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Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education

Belarus

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes

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BELARUS

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECCE) programs

A. GENERAL INFORMATION, STATISTICS AND INDICATORS

Starting age of compulsory education (if applicable):

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) the compulsory education age range is 6-16 years.

1. ISCED 0 PROGRAMS (USUALLY, PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION)

(ISCED = International Standard Classification of Education)

1.1. National definition of ISCED 0 programs:

Pre-school education (kindergarten)

1.2. Normative age group(s) covered by ISCED 0 programs:

3-5 years of age

Note: According to the recent Regulation on Preschool Education of the Ministry of Education, approved on 15 December 2004, children from 2 months to 6 years of age—and even older, depending on the opinion of the medical-pedagogical committee—can attend preschools.

1.3. ISCED 0 programs: statistics and indicators (Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics–UIS)

1.3.1. Enrolment:

	Percentage	Year
Gross enrolment ratio	104.1	2003/04
Net enrolment ratio	91.6	2003/04
Percentage of children entering primary education with previous preschool experience	...	

Note: In 2004, 100% of 5-year-olds were enrolled in preschool education. Percentages concerning other age groups are as follows: 3–6 years, 88.1%; 1.5–3 years, 11.2%; under 1.5 years of age, 0.6%.

1.3.2. Enrolment ratio by age group, 2002/03 (percentage, also including the first years of primary education when applicable):

Less than 3 years of age	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	Age 6	Age 7
0.0	89.5	95.0 0.0(*)	90.7 0.0(*)	26.0 87.3(**)	0.5 97.6(**)

UIS estimation. (*) Enrolled in primary education. (**) Primary education enrolment ratio.

1.3.3. Teachers:

Total number of teachers	Of whom female (%)	Percentage of trained teachers (all)	Percentage of trained teachers (males)	Percentage of trained teachers (females)
43,606	99	64.4	64.6	64.4

Note: According to the statistics of the Ministry of Education (2003), 39.9% of preschool teachers had university education, 55.5% special education (pedagogical college), 2.3% were studying in universities, and 2.3% had secondary education. According to 2004 UNICEF Situation Analysis, the total number of teachers was 50,217 and 95.6% of them were trained.

1.3.4. Funding:

	Percentage
Public current expenditure per pupil as percentage of the Gross National Product per capita	37.46 (2004)

Note: In 2003, 47% of the consolidated social budget was spent on education, 36% on health and physical education and 12% on social assistance and insurance.

1.3.5. Main source(s) of financing:

In 2000, the parents' contribution to the preschool budget was equivalent to 6.6% of the government average monthly salary. According to the social standards approved by the central government, an annual average of US\$605 is spent per child in preschool education.

2. OTHER ECCE PROGRAMS

(Generally preceding ISCED 0 programs)

2.1. National definition of other ECCE programs:

Nursery education

ECCE programmes also include: early intervention services for children with special needs (these centres are established under the Ministry of Health and are proposing integrated services for children with special needs); better parenting programmes (parents' universities, mothers' schools, etc.); Family Support Centres under the Ministry of Labour and Social protection; Centres for development and rehabilitation of children with special needs (under the Ministry of Education: these centres have short-term groups for children under 3, consultations and family groups); and new preschool education schemes, such as family kindergarten and experimental playgrounds (under the Ministry of Education).

2.2. Normative age group(s) covered by other ECCE programs:

Children in the age group 2 months–3 years (see 1.2 and 3.3).

2.3. Estimate number of children covered by other ECCE programs:

In 2004, 43,123 children under 3 years of age were attending preschools (approx. 12%).

According to the 2005 ECD KAP survey conducted with the support of UNICEF among parents of children under 3 years, 17.7 % of children were attending different preschool institutions. Many children attend short term programmes, consultations in different centers/polyclinics/services for children with special needs, thus it is difficult to calculate the total number of children in ECCE programmes.

B. BACKGROUND INFORMATION CONCERNING ECCE PROGRAMS (INCLUDING ISCED 0)

3.1. Legislation concerning ECCE:

The Legislation “About Education” (1991, amended in 2002). Law “About Special Education” (2004). Regulation about development and rehabilitation centres for children with special needs under the Ministry of Education (2004). Regulation about integrated education for children with special needs between Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and Ministry of Finance (2002). Regulation about preschool education of the Ministry of Education (2004). The national standard “Preparedness to school”. National ECD standards, developed with assistance of UNICEF, which are under revision. National integrated preschool programme “Praleska”.

