields include: pedagogical – kindergarten; general, developmental and social psychology; infancy; paediatrics; hygiene; dietetics; play; music-rhythmic; children's art; puppetry-theatrical play; painting; environmental education; kindergarten Organisation; and interpersonal relationships and communication.

Pedagogical approaches: All known teaching methods are applied, while special emphasis is given to the application of participatory teaching methods and active teaching techniques according to the principles of adult education. Course content may also include: Lectures held by specialist professionals in the field, educational visits to companies and thematic exhibitions.

4.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

Kindergarten Teachers

There is no other way to enter the profession of Kindergarten Teacher other than through graduation from one of the nine University Departments of Early Childhood Education (see *Chapter 4.1*). However, holders of a degree as Kindergarten Teacher are authorised to work in other institutions and services besides public and private kindergartens. In terms of their career development, this concerns administrative positions in the school unit –as heads, principals, deputy principals or as a director of primary education at the school and regional level, or as school counsellors, provided they have the appropriate formal qualifications for each position.

Some examples of potential additional fields of employment for Kindergarten Teachers are: as an owner/service provider of a private kindergarten; in services, organisations and institutions concerned with education; as scientific staff in the production of pedagogical material and children's books; as scientific staff in public and private sector services; in children's creativity centres, summer camps, children's museums, playgrounds.

Kindergarten Teachers with postgraduate training in special education can teach in special education schools.

Teachers in service have the opportunity to be seconded for a period of one year and in positions outside the school upon request.

These secondments concern positions in services and bodies of the public sector such as the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, in the offices of the Regional Directorates of Education and the Directorates of Primary Education, as Coordinators of Refugee Education, in Universities, in Higher Education, in the Supreme Ecclesiastical Academies, in independent and decentralised services, supervised legal entities under public law and legal entities under private law such as: Academy of Athens, National Library of Greece, Public Libraries, National Agency for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance, Public Vocational Training Institute, Greek Language Centre, Inter-Orthodox Centre of the Church of Greece, Holy Synod of the Church of Greece, Holy Archdioceses in the Holy See.

Nursery and Childcare Teachers

There are no flexible pathways for becoming a Nursery and Childcare Teacher. The only legitimate entry to the profession is the qualification routes described in *Chapter 4.1*.

Nursery and Childcare Teachers may also be employed as (Doliopoulou 2018):



- Managers of research, organisation and operation of nursery and childcare centres
- Supervisors/principals of operational units (directorates, departments, offices) in nursery and childcare centres of local government bodies
- Teacher educators in secondary and tertiary education responsible for the theoretical and practical teaching in early childhood education course classes (Presidential Decree 523/24.12.91).

For staff of municipal nursery and childcare centres, the posting of an employee of one Local Government Body (LGB) to another LGB is possible subsequent to a petition filed by the employee and subsequent to the approval of the originating body with a decision of the person responsible for appointments of the receiving LGB. The posting is for two years and may be extended for one extra year (Law 4257/2014).

The formal opportunities for moving up the system are available only at the vertical level (i.e. starting with a specialist first degree and moving on to take a Master's degree or a Doctoral degree). There are no specifically horizontal qualifying options for side entries by career changers with non-specialist qualifications, i.e. no specifically defined career pathways with diverse entry points at different levels and a clear progression route (Law 3801/2009; Law 4674/2020).

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

Kindergarten Teacher

Internships are included in the programmes of all the University Departments of Early Childhood Education in Greece, although their duration and point of time during the study programme may vary. This chapter describes how the University of Ioannina provides guided workplace experience.

Internships ("Practical Exercises") are carried out in kindergartens (in this case of the Prefecture of Ioannina) designated by the Ministry Education. For the academic year 2019/20, the certified kindergartens were defined according to the Ministerial Decision of the Ministry of Education sub no. 27/14599/D1 (Government Gazette Issue B' 398/13.02.2019). Following a request from the Ioannina Department of Early Childhood Education, Refugee Reception and Education Centres (DYEP) were included in the 2019 list of certified kindergartens in order to sensitise students to issues of intercultural education during their studies.

The internship of students in kindergartens is mandatory for obtaining the degree and takes place throughout the study period from the third semester onwards, with the guidance and co-operation of teachers seconded to the University Department. At the same time, specialised Practical Exercises are carried out in the context of other mandatory courses. The supervisory responsibility for the internship lies with the teacher of the relevant course, after preparation in the context of laboratory courses.

The internship aims to prepare professional teachers who can independently and responsibly undertake pedagogical work in early childhood education. The purpose of the internship is not limited to gaining practical experience in the workplace, but is associated with the use of theoretical knowledge and the development of research and thinking skills, seeking a critical approach to both personal teaching practice and the ways other teachers work. Its main goal is to connect theoretical knowledge with educational practice and to enhance the participation of



the students in activities that will help them to become reflective professional teachers. More specifically, the objectives of the internship are for students to be able to:

- Link academic theory with educational practice by relating their teaching options to the various theories and using them to analyse and understand the context in which they are going to intervene in the educational act itself
- Familiarise themselves with procedures for exploring the context of the classroom and the wider context before making decisions about the planning, implementation and evaluation of the activities they organise
- Be involved in self-assessment processes and to realise that this reflective practice contributes to a teacher's professional development.

Specialised Practical Exercises are carried out in the following mandatory and optional courses:

Systematic Observation in Kindergarten is an optional course taught in the 3rd semester of studies (6 ECTS). This particular course includes 4 days of practical training in partner cooperating kindergartens in the Prefecture of Ioannina. Before the start of the internship, the students attend four laboratory courses on systematic observation, its methodology, recording techniques and the axes on which their observations in the kindergartens will be based.

Teaching of Concepts of Natural Sciences, I and II: Practical training is directly linked to the objectives of the courses. These include the recognition of (a) the socio-cultural component of Natural Sciences, (b) the procedures of the scientific method in an organised activity, (c) of teaching objectives in a series of organised activities and (d) dealing with conflicts. In this context, the main objective of the internship is to prepare work plans for micro-teaching and whole class teaching. The internship period lasts two weeks. Course I (6 ECTS) is taught in the 5th semester and Course II (8 ECTS) during the 6th semester.

Teaching Mathematics II. This is a mandatory elective course taught in the 6th semester (8 ECTS). It aims to develop the management of knowledge, abilities and skills for mathematics in the kindergarten curriculum. More specifically, key goals are for the students to be able to: (a) recognise the mathematical ideas underlying the activities for maths in the kindergarten, (b) evaluate maths activities in terms of their objective, their degree of difficulty, and their teaching management, (c) plan and carry out maths activities in a classroom with specific and worthwhile learning objectives and adjust them to the requirements and needs of the children they address, (d) to analyse and evaluate the children's action and their own when carrying out a mathematical activity. The internship period lasts two weeks and the course is taught in the 6th semester (8 ECTS).

Information Technology and Education – New Technologies. This is a compulsory course taught in the 6th semester (8 ECTS). Key goals are-(a) to acquire general background knowledge in this area and (b) to develop knowledge, skills and application skills about teaching IT and the new technologies in education, in particular in kindergarten. The objectives of the internship are (a) to utilise knowledge about new technologies (e.g. language programming in educational technology, security issues of the internet and copyright), (b) to utilise new technologies (e.g. educational software, modern online applications) in early childhood education, and (c) to develop teaching abilities and skills about computers in the kindergarten, with modern methods. The internship period lasts two weeks. The course is taught in the 6th semester (8 ECTS).

