

# ROMANIA

Early Childhood Education and Care  
**ECEC Workforce Profile**

*Country report authors*

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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](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>

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## 1. ECEC governance in Romania

In recent years, early childhood education and care in Romania has gone through considerable changes at the governance level. Pursuing an integrated approach towards early education has been further strengthened through the National Education Act 1/2011, modified by law 17/2022. The Act (article 27) was amended to include nurseries as part of the national pre-university education system and to offer children between the ages of 11 months and 3 years integrated education, care and supervision services.

Since September 15, 2021, nurseries come under the auspices and guidance of the Ministry of National Education (*Ministerul Educației Naționale*) – MEN – through the County School Inspectorates, regardless of whether they are assigned to a state kindergarten. Furthermore, on April 28, 2022, Decision 566 of 2022 included strategies for the organisation and operation of nurseries and other early education units, thus creating a legislative framework to support an integrated approach.

Since nurseries/crèches became part of the education system in the 2021-2022 school year, the draft Government Decision approving strategies for organising and operating nurseries and other early education units has proposed the following:

- Where local public authorities (LPA) request nursery provision, this should be included within the available early childhood education units (kindergartens) and included in the school network of pre-university education.
- Ensuring the strategic coordination of the nurseries for which the local public authorities do not request districting status and for which the LPA takes on the role of founding legal entity; in such cases, strategic coordination is carried out by delegating responsibility to a kindergarten through the school inspectorate.
- Ensuring, upon request, the strategic coordination of the nurseries remaining under the responsibility of local public authorities as social services.
- Ensuring the necessary personnel for the development of early childhood education by the Ministry of Education, in compliance with quality standards and the legislation in force; starting from the 2021-2022 school year, Childcare Educators from state nurseries that come under the coordination of the Ministry of Education can, for the next four years, occupy the position of Childcare Educator, provided they meet the specific requirements of the Ministry of Education's framework for the recognition and attestation of professional skills.
- Regulation of aspects regarding the enrolment of children, the number of children in the group, the types of staff and their duties, the partnership with parents and other partners at the central/local level, as well as aspects regarding the educational environment and the content of education in the units that offer childcare services and early pre-school education.

## 2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

### 2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

#### Staff in nurseries

Staff in nurseries currently comprise the following categories:

- Management staff: Director / Centre Head
- Pedagogical staff: Educator – Early Years (*educator-puericultor*)
- Specialist support staff, e.g. Medical Assistant
- Non-specialist staff: administrator, caregiver, cook, etc.

Two main groups of staff work directly with the children on a daily basis:

***Educatori-puericultori*** (Educators – Early Years) hold a professional qualification acquired at a Pedagogical High School. Pedagogical High Schools are vocational upper secondary education institutions offering qualifications at EQF level 4 and ISCED (2011) levels 3 and 4. Some staff in nurseries may also hold a higher education Bachelor's degree (three years) in educational sciences (Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-primary Education), mainly where services for the under 3 year-olds are offered in groups affiliated to kindergartens. In recent years, Pedagogical High Schools have also organised a form of tertiary non-university qualification route for those already holding a high school graduation diploma from regular high schools.

***Îngrijitori*** (Caregivers) complete a form of upper secondary education and a compulsory in-service training module of at least 30 hours focussing on early childhood education and care and parenting. Beyond that, there are no minimum requirements regarding initial professional studies for Caregivers in nurseries. There is currently no formal obligation for nurseries/crèches organised as independent institutions to have staff holding a specialist higher education qualification, although employing staff with the appropriate qualifications should be a necessary prerequisite for quality in early education for children under 3 years of age.

Although the staffing requirements for work in nurseries/infant-toddler centres are not formally regulated, some universities have started to offer specialist degrees in early childhood education. A relevant example here is the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, which has been offering a two-year Master's degree in Early Childhood Education since 2013.

#### Staff in kindergartens

At the level of pre-primary education/kindergartens (3 to 6 year-olds), three main categories of staff may be working in direct contact with the children, each having followed a different qualification route.

***Educatoare*** (Educators – Early Years) complete a specialist (early childhood education) qualification at a Pedagogical High School (upper secondary vocational). Persons with this qualification are still working in the system, although this specific route is not available any more as a stand-alone qualification. This route is now viewed only as a precursor to becoming a fully qualified Pre-primary Teacher, since in order to gain a permanent position in a kindergarten, the completion of a Bachelor study route in Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-primary Education is now the formal requirement.

***Institutori*** (Elementary Teachers) complete a short-term higher education degree (three years) awarded by the University College of Elementary Teachers (*Colegiul Universitar Pedagogic de Institutori*). This award originates from the pre-Bologna system (up to 2005), when regular

higher education degrees took four to six years to complete. The title of *Institutor* could also be held by qualified Educators (*educatoare*) who had completed a higher education diploma after their initial studies, regardless of the specialisation they had followed.

As from 2005 this qualification has been replaced by:

**Profesori pentru învățământul Primar și Preșcolar** (Primary and Pre-primary Teachers) with a higher education degree and a dual specialism. The first graduates with this specialism completed their studies in 2008.

Although the minimum requirement for working in a kindergarten as a core professional is now a Bachelor's degree, the staff in kindergartens may have any one of the above-mentioned qualifications.

For early childhood education and care in **nurseries** in Romania, required staff qualifications are still not clearly defined. From the viewpoint of the authors of this report, the specialisation of "Childcare Educator" (see below) needs to be reintroduced in upper secondary schools with a pedagogical profile.

According to Law no. 17/2022, Art. 41 (Portal Legislativ 2022), the **Childcare Educator** in early education units in nurseries is broadly expected to carry out tasks according to the Early Education Curriculum approved by the Ministry of National Education. These include the following:

- Care and psychomotor stimulation; supporting the development of socio-affective behaviour; training and improving verbal behaviour; supporting cognitive development and learning skills and attitudes
- Recording each child's progress in an observation notebook and progress assessment sheet
- Actively collaborating with parents/legal representatives and holding information and training programmes to develop parental skills (Government of Romania 13/2022a)
- The activity of the Childcare Educator is coordinated by the Teachers' Council within the ECEC unit designated by the County School Inspectorate.

During recent years, the changes in early education in nurseries in Romania have led to new regulations regarding the training process of **non-teaching staff** who interact directly with the children.

The term 'non-teaching staff' refers to assistant staff not specifically educated/trained as teachers. Through the draft Government Decision of September 10, 2021, "non-teaching staff of the early childhood education unit must complete a specific professional training module in early education, with a duration of at least 30 hours, once every 5 years. The module includes the following topics: principles of early education, holistic approach to the child and teamwork and educating and supporting families to develop parenting skills" (Government of Romania 13/2022a, Project HG approval methodology nurseries, Art.36, 12).

The guidelines for the organisation and operation of nurseries and other early childhood education units approved by Government Decision no. 1252/2012 provide a framework regarding the activities of the nursery. However, the current Decision no. 566/2022 no longer specifies an employee to child ratio, so there are no staffing requirements based on the number of children in the group. The only exception is in the case of the Childcare Educator; however, this staff category is on the verge of extinction, given that today, in Romania, we only have 2–3 classes per year of Childcare Educators in the few remaining pedagogical high schools with an educator-childcare specialisation.

In terms of older types of certification, these may be graduates from pedagogical high schools, post-secondary pedagogical schools, university colleges of teachers or other equivalent schools with a specialisation in pre-school and primary education.

In the Ministerial Order 5573/2011, Art.32 and Art.33, the functions of **auxiliary teaching staff** are listed, and among those assigned to early education are the following: medical assistant, social assistant and a school doctor employed by the institution.

In terms of further non-teaching staff, among those who interact directly with young children are: cook, caretaker and night supervisor, the latter being a position found in nurseries with a weekly schedule.

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

**Romania: ECEC staff in centre-based settings**

Job title	Main ECEC work-place settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age-range focus of initial professional education	Minimum qualification requirement ECTS credits EQF level ISCED level
<b>(Primary and) Pre-primary Teacher</b> <i>Profesor pentru învățământul preșcolar</i>  <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional	Kindergarten and nursery <i>Grădinițe, creșă</i> 1–5 years <sup>1</sup>	Core pedagogue with group responsibility	1–5 years	3 years at university <i>Award:</i> Bachelor's degree  ECTS credits: 180 EQF Level: 6 ISCED 2011: 6
<b>Educator</b> <i>Educatoare</i>  <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary Education Professional	Kindergarten <i>Grădinițe</i> 3–6 years	Core pedagogue with group responsibility	3–6 years	<i>Since 2005:</i> 3-year university programme <i>Award:</i> Bachelor's degree ECTS credits: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2011: 6  <i>Up to 2005:</i> 5 years upper secondary pedagogical high school route ECTS credits: n/a <sup>2</sup> EQF level: 4 ISCED 2011: 3, 4
<b>Elementary Teacher</b> <i>Institutor</i>	Kindergarten <i>Grădinițe</i> 3–6 years	Core pedagogue with	3–6 years 6–11 years	3 years at higher education college

<sup>1</sup> **Editors' note:** International data sources use varying ways of presenting the age range of children enrolled in ECEC settings. We have chosen the following age-inclusive format for the SEEPRO-3 reports: **0–2** years for children **up to** 3 years of age and **3–5** years for 3-, 4- and 5 year-olds in countries with a primary school entry age of 6 years, as in Romania

<sup>2</sup> n/a 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
(since 2005 replaced by „Early Childhood Teacher“ qualification, but still working in kindergartens and primary schools)	Primary school 6–11 years	group responsibility		<i>Award:</i> Short cycle university degree ECTS credits: 180 EQF Level: 5 ISCED 2011: 5
<b>Childcare Educator</b> <i>Îngrijitor copii</i>  <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional	Nursery / Kindergarten <i>Creșă /Grădinițe</i> 1–5 years	Core pedagogue (nursery)  Qualified co-worker (kindergarten)	1–5 years	Upper secondary education  ECTS credits: n/a EQF Level: 4 ISCED 2011: 4
<b>Early Childhood Assistant</b> <i>Asistent educatoare</i>	Nursery/ kindergarten <i>Creșă /Grădinițe</i> 1–5 years	Non-qualified co-worker	1–5 years	Since 2021: Mandatory attendance at a 30-hour course every 5 years
<b>Medical Doctor</b> <i>Medic</i>	Nursery/ kindergarten <i>Creșă /Grădinițe</i> 1–5 years	Provides first aid in medical situations	1–5 years	Faculty of Medicine, University, 4 years  ECTS credits: 240 EQF Level: 6 ISCED 2011: 6
<b>Assistant Medical Nurse</b> <i>Asistent medical</i>	Nursery/ kindergarten <i>Creșă /Grădinițe</i> 1–5 years	Daily triage of children	1–5 years	Post-secondary studies, 3 years  ECTS credits: n/a EQF Level: 5 ISCED 2011: 5

Worth mentioning here is the fact that, at the level of National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, an initiative was registered to set up a new undergraduate degree (Bachelor level) on early childhood education, correlated with previous degrees in pre-school and primary education. This initiative led to approval of new quality standards for this degree, and a number of universities are working now to set up the programme.

#### 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

Concerning the management of ECEC services, this has not undergone considerable changes in recent years. **Directors/Centre Heads** (*Director/şef de centru*) are trained professionals with educational and management responsibilities to ensure the continuous improvement of quality at the institutional level. Since 2012 (see Government Decision 1252/2012), new conditions have been in place for applicants for this position: they need to have a higher education award (Bachelor level) in one of the following areas: economics, law, administration, medicine, sociology, psychology or educational sciences, with a minimum of two years of work experience in the field of ECEC. This is a significant change in terms of formal requirements.

The Director's duties are set out in the National Education Law no. 1/2011, with subsequent amendments and additions, and related documents.

Specific tasks of an ECEC director include:

- Ensuring that the stated objectives of the educational unit correspond with those established at the national and local level
- Submitting an annual report on the quality of education in the educational unit, drawn up by the evaluation and quality assurance committee; this report, approved by the board of directors, is presented to the teachers' board and the parents' committee/association; it is brought to the attention of the local public administration authorities and the school inspectorate
- Preparing, in accordance with the law, job descriptions for subordinate personnel
- Being responsible for the selection, employment, periodic evaluation, training, motivation and termination of employment of the staff in the unit, as well as the selection of non-teaching staff
- Showing appreciation to the teaching staff, during inspections for obtaining teaching degrees, as well as for awarding merit grades
- Coordinating the collection of statistical data for the national system of education indicators, transmitting these to the school inspectorate, and being responsible for entering the data into the Integrated Information System of Education in Romania (SIIR)
- Approving the kindergarten service schedule of auxiliary teaching and/or non-teaching staff
- Specifying their duties in the organisation and operation regulations of the educational unit
- Controlling, with the support of the managers of the methodological commissions, the quality of the instructive-educational process, by checking documents, assisting in classes and participating in various extracurricular educational activities.

In the course of a school year, the director performs four weekly periods of teaching assistance, so that each teacher is assisted at least once per semester. The director also monitors the continuing professional development of the staff in the unit (National Education Act – amended 2022, Art. 97, 45).

The Director (or deputy director) of a kindergarten is usually selected through a competition. Applicants are required to meet new formal requirements set out in the Education Act 1/2011 and subsequent regulations issued by the MEN: a higher education award (Bachelor's degree), a minimum of four years' professional experience in the field and membership in the National Registry of Management Specialists. To be registered as a management specialist, a person must

have competencies in educational management and administration acquired through initial or continuing professional education.

## 2.3 Centre-based posts of responsibility

There are no centre-based posts of responsibility in **nurseries/crèches** beyond the Centre Leader and the core staff.

In **kindergartens** (and schools), the position of Mentor Teacher is a designated post. These Pre-primary Teachers have a contract with the university responsible for the initial professional education of prospective kindergarten teachers. They are remunerated for the time spent with students during their workplace-based learning periods.

There has been some debate relating to the qualification and tasks of these teacher with a mentorship role. An occupational standard was developed at national level and there was an attempt to build a national registry of mentor teachers. However, lack of financial resources at the MEN have hindered this initiative. However, some effects can be seen, despite the fact that the formal status of mentors has not yet been clarified. One example is at the University of Bucharest where a new Master's programme in *Mentoring in education* has been offered since 2015, preparing interested teachers from schools and kindergartens for this work.

## 2.4 Co-ordinating and supervisory staff

In the early education system in Romania, there are supervisory and coordinating staff, and the roles may vary according to the administrative levels. County School Inspectorates and the Ministry of Education and Research have monitoring and coordination responsibilities at national and county level. At the level of individual institutions such as kindergartens, school inspectors and educational counsellors provide support and guidance.

Educational counsellors are appointed through County Educational Resource and Assistance Centres (*Centrul Judeţean de Asistenţă şi Resurse Educaţionale – CJRAE*) or, in the case of Bucharest, the municipality. Kindergartens have access to the services of a counsellor from one of these offices, who in general have a Master's degree in one of the following: school counselling, educational counselling, career development, educational management, psychological counselling. The county offices and the municipality of Bucharest offices provide counsellors with support and guidance in their specialty and evaluate their activities with educational institutions such as kindergartens.

The responsibilities of educational counsellors in kindergartens vary depending on the specific needs of the institution and community. In general, these responsibilities can include: individual and group counselling to both children and parents to address specific aspects of child development; working as a team with teachers to identify children's needs and concerns and develop appropriate strategies and resources; identifying potential problems of children and developing appropriate intervention plans; providing support for children transitioning to kindergarten or experiencing significant changes in their educational environment; providing information and resources to parents to help them support children's development at home and deal with various challenges; creating and delivering programmes or activities that support children's social-emotional development; providing support in crisis situations, such as behavioural problems or traumatic events; working with other professionals or organisations to provide additional support and resources when needed.

The “Inspectors for Pre-school Education” carry out two types of inspection in the nursery and kindergarten. The first is a specialised thematic inspection twice a year, during which an evaluation of the professional competences/professional activity of the teaching staff is carried out

at the level of the discipline/studies taught or the educational activities they support. The focus is on the quality of teaching activities and professionalism.

The second type is the general inspection. This focuses on the general evaluation of the performances of different educational institutions in terms of educational policy goals and the standards for their implementation. The main objective of the general school inspection of pre-university education units is the entire activity of the specific unit as a provider of educational services.

The pre-school education inspectors have knowledge of the ECEC system through information sent to the inspectorates by the Romanian Ministry of Education.

## 2.5 Specialist support staff

Both nurseries/crèches and kindergartens can benefit from the services of professional support staff, mostly hired from County Centres for Educational Assistance and Resources. In rather exceptional cases, these support staff are employed directly by ECEC providers.

**Profesor logoped** (Logopaedic/Speech Therapy Teachers), with professional studies in special needs education, psychology or pedagogy, support the staff, as well as children and families.

**Profesor consilier** (Counselling and Guidance Teachers) with a professional higher education degree in educational sciences, psychology, sociology or social work may provide psycho-pedagogic support, counselling and guidance directly for children, but also for regular staff and families.

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

As a consequence of the pandemic and the corresponding lack of specialists to compile statistical information, the most recent statistical data on early childhood education and the qualification of staff in Romania were collected in 2019–2020.

Table 2

Romania: Structural composition of ECEC workforce, 2019/20

Categories	Year/proportion of staff, in %
Staff with a specialist three-year (or longer) higher education degree	No systematically compiled national data for core pedagogues in nurseries and kindergartens Kindergarten heads: <b>96.2*</b>
Staff with a specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary, post-secondary)	No systematically compiled national data for core pedagogues in nurseries and kindergartens Kindergarten heads only, including those of kindergartens attached to schools: <b>3.8*</b>
Staff with a non-relevant qualification	Kindergartens only: <b>8.4*</b>
Unqualified staff	No national data available
Male practitioners	2016: <b>0.4%</b> of total staff in nurseries and kindergartens (144 out of 35,084)*
Staff with a minority ethnic background or a 'background of migration'	No systematically compiled national data

Source: INS 2021 \*Data for the local/county level (Bucharest) only.

In the 2019-2020 school year, of the 55.3 thousand persons working in early childhood education centres, 66.3% were teaching and auxiliary teaching staff, and 33.7% were non-teaching staff. Of the total teaching staff in kindergartens, 2.6% also held management positions. In addition, about 500 persons were management staff in kindergartens without teaching duties. Of the 34.9 thousand teaching staff in early childhood education (0.9% more than in the previous school year), 97.0% were qualified teaching staff (INS 2021, 26).

64.1% of teaching staff worked in urban and 35.9% in rural areas. The highest age bands among Pre-primary Teachers were 40-44 years (17.2%) and 35-39 years (15.0%). On average, each teacher was responsible for 15 children in the 2019-2020 school year; in urban areas for 14 children and in rural areas for 18 children. For the duration of the pandemic, no reliable data were collated on the structural composition of the ECEC workforce.

## 4. Initial professional education (IPE)

### 4.1 Initial qualifying routes (higher education and vocational)

Despite the fact that staff with a wide variety of qualifications are still working in the ECEC field, the current official requirements for initial professional studies for ECEC staff in Romania have been narrowed down to two main routes:

- For those working in nurseries/infant-toddler centres (*educator-puericultor*) this is the Pedagogical High School upper secondary vocational route or a post-secondary vocational study route for graduates of non-pedagogical high schools. After passing an entrance examination, graduates from these two routes can study for a Bachelor's degree (Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-primary Education).
- For those working in kindergartens (*Profesor pentru învățământul primar și preșcolar*) this is the higher education route (Bachelor's degree) offering a double specialisation for work in kindergartens and primary schools; graduates are also eligible for a position as Educator (*educator-puericultor*) in a nursery/infant-toddler centre. Support staff (Speech Therapists, Counsellors), who are mostly employed by county administrations and provide services for ECEC provision in their area, are also required to have a higher education level qualification.

It is still possible to work as a Caregiver (*îngrijitor*) in settings for under-threes without having a formal qualification, and sometimes also as auxiliary support staff in kindergartens, mainly in those with an extended-day programme (7:30 to 16:00-18:00).

The main IPE programme for ECEC staff in kindergartens is the Bachelor's degree in Pedagogy for Primary and Pre-primary Education (three years, 180 ECTS credits). The majority of kindergarten staff now has this level of qualification, since special pathways offered by universities attracted non-Bachelor professionals to complete their studies with a higher education diploma. Moreover, the management of ECEC settings has been offering staff with higher education qualifications a higher salary.

Table 3

**Romania: Educator – Early Years**

<p><b>Job title in Romanian:</b> <i>Educator-puericultor</i>  <b>Profile:</b> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional with infant-toddler focus</p>
<p><b>Entry requirements:</b> Completion of compulsory education and a successful ‘eligibility exam’  <b>Professional studies:</b> 4 years Pedagogical High School, specialisation as <i>educator-puericultor</i>  <b>Award:</b> Upper secondary school leaving certificate (<i>Bacalaureate</i>) <b>plus</b> certification as an <i>educator-puericultor</i>  <b>ECTS credits:</b> n/a  <b>EQF level:</b> 4  <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 3 or 4  <b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> Nurseries/crèches, infant-toddler centres, kindergartens organising crèche groups for infants/toddlers  <b>Note:</b> Also eligible for this job are higher education graduates (Bachelor, Pedagogy in Primary and Pre-primary Education).</p>

Table 4

**Romania: Childcare Educator**

<p><b>Job title in Romanian:</b> <i>Îngrijitor copii</i>  <b>Profile:</b> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>
<p><b>Entry requirements:</b> Completion of compulsory education and passing an ‘eligibility exam’  <b>Professional studies:</b> 4 years pedagogical high school, upper secondary level  <b>Award:</b> Upper secondary school leaving certificate (<i>Bacalaureate</i>); certification as Childcare Educator  <b>ECTS credits:</b> n/a  <b>EQF level:</b> 4  <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 3  <b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> Nurseries/crèches, infant-toddler centres, kindergartens organising crèche groups for infants/toddlers</p>

Table 5

**Romania: Primary and Pre-primary Teacher**

<p><b>Job title in Romanian:</b> <i>Profesor pentru învățământul primar și preșcolar</i>  <b>Profile:</b> Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional</p>
<p><b>Entry requirements:</b> Upper secondary school leaving certificate (<i>Bacalaureate</i>) and university entrance examination  <b>Professional studies:</b> 3 years of study in Educational Sciences (Pedagogy for Primary and Pre-primary Education)  <b>Award:</b> Bachelor’s degree and teaching licence in Pedagogy for Primary and Pre-primary Education (double specialisation)  <b>ECTS credits:</b> 180  <b>EQF level:</b> 6  <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 6  <b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> Kindergartens (3-6 years) and primary schools (6-11 years). Graduates are also eligible to work in nurseries / infant-toddler centres.  <b>Note:</b> Since 2005 this is now the main route of professional qualification for kindergartens and primary schools.</p>

Table 6

## Romania: Educator

<b>Job title in Romanian: <i>Educatoare</i></b> <b>Profile: Pre-primary Education Professional</b>
<p><i>Until 2005:</i></p> <p><b>Entry requirements:</b> completion of compulsory education and an ‘eligibility exam’</p> <p><b>Professional studies:</b> 5 years of study at a Pedagogical High School</p> <p><b>Award:</b> upper secondary school leaving certificate (<i>Baccalaureate</i>) <b>plus</b> certification as an <i>educatoare</i></p> <p><b>ECTS credits:</b> n/a</p> <p><b>EQF level:</b> 4</p> <p><b>ISCED 2011:</b> 3, 4</p> <p><b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> Kindergartens (3–6 years)</p> <p>The above route still exists, but there is no possibility to become a tenured teacher working full time without completing the following step:</p> <p><i>Since 2005:</i></p> <p><b>Entry requirements:</b> Upper secondary school leaving certificate <i>Baccalaureate</i>, university entrance examination</p> <p><b>Professional studies:</b> 3-year university study route in educational sciences, specialising in Pedagogy for Primary and Pre-primary Education</p> <p><b>Award:</b> Bachelor’s degree and teaching licence in Pedagogy for Primary and Pre-primary Education (double specialisation)</p> <p><b>ECTS credits:</b> 180</p> <p><b>EQF level:</b> 6</p> <p><b>ISCED 2011:</b> 6</p> <p><b>Main ECEC workplaces:</b> kindergartens (3–6 year-olds) and primary schools (6–11 years old) and sometimes in crèches</p>

Table 7

## Romania: Elementary Teacher

<b>Job title in Romanian: <i>Institutori</i></b> <b>Profile: Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional</b>
<p><b>Entry requirements:</b> Upper secondary school leaving certification: <i>Baccalaureate</i> and higher education entrance examination</p> <p><b>Professional studies:</b> 3 years of study at a <i>Colegiul Universitar Pedagogic de Institutori</i> (University Pedagogical College for Elementary Teachers) – short-term university degree (pre-Bologna system)</p> <p><b>Award:</b> Certificate as an Elementary Teacher (Pre-school and/or Primary)</p> <p><b>ECTS credits:</b> 180</p> <p><b>EQF level:</b> 5</p> <p><b>ISCED 2011:</b> 5</p> <p><b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> Kindergartens (3-6 years) and primary schools (6-11 years).</p> <p><b>Note:</b> An alternative route to obtain this qualification used to be successful graduation from a Pedagogical High School (<i>Baccalaureate</i> + professional certificate) and a course of studies at any type of higher education institution (Bachelor level). This route was closed in 2005, when the Bachelor’s degree for Pre-primary and Primary Teachers was established.</p>

## 4.2 Competences, curricula and pedagogic-didactic approaches in initial professional education programmes

This section refers to the current qualification routes for core pedagogues in nurseries (*educator-puericultor*) and in kindergartens (*Profesor pentru învățământul primar și preșcolar*).

### **Educator – early years (*Educator-puericultor*)**

This upper secondary vocational qualification was strengthened by the Government Decision (1252/2012) on the organisation and functioning of nurseries and other early childhood education institutions, which specifically required that this should be the minimum requirement for pedagogical staff. The duration of vocational high school studies is four years and the leaving certificate has two components: the Baccalaureate (final exam at the end of high school and prerequisite for accessing higher education) and the professional certificate (professional examination granting access to qualified jobs in nurseries/crèches).

The main responsibilities expected to be carried out by these professionals are:

- Caregiving and stimulating activities to increase the child’s autonomy
- Activities focused on the social-emotional development of the child
- Training and development of oral expression
- Activities focussing on enhancing the child’s attention span and receptivity
- monitoring and documenting the developmental progress of the children;
- Active cooperation with parents/legal representatives of the children.

#### **Curricular areas:**

This IPE route comprises a combination of classic general subjects, allowing graduates to take their Baccalaureate exam and eventually go on to higher education studies, and also professional subjects and professional practice in ECEC institutions.

The first two years of study comprise curricular areas such as language and communication, mathematics and sciences, but also social-humanistic disciplines, including general psychology, child and family psychology, pedagogy, early childhood education, and professional practice. More specialised professional subjects are included in the last two years of study: hygiene and child growth/care, child pathology (0–3 years), play and learning, special needs education, psychology of education, child protection and children’s rights. All these are complemented with practice-oriented educational/learning activities in different areas: language, sciences, technology, arts, music and drama. Field-based placements take place for at least three to four hours per week and can also be organised as compact week(s) during the semester.

### **Primary and Pre-primary Teacher (*Profesor pentru învățământul primar și preșcolar*)**

In Romania, all teachers in the pre-university education system have to have a higher education qualification. The profession of Pre-primary (and Primary) Teacher is regulated by law and preceded by a three-year Bachelor’s degree in Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-primary Education. The degree can be offered by public and private higher education institutions if they have been accredited by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, according to the official standards approved in 2016 (see ARACIS 2016). The agency has stringent compulsory criteria and quality indicators for these degree programmes in terms of curriculum, human resources, facilities etc.





### Competences/didactic approaches:

The key competences to be acquired are described in the table below. They are based on a national framework, using the example of the University of Bucharest. The objectives of the Bachelor programme for prospective Primary and Pre-primary Teachers comply with identified professional needs and with the roles and specific competences that define the activity of educational science specialists (see also the pedagogical perspective outlined by Stan 2014). Since the academic year 2013–2014, the study programme has focused on professional and transversal competences, in accordance with the standards defined at national level by the Romanian National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

Table 8

**Romania: Primary and Pre-primary Teacher – Competence specifications** (University of Bucharest, based on NQF)

<b>General competences</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Planning and developing educational programmes adapted to the primary and pre-primary education levels and to the target group</li><li>– Assessing educational programmes for primary and pre-primary education</li><li>– Group / classroom management and capacity to manage educational projects specific for primary and pre-primary education</li><li>– Offering counselling, guidance, psychological and pedagogical assistance to different stakeholder groups (children, families, teachers, employees, etc.)</li><li>– Self-assessment and continuous improvement of professional practices and career evolution.</li></ul>
<b>Instrumental competences</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Utilising pedagogical knowledge appropriately in designing educational and instructional activities: concepts, models, methods, techniques, scenarios and educational alternatives</li><li>– Identifying and using educational concepts, models and strategies for appropriate pedagogical methods</li><li>– Identifying and comparing theories, models and specific techniques and instruments necessary in educational assessment</li><li>– Analysing specific concepts, theories, models and techniques for designing targeted interventions in counselling, guidance and psychological and pedagogical assistance of various target groups</li><li>– Conducting pedagogical research to inform theory and practice and reflecting on professional practices aiming at continuing improvement</li><li>– Interpreting and explaining various pedagogical theories, models and contexts from an educational manager’s perspective</li><li>– Promoting reflective practice based on students/children’s learning and on one’s own professional development</li><li>– Creating educational projects/programmes regarding the efficient organisation of the learning environment and of the resources used, in accordance with the principles and specific functions of the educational management.</li></ul>
<b>Interpersonal competences</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Conducting educational programmes through the appropriate use of specific concepts, theories and methodologies, adapted for different age-groups</li><li>– Applying standard methods of assessment in educational activities with children / adults and using these to improve process quality.</li><li>– Analysing, interpreting and explaining evaluation data both at the individual and institutional levels</li><li>– Designing educational programmes in order to identify, analyse and respond to specific educational needs</li></ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Developing good professional practices and being involved in the process of drafting research projects, taking into account specific methodological norms and principles.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Systemic competences</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Analysing, interpreting and correlating intra-/interdisciplinary practices and applying pedagogic knowledge in the designing of educational activities and didactic resources on different levels (macro, meso, micro)</li> <li>– Explaining and interpreting educational contexts/situations and converting the knowledge, abilities and skills into pedagogical planning</li> <li>– Analysing and interpreting various educational contexts through the use of scientific concepts, paradigms and theories regarding persons with special educational needs</li> <li>– Carrying out educational activities in a methodologically appropriate way in accordance with the National Curriculum framework</li> <li>– Designing and applying evaluation tools, analysing and interpreting the results; providing arguments for the choice of methods, techniques and the instruments employed</li> <li>– Transferring the results of an evaluation into practice to support institutional or individual development</li> <li>– Creating alternative evaluation strategies for specific teaching and learning processes.</li> </ul>

The following competences can be seen as the expected synthesis of the learning processes at the BA programme level:

- Designing, carrying out and assessing teaching and learning activities
- Designing, carrying out and assessing extracurricular activities and educational partnerships
- Psychological and pedagogical assistance for the pupils in a situation regarded as at risk, single parent families, parents who work abroad, parents with very low wages etc.)
- Accomplishing the optimal collaboration between the school and the families of the children, as well as with the local community
- Performing management and resource management at class level
- Institutional management and marketing
- Design and evaluation of social and educational projects
- Expertise in designing and implementing the curriculum and the initial and continuous training programmes.

**Curricular areas:**

The curriculum of this programme is strongly regulated by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education through a set of specific standards. The most recent standards, approved in 2016 and covering around 75% of the total study programme, create a common national curriculum framework. Approximately 25% of the programme content is decided on by each university. The standards state some basic/fundamental subjects, valid for all degrees in educational sciences, but also a large number of study areas/disciplines specific to this particular degree. Practical training should cover at least 15% of the total duration of the study programme.



Table 9

**Romania: IPE curriculum for prospective Primary and Pre-primary Teachers – first year of studies** (University of Bucharest, Department for Teacher Education, Study programme in Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-primary Education)

Subject	ECTS credits
<b>I. Basic disciplines</b>	
Fundamentals of Psychology	5
Fundamentals of Pedagogy	5
Fundamentals of Special Psycho-Pedagogy	5
Information and Communication Technologies	4
Curriculum Theory and Practice	5
Early Childhood Education	4
<b>II. Domain disciplines</b>	
Psychology of Personality	4
Developmental Psychology	4
Romanian Literature	4
Psychology of Education	5
Mathematics	5
Psycho-Pedagogy of Learning Difficulties	4
Professional Practicum (Pre-School and Primary Education)	2
<b>III. Complementary subjects</b>	
Foreign Languages	4
<b>TOTAL ECTS CREDITS</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Optional (elective)</b>	
Physical Education	4

Table 10

**Romania: IPE curriculum for prospective Primary and Pre-primary Teachers – second year of studies** (University of Bucharest, Department for Teacher Education, Study programme on Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-primary Education)

Subject	ECTS credits
<b>I. Basic disciplines</b>	
Instruction: theory, research and practice	4
Evaluation: theory and methodology	4
Methodology of Educational Research	4
Educational Theories	3
<b>II. Specialism disciplines</b>	
Computer Based Learning	4
Class/Group Management	4
Primary School Education	4
Contemporary Romanian Language	5
Didactics of Languages and Communication (Pre-school Education)	4
Children's Literature	4
Mathematics	4
Didactics of Mathematics and Sciences. Mathematics (Pre-school Education)	3
Didactics of Mathematics and Sciences. Sciences (Pre-school Education)	3
Professional Practicum (Pre-school Education)	4
Professional Practicum (Primary School)	4
<b>III. Complementary disciplines</b>	

Subject	ECTS credits
<b>One optional- Package A</b> Sociology of Education (elective) Educational Management (elective)	2
<b>TOTAL ECTS CREDITS</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Optional (elective)</b>	
Theory, Solfeggio, Dictation (elective)	4
Foreign Languages (elective)	4

Table 11

**Romania: IPE curriculum for prospective Primary and Pre-primary Teachers – third year of studies** (University of Bucharest, Department for Teacher Education, Study programme on Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-primary Education)

Subject	ECTS credits
<b>I. Specialism disciplines</b>	
Contemporary Romanian Language	3
Psycho-pedagogy of Play	4
Didactics of Romanian Language and Literature	4
Didactics of Arithmetic	4
History and Didactics of History	4
Geography and Didactics of Geography	4
Didactics of the Arts: Musical Education	4
Didactics of Physical and Psychomotor Education	4
Didactics of Civic Educational Activities	4
Didactics of the Arts: Creative Education	4
Environmental Education/ Didactics of Natural Sciences	4
Didactics of Practical Abilities	4
Professional Practicum (Pre-school Education)	5
Professional Practicum (Primary Education)	5
<b>II. Complementary subjects</b>	
<b>One Optional – Package B</b> Intercultural Education Educational management	3
<b>TOTAL ECTS CREDITS</b>	<b>60</b>

Students are awarded an additional 10 ECTS credits for the Bachelor of Arts Degree final examination. For successful finalisation of studies, they need to pass a written exam on fundamental knowledge of primary and pre-primary education (curriculum, instructional design, evaluation and assessment, communication and group management), and to defend a research-based Bachelor dissertation paper in front of a committee.

### 4.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

From the moment in which the profession of **Teacher for Primary and Pre-primary Education** was regulated, the flexibility of the routes decreased.

Regarding the *educator-puericultor* in crèches/infant-toddler centres, persons who have not completed the classical route of four years Pedagogical High School but have graduated from a different kind of high school and have a *Baccalaureate* diploma, can enrol for two years at a ‘post-high school’ offering the same specialisation. These post-high schools are not permanent, but are organised on demand, when employers are in need of professionals. The main issue in

Romania is that service provision for the under-threes is extremely low, and kindergartens, although they can form nursery groups since 2012, are reluctant to do so, as local authorities are not sufficiently financing this cycle of education. So this particular position, if available in nurseries, is open also to other higher education graduates in educational sciences; however, the take-up is low, mainly because of the very low salary level.

In terms of the **Primary and Pre-primary Teachers**, some flexibility is offered through open and distance learning programmes, which also have to be accredited by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, and also through professional reconversion programmes. The latter can be organised by universities for professionals working in kindergartens (or primary schools) who have a teaching certification in a different domain (i.e. teacher of biology, geography, languages, etc.) and therefore work as ‘unqualified’ staff in a kindergarten or primary school. These studies take two years to complete and are awarded 120 ECTS credits. They are organised as modules in a blended learning approach.

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

### **Educator – Early Years** (*Educator – puericultor*)

The IPE programme for Educators includes three to four hours per week compulsory workplace-based learning/professional practice in the field (three hours in the first two years and four hours in the last two years of study). The structure and content of this field-based practicum relates to the progressive stages of professional development: first observational practice, then practising professional skills under supervision, and finally designing and delivering educational activities under supervision. There are no clear standards regarding workplace-based learning in IPE for this level. The weekly hour allocations can also be organised as compact modules.

### **Primary and Pre-primary Teacher** (*Profesor pentru învățământul primar și preșcolar*)

For Primary and Pre-primary Teachers, national standards require a minimum of 15% professional practice in the IPE curriculum and the ECTS credits allocated. This means that in order to meet the standard requirement, every study programme should have at least 27 ECTS credits allocated to professional practice. It is common for kindergarten placements to take place in specified institutions selected jointly by the university as the training provider, and the local school inspectorate as the main beneficiary of qualified staff. Professional practice periods are coordinated by an academic from the university side, who assists students in all stages and evaluates them at the end, but also by a mentor teacher from the kindergarten, who has a contract with the university and is remunerated for his/her work with the prospective kindergarten teachers. All universities providing the Bachelor’s degree have their own network of placement kindergartens with experienced mentors. Nevertheless, the students do not have a sufficient number of sustained periods of time during their studies for working in these placement kindergartens. Workplace-based learning at IPE level tends to be fragmented and thus lacking in impact in the long run.

Key skills and competences to be acquired during professional practice include (but are not necessarily limited to) the following:

- Understanding group dynamics and developing strategies for high quality interactions with children
- Designing and adapting learning experiences according to specifications in the curriculum, delivering and assessing them
- Developing reflective practice skills to improve one’s own professional practices.

In general, students are asked to maintain a portfolio to document both their observational and research skills, but also their capacity to take responsibility for working professionally with children. The teacher mentor in the kindergarten assesses the student’s performance and informs the academic supervisor at the university. The university tutor then undertakes the final evaluation of the student based on the mentor’s evaluation, the quality of the portfolio and the progress made over the course of the semester (professional practice is assessed each semester).

There are two significant current debates and prospective reforms in Romania. The first is related to the **qualification and role of Teacher Mentors** in the kindergartens. An occupational standard was developed at national level with multiple roles for mentors and there was even an attempt to build a national registry of mentor teachers. But the initiative is not being followed up because of the lack of financial resources at the MEN. However, some effects can be seen, despite the fact that the formal status of mentors has not yet been clarified. One example is at the University of Bucharest where a new Master’s programme in *Mentoring in education* has been offered since 2015, preparing interested teachers from schools and kindergartens.

The second debate has started at the policy level, refocusing attention on a provision in the Education Act 1/2011 which called for a change in the institutional model for teacher education by introducing *didactic Master programmes*. One of the key ideas of these programmes is to spend the final semester as a **compulsory internship** in an educational institution. One reason for this could be the current procedures for newly qualified teachers, who have to wait for two years in order to take a final qualifying exam which confers teacher certification and makes them eligible for taking up a permanent teaching position.

## 6. Continuing professional development (CPD) of ECEC staff

Continuing professional development for educational professionals working in services for the under-threes is not regulated at the national level but remains the decision of each institution and local authority. Taking into account the very low coverage of this service and the limited number of staff hired, a broader framework is possibly not yet needed. However, the various CPD opportunities available for Pre-primary and Primary Teachers do not apply to the pedagogical staff in nurseries/infant-toddler centres, where CPD is mostly offered in form of various projects and not as a coherent system. Moreover, the participation in CPD is unequal and there are still some professionals who avoid it (see Lucian Ciolan 2014, 57).

### **Primary and Pre-primary Teacher** (*Profesor pentru învățământul primar și preșcolar*)

The CPD of Primary and Pre-primary Teachers is located within a broad and comprehensive system organised and coordinated at the national level by MEN.

According to the Education Act 1/2001, CPD is **both a right and an obligation** for teachers, and can be realised in the following ways:

- Programmes and activities for the continuous improvement of scientific, pedagogical and didactic skills
- Training programmes in the area of management, leadership and evaluation of education
- Training courses and exams for teaching awards II and I (see below)
- Professional reconversion programmes for persons with a non-specialist background
- Studies corresponding to a degree specialisation.

Both pedagogical and management staff in pre-university education are **required to participate in credit-awarding training programmes every five years** after passing the final qualifying exam (*definitivat*) which confers teacher certification.

Accumulating credits has an impact both on salaries and **career advancement**. For instance, participation in CPD and credit accumulation is one of the key criteria for awarding teachers a salary supplement, called ‘merit award’ (*gradație de merit*). This is obtained through an open competition and is based on the teacher’s professional achievements over the last five years. The stipend adds around 25% to the salary for a duration of five years.

In order to accumulate credits, teachers have to participate in accredited training courses. At the national level, MEN has a specialised accreditation body for teacher and management training courses in pre-university education: This *Specialised Commission for Accreditation* is composed of twenty independent experts appointed through an open call for a duration of five years, with the possibility of two mandates. These experts work closely with the permanent staff in the Ministry of National Education responsible for CPD (Directorate for Continuing Training). The Commission is asked to evaluate the course proposals submitted by different providers. Once accredited, these courses are included in the register of accredited training providers and are assigned a specific number of professional transferable credits.

Graduates of the study programme *Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-primary Education* can benefit from CPD activities in public institutions, primary and pre-primary education units, County Teachers’ Centres (regional CPD provider), professional associations and trade unions. According to the regulations in force, the **CPD provider** can be an educational institution, public or private, a non-governmental organisation or even a private company specialising in CPD. The training courses they submit for accreditation to the national responsible body should comply with the professional standards for the teaching profession and with the regulatory framework for accreditation of training providers, provided by Ministerial Order no. 5561/2011 *Methodology for accreditation and periodical evaluation of CPD providers and their programmes*.

Teachers’ Centres (known as ‘Teacher Training Houses’ – *Casa Corpului Didactic*) are important CPD providers at the local/county level and are part of a national network financed by Ministry of National Education.

In synthesis, the offer of accredited CPD should fall under one of the programmes for different categories of personnel (mostly for Pre-primary Teachers) described in the table below.



Table 12

## Romania: CPD courses for Pre-primary Teachers

Year	Name of the course	Description	Targeted personnel	ECTS credits
2020-2021	Family–school communication management  A creative approach to the curriculum in early education	Workshop on how time constraints are the biggest obstacle to the level of parental involvement. Good communication with the teacher to find suitable and collaborative ways to improve this situation.	Pre-primary Teachers and auxiliary teaching staff	15
2020-2021	A creative approach to the curriculum in early education	Curriculum for pre-school education involves planning early education based on the diversity of contexts and areas of development.	Pre-primary Teachers	12
2020-2021	Digital tools for online work with young children	The course responds to the need to ensure optimal conditions for Pre-primary Teachers to carry out online activities and to have a consistent set of digital tools so that they offer young children a variety of learning contexts.	Pre-primary Teachers	10
2020-2021	Designing and carrying out activities integrated in early education	The course responds to the need to develop the skills of Pre-primary Teachers in the design and development of activities according to the current Curriculum for early education.	Pre-primary Teachers	12
2020-2021	Online teaching methods, tools and strategies in early education	The training programme aims to support teachers in carrying out teaching – learning – assessment activities in the online environment by identifying important aspects regarding the design of online activities, the utilisation of online teaching resources and platforms, as well as by identifying and practising some methods, means and strategies of carrying out curricular and extracurricular activities in the online environment.	Pre-primary Teachers	10
2020-2021	Modern guidelines in pre-school education	Developing the professional skills of teachers in order to design and carry out educational activities appropriate to the age and individual needs and potentials of young children.	Pre-primary Teachers	25
2020-	Creativity and innovation	Creativity and innovation are	Pre-primary	22

Year	Name of the course	Description	Targeted personnel	ECTS credits
2021	in the instructional-educational process	broad, complex and multifaceted concepts that can be applied in several fields. Their multi-disciplinarity, variety of approaches and conceptualisations are covered.	Teachers	
2019	Communication strategies at the level of the educational unit	Two situations are identified: supporting children to develop optimally and helping them to overcome a crisis situation.	Pre-primary Teachers Auxiliary teaching staff Management, guidance and control staff	16
2020	Net Time – Useful, creative, safe use of the Internet	The training and development of pre-university teaching staff in digital competence and the skills needed for useful, safe and creative use of the Internet and smart technologies in teaching, as well as in the overall instructional-educational process	Teaching staff in pre-university education including Pre-primary Teachers and auxiliary teaching staff in early education	15
2019	INDOOR and OUTDOOR non-formal education	Outdoor education is an organised form of education and prepares the child for outdoor life, based on the philosophy, theory and practice of experiential education and environmental education.	Pre-primary Teachers	22
2021-2022	Learning management based on interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary principles	Article 68 of 1 of Law 1/2011 stipulates that education should have as its essential objective the formation of fundamental skills, including skills in the field of methods and strategies for managing didactic activities. In order to transmit these skills to children, pre-university teachers must acquire a series of related methods, techniques and strategies.	Pre-primary Teachers	22
2020	Learning through play and exploration workshop	The purpose of the workshop programme is to contribute to the development of cognitive, affective, psychomotor skills and to the development of students' motivation for learning	Pre-primary Teachers Primary School Teachers	18
2020-	Inclusive early education	Inclusive education is quality,	Pre-primary	22



Year	Name of the course	Description	Targeted personnel	ECTS credits
2021		accessible education that fulfils its purpose of addressing all children without discrimination.	Teachers Primary School Teachers	
2020-2021	Prevention of language disorders in pre-schoolers and young schoolchildren	In order to promote the education and development of pre-schoolers' verbal expression, it is necessary that the educational activity is carried out in such a way that the pre-schoolers are stimulated to participate in the activities both verbally and mentally.	Pre-primary Teachers Primary School Teachers	10

Overall, however, the number of courses specifically targeting ECEC staff is not extensive, particularly courses funded by the national or local authorities. Public investment in CPD in recent years mostly took the form of Structural Funds projects, but this situation created considerable disparities in terms of access, which was much easier for professionals working in large cities than for those in rural environments. The financing of CPD is currently a critical issue. Investment at the national level is restricted to projects and the modest funding of the Teacher Training Houses. Investment at the local/institutional investment is very limited and staff participation in CPD is compromised by the very low level of their income.

Considering the need for continuing professional development for implementing the Early Education concept, the situation regarding the development of training programmes within the School Inspectorates is in most cases not at an up-to-date level. Recent research shows that in some School Inspectorates no training projects for early education have been carried out since 2015 or even 2011, which does not correspond to the ideal of guiding Pre-primary Teachers towards supporting the holistic development of the child at an early age in reaching their maximum potential, or in the innovative use of resources for enhancing the quality of teaching.

## 7. Working conditions and current workforce issues

### 7.1 Remuneration

In the last three years, statistics have shown that fewer and fewer graduates of pedagogical high schools and later graduates of primary and pre-primary education study programmes choose to stay in education, one of the prime reasons cited being the salary.

Currently, teachers are paid according to the Salary Law No. 153/2017, which includes the salary of all budget categories. Salaries are very low compared to other budget categories.

The most recent data, presented in the specialised media by the authorities, show that the lowest monthly salary in pre-university education would be 2,647 lei (€542), for a teacher with short-term higher education and teaching degree I. The highest, without increments and other benefits, such as that of a teacher with long-term higher education and teaching grade I, is 4,709

lei (€965) per month. The annual average gross starting salary of a Pre-primary Teacher working at ISCED 02 level is €8,027 and for a teacher at the top of the range €15,644 (Salary Law No. 153/2017, art.45).

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

The majority of professional staff employed in ECEC works on a full-time basis, since there is little flexibility in terms of employment regulations. The regular working week comprises 40 hours, whereas the time for direct interaction with children varies according to the type of institution and the way the service is regulated. For instance, both short programme (around four hours per day) and extended programme (around eight hours per day) kindergartens exist. In the latter case, professional staff may work in shifts if the opening hours exceed the regular working hours of the staff. There are no national statistical data available specifically on full-time and part-time employment in nurseries and kindergartens.

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

In the light of new policy initiatives related to the teaching profession, the induction of newly qualified teachers/educators is under debate again. After taking up their first job, teachers usually have a probationary period of two years (see end of *Chapter 5*), after which they take an examination called *definitivat*, which is both the final certification as a professional, and also the first step in career development. However, because of the lack of investment in this area, the amount of support they receive in the workplace varies considerably. After graduation and hiring, there is a mentorship system dedicated for entry level professionals called *mentorat pentru stagiatură*. Although not very structured and regulated, this approach is institution-based and supports the integration and improvement of professional practices during the teacher's early career.

## 7.4 Non-contact time

The contractual obligations of both professional staff working in nurseries/crèches and in kindergartens include responsibilities which are not necessarily related to direct contact with children, such as participation in training and professional development activities, mentoring for other newly employed professionals, etc. In fact, staff responsibilities, mostly in kindergartens, diversified considerably in recent years, creating an increasing workload and pressure for the profession. There are no compiled national data available, but it can be estimated that a kindergarten teacher spends an average of two hours per day on this type of activity.

## 7.5 Current staffing issues

In terms of ECEC services for children under 3 years of age there is both a shortage of available provision and a shortage of qualified staff. The main reasons for the latter are the low salaries and the challenging work conditions.

In kindergartens/pre-primary education, the share of qualified staff is rather high, giving the system a certain level of stability. Basically, there is no shortage of qualified staff at the national level, particularly if the large number of study programmes in Pedagogy for Primary and Pre-primary Education accredited over the last few years are taken into account. However, the staffing situation in small urban and more isolated rural areas is a different matter, where providers have difficulties to recruit qualified staff. The main problem is twofold: one is related to the low level of income, and the other one is the inequality of qualified staff supplies in different areas.



Statistics show that of the total staff in pre-university education (290,087 persons), 19% work in early childhood/pre-school education). 208,642 are teaching staff, 20,941 auxiliary staff, and 7,484 administrative staff (World Vision 2022).

According to experts, the high level of aging of the teaching staff reflects a social phenomenon that the entire economy will feel in the next 10-15 years.

An overloaded or unsuitable curriculum, bureaucratic obligations, low support from the Ministry of National Education and insufficient digital equipment for schools are problems indicated by teachers as the main obstacles to performance in the World Vision survey (2022).

The greater majority (96%) of the surveyed teachers stated that they wished to be consulted through questionnaires regarding decisions in the field of school education (75% to a great extent and 21% to an average extent). To respond to this need, World Vision launched the "Civic School Inspectorate" project through which it will create the first integrated online consultation platform for teachers, students and parents in Romania. As part of the project, the organisation created a first online consultation questionnaire, completed by 375 of the 570 teachers registered in the first week after the launch. According to World Vision: "For the respondents to the questionnaire, the main obstacles that prevent them from achieving higher performance with students are "loaded schedule" (46%) or "inappropriate schedule" (20%), "bureaucratic obligations" (35%) or "low support at the ministry level (decisions, frequent disruptive changes)" (24%), the insufficiency of "schools' digital equipment" (30%), but also the "lack of a stimulating environment" (30%). Last but not least, teachers mention the "lack of parental involvement" (25%) and the "socio-economic problems of the families" (25%)" (World Vision 2022).

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

A number of recent events, studies and documents strengthen confidence in the increasing importance of and support for the early education sector, not only at the level of governance, but also at the level of strategic partners, mobilisers with expertise and enabling agencies. Some examples:

- The Government Ordinance article 9, paragraph (2) has been amended and now specifies that the state provides basic funding for preschoolers, both in state education and in accredited private and denominational education (as for students in accredited private and confessional compulsory general education). Funding is based on the standard cost per preschooler or per pre-school, depending on calculations made according to the methodology developed by the Ministry of National Education.
- Delegates from Romania participate in the European Commission ECEC Working Groups such as the "EC Thematic Working Group for Early Childhood Education and Care". The latter aimed to support Member States to implement the 2019 Council Recommendation for high-quality ECEC systems and its main component, the EU Quality Framework for ECEC. It mainly supports peer-to-peer learning in quality measurement, monitoring and evaluation and will follow up the ET2020 working group which focused on inclusion, staff professionalisation and managing the COVID-19 pandemic in the early education and care sector. The most recent Working Group runs from 2021–2025 (European Commission 2023).
- In 2021, the Government's Emergency Ordinance (GEO) no. 100 of 10.09.2021 (Portal Legislative 2021) specifies that "with subsequent amendments and additions, it is regulated that



the pre-school level is part of early education, more than that, nurseries established by decision of the local council, under its subordination, are part of the public educational system. As a result of these legislative changes, the takeover of nurseries within the education system is to be carried out starting from the 2019-2020 school year.” According to GEO 100/2021, administrative, financial, and managerial measures are needed to support the proper functioning of nurseries within the national education system. Without these, the legitimate right of parents/ legal representatives to enrol children in fully functioning nurseries within a reliable education system may be negatively affected.

## 9. Recent country-specific research focusing on ECEC staff

There has been little large-scale funding of research on early childhood education and care in Romania. UNICEF Romania continues to support reports and studies about this age level which are very much needed and appreciated; however, they tend to be mostly policy-focused rather than practice-focused.

### Effects of a teacher-focused educational intervention on children’s wellbeing

**Source:** Rodawell – Romanian-Danish Centre for Children’s Wellbeing 2017, research and development project coordinated by the University of Bucharest, 2016-2019) (see *References* for further details)

**Aims and background:** The aim of this investigation was to devise, implement and measure the effects of a multi-component educational intervention targeted at 4 to 10 year-old children recruited from two kindergartens and two primary schools located in areas of Bucharest that are lower-than-average in terms of socioeconomic living conditions. This was a longitudinal research study that compared the wellbeing and academic performance of children enrolled in two state education settings. In the first group the children were exposed to enhanced educational intervention; in the second (control) group the age-matched children did not experience the intervention programme. The intervention built on the success of the RODACIE programme that was developed by Romanian and Danish education experts and piloted during 2011-2015 with economically-disadvantaged pre-schoolers. The project was conducted by members of the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences at the University of Bucharest in collaboration with a team of educational researchers and trainers from VIA University College in Denmark.

**Procedure:** One of the main goals was to provide teachers with intensive training sessions in key areas which address both the content taught in class and the learning and relational environment. During the 12 months of intervention teachers were offered opportunities for “formative evaluation” while the intervention team offered on-going and direct support for transferring new skills to students in class. Design: Two groups: control and intervention; Pre-(baseline), mid-term (six months into the intervention) and post-intervention measurement (at the end of the programme). Sample: 247 children in the intervention group (89 in kindergartens; 158 in primary schools); 191 children in the control group (93 in kindergartens; 98 in primary schools). Instruments: Well-validated and widely-implemented instruments were used to assess the children’s emotional, behavioural and social functioning.

**Findings and implications:** This research produced a comprehensive final report on the wellbeing of children at risk in nursery and primary schools. The final conclusions particularly emphasised a high level of vulnerability in emotional and social indicators. The research data led to the creation of a "Wellbeing Barometer" to be used as a self-assessment and diagnostic tool in kindergartens and primary schools in Romania.

### National and European impact study on early childhood education

**Source:** ACEDO – Association Centre for Education and Human Rights 2022 (see *References* for further details)

**Aims:** In the Effective Social Dialogue project for Alternative Public Policies in Early Education (2014-2020) the documentation activity began with a study at the national level, to understand the needs, opportunities and current situation of early education. Early education in Romania is a priority for public policies, but currently faces insufficient funding and a new curriculum adapted to the 0–3 age group but put into practice by teachers unprepared to carry out educational activities for this age segment. The study also addresses children's access to early childhood education services, especially in rural areas.

**Procedure/Methods:** 200 discussions with education experts, carried out through interviews and questionnaires. In parallel to the survey, examples of inspiring practice from Europe are presented, where early education is a basic pillar in the growth and education of the future adult, being a service developed through the contribution of the community.

**Selected findings:** The national and European impact study on the early education of children in nurseries identified the main characteristics and needs of early education in Romania. During the interviews with early education specialists, we identified that there is a desire for involvement at the national level. The quantitative study highlighted the fact that early education in Romania is on a good path, although it requires attention to address aspects related to: infrastructure, curriculum, staff qualifications, access to early education and social inclusion.

**Implications:** Among the examples of inspiring practices from other countries that would benefit nursery provision in Romania are the following:

1. Italy – Reggio Emilia model of early education – pedagogy of listening, encouraging children to discover and undertake activities on their own
2. Spain – Inter-generational projects with the involvement of grandparents/elderly in the activities of children aged 0-3 years
3. France – Stimulating the creation of private nurseries by private companies
4. Slovenia – Language workshops for the integration of immigrants or inclusion of vulnerable groups
5. Finland – Flexible programme, where nurseries offer the possibility to use their services during the evening, night or weekend.

### Project for Early Education Reform (P.R.E.T.)

This is a national project co-financed by the Government of Romania and the Development Bank of the Council of Europe (BDCE), with a budget of 105 million Euros. Originally, P.R.E.T. it was supposed to take place between 2007 and 2016, but the duration of this programme was extended until 31 Dec. 2021.

**Source:** P.R.E.T. 2023. The project for the reform of early education (2017-2021) (see *References* for further details)



**Aims:** The main objective of this project is to improve the infrastructure of the most disadvantaged kindergartens, so that they reach a minimum standard of operation, as well as to ensure the necessary spaces for the units that suffered from the process of retrocession of nationalised buildings. The project will finance the rehabilitation and furnishing of underprivileged kindergartens, as well as the construction and furnishing of new kindergartens in certain locations. The possibility of equipping preparatory classes with special equipment will also be analysed.

Within the project, approximately 53,000 children across the country will benefit from the renovation and construction works. The further training and professional development of kindergarten staff (managers, teachers, nurses, administrators and other categories) is also included.

More specifically, the Early Education Reform Project aims to:

- To improve the current infrastructure of the early education system for children from 3 to 6/7 years by renovating and developing kindergarten settings
- To improve the quality of early education by supporting teaching staff and providing appropriate teaching materials
- To make the educational system more efficient by creating Resource Centres for Education and Development, as well as through developing the educational management system of the Ministry of Education.

**Procedure/Methods:**

- Equipping kindergartens with: didactic material (maps, boards, models); educational games; books/brochures
- Establishment of the network of Resource Centers for Education and Development (CRED)
- Establishment of specific services for children aged 0-6/7 with disabilities and special needs
- Increasing the capacity of medical staff and local authorities to monitor, evaluate and develop educational policies.
- Specific training modules will be organised for educators (approx. 35,000 people), ECEC staff – carers/assistants/medical staff (approx. 13,000), managers (approx. 2,500) and parents.

**Intended outcomes:**

The results and effects of the programme were monitored and evaluated with the help of indicators that reflect key aspects of programme implementation, such as:

- Improving kindergarten management
- Improving visibility by raising the level of parents' knowledge about their children's performance
- Improving the existing infrastructure through renovation works
- Improving teaching staff practices in the system
- increasing the quality of educational services
- Renovating 340 kindergartens and equipping them with specific equipment, as well as with special access paths for children with disabilities
- The construction of 410 new kindergartens, equipped with specific equipment, as well as with special access paths for children with disabilities
- Providing CPD sessions for all Pre-primary Teachers
- Providing training for all kindergarten directors
- Providing training of all caregivers/assistants/administrators etc. in kindergartens
- Establishing 318 Resource Centres to offer a complex package of services in support of the community



- Monitoring/tracking the proportion of the 13,000 kindergartens equipped with didactic material, games, etc.
- Monitoring/tracking the number of children from urban and rural environments who benefit from rehabilitation works/new constructions.

## 10. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

If we analyse the current challenges in the field of early childhood education and care in Romania, at least three key aspects need to be highlighted:

- Romania faces an **aging workforce**, which reflects a social phenomenon that the entire economy will feel in the next 10–15 years. However, the situation is particularly alarming since there do not seem to be any affirmative measures in place to compensate the situation in the future. This situation is leading to a fluctuation in numbers and also to a low level of new entries into the education system (Economedia.ro 2022).
- **Qualification requirements for staff working with children under 3 years of age.** Here the challenge is to clearly define and regulate the type of professional, their level of study and their responsibilities in nurseries as a result of the new regulatory framework, which situates nurseries within the national education system under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. Do all professionals working with this group need a higher education qualification? What will the envisaged new degree in early childhood education look like? How will a motivational structure to attract young persons into the profession be developed and implemented? There are many questions on the table of decision-makers, who are currently working towards a new Education Act.
- **Continuing training and career progression for early childhood professionals.** At the moment ECEC staff are working in a rather chaotic system, comprising legacies and remaining elements of the past, but also integrating new realities, some of them being still under construction. This issue links to the need to enhance the attractiveness of the profession and also to create a clear and quality-oriented system for continuing training and professional development.

The early education system in Romania is at a crossroad. Currently an object of large-scale investments, of regulatory framework changes and of high public pressure for good quality service delivery, ECEC in Romania stands a good chance of making progress and contributing to social stability, economic development, family wellbeing and good quality education in early childhood.





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