3.2. Official body/bodies in charge of supervision or coordination:

The Interagency ECD/Preschool Council under the Ministry of Education; regional and local department of education. Currently (2005), UNICEF is advocating for the establishment of a National ECD Council under the Council of Ministries.

3.3. Other entities involved in the provision (e.g. municipalities, local governments) and main types of providers (e.g. public, private, mixed, community-based, etc.):

In general, nurseries cater to children less than 3 years of age, kindergartens to the age group 3-5. According to the recent Regulation about the preschool education approved on 15 December 2004, children from 2 months to 6 years of age (and even older) can attend preschools.

However, many children do not enter school at 6 years and prefer to repeat the last year of pre-school education. Almost 100% of 5-year-old children participate in the preparatory course that is organized in schools and kindergartens.

There are public and private pre-school establishments and also kindergartens under different large enterprises using different types of programmes, such as nurseries, kindergartens, kindergarten-nurseries and play groups with flexible, daytime or round-the-clock hours of attendance, family-type children’s establishments and boarding homes of various kinds. State organs, enterprises, public associations and individual citizens give financial, psychological and pedagogical assistance to families. Private establishments that belong to enterprises and organizations have to face financial problems, in 2002/03 their number decreased by 12% because of shortage of funds. In 2003, only 3.9% of preschools were in the private sector.

The public nurseries and kindergartens are free of charge but parents should cover about 60% of the meal's cost. In 2004, more than 91% of children of the target age group attended preschools in urban areas—50.5% in rural areas.

3.4. Type of personnel involved:

In 1997, 99.9% of the 55,500 pre-school teachers were women. Their educational qualification was as follows: 35.1% had received higher education; 22.7% incomplete higher education; 59.2% specialized secondary education; and 3% general secondary education. 12.3% of the total number of college-educated staff, 1.5% of staff with incomplete higher education, and 41.5% of staff with specialized secondary education had obtained a special qualification in pre-school education.

Compared with the 1993 level, the proportion of staff with higher or special secondary education had increased by 1.8%, and that of staff with secondary general education has diminished by 0.3%. The proportion of staff with higher and specialized secondary education possessing a special qualification in pre-school education had risen by 1.1% and 1.4%, respectively.

According to the statistics of the Ministry of Education (2003), 39.9% of preschool teachers had university education, 55.5% special education (pedagogical college), 2.3% were studying in universities, and 2.3% had secondary education. According to 2004 UNICEF Situation Analysis, the total number of teachers was 50,217 and 95.6% of them were trained.

3.5. Type of staff training (requirements):

Training for pre-school specialists is provided at three pedagogical universities, one pedagogical institute, three colleges and eight teacher training schools. The National Institute of Education runs special centers: the National Preschool Center, the National Center of Special Education, and the Academy of the Postgraduate Training.

Training of teachers and educators at various levels of the education system (1997/98):

Level and type of education	Type of establishment	Conditions of admission	Breakdown by syllabus taken	Qualification/type of diploma
Pre-school education	Teacher training school or college, pedagogical university (institute), level I	Competitive examination – applicant must have incomplete secondary (9 grades) or secondary education	Social studies and humanities, 20-22%; natural sciences and mathematics, 10-12%; psycho-pedagogical studies, 12-13%; special subjects, 40-45%	Diploma of specialized secondary education, qualified as teacher or educator

3.6. Recent national policies and reforms:

Currently there is freedom to choose from different educational programmes, all of which are drawn up by the National Institute of Education and the State Pedagogical University, with the help of specialists. These programmes, which have titles such as *Harmony*, *Enchantment*, *The family*, are based on the personality-oriented model of the child—parent—pre-school teacher interaction.

The *First Steps* programme is still in its draft stage that aims at transforming pre-school and elementary education into a system that incorporates the latest attainments of national and world-wide practice in that field; developing and introducing new forms of co-operation between the kindergarten, the family and the social environment; establishing centres for work with families in different parts of the country; and to developing and supporting new alternative methods of teaching and bringing up infants.

The programme has four main components: education (of children, parents and teachers); involvement of parents in the education and instruction process; health (physical and mental); and the provision of socio-psychological services to all participants in the pre-school education system (children, parents, teachers).

The first national experience-based programme, *Praleska*, does not set out to regulate teachers' activities but only to guide them in their work and to help them to refine the methods used to assess and correct the child's physical and mental development. Every year some tens of guide books are edited for the teachers and parents. At the same time it also encourages the teacher to provide each child with its own development programme, which must then be adjusted and correlated with the common programme. Work done on the basis of *Praleska* has demonstrated the need for consultant psychologists to work in PSE, side by side with trained teachers on the preparation of such individual development programmes.

The tendency is towards developing variable programmes, methods and teaching aids from among which the teacher can choose. A new model of pre-school establishment—the “open” kindergarten, where parents participate directly in the educational process by acting as assistants to the kindergarten teacher or play-group leader—has been developed with the same end in view.

The further development of the pre-school education system within the context of the general school reform presupposes the following:

- preservation of the existing system of State pre-school establishments (funded out of national or departmental budgets);
- guaranteed parental right to choose the form and type of pre-school education;
- adoption of a personality-oriented model of the pedagogical process;
- elaboration of State standards for pre-school education and a system of licensing and accreditation of pre-school establishments;
- different possible scenarios of receiving elementary education: from age 6, the first (preparatory) year being taken either in school or in kindergarten (provided the latter is properly equipped for the purpose), followed by three years of elementary schooling; from age 7, the child entering school at the year 1 level, provided he/she has reached the required standard;
- elaboration of flexible and variable multi-level elementary school curricula that will prepare the ground for the exercise of a genuine choice of the further educational trajectory in accordance with the wishes and capabilities of each child and will take into consideration any special area of activity accentuated during the child's pre-school education;

- improved co-operation with the family, involvement of parents in instruction and education processes as observers, volunteer assistants or collaborators; development of various forms of assistance to the family in shaping the child's personality, as well as of a network of home education and tuition services;
- co-ordination of the work of medical, pre-school, school, psychological, social and legal services; creation of the posts of "social pedagogue" and "practical psychologist";
- improved training of pre-school teaching staff, including the introduction of new specializations; changing the structure and contents of psycho-pedagogical training;
- establishment of the necessary conditions for the introduction of compulsory pre-school education from age 5.

Another recent development is the implementation of the UNICEF project "Early Childhood Development" in the Republic.

New models of preschool education in rural areas have been developed with assistance of UNICEF and approved in the new Regulation about preschool education by the Ministry of Education. The practice to involve children with special needs into activities of kindergartens for mainstream children was implemented in selected regions. The project stimulated the development of better parenting approaches, and monitoring surveys showed positive changes in parenting practices in target groups. The "Better Parenting Package" (42 brochures on main ECD topics) has been developed, printed and disseminated via educational and medical institutions in order to support parents. Six specialists of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection were trained in the ECD Resource Package. The "Positive Parenting Conception" was developed and became the basis for the development of the positive parenting university course in the State Pedagogical University.

Eight early intervention centers for children with special needs have been established. During the next programme cycle, early intervention services will be expanded.

3.7. Efforts targeted at vulnerable or disadvantaged children:

Main legislation includes: the Law "About Special education" (2004); the Regulation about development and rehabilitation centres for children with special needs under Ministry of Education (2004); the Regulation about integrated education for children with special needs between the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and Ministry of Finance (2002).

There are 114 centres for development and rehabilitation of children with special needs under the Ministry of Education in all regions of the Republic; 8 early intervention centres were created; and 20 methodological guidelines for professionals working with children with special needs were developed (UNICEF-supported project). The Regulation about collaboration between educational, health and social protection institutions in Minsk is under revision.

3.8. Special projects/programmes aiming at expanding or improving ECCE:

See 3.6.

3.9. Information concerning the curriculum (if applicable) or the contents of ECCE programs

3.9.1. Objectives and aims:

According to the Education Act, the objective of pre-school education is to develop the child's natural desire to learn and to familiarize itself with the environment, and to assist the child's physical and mental development. The leading role in pre-school education is played by the family. Pre-school establishments educate the child by introducing it to the language, culture and traditions of its people and to the culture of other nationalities living in the territory of the Republic

The main tasks of pre-school education as the first stage of continuous education are the following:

- to teach the skills and work habits necessary for the child's orientation and adequate performance in the world he/she is learning to know;
- to identify and develop individual capabilities and gifts, to form the personality and to develop its creative potential;
- to protect and strengthen the child's health and to instill basic habits of a healthy lifestyle;
- to facilitate the child's timely and trouble-free transition to the next stage of the education system—the school.

3.9.2. Learning areas and teaching-learning methods:

Not available

3.9.3. Average number of hours per week and average amount of weeks per year:

It depends on the needs of the children and the decision of parents: it could be 5 or 6 days per week, ranging from 2 to 24 hours per day. For short-term groups: 2 to 7 hours per day, 2-5 times per week. Groups can be opened even for two children. (Regulation about preschool education, 2004.)

3.10. Any other relevant and pertinent information

In 1997, there were 4,511 pre-school establishments in operation in the country, including 2,852 managed by the central level and 1,659 under departmental management. A breakdown by type of establishment shows: 2,756 general and 1,027 special pre-school establishments; 13 infant development centres; 27 sanatorium-type establishments; 28 establishments for children with physical or mental handicaps; 497 combined-type establishments; and 163 kindergarten schools, attended by a total of 444,200 children. About 52% of all pre-school establishments were attended by 75 children or fewer; 20.9% by up to 150 children; 12.1% by up to 225 children; 12.5%

by up to 300 children; and 12.1% by more than 300 children. About 76% of all pre-school establishments work a five-day week and 24.2% a six-day week; 0.4% of the kindergartens and nurseries open round the clock. 61.2% of the country's 5-year-olds (71.5% in towns and 48.7% in rural areas) attend senior kindergarten groups.

According to data of January 2005, there are 4,146 preschool educational establishments in Belarus, of which 3,960 are managed by the Ministry of Education and/or regional/local departments of education; 286 of them belong to large enterprises and organizations. There are 60 sanatorium-type establishments, 40 establishments for children with physical or mental handicaps, 779 combined-type establishments and 744 kindergarten-schools. The total number of children in preschools (from 2 months to 8 years of age) is 363,090 children.

C. SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION REGARDING ECCE (TO BE COMPILED IN COLLABORATION WITH UNICEF OFFICES WHERE POSSIBLE)

4.1. Parenting programmes are usually addressed to parents and families of children less than 6 years of age. Please provide information about any parenting programmes in your country according to the table below:

Type of programme	Yes or No (note for each programme)	Please estimate the number of beneficiaries (if possible)
Parenting education through early learning centres and child care centres	Yes. Early intervention services, short-term groups (for parent's with children) in early intervention centers and in centers for development and rehabilitation of children with special needs. Training for parents is organized in preschools based on needs of parents (the programmes were developed by the National Institute of Education/UNICEF project and were published.	
As component of health and nutrition programmes, such as information about child development included in health and nutrition visits	Information about child development should be provided to parents by pediatrics; at the same moment preschool teachers are organizing home visits also. IMCI-C was	

	developed in 2005.	
Parent groups that meet to discuss issues of their young children, including health, nutritional status, and development	Parents' universities (the programme was developed with assistance of UNICEF), usually organized in preschool. Collaborative activities between family and kindergarten are available in almost all kindergartens.	
As component of adolescent, livelihood or literacy programmes	<u>Yes</u> , as a part of "Healthy life style education"	Nation-wide
Media broadcast, such as <i>Sesame Street</i> , with media for and with children	In Belarus Sesame Street is not used, but there is a everyday programme/talk show "Family evening" and in 2005 the ECD PSA was produced and placed on National TV.	Nation-wide
Other (please specify)	42 brochures of Better Parenting Package were developed and published by UNICEF. The Package was developed by counterparts in the institutions under the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education. The Positive Parenting Conception was	42,000 brochures (1,000 copies of each)

	<p>developed and became the basis for the development of the positive parenting university course in the State Pedagogