



## INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (IECE) COUNTRY QUESTIONNAIRE – CROATIA

### 1. ACCESS, PROCEDURES AND PARTICIPATION

#### Key principles

1.1 Provision that is available and affordable to all families and their children.

1.2 Provision that encourages participation, strengthens social inclusion and embraces diversity.

The key law at pre-primary level that regulates the provision available and affordable to all families and their children and the provision that encourages participation, strengthens social inclusion and embraces diversity is the *Law of Pre-school Education* (Official Gazette No 10/97 and 107/07).

| Guiding questions  | Country response  |
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| <p><b><i>Legislation and policy at national level</i></b></p> <p>1. Is there a national policy and legislation that gives the right to all children, without exception, from at least 3 years onwards, to attend mainstream Early Childhood Education (ECE)?</p> <p>2. Is there support available to enable every child to attend ECE?</p> <p>3. Is there a period of compulsory ECE before school starts?</p> <p>4. Are arrangements in place for transition from home to ECE and from ECE to primary</p> | <p>1. At a national level there is national policy and legislation that gives the right to all children, without exception, to attend mainstream Early Childhood Education (ECE), for example: <i>Law of Pre-school Education; Pedagogical State Standard for Pre-school Education</i> (Official Gazette ‘<i>Narodne novine</i>’ No 63/08 and 90/10), <i>Direction Programme for Pre-school Education</i> (Ministry of Education and Culture Herald, No 7/8, 1991), <i>National Curriculum of Early and Pre-school Education</i> (Official Gazette ‘<i>Narodne novine</i>’ No 15/1); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and Optional Protocol to the Convention.</p> <p>The main goal of the <i>National Strategy of Equalisation for Persons with Disabilities</i> (2007–2015) is to promote and assure complete and equal enjoyment of all human rights and freedoms to all people with disabilities, including children. It encompasses respecting the developmental capacities of children with difficulties and their right to maintain their identities.</p> <p>The types of expertise of professionals and the type and level of qualification of other employees is listed in kindergarten protocol (Official Gazette ‘<i>Narodne novine</i>’</p> |



| Guiding questions  | Country response  |
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| <p>education for all children?</p> <p>5. Is inclusion stated as a goal of ECE provision? Is there a policy making ECE accessible to all children?</p> <p>6. Is there a policy that obliges mainstream publicly funded ECE to make adaptations so that all children can attend and participate? Please describe</p> | <p>No 133/97).</p> <p>2. The early childhood and pre-primary education system in the Republic of Croatia includes children between six months of age and primary school starting age, and it is part of the education system in Croatia. However, there are not enough kindergarten places and more need to be created. Every child with inclusion requirements whose parents want them to go to the pre-school or kindergarten has priority enrolment in kindergarten.</p> <p>In practice, there are ‘short programmes’ which are viewed positively by experts and senior advisers from the Teacher Training Agency. They are verified by the Ministry of Education, devoted to pre-primary education and last three hours per day.</p> <p>3. As of 1 October 2014, the Pre-school Programme has become mandatory for all children in the year before starting primary school. The Pre-school Programme includes all children who have turned five and a half years of age by 1 September 2015 (or who will have turned six years of age by 31 March 2016). The first year it covered 99.6% of children in the year before starting primary school, in both mainstream kindergarten and pre-school programmes and since 2014–2015 it has covered 100% of children. The content, duration and implementation of the Pre-school Programme are regulated by the Ordinance on the Content and Duration of the Pre-school Programme (Official Gazette, No 107/2014).</p> <p>4. All children who have turned 5 years of age by 1 April of the pedagogical year are obliged to attend the Pre-school Programme, as all children who have turned 6 by 1 April start primary school.</p> <p>5. In the Republic of Croatia, pre-primary education programmes can be attended by children from 6 months of age until the school starting age. The inclusion of children in various pre-primary education programmes is 70%. Croatia will do its best to increase the total inclusion of children to 95% by 2020. Local government and self-</p> |



| Guiding questions   | Country response   |
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|   | <p>government units have a network of kindergartens (which includes private kindergartens which are co-funded by the local government) and greater inclusion of children in pre-primary education programmes is therefore ensured. The obligatory pre-primary programme was introduced in 2014, for all children who are in the year before starting school. This includes children who are already enrolled in kindergartens (public and private) and children who are not yet enrolled. The Pre-school Programme is organised in the nearest kindergarten for children who are not enrolled in kindergartens, while it is organised in primary schools in the areas without kindergartens.</p> <p>6. Local Self-Government Units (cities and districts) co-finance private kindergartens as well, in order to increase the number of children who attend regular programmes in kindergartens.</p> <p>Total number of children: 159,591 (64%). The number of children in private kindergartens is 34,596 (21.68%), and the number of children in city/municipal/county kindergartens is 124,995 (78.32%).</p> |
| <p><b><i>Practice at national level</i></b></p> <p>1. What percentage of children attend mainstream ECE provision at ages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 years</li> <li>• 4 years</li> <li>• 5 years (if not primary)</li> <li>• 6 years (if not primary)?</li> </ul> <p>2. What are the main factors preventing some children from</p> | <p>1. Number of children by age:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 3 years: 10,295;</li> <li>– 4 years: 11,814;</li> <li>– 5 years: 10,596;</li> <li>– 6 years: 13,453.</li> </ul> <p>2. Insufficient capacity in kindergartens.</p> <p>3. Some children with difficulties are included in special groups and, in the last school year in Croatia, there were 602 children included in special groups for children with difficulties.</p> <p>4. Children with difficulties that can be included in the mainstream programme are provided with an assistant or third educator or rehabilitator whenever possible.</p> <p>5. Information not available.</p>   |



| Guiding questions   | Country response |
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| <p>accessing mainstream ECE?</p> <p>3. Are there children who attend special ECE settings? Please provide data if available.</p> <p>4. Describe arrangements for inter-service collaboration to enable children's attendance and participation?</p> <p>5. What proportion of children is formally identified as having additional needs at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3 years</li><li>• 4 years</li><li>• 5 years</li><li>• 6 years</li></ul> |                  |



## 2. WORKFORCE

### Key principles

2.1. Well-qualified staff whose initial and continuing training enables them to fulfil their professional role.

For several years the UNICEF programmes ‘Growing up together’ and ‘Growing up together plus’ (for parents of children with special needs) were provided. Pre-primary education employees were taught to work with parents through these programmes. Non-governmental organisations also work with parents.

2.2. Supportive working conditions including professional leadership that creates opportunities for observation, reflection, planning, teamwork and co-operation with parents.

They send their reports to local authorities or founders that plan and adapt conditions based on the reports.

| Guiding questions   | Country response  |
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| <p><b>Legislation and policy</b></p> <p>1. What level of qualification is required to work in ECE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for teachers?</li> <li>• for other staff?</li> </ul> <p>2. What regulation is there for staff-child ratios in ECE?</p> <p>3. What provision is there for additional staffing to support children with diverse and additional needs?</p> <p>4. Does the initial training of staff include understanding and supporting children with diverse and additional needs:</p> | <p>1. There are 18,716 employees in pre-primary institutions, of which 11,410 are professionals in early childhood and pre-primary education, 1,009 are other educational staff (professionals), 658 are graduate nurses and 5,639 are administrative and technical support staff.</p> <p>The professional duties of the professional in early childhood and pre-primary education for children between six months of age and the school starting age can be performed by individuals who have completed an undergraduate university study programme, certain professional study programmes lasting three years, or an appropriate study programme in which students achieve higher professional qualifications in accordance with the previous regulations, as well as individuals who have completed certain graduate university or specialist study programmes lasting 5 years.</p> <p>The duties of other educational staff (professionals) can be performed individuals who have completed a graduate university study programme or certain graduate specialist study programmes.</p> <p>The duties of nurses or health workers in kindergartens can be performed by individuals who have completed an</p> |



| Guiding questions   | Country response   |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• for teachers?</li><li>• for other staff?</li></ul> <p>5. Does initial training include preparation for working in partnership with families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• for teachers?</li><li>• for other staff?</li></ul> <p>6. Is there a policy for in-service training? Does it cover inclusive education skills?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• for teachers?</li><li>• for other staff?</li></ul> | <p>undergraduate university study programme or the professional nursing study programme which leads to higher professional qualifications in the field of nursing in accordance with the previous regulations, as well as a person who has completed a graduate university study programme or the specialist nursing study programme.</p> <p>2. In mainstream pre-primary education programmes, a group of 23 six-year-old children must have two educators for programmes lasting 10 hours a day, or one educator for programmes lasting 5 hours a day.</p> <p>In the pre-school programme, the maximum number of children in a group with one educator is 20. It is desirable that children with difficulties and children who are members of the Roma national minority should be included in the pre-school programme for at least two years before starting primary school, and special attention is therefore paid to this from local and county levels to the state level.</p> <p>3. In addition to pre-primary educators there are mobile teams in the Teacher Training Agency organisation, special teachers, speech pathologists, etc.</p> <p>4. The initial training of staff includes understanding and supporting children with diverse and additional needs for pre-primary teachers and for other staff in the Education and Teacher Training Agency.</p> <p>For example, the Education and Teacher Training Agency includes the inclusion of children with difficulties in mainstream kindergartens in professional training and in lifelong education for all target groups of educational staff (educators, professional associates and directors) and, indirectly, for parents of children that are included in pre-primary institutions.</p> <p>The aims are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– to sensitise educators and professional associates to the inclusion of children with difficulties;</li></ul> |



| Guiding questions | Country response  |
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|                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– to sensitise directors to the inclusion of children with difficulties;</li><li>– to empower staff and to provide support in preparation, adjustments, and in working with children;</li><li>– to encourage and develop competencies for new challenges in work;</li><li>– to encourage new strategies for working with parents;</li><li>– to encourage co-operation with their peers and the local community.</li></ul> <p>5. –</p> <p>6. Yes.</p> <p>Education and Teacher Training Agency senior advisers work on several levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Professional conferences, modules and cycles, projects, professional and advisory assistance, monitoring of educational workers, assistance in education of parents;</li><li>– Regular professional training on the subject of inclusion of children with difficulties in mainstream kindergarten programmes;</li><li>– Professional and advisory assistance and training for kindergarten educators and expert associates on the subject of inclusion of children with difficulties, on invitation of the kindergarten director;</li><li>– Professional and advisory assistance to kindergartens with special educational groups for children with difficulties (Kindergartens Bajka, Potočnica, Ciciban, V. Gorica, etc.);</li><li>– Professional and advisory assistance in the compulsory pedagogical documentation for children with difficulties and treatment protocols;</li></ul> |



| Guiding questions  | Country response   |
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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Professional and advisory assistance with the support of the mobile support team service in the process of inclusion of children with difficulties, and the training of educators and expert associates about adjustments and working methods with a child, depending on their difficulties;</li> <li>– Projects: during 2010–2011, as partners on the ‘Early Intervention Network’ project conducted by the Croatian Association for Early Intervention, training of directors in pre-primary institutions in all Croatian counties was conducted, in order to sensitise them to the inclusion of children with difficulties and exchange examples of good practice;</li> <li>– Professional and advisory assistance to Associations of Directors that initiate professional training on the subject of children with difficulties;</li> <li>– Inspection in cases of complaints on the subject of inclusion of children with difficulties.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b><i>Practice at national level</i></b></p> <p>1. What proportion of staff has the required qualification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for teachers?</li> <li>• for other staff?</li> </ul> <p>2. Please describe any proposed changes to the required qualifications.</p> <p>3. Describe the role of leaders of ECE settings in ensuring inclusive practice?</p> <p>4. Provide any data on</p> | <p>1. Teachers are people who have completed an undergraduate university study programme or a certain professional study programme lasting three years, or an appropriate study programme which allows them to acquire higher professional qualifications in accordance with regulations, or people who have completed a graduate university or certain specialist study programme lasting 5 years.</p> <p>Other educational staff (professionals) could be people who have completed a graduate university study programme or a certain graduate specialist study programme.</p> <p>2. To increase educators’ training for work with children with difficulties.</p> <p>3. Directors, in co-operation with kindergarten founders, should provide the conditions for integration of children with difficulties in mainstream kindergarten programmes</p>   |





| Guiding questions   | Country response  |
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| <p>staff–child ratio.</p> <p>5. Please describe the range of specialist support that is available and how it is organised?</p> <p>6. How do regular and support staff collaborate in IECE settings?</p> <p>7. Describe the role of support assistants in the ECE setting?</p> | <p>whenever possible.</p> <p>4. In accordance with the <i>Pedagogical State Standard of Pre-school Education</i>, the number of educators in an educational group with regard to the daily duration of the programme is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– 3 hour programme: one part-time (half) educator;</li><li>– 4 to 6 hour programme: one full-time educator;</li><li>– 7 to 10 hour programme: two full-time educators.</li></ul> <p>5. If a child with severe difficulties is included in an educational group, an additional educator or expert associate with an educator-rehabilitator profile can also work in the group.</p> <p>6. The number of educators in an educational group with a special programme for children with difficulties with regard to the daily duration of the programme is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– 4 to 6 hour programme: one full-time educator-rehabilitator expert and one part-time (half) assistant;</li><li>– 7 to 10 hour programme: one full-time educator-rehabilitator expert, one full-time educator, one full-time assistant.</li></ul> <p>7. The Ministry of Science, Education and Sports supports the inclusion of assistants who work with children with difficulties. These assistants, together with educators and expert associates, rehabilitators and speech pathologists, work with children with difficulties to help their inclusion in mainstream educational programmes. Assistants in kindergarten education have appropriate qualifications that are required for work in kindergarten (educator, general class teacher, educator-rehabilitator expert, expert associate pedagogue, or expert associate psychologist). It is important to emphasise that article 28 of the <i>Pedagogical State Standard of Pre-school Education</i> states that, if requested by the professional team, an additional educator or educator-rehabilitator expert can</p> |



| <b>Guiding questions</b> | <b>Country response</b>   |
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|                          | work in an educational group which includes a child with severe difficulties. |



### 3. CURRICULUM

#### Key principles

3.1. A curriculum based on pedagogic goals, values and approaches that enable children to reach their full potential in a holistic way.

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sports develops a basic curriculum and each kindergarten creates its own programme based on the basic curriculum, in accordance with the children’s needs.

3.2. A curriculum that requires staff to collaborate with children, colleagues and parents and to reflect on their own practice.

Each institution plans gatherings (demonstrations, performances, etc.) in its annual curriculum in which children, staff and parents are included.

| Guiding questions   | Country response  |
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| <p><b>Legislation and policy</b></p> <p>1. Is there a national ECE curriculum for <i>all</i> children?</p> <p>2. Does it include skills and competences to be achieved by children?</p> <p>3. Describe how the curriculum facilitates inclusion?</p> <p>4. Is the use of new technologies included in the curriculum?</p> <p>5. Is the curriculum adaptable to meet the needs of all children?</p> <p>6. How are parents involved in the adaptation of the curriculum to individual children?</p> <p>7. Is there awareness of</p> | <p>1. The <i>Strategy for Science, Education and Sports</i>, the <i>National Curriculum Framework for Pre-school Education and General Compulsory and Secondary Education</i> and the <i>National Curriculum for Early Childhood and Pre-school Education</i>.</p> <p>2. Yes it does.</p> <p>Early childhood and pre-primary education is regulated by the <i>Pre-school Education Act</i> and numerous subordinate regulations as well as the <i>Pre-school Children Education Programme</i> and the humanistic concept of development. The <i>National Curriculum for Early Childhood and Pre-school Education</i>, as an expert document, is currently part of a comprehensive curricular reform.</p> <p>The aim of the comprehensive curricular reform is the establishment of a harmonised and efficient education system through the introduction of comprehensive changes in terms of content and structure. Early childhood and pre-primary education have been included in comprehensive curricular reforms as part of the Croatian education system since the adoption of the <i>Pre-school Education Act</i> in 1997. <i>The Framework for the National Curriculum</i> (FNC) is a key curricular document. It is being prepared in accordance with the guidelines of the <i>Strategy for Education, Science and Technology</i> (2014),</p> |



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| the impact of labelling on children's participation   | developing certain conceptual solutions as laid down in the <i>National Curriculum Framework (2011)</i> and taking into account other relevant education policy documents.  |
| <p><b><i>Practice at national level</i></b></p> <p>1. Is there assessment of the learning and development of children from age 3 years?</p> <p>2. What arrangements are there for the screening of children's functioning?</p> <p>3. Is children's engagement and participation in ECE activities monitored?</p> <p>4. How do ECE settings reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of all children?</p> <p>5. How do staff adapt (prepare and present) the curriculum and the learning activities to make them accessible to all children?</p> <p>6. How are parents involved in this process?</p> <p>7. How are children themselves involved in this process?</p> <p>8. How is ICT used to</p> | <p>Each educator assesses the developmental level of the children enrolled in their educational group.</p> <p>In addition to basic information about the child and any difficulties that are present, individual education plans should inevitably include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– a developmental profile of the child and an assessment of child's educational needs;</li> <li>– definitions of educational objectives and expectations;</li> <li>– information on planned sources of support and adaptations;</li> <li>– information on duration and implementation of individual education plans (planned environment and learning experiences, work plan assistant);</li> <li>– plan of parents' involvement;</li> <li>– plan of pre-primary expert involvement;</li> <li>– plan of the involvement of any other external collaborators, if necessary;</li> <li>– evaluation of the growth, development and progress of a child with special educational needs that, in addition to monitoring the child's behaviour, includes psychological, speech therapy, education-rehabilitation and educational assessment.</li> </ul> <p>In accordance with each child's needs, a team carries out an evaluation of the planned educational expectation performance. In some cases, where it is extremely important to know the state and course of the difficulty the child may have and to understand its impact on the child's progress, information from the doctor or specialists</p> |



| <b>Guiding questions</b>  | <b>Country response</b>                               |
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| overcome barriers to participation and learning?<br>9. What provisions are there for meeting children's additional needs?<br>10. How is the environment adapted to the needs of all children? | may influence the assessment of the child's progress. |



## 4. EVALUATION AND MONITORING

### Key principles

4.1. Monitoring and evaluating produces information at the relevant local, regional and/or national level to support continuing improvements in the quality of policy and practice.

The local government Department for Education collects data and sends it to the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports.

4.2. Monitoring and evaluation which is in the best interest of the child.

Educator-rehabilitator experts perform monitoring. They are kindergarten employees.

| Guiding questions   | Country response  |
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| <p><b><i>Legislation and policy</i></b></p> <p>1. What standards are in place for ensuring the quality of ECE at national level?</p> <p>2. Describe the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the quality of ECE provision?</p> <p>3. How is the participation of all children reflected in the national quality standards for ECE?</p> <p>4. How does national policy identify and address inequalities in participation in ECE?</p> <p>5. How does research inform policy and practice in ECE?</p> | <p>The Education and Teacher Training Agency is responsible for the maintenance of and increasing the quality of educational work in kindergartens. The Agency participates in monitoring, enhancement and development of education in pre-primary primary and secondary education, adult education, the education of the children of Croatian nationals living abroad and the children of foreign nationals.</p> <p>Self-evaluation and external evaluation of kindergartens is implemented in co-operation with the National Centre for External Evaluation of Education.</p> |



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| <p data-bbox="150 320 464 398"><b><i>Practice at national level</i></b></p> <ol data-bbox="150 427 517 904" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="150 427 517 600">1. How do staff monitor and evaluate the participation and learning of all children?</li><li data-bbox="150 622 443 752">2. How are parents involved in this process?</li><li data-bbox="150 775 501 904">3. How are children themselves involved in this process?</li></ol> | <p data-bbox="544 320 1445 1218">In the initial assessment, measurement tools are used. The results of the comprehensive assessment should be included in the individual education plan. Individual education plans should include concrete goals with a focus on the strengths and abilities of the child. These goals are developed with the particular encouragement of the development areas, with simultaneous objectives, activities, resources space, scheduling, curriculum modifications and systems and procedures of the child's progress. It is necessary to have a purpose and aim for recommendations during observations of the child in the group. Work plans of the assistants, parental consent and consent of the kindergarten founder or Ministry of Science, Education and Sports are needed. Assistants should undergo training before providing support. The therapist's direct work with the child with difficulties (objectives, activities, methods, strategies, monitoring and evaluation of developmental characteristics of a child in relation to himself, evaluation, etc.) should also be an integral part of the individual education plan.</p> |



## 5. GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING

### Key principles

5.1. Stakeholders in the ECE system have a clear and shared understanding of their role and responsibilities, and know that they are expected to collaborate with partner organisations.

5.2. Legislation, regulation and/or funding supports progress towards a universal legal entitlement to publicly subsidised or funded ECE, and progress is regularly reported to all stakeholders.

The Republic of Croatia is a participant in a number of international instruments that protect the rights of persons with disabilities, and the right to accessibility is stated as a fundamental right.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is the fundamental act. It entered into force on 3 May 2008, together with the Optional Protocol (Official Gazette 'Narodne novine' No. 6/07, 3/08 and 5/08). Article 3 of the Convention points out the general principle for the implementation of all rights of children with difficulties: Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities is a general principle of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and should be taken into account in the implementation of all other rights.

| Guiding questions   | Country response  |
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| <p><b>Legislation and policy</b></p> <p>1. Under which ministry(ies) / department(s) are ECE provisions regulated and funded?</p> <p>2. How is intersectorial (health, social and education) collaboration promoted among all stakeholders in ECE?</p> <p>3. How is free or affordable provision guaranteed to all children age 3 years</p> | <p>1. The Ministry of Science, Education and Sports.</p> <p>2. There is inter-agency co-operation when needed, especially in the inclusion of children with difficulties into kindergarten programmes.</p> <p>3. The pre-primary programme is free to parents, all other programmes are financed by local governments and parents.</p> <p>4. –</p> <p>5. It is not necessary.</p> |





| Guiding questions  | Country response  |
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| <p>and over?</p> <p>4. What additional economic measures are available for children with additional needs and their families to access mainstream ECE?</p> <p>5. How is additional funding allocated?</p>  |   |
| <p><b><i>Practice at national level</i></b></p> <p>1. How far does the standard of ECE provision vary across regions and localities?</p> <p>2. How effective is collaboration between the ECE and health, social and other relevant agencies for children and families?</p> <p>3. What proportion of children (3 years to primary education) make use of additional funding?</p> <p>4. How well does additional funding support inclusive education?</p> | <p>1. Each child is provided with rehabilitation and education.</p> <p>2. The government co-ordinates the co-operation.</p> <p>3. Information not available.</p> <p>4. Information not available.</p> |