Teaching Applications II. This is a compulsory course which is taught in the 8th semester (10 ECTS). The internship in the context of this course includes laboratory courses and a training project by the students lasting four weeks in cooperating kindergartens. In particular, objectives of the internship are:

- To approach the educational process as an exploratory procedure



- To understand the classroom as a learning environment
- To plan both short-term and long-term activities
- To choose the appropriate activity for the realisation of specific goals and to experiment with new methods and media
- To develop observation and interpretation skills
- To create an open and flexible learning environment that facilitates the all-round development of children
- To recognise the importance of assessment and make use of appropriate methods, techniques and tools for educational evaluation
- To form their own personal educational theory through action and reflection

The internship of the course **Teaching Applications II** consists of three phases.

During the **first phase**, students participate in laboratory courses at the University by delving into issues related to the collection, analysis and utilisation of information for the design of teaching interventions through observation, recording and reflective practice. At the same time, they plan cross-curricular activities around a topic in pairs, choosing the objectives, the teaching aids, the methods, the content and the process of evaluating the activities. Based on the feedback provided by the teacher and their classmates, they redesign the planned curriculum. During this period, they are placed in cooperating kindergartens and are informed about the internship file that they will have to submit at the end of the semester in order to be evaluated.

In the **second phase**, the students undertake a complete educational project in placement kindergartens. The first of four weeks of the internship is spending in study the context of the classroom by collecting, recording and interpreting data in order to decide on any variations of the educational programme that they have designed and become familiar with the classroom environment. In the following weeks, the students undertake in pairs to carry out all the activities included in the kindergarten schedule during the morning session, such as the reception of children, free play and activities in the learning centres, break, children leaving for home, as well as the organised activities they have planned. The students work in the same classroom with the same group of children but alternate roles so that they take turns in having the main responsibility of the programme while the other observes, records and supports the whole process. At the end of each week, the two collaborating students meet up to, identify and interpret their observations, taking them into account for the planning of next week's programme. During this phase, visits are made to the placement kindergartens by the supervising and collaborating staff at the University in order to support and give feedback to the students and to communicate and cooperate with the teaching staff of the kindergartens.

In the **third phase** after the end of the internship in the cooperating kindergartens, the students present their work at the university and reflect on their teaching interventions. At the same time, they receive feedback from the professor in charge of the specific lesson on the project they presented and are supported in the compilation of the internship portfolio.

The presence of students is mandatory in all activities of the course. During their time in the cooperating kindergartens, the students must adhere to the schedule of the kindergarten, to adapt to the regulations and the specifics of its operation and to cooperate harmoniously with the kindergarten staff. In case they need to be absent for health reasons or for any other serious reason, they should inform the kindergarten teacher and the teacher and after consultation are required to make up for the day / days of their absence. Students who have not fulfilled their obligations have to repeat the course. When they have completed all their obligations (except the submission of their personal file / portfolio), they can be evaluated in the September exam. This is important for working students who do not have the possibility of additional educational



leave. According to the university guide to mandatory practical exercises they can, after presenting a relevant certificate, complete their internship in partner kindergartens in two instead of four weeks (Sakellariou 2010; University of Ioannina 2022b).

Nursery and Childcare Teacher

In Greece, three higher education institutions have a Department of Early Childhood Education and Care. The practicum of six months is mandatory in two of them. At the International Hellenic University (2021) the practicum is awarded 24 ECTS. At the University of West Attica practicum is mandatory (20 ECTS) (University of West Attica n.d.). In the Department of Early Childhood Education and Care at the University of Ioannina (2022c) the practicum of six months is optional. Moreover, students of the ECEC Department at the University of Ioannina – where there are two Departments, a Kindergarten Department and an ECEC Department – are provided with the opportunity to do an optional internship within the programme (ESPA) Enterprise Agreement for the Development Framework 2021-2027, which is the basic strategic plan for the development of the country with the assistance of significant resources from the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) of the European Union.

(ESPA) Enterprise Agreement for the Development Framework funded Internship Programme:

The internship lasts for two months (continuous duration) full time; it takes place in private and public sector institutions and is awarded at least 2 ECTS. It is offered in the final semester of the degree programme as an optional/elective course. It is not taken into account in the calculation of the degree grade. Participation in the programme takes place following an invitation to express interest and selection of students according to criteria set by the Department. Those students who finally complete an internship will receive, together with their degree, a certificate of internship, where the organisation of the internship will be indicated.

Internship outline: During the optional internship the student should be trained in all areas of the service. It is structured in four progressive stages of activities:

- First stage: Duration of one week. The aim is to get acquainted with the infants and to participate in the work of the Nursery and Childcare Teacher: care, nutrition, education (handicrafts, play, etc.).
- Second stage: Duration of two weeks. The student coordinates the programme of the nursery and childcare centre (nutrition, pedagogical occupations of infants) with the participation of the responsible teacher.
- Third stage: Duration of four weeks. The student assumes full responsibility of the nursery under the supervision of the responsible teacher.
- Fourth stage: Duration of one week. Information and training on administrative and management issues (infant registration, correspondence with various services, archiving, cost sharing, etc.).

The working hours of the students coincide throughout the semester with the working hours of the permanent pedagogical staff (University of Ioannina 2022d).

Nursery and Childcare Assistants

Field studies in the post-secondary study route at a Vocational Training Institute

A six-month internship or workplace apprenticeship, lasting 960 hours, is mandatory for students of Vocational Training Institutes (VTI) and is considered a prerequisite for obtaining a Vocational Training Certificate (Government Gazette 1245/2017).

The **Internship** can take place after completion of the first two semesters. The students may carry out the internship in public and private sector bodies and services in accordance with the

relevant legal provisions in force (Law 4186/2013 (A '193)) under the responsibility of the Vocational Training Institute in which they study. The internship period can be continuous or spaced out. The supervision, coordination, quality assurance and evaluation of the internship are carried out under the responsibility of the Director of the Vocational Training Institute or another person designated by him as an Internship Coordinator. Coordinator is responsible for monitoring the presence of the trainees, ensuring the quality of their work environment, the on-site inspection of the company and the maintenance of an individual internship file with the relevant monthly progress reports. The internship, both in private and in public bodies, can be financed from national and / or community resources in accordance with the provisions in force at the time (Government Gazette 1245/2017).

The students of Vocational Training Institutes who have completed at least 120 working days or at least 120 days of insurance as self-employed or self-employed professionals in the specialty they are registered are exempted, if they wish, by filling out a declaration form, from the obligation to attend the semester of internship and they are awarded the certificate of vocational training upon completion of the four semesters of theoretical and laboratory training (Government Gazette 1245/2017).

The **Apprenticeship Programme VTI** at a Vocational Training Institute consists of two sections, one at the VTI and one at the workplace. Graduates of the 4th semester are registered for the programme if they have not completed an internship. The total duration of the Apprenticeship Programme is 960 hours and is divided into 192 hours of training at the VTI and 768 hours of apprenticeship in the workplace. The Apprenticeship Programme VTI is implemented in accordance with the respective current provisions of the VTI Operating Regulations.

The monitoring and coordination of the Apprenticeship Programme in the workplace is the responsibility of the relevant VTI. The evaluation of the learning outcomes of the apprentices is carried out at the VTI and in the workplace.

The purpose of the both the internship and the apprenticeship programmes for prospective Nursery and Childcare Assistants is for the trainees to gain experience in the workplace and to upgrade their professional knowledge, skills and abilities in order to acquire the qualifications with which they will be able to fulfil their professional duties.

In terms of knowledge, with the completion of the Internship or the Apprenticeship the trainee will be able to:

- Describe the purposes of a nursery
- Distinguish the basic principles that govern the profession of Nursery and Childcare Assistant
- Know the daily pedagogical and care programme, depending on the age, interests and needs of children
- Understand the value of a daily pedagogical schedule and a consistent routine in the lives of infants and toddlers
- Recognise cases of children with special needs
- Know in practice the ethics of the profession of Nursery and Childcare Assistant
- Understand the factors that can create obstacles in the developmental process of children
- Understand the cases of children who show particular characteristics and difficulties in their behaviour and know how to manage their difficulties
- Recognise the importance of special education in supporting children with disabilities
- Identify the factors that can contribute to the normal psycho-emotional development of infants and toddlers.

At the skills level the trainee will be able to:

- Familiarise themselves with and adapt to the conditions of the work environment with infants and toddlers
- Explain the role and duties of a Nursery and Childcare Assistant
- Take care of infants and toddlers
- Organise space and time and implement activities, depending on the children's age, needs and interests
- Select and use the psycho-pedagogical material depending on the age and the developmental level of the children
- Provide personal hygiene to infants and toddlers during routine hours
- Take care of the arrangement and hygiene of the space, equipment and materials
- Organise and implement activities based on a topic of choice, which is multifaceted and interdisciplinary
- Plan, implement and evaluate a daily programme
- Address the difficulties and problems that arise during pedagogical practice
- Manage child safety issues and provide first aid in emergencies
- Act based on the basic principles of ethics of the profession
- Enhance knowledge and skills for the care and education of infants and toddlers
- Contribute to the formation of a suitable and safe environment for the smooth psycho-emotional and social development of infants and toddlers
- Work according to the pedagogical principles and the culture of the workplace
- Respect diversity
- Work with responsibility, conscientiousness, consistency, patience and empathy
- Collaborate effectively with the administration, the staff of the nursery/childcare centre and the parents of the children.

Upper secondary study route at a Vocational High School

There is the possibility of optional attendance of an Apprenticeship programme after the completion of studies at the VHS, with the aim of upgrading knowledge, professional skills and abilities which smooth the transition of students from the school unit to the workplace and in real-life professional conditions.

Emphasis is placed on learning outcomes and the implementation of the curriculum focuses on the student-centred approach and collaborative learning and combines pedagogical learning principles with adult education principles (MD F2/181534/D4/2017).

6. Continuing professional development (CPD) of ECEC staff

Kindergarten Teachers

Continuing professional development activities for Kindergarten Teachers are provided within the larger framework of CPD provision for all teachers in the education system. There is no specific CPD framework for teachers working in kindergartens or pre-primary units in schools.



Compulsory or optional? Continuing professional development for Kindergarten Teachers is partly compulsory, partly optional. It is provided in the form of training programmes, which, after their approval by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, are implemented by professional development agencies.

The forms of *compulsory* training are (PD 250/1992 with amendments, PD 101/1994, 145/1997, 45/1999):

Introductory training, lasting at least one hundred teaching hours for newly qualified Kindergarten Teachers who are applying for a post or for newly appointed teachers before taking up their post. This training aims to renew and supplement their theoretical and practical training (in Greece, newly qualified staff often have to wait several years before taking up their first post). A presidential decree, issued on the proposal of the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs, determines the bodies, the duration of the training and any relevant details. During the training, the teachers attend classes in kindergartens where they also teach in parallel with their theoretical training. Those who are invited to the introductory training before their appointment are paid compensation, the amount of which is determined by a joint decision of the Ministers of Education and Religious Affairs and Finance.

Periodic training is offered in two training cycles each academic year lasting up to three months for full-time teachers with a permanent post. It is repeated for teachers every four to six years and aims at informing them about recent research, innovative educational programmes, new teaching and assessment methods and generally enhancing their professional expertise. However, this type of CPD is no longer offered, because it requires the absence of teachers from schools and their replacement, a procedure which is not chosen due to the economic crisis.

Special short-term training programmes of 10 to 100 hours' duration are offered for all serving teachers and up to 200 hours for teachers serving in special education units. These are related to educational reforms and innovations, changes in school curricula, the introduction of new courses, new teaching methods and textbooks.

Teachers serving in public schools with an employment contract under private law for an indefinite period of time and teachers serving in private schools which have been recognised as equal to the public can also participate in this type of training during their working hours.

Additional compulsory forms of CPD can be, for example, training seminars and workshops, decided on by the Education Counsellor (PD 79/2017, Law 4823/2021). These training sessions aim to address issues related to the scientific and pedagogical support of teachers, the implementation of curricula, the planning and evaluation of educational work or the treatment of problems that hinder the proper functioning of settings.

Funding: In the case of compulsory CPD, the employer funds the training. Forms of continuing professional development such as postgraduate or doctoral studies, participation in seminars or conferences are not financed by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and are not supported through paid leave. However, in certain cases teachers may participate in exams, conferences and other training activities while receiving their full salary. These activities usually take place outside of teaching hours. Permission is also provided for the participation in exams (see Law 3528/2007, Law 4210/2013, Law 4590/2019).

Providers of both compulsory and optional continuing professional development courses for teachers can be: (a) the school units, (b) the Regional Education Quality Supervisors; Education Quality Supervisors; Education Consultants; Interdisciplinary Assessment, Counselling and Support Centres; and Education Centres for the Environment and Sustainability, under the coordination of the Regional Education Quality Supervisors; (c) Higher Education Institutions and supervised bodies of the Ministry of Education; (d) teachers' unions through their research centres; (e) international organisations such as OMEP through its Greek branch.

The universities are providers of continuing professional development options through their postgraduate and doctoral programmes and Training and Lifelong Learning Centres, which offer courses for higher education graduates and teachers, including courses in the latest developments in science and technology and in interdisciplinary fields which are currently developing rapidly. They may also offer short- and medium-term specialisation programmes and internships by scientific specialists in specific fields and applications of technology and science which require additional in-depth studies. A further focus includes the development and implementation of continuing vocational training programmes to complement, modernise or upgrade the participants' knowledge, abilities and skills with the aims of integration into the labour market, job security, as well as professional and personal development.

In addition to the above-mentioned providers, the Education Centres for the Environment and Sustainability also have an educational role through their support of schools in matters related to environmental education, with an emphasis on ecology and sustainable development.

CPD offers at the school unit level: On-site professional development through training seminars in the school setting is carried out for at least 15 hours per school year according to decisions made by the Kindergarten Principal or School Head. Topics of the training seminars are based in particular on: (a) the needs of the school unit, (b) the specific CPD provider. The training seminars are conducted outside teaching hours. Teacher participation is optional; participation, however, is taken into account in their individual evaluation. After the completion of each training seminar, the Kindergarten Principal or the Head of the school issues a printed or electronic certificate of attendance and enters the latter in the teacher's electronic service file. A characteristic feature of the 15-hour training is that it is the teachers' responsibility to organize it, to find lecturers and hours outside of working hours, which is a burden on their personal and family time, as well as tiring for them, since it is required to take place during the academic year.

CPD offers at the regional level: The Regional Supervisor organises and implements training programmes or seminars and other CPD activities at the level of the Regional Directorate of Primary and Secondary Education collaborating in particular with: (a) the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP), (b) the Quality Assurance Authority in Primary and Secondary Education, (c) Higher Education Institutions (HEI); (d) research centres/institutes; (e) local self-government organisations; (f) teachers with additional qualifications or experience in relevant issues arising. The Education Counsellors ensure the dissemination and exchange of knowledge and experiences between teachers of the same or different level and of the same or different disciplines in pedagogical and scientific matters.

CPD activities can be organised in September and June each year by the Education Counsellor in collaboration with the Primary Education support structures (PD 79/2017 as amended by Government of Greece 2018).

Further CPD options: Kindergarten Teachers can also participate in the mobility plan of the ERASMUS+ programme of the European Commission. Within this framework they have, for example, the opportunity to spend a period abroad in a similar educational institution, giving them the opportunity to improve their knowledge, professional and language skills, their abilities to get in touch with a new culture and civilisation and to develop a sense of European identity. Some Kindergarten Teachers participate in Erasmus programmes, but not as a part of their initial professional education. They choose this programme for their professional development. Moreover, participation in these programmes is positively graded in terms of career advancement. The number of participants in the programme per year, the length of participation and the number of participating teachers, students and accompanying teachers (who, as mentioned above, must necessarily belong to the school units and pedagogical groups of the programme), are de-



terminated according to the approved programme in which the participation is included. The number of submissions of Erasmus+ programmes by the same school unit depends on the existing human resources and their management capacity and is decided by the Teachers' Association in the context of the strategic planning of the school units in combination with Erasmus+ priorities. The participation of Primary and Secondary education teachers for training, further training, attending seminars and teaching may last up to 14 days, including holidays. The participation of teachers without accompanying students in the context of the preparation of the approved European Programmes in which the school units participate, may not exceed five days, of which three must be working days.

The duration of travel within the framework of the Erasmus+ programmes is approved by the relevant Directorate of Education (MD 25735/H1/20-2-2020).

Each cycle of an eTwinning seminar lasts approximately 6 months (e.g. October 2022 until May 2023). The seminars are not specialised for a specific level of education; they are also used by Kindergarten Teachers (eTwinning Teacher Training Community 2023; Eurydice 2023).

Planning, coordination and supervision of CPD: The Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) is the main body supporting the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs in matters related to the continuing professional development of teachers. It is responsible for the design of training programmes, for the planning of the national CPD strategy and for the certification of CPD providers. The IEP coordinates and monitors the implementation, certification and evaluation processes of the training.

More specifically, one of its scientific departments, the Teacher Training Unit, based on law 4763/2020 (Chapter DG, art. 96):

- Plans the national strategy for teacher training and monitors its implementation
- Cooperates with the Department of Training of Primary and Secondary Education Teachers of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, the other services and bodies of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and other Ministries, as well as other Greek or international organisations for the planning and implementation of action
- Gives an opinion on the allocation of national and Community resources available for teacher training and on teacher training proposals submitted to the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs
- Advises on the certification of training institutions, coordinates and monitors the processes of implementation, certification and evaluation of teacher training
- Implements, in cooperation with the project manager, the criteria for registration of trainers in special registers, based in particular on the suitability and qualifications of the trainers, the subject matter, the objectives and the population to which the training programmes are addressed
- Establishes, maintains and updates the registers of trainers, prepares and implements training programmes and training actions
- Prepares or proposes studies and research on issues related to teacher training
- Organises publicity and dissemination events of the results of training actions and
- Ensures the development and sustainability of training activities, as well as any necessary details related to the operation and implementation of training programmes prepared by the IEP.

The following are examples of programmes that the IEP implements for teachers:

- Special Education and Training
- Training of specialised educational support for the integration of students with disabilities and / or special educational needs

- Training in the New Foreign Language Curricula - Unified Foreign Language Curriculum (EPS-XG) and English Early Childhood Learning Programmes
- Training Actions to support the education of refugee children
- Training in Skills Workshops (Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs 2020; Educational Policy Institute 2023).

CPD evaluation: Law 4610/2019 established the **National Teacher Training Centre** at the Hellenic Open University. The purpose of this Centre is the design, implementation and evaluation of training programmes, held in person or online, for education staff, members of the Special Teaching Staff (SPD) and the Special Auxiliary Personnel (APS) of Primary and Secondary Education, as well as prospective members of these categories of staff. In order to achieve its goals, NTTCH cooperates with the IEP and the responsible service of the Ministry of Education. University lecturers and Collaborating Teaching Staff are employed as teachers in the training programmes.

Priority topics for kindergartens: Priority topics for those working in kindergartens include:

- Cooperation with families and supporting the parental role
- Training in the curricula
- Training in administrative tasks
- Crisis management (COVID-19)
- Class management
- Resilience in teachers and children
- Intercultural education.

In order to prioritise the training issues, the Principal of the school unit decides whether it is a matter for school-level training or whether it is a large-scale issue that concerns all Kindergarten Teachers in a prefecture or a district. Teachers' views are not formally submitted as a recording of needs. The possibilities are limited.

Large-scale and still ongoing CPD activities have focused for many years on the training of teachers in the utilisation of ICT. Currently, the Institute of Computer Technology and Publications "Diofantos" is implementing, in collaboration with the IEP, an educational project in the framework of the Act "Training of Teachers for the Utilisation and Application of Digital Technologies in Teaching Practice" which is co-financed by the European Union (European Social Fund, NSRF 2014-2020) and the Greek State and continues the previous comprehensive training on the use and application of ICT in teaching.

The training is developed and implemented in two levels of knowledge and skills:

1. Introductory training for the educational use of ICT (**B1** ICT level) and
2. Advanced training for the use and application of ICT in teaching practice (**B2** ICT level).

CPD for Kindergarten Principals and School Heads include topics related, in particular, to the leadership, organisation and administration of the education system, human resource management, quality improvement in education, evaluation, national and international education policy and adult education and may vary according to the position of the specific duties and responsibilities of the education executives.

The acquisition of qualifications for professional development is also provided by law (L4823 / 2021). In order to be selected as an executive, additional qualifications to the necessary teaching experience are also required (postgraduate, doctoral or second university degree, foreign languages, ICT, seminars, etc.). The higher the position in the management pyramid, the more formal qualifications are required. For example, the position of consultant or regional director requires a doctorate. The acquisition of qualifications is done with personal funding and outside



school hours, as there are now few cases of supported leave (usually only for the examination period).

Leave entitlement: Kindergarten Teachers do not have official permits for attending professional development courses. For postgraduate studies, primary and secondary education teachers are only granted unpaid leave under the current restrictive fiscal policy.

However, the grant-renewal of in-service training licenses leave with mandatory remuneration to IKY (State Scholarship Foundation) fellows is allowed. Teachers who were granted a scholarship from the State Scholarship Foundation are allowed to have paid leave (Law 3528/2007).

For teachers attending a course at a higher education institution, an annual exam leave license may be granted for a period of up to 14 days (Law 3528/2007, 4210/2013, 4590/2019).

Short-term paid leave for educational or scientific reasons can be granted in accordance with Law 3528/2007. These leave licenses are issued compulsorily to employees who participate in competitions to receive a scholarship, to be admitted to the National School of Public Administration and Local Government or to be selected to study in postgraduate courses, to participate in conferences, seminars and all kinds of scientific meetings, at home or abroad, on subjects of interest to the service.

Motivation for participation in professional development activities: The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs is obliged to take care of the training of its employees throughout their career regardless of their category, branch, specialty and grade (Law 3528/2007).

Motivating factors for participation in certified training activities may be both personal (enhancing knowledge of recent research and pedagogical methods) or related to career development. If a teacher wishes to apply for a position of responsibility in the administration of education (e.g. as a consultant, supervisor, administrative officer (director), Law 4823/2021 sets as a prerequisite certified knowledge of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) at Level A. Also included as selection criteria may be the certified knowledge of Level B' ICT, annual training through a university department, certificates of attendance of certified training programmes of the Ministry of Education.

Research on continuing professional development: There have been no research projects in recent years focusing specifically on the CPD of Kindergarten Teachers (and the same is true for Nursery and Childcare Teachers).

Current issues relating to CPD: Ongoing professional development involves kindergarten staff, permanent and substitute teachers. In addition to the essential need for continuing education, they all face new challenges in their work, such as classes with refugees, children with learning difficulties in regular classes (cooperation with a special educator if any), managing financial and health crises, changes in the curriculum. Ongoing professional development is a matter of constant concern and demand by the teacher trade unions. During the pandemic, distance education emerged as an issue, as it was used as the only way to train teachers. This process is very problematic since it has nothing to do with the principles of adult education and proves to be insufficient and often tedious. Training by the IEP in the use of distance education took place during the health crisis and still continues with skills workshops or the introduction of English in the kindergarten curriculum, in addition to online seminars by the School Communication Control Council and the Regional Centre for Educational Planning. The approaches towards CPD described are not appropriate, as teachers cannot leave the classroom in order to be trained effectively and exclusively. In particular, very tight schedules are followed and in fact in the middle of the school year, the workload is particularly heavy, while CPD takes place remotely in a modern and asynchronous way.

In 2011 there were mergers, abolitions and cuts in education due to the financial crisis and also the abolition of the retraining of current teachers and Kindergarten Teachers, which was carried



out through an institution called “The Faculty”. The Faculty was an important and pioneering institution for the further education and training of current teachers. There were nine centres across the country connected to the respective university Departments of Early Childhood Education. The admission of teachers was through exams and lasted two years, a period of time when teachers were seconded in order to be able to improve their knowledge and reflective competences at universities. Since then, training priorities and assessment have been oriented towards the acquisition of formal qualifications through fee-paying training programmes, in which teachers are forced to participate without being given time off.

Continuing professional development falls under the principles of adult education, but the way it is conducted does not take these principles into account to ensure that learning is effective. More specifically, it is known that adults face obstacles (family obligations, etc.) and the possibility of overcoming them has not been explored. Also, while Kindergarten Teachers have a tendency for active participation, no one has asked their opinion on issues that concern them, their needs have not been investigated. A technique of one-sided information has been followed and not active / experiential techniques, no effective communication has been formed, there is no feeling of mutual respect. The pace at which Kindergarten Teachers want to and can learn is not taken into account, resulting in the risk of frustration. In addition, all CPD sessions are now held outside working hours, mainly in the afternoons and at the weekends, where they coincide with the necessary preparation for work. This leads to exhausting hours, fatigue, burnout and loss of personal and family time.

Nursery and Childcare Teachers

For the Nursery and Childcare Teachers there is no special provision for professional development. They are civil servants in the social welfare sector and are governed by this legislation. The CPD of Kindergarten Teachers, who are also civil servants but within the education sector, is organised differently.

The legal framework (Law 3528/2007) states that on-the-job training is a right of the employee, to be carried out through introductory training at the beginning of the employee’s career, continuing professional development activities, postgraduate programmes or postgraduate education cycles. The programmes take place either in Greece, particularly within the framework of the National Centre of Public Administration and Local Government, or abroad, according to the legal provisions in force.

Introductory training is mandatory, both for the service provider and for the employee. It takes place during the first two years following appointment and aims to familiarise the Nursery and Childcare Teachers with their duties both as an employee in their specific workplace and as an employee of Local Government Organisations in general. The employee is not promoted to the next grade level without successfully completing this introductory training, as a course which is mandatory.

Service providers are obliged to take care of the continuing professional development of their employees throughout their career, regardless of their category, industry, specialty and grade. The training can be general or in the form of specialisation related to the specific service. Employee participation in training programmes can be defined as mandatory, as can postgraduate education in recognised universities in Greece or abroad.

7. Working conditions and current workforce issues

7.1 Remuneration

Kindergarten Teachers

According to the current legislation (Law 4354 / 2015, Law 4823 / 2021) the salaries of Kindergarten Teachers are at the same level as those of all teachers in primary education. The pay level is shaped by factors such as years of service, marital status, obtaining degrees beyond the basic degree, serving in border areas, serving in a position of responsibility (manager, supervisor, advisor, etc.), but also the employment relationship (permanent or contract employee).

The new salary scale provides for scales from 1 to 19. The salary scale changes every two years and the employee receives a corresponding increase of €15-20. Holders of postgraduate and doctoral degrees count extra working time of two and six years respectively. Position allowances are provided, i.e. for the supervisor (€150), the manager (€300), the deputy manager (€150) and the consultant (€300). The salary scale has been valid since 01.01.2016, with increases every four years. The increase of the basic salary amounts to 25% every year and concerns the years 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019. For example, an increase of €60 was attributed to €15 each year for the twelve months. There are also allowances paid in addition to the salary, such as family allowance (€50 for the first child, €70 for two), or service allowance in remote or border areas (approximately €100).

The average salary of a teacher, as a result of the continuous cuts due to the financial crisis, is estimated at around one thousand euros. This amount is not enough to live on in a big city as a single parent or a family. In the case of contract teachers, who during school holidays are paid with an allowance by the Organisation of Labour Employment (OAED), extra financial support is needed, which comes mainly from their parents. In addition to covering their living expenses with their salary, teachers also have to cover their travel expenses to and from their workplace, even if it is far away from home. Moreover, they have to cover their training needs, the printed or electronic resources they need for their work and also the tuition fees for the various seminars they attend. Contract teachers also face the risk of precarious sources of funding for their work as these are EU funding programmes which may be withdrawn at any time; the same applies even more so to those working in special education and training, where their pay is not part of government spending on education. A typical example is the non-payment of their salary even for one day's absence due to circumstances beyond their control, e.g. if the school closes and does not operate due to adverse weather conditions.

Nursery and Childcare Teachers

Their salary is determined on a monthly basis, corresponds to the total remuneration of their specific position and is paid fortnightly in advance. Salary, bonuses and benefits are the same as for other civil servants. While overtime is provided for work beyond the mandatory working hours. The director of the centre receives a bonus due to position (Law 4354/2015). According to data provided by the Ministry of Finance, for civil servants the salary scales start from 1 to 19. For example, an employee on salary scale 1 receives a salary of €1,151; on a salary scale of 10 and 18–20 years of service, he/she receives a salary of €1,623; on a salary scale of 19 and 38 years of service, he/she receives a salary of €2,154. These amounts refer to salary without deductions for care and pension. So the actual amounts are lower. For example, on salary scale 12

with 24 years of service, the employee's salary is €1,741, but in real terms, the net amount is around €1,100 (Ministry of Finance 2022).

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

Kindergarten Teachers

With the Ministerial Decision no. 127187 / E1 / 01-08-2016 (Government Gazette 2524/2016), total working hours in primary education are 30 hours per week, five of which are non-teaching hours. Working hours mean that teachers attend the school unit even if they have completed their teaching hours in order to complete other tasks related to their class or school unit. Also, the teaching schedule differs according to the years of service and the type of school unit. As for the contractors, these can be full time, like the permanent staff, but there are also part-time workers, who work up to sixteen hours. The selection of substitute / contract teachers is carried out by the Supreme Personnel Selection Council, with transparent and objective procedures. In recent years, due to the retirement of teachers and at the same time the absence of permanent appointments in education while the needs remain the same, there has been an increase in the percentage of contract teachers working in education, amounting to about 25% of all Primary School Teachers, including Kindergarten Teachers.

Nursery and Childcare Teachers

Nursery and Childcare Teachers with permanent employment status and Nursery and Childcare Assistants work five days a week for thirty hours. Holiday leave is the same as for the other civil servants. During their two-year probationary period they attend introductory education programmes. Among nursery workers, a large percentage of the workforce are contract staff. This rate is on the increase due to the absence of permanent posts.

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

For the newly appointed **Kindergarten Teachers** as employees with a permanent employment status, the possibility of introductory training is provided, which should be completed within the first two years, during which time they are considered probationers. Apart from this training, no further support is provided during their introduction to the profession. There are no on-site mentors supporting newcomers to the profession. Contract Kindergarten Teachers are not eligible for this training. Teachers' associations advocate for supportive institutions for new Kindergarten Teachers. With their mission of scientific and professional guidance, the Education Counsellors work in support of the teachers, whether permanent, contracted or newly appointed. However, in the kindergarten field the problem is the limited number of counsellors and the large number of schools for which they are responsible. This means a reduced possibility of effective support. In addition to the relevant law (4823/2021) which provides for the evaluation of Teachers and Kindergarten Teachers, School Counsellors are likely to have increased bureaucratic work with the evaluation, which means that their advisory duties will take second place.

For **Nursery and Childcare Teachers**, no similar support measures are provided, neither by a mentor, nor by the Counsellor, while any issue that refers to the operation of the nurseries and childcare centres which is not included in their Rules of Operation, is regulated by a decision of the Board of Directors.

7.4 Non-contact time

A feature of the work of teachers is the high workload and work outside the classroom, to prepare the work in the classroom, to hold meetings of the teachers' association, to correct, to organise activities of the school community in collaboration with various agencies (excursions, visits, etc.), to organise parent information events, school festive events, but also holding meetings with parents, etc. For these reasons, alongside the five non-teaching hours, a preparation and extracurricular employment allowance was introduced and granted. However, these allowances were abolished in 2011 when uniform salaries were applied to civil servants due to the financial crisis and thus there was a large reduction in salaries. Although these allowances have been abolished, teachers and Kindergarten Teachers in particular continue to function as before, for example in their cooperation and communication with parents outside the opening hours of the kindergarten, without receiving any additional remuneration (Law 4024/2011; MD 127187 / E1 / 01-08-2016).

7.5 Current staffing issues

Kindergarten Teachers

Between 2010 and 2015, 2,721 Kindergarten Teachers left the kindergartens, the permanent recruitments in those years amounted to 529, while in the years 2014 and 2015 no recruitments were made at all (Bratis 2016), while between 2010 and 2022, 4,070 Kindergarten Teachers retired (Teaching Federation of Greece (DOE) 2022). With Law 4589/2019 (Government Gazette 13 AD), 289 permanent Special Education Kindergarten Teachers were appointed in special education units and integration groups. However, these recruitments have not met the existing needs which are met by the temporary recruitment of contract teachers or in many cases are not covered at all. After many years of the absence of permanent appointments, or minimal in relation to the needs, 1,500 permanent appointments of general education Kindergarten Teachers took place in 2020 and in 2021 (MD 91715/E1/22-7-2022).

According to the European Commission's annual report on the monitoring of education and training, there is a steady decline in the funding for education in Greece (3.20% in 2012-2013, 2.85% in 2017, 3.44% in 2018 and 3.9% in 2019), whereas the European average is 4.6%. This is also reflected in the preference for contract staff, who cost less than a permanent employee in terms of salary, while their recruitment can also be covered through programmes to mitigate unemployment. In Greece, the ESPA program (Corporate Pact for the Development Framework) is utilised, which draws resources from the European Structural and Investment Funds. This is one of the reasons why many educators consider their contracts precarious, as this financial support may be discontinued. Also, under funding leads to understaffing, while there are mergers of schools, a reduction of teachers' income, insufficient and delayed staffing (mainly in special education) and a lack of logistical infrastructure.

In Greece, the education system is characterised as centralised, with the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs being the only authority responsible for the formulation and implementation of educational policy. Among the issues that are regulated centrally is that of the staffing of the education system. Law 2525/1997 abolished the system of appointment of teachers through the yearbook and replaced it with a system of examinations under the responsibility of the Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection, an independent authority established by law 2190/1994. From the year 2003 and with law 3027/2002, the appointment of teachers was determined at a rate of 75% from the competition and 25% from a list of contractors. These percentages changed several times in the following years. It is a fact that from 2008 onwards the

permanent posts for teachers were dramatically reduced and the needs were covered by contractors or substitutes. In 2010, with law 3848/2010, in parallel with the grade in the competition, the candidates could count other academic criteria such as a Bachelor's degree, postgraduate and doctoral degree, but also social criteria such as disability, while the possession of a Certificate of Pedagogical Competence was also institutionalised. Although this law provides for the appointment of permanent teachers, these are not made and this was the reason why no staff selection examinations of the Supreme Personnel Selection Council are held. As a consequence, temporary substitute Kindergarten Teachers are hired on a contract basis. Up to today, the competition has not taken place since 2008, although the Ministry of Education has recently spoken of its intention to reinstate it as part of the teaching staff selection process.

By law 4589/2019, the Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection, at the request of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, announces and conducts every two school years a classification process in order of priority, by sector and specialty, of the candidates for vacancies in primary and secondary education, including special education staff. The appointment or recruitment of teachers is made exclusively by ranking boards, which are valid until the end of the second school year following the end of the school year in which they were published in the Government Gazette, without the possibility of modifying the data in the intermediate period.

These tables are compiled on the basis of predetermined and objective criteria (academic, educational background, social criteria) in descending order of the overall score resulting from the cumulative rating of these criteria.

ASEP and the Ministry of Education then post the provisional ranking tables on their websites. Candidates can file an objection within a specified period of time. After checking the objections, ASEP prepares the final tables which are published in the Government Gazette.

Those interested can submit a candidacy application in the manner specified in the relevant announcement of ASEP. Candidate teachers and members of special education staff who have the formal qualifications for appointment in primary or secondary education are accepted in the process.

This law on the system of permanent appointments has provoked many reactions from teachers, because it devalues the previous service of deputies and proposes the formal qualifications, while it also devalues the basic university degree which is no longer enough to secure a job as a teacher.

As for recruitment strategies to meet the increased licensing needs of individuals belonging to vulnerable groups during the health crisis, this was addressed by the government with three-month training contractors.

Data on the number of contract teachers show a steady increase in recent years. Specifically, in the school year 2016/2017, 1,718 Kindergarten Teachers were hired on a contract basis, in the following school year 2,007, one year later 2,554, and in 2019/2020 3,742. Conversely, the proportion of permanent and seconded Kindergarten Teachers has decreased, due to retirement and the failure to recruit young people. This means that the needs for teaching staff remain and the shortages are great. From the school year 2019-2020, the provision of Law 4589/2019 came into force which allows a reduction of the maximum number of children in kindergarten groups from 25 to 22, in order to improve the pedagogical and didactic support of the children. However, this provision was changed again through law 4692/2020 and the aim is now to reduce the number of teaching staff, mainly by increasing the number of children by 3 per teacher, ignoring what is required pedagogically for the teaching and learning of young children.

According to the data of the Hellenic Statistical Authority for the school year 2019/2020, regarding the age distribution of the teaching staff in kindergartens, 39.94% of the teaching staff are over 55 years old. The total number of active teaching staff in kindergartens for the same school



year was 16,483. 29.56% are between 40 and 50 years old and 26.54% are between 30 and 40 years old.

Nursery and Childcare Teachers

Nurseries and childcare centres also face staff shortages. The recruitment of permanent staff has not changed since the 1990s. The needs are covered by contract workers who usually work for eight months a year, recruited through the Labour Organisation.

Each municipality, through the Legal Entity under Public Law responsible for children, announces the intention to conclude a fixed-term employment contract. The recruitments concern a fixed-term private law employment contract to cover the seasonal or temporary needs of any additional qualifications. The Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection posts the announcement and the deadline for applications (Law 4257/2014; Law 4354/2015). The existing workforce, the current permanent Nursery and Childcare Teachers with many years of work experience, will be retiring during the coming years. This implies the aging of the permanent teaching staff.

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

Kindergarten Teachers

Although not recent, it is worth noting that in 2013, the working hours of Kindergarten Teachers were officially regulated in the same way as those of Primary School Teachers. This was an important step forward for Kindergarten Teachers as professionals (Law 4115/2013).

In 2020, with Law 4589/2019 (Government Gazette 13/A/29-1-2019), 289 permanent Special Education Kindergarten Teachers were appointed in special education units and integration groups³.

In 2018, a two-year compulsory education for 4 and 5 year olds was established by law (Law 4521/2018). This has slightly increased the number of jobs, as there are no more student outflows into other settings. Both teachers and parents supported the demand for the institutionalisation of a 2-year compulsory education in public kindergartens. The advantages include facilitation of the non-discriminatory inclusion of all children in the educational process, as it ensures the early detection of their educational needs, guides them for timely and valid assessment in the appropriate state services and agencies when this is necessary and offers the possibility to Kindergarten Teachers to implement the required pedagogical interventions. Furthermore, through transition programmes planned and jointly implemented by Kindergarten and Primary School Teachers, a smooth transition to primary school can be facilitated (Sakellariou, Anagnostopoulou, and Strati 2018).

³ The same law appointed 1,041 permanent employees of special education and special auxiliary personnel for primary and secondary education. The positions included 116 Speech Therapists, 137 Psychologists, 114 School Nurses, 70 Physiotherapists, 81 Occupational Therapists-Occupational Therapists, 135 Social Workers, and 388 Special Auxiliary Staff. Most of the above employees were appointed to special education schools, the rest to regular schools, but also to Committees of Scientific Education Evaluation and Support (E.D.E.A.Y.) who are responsible for the educational evaluation and support of students and the school community.



Nursery and Childcare Teachers

An important development for Nursery and Childcare Teachers was the maximisation of the institutions that offer their studies, which were renamed from Technological Educational Institutions (TEI) to Universities of Applied Sciences. The staffing of the nursery and childcare settings with permanent staff is part of the public sector process (Law 3584/2007), but as mentioned in the previous chapter, permanent appointments have not been made in recent years. Consequently, the majority of employees are contract workers. Characteristic is also the absence of a selection procedure for Centre Heads/Directors due to a lack of relevant legislation since 2011. A serious issue is also the lack of formal and continuing training, but also the lack of pedagogical support through Counsellors.

9. Recent country-specific research focusing on ECEC staff

In terms of research studies focusing on Kindergarten Teachers, two kinds can be identified: (1) from a broader perspective as public sector employees, and (2) from the perspective of the trade union to which both Kindergarten Teachers and Nursery and Childcare Teachers belong, the "Supreme Administration of Civil Servants Associations". Within the trade union, a *Social Multicentre* organisation was founded in December 2004 with the aim of scientifically supporting the diverse activities of the trade union through educational research, while cooperating with respective institutes and higher education institutions in Greece and the European area.

It also promotes the continuing education and training of employees in the public sector.

The level and evolution of wages in the Greek public sector from the crisis of 2009-10 until today

Source: Mavroudeas, S., and K. Passas 2022 (see *References* for full details)

Aims and methods: The aim of this study was to record the level and the evolution of the salaries of the employees in the public sector in Greece from the outbreak of the Greek crisis until the present day. Data on employment in the public sector were used and analysed based on the data of the Labour Force Survey, which are compared with the data of the Register of Employees of the Greek State.

Selected findings: The main conclusions of the study can be summarised as follows:

- It is confirmed that public sector employees contribute more than they are paid for, while in terms of taxation, employees, and especially civil servants, they contribute the most.
- Due to adverse financial conditions, wages in general, but especially those for public sector workers, are more affected, leaving them in a more vulnerable position in terms of their income.
- Specifically, during the period 2010 to 2020, the average salary of doctors decreased by 10.5% – from €1,443 to €1,291 – while the average salary of teachers decreased by 15.7%, from €1,311 to €1,105, of health technicians by 11.9%, from €1,176 to €1,036 and the salary of general office clerks by 14.7%, from €1,196 to €1,020.
- Respectively, we can observe that the reduction of the salaries of the civil servants by sector of economic activity amounts to 11.5% in the sector of health, to 15.8% in the sector of education and to 15% in the sector of public administration. During the period 2010-2020,

average wages for both men and women declined while at the same time the gap between wages by gender increased.

- More specifically, it is observed that the average salary for male civil servants decreased by 14.7%, from €1,326 to €1,131, while for women it decreased by 15.4% from €1,210 to €1,024. As a result of this simultaneous decline, the average wage for women from 92.1% of the corresponding for men in 2010 falls to 90.6%. In other words, the crisis is leading to a widening of the gender pay gap.
- The proportion of the lowest paid employees is also increasing. It is indicative that employees earning between €1,000 to €1,100 have increased from 11% to 16% of the total, those earning €900 to €1,000 from 6% to 10%, while those with a salary level below €900 have increased from 12% to 20%.
- The evolution of the salaries of public sector employees in Greece is always adjusted negatively in relation to European countries where Economic Adjustment Programmes were implemented: for example, Cyprus shows an increase of 6.3%, Portugal of 5.2%; only Ireland shows a decrease of 6.5%, while in Greece the average salary in the public sector decreased by 25%. At the same time, it increased by 21.4% in the Eurozone and by 23.8% in the EU.

Implications: During the current period, the observed increase in inflation will lead to a decrease in the purchasing power of public sector employees, which also applies to Kindergarten Teachers and Nursery and Childcare Teachers, if there is no corresponding increase in wages.

Education and teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic: narratives, experiences, practices – qualitative and quantitative dimensions

Source: Zagos, C., I. Kamarianos, A. Kyridis, and N. Fotopoulos 2022 (see *References* for full details)

Background: A second study by the Social Multicentre of the trade union concerns the levels of education of teachers in general, including Kindergarten Teachers as part of primary education, but not Nursery and Childcare Teachers.

Aims and methods: The purpose of this study was to highlight the optics and dimensions of conditions faced by the educational community during the pandemic period, both inside and outside classrooms and educational institutions. The authors use a rich range of methodological tools for approaching, analysing and interpreting the Greek educational reality during the period of the pandemic crisis. A sociological perspective productively combines theoretical and empirical approaches with qualitative and quantitative character. Specifically, questionnaires were analysed and processed, as well as interviews with teachers (among them Kindergarten Teachers) and university teachers, trying to investigate how they as actors managed the extreme and unprecedented conditions in the education and practice of their work crisis. The sample drew from teachers working in both kindergartens and primary classes. The questionnaires were distributed to approximately 9,000 people. The response rate was 12.04% (1,084 responses).

Selected findings: The conclusions of the study include the following:

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, the teaching profession and teachers went through an unprecedented and difficult period. The question is the magnitude of the impact of the pandemic on the substance of the teaching profession, the nature of teaching and the character of schools. The pandemic crisis came to intensify the already burdened landscape in education and to make the experience of everyday life more painful and stressful.

- In their responses to the Professional Exhaustion questionnaire, the teachers did not present extreme and unpleasant situations. Quite a significant percentage (27.9%) of the sample is in the range of high emotional exhaustion, 35.8% show low personal achievement, while 19.9% high.
- Regarding the scale Sources of Teachers' Stress, they include: the educational organisation, the lack of support for and prestige of the profession, the management of the pandemic, followed by factors related to learning, behaviour, relationships, workload and the pressure of time. In previous research (Leontari, Kyridi, and Gialama 1996) the factors causing the greatest stress to teachers are student behaviour and working conditions.
- The degree of satisfaction of teachers regarding the response of Greek public education is low and even lower regarding the response of Greek educational policy. In e-learning there were technical problems that made their work difficult, while they themselves experienced significant financial costs in supplying infrastructure and technological equipment. The sample considers that in terms of training and logistical support the Ministry of Education did not respond properly to support their work. The trainings were not focused on distance education, while training focused on the psychological management-support of their students did not exist and in general the responsibility of distance education was transferred from the ministry to the teachers.
- Teachers say they feel the nature of their work is changing. Regarding teaching and learning, they record the incomparable value of living teaching, the inability to evaluate the performance of students, the lack of control over the learning climate and the learning process in general, the inability of all students to participate in the distance learning process, but also the difficulty of teaching all courses remotely. They express their concern that in the future the methodology of distance learning, e-learning and in general the toolbox of e-learning methods and approaches will be used more and that in this way their jobs will be endangered. Also, in terms of distance learning, the lack of technological means and infrastructure did not allow equal access and participation of all students, while state resources for the purchase of equipment were limited and allocated with a long delay and a minimal percentage of schools, teachers and students.
- Vulnerable groups of the student population (students from weaker economic strata, children in remote areas, Roma, children of refugees and immigrants) were excluded from the educational process. The teachers, however, have done their job and continue with solidarity through independent activities and voluntary work – but at great personal cost, since they are not provided with the means to fulfil their social mission.

Implications: The study clearly highlighted the important role of schools (including kindergartens), and education in general, for the children's psychosocial development and well-being; in other words, the importance of living teaching and learning and the social role of the school.

Characteristics of public human resources in critical areas of education and health

Source: Tsiolas, G., and M. Filiopoulou 2021 (see *References* for full details)

Background: A report on the human resources of the public sector in the field of education is part of the documentation work by the Social Multicentre of the trade union.

Aims and methods: The aim is to record the characteristic elements of the public's human resources in the critical field of education. Data on gender, age and years of service are used to show the demographic trends and specifics in each of the category of the professions in the field of education. The study draws on data from the 2020 census of public employees and from other official databases, such as the Public Sector Inventory Register.



Selected findings: This report notes that in primary education (including kindergartens), 32% of permanent teachers have 20 to 30 years of service, indicating an aging of the permanent teaching staff. The average age of teachers in primary education is 53 years. 37.0% are aged 51 to 60 years, while 34.7% are aged 41 to 50 years. In primary education, 75.3% are women. At all levels of education, the percentage of women is higher among the younger generation of teachers (under 30 years old) than among older people (50 years and older).

On average in OECD countries, 70% of teachers in 2019 were women at all levels of education. The largest concentration of women in the teaching profession is noted in the first years of school education and the percentage shrinks proportionally in the next levels of education. Women represent 96% of the teaching staff in pre-school education and 82% in primary education. At secondary level they make up 63% and only 44% at higher level on average in OECD countries (OECD 2021, 396).

No similar studies were found for the Nursery and Childcare Teachers, except for the first one presented in this chapter, which focused on all civil servants, including the employees of local government organisations.

10. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

Kindergarten Teachers

Kindergarten Teachers are very likely to face a reduction of jobs due to demographic issues: while the birth rate has been decreasing dramatically, at the same time the **unfavourable staff to child ratio** (1 teacher to 25 children) has been maintained. Another significant problem is the **aging of the teaching staff** and this will intensify even more with the constant increase in retirement age limits. This is particularly significant because the nature of the profession requires physical endurance to cope with the daily life of a Kindergarten Teacher, in addition to professional development activities to update their knowledge. In terms of day-to-day operation, another challenge is an **increase in bureaucracy** through the push for efficiency and promoting a culture of accountability. Under these conditions, the kindergarten curriculum is at risk of becoming overly structured and rigid, with more of an academic orientation rather than remaining flexible and offering opportunities for social learning.

A further continuing difficulty is the fixation of **salaries and pensions at very low levels** (Law 3833/2010) compared to those in force in the rest of Europe, with no prospect of improvement as the economy is not expected to recover. **Low funding for education** (Law 4584/2018) compared to other countries (OECD 2022, 4) is an important element that should be improved and which is not expected to improve immediately, also due to the prevailing economic situation and other factors. The underfunding of education is justified by the rulers at the level of public rhetoric with the underestimation of the profession, but also of teachers as public servants, with teachers arguing that it is simply a matter of priorities.

A further challenge with social implications is the increase in the relative number of substitute / **contract teachers**, who experience precarious working conditions while being expected to have high-level scientific and professional training. In the past, the local government authorities have often expressed the desire to have the operation and funding of primary education under their supervision, something that Kindergarten Teachers do not want and are constantly debating,

because they believe that not only will the quality of education provided to children be degraded, but also their own official status. Teachers believe that local government authorities under fund the organisations under their responsibility, that there is no transparency in the recruitment of staff and also fear that there will be no uniform professional development opportunities offered throughout the country, as is currently the case in the public sector.

Another challenge is the fact that in times of crisis, like the health care crisis which we have recently gone through, teachers in Greece have completed **remote learning** without support from the ministry (training, logistics) and this is required by the ministry, even in periods when, for example schools have to close due to adverse weather conditions. In addition to this fact, CPD programmes for Kindergarten Teachers tend to depend entirely on remote learning, which is not in line with the principles of adult education. The experience of the pandemic crisis raises many challenges, such as how much the teaching profession will be affected, its nature and character, how the curricula will be affected, what form initial and continuing professional education will take in the future, what organisational models will be developed and how much the forms of teaching in education will be changed, including the relative role distance education (modern or asynchronous) will occupy through remote learning or other e-learning tools (Sakellariou et al. 2021; Sakellariou and Banou. 2020).

Nursery and Childcare Teachers

Nursery and Childcare Teachers, as well as all civil servants, face the fixation of wages at very low levels (Law 3833/2010). The country's demographic problem, which could lead to a reduction in jobs, is a possible negative development for the employees in nurseries and childcare centres. Further negative factors are the absence of permanent appointments, the job insecurity and uncertainty of contract workers. This fact is directly related to the aging of the staff, a condition which complicates the daily operation of employees due to the requirements of the profession and the quality of work.

Another challenge will be to address the demand for places in nurseries and childcare centres, because currently, not all applications for registration can be met. Due to the lack of places in the public sector, many children have to be enrolled either in private nursery provision at an additional cost, or their parents have to use vouchers from European Union programmes, or the children have to stay at home. The needs exist mainly for the very young children, since the municipalities do not establish nurseries and childcare centres to the same extent. Nurseries require the recruitment of more staff (small groups of children and more staff due to the young age of the children). For this reason, the government has announced the intention to implement a programme called "Neighbourhood Nanny", which promises to meet the existing needs. Of course, the question remains as to why the existing structures are not improved, upgraded or why the nurseries are not strengthened with new buildings. This situation does not serve working parents, especially mothers, who find it difficult to look for work and to reconcile work and family life. Another important issue in the operation of nurseries and childcare centres is the need for a curricular framework which would be implemented in all settings.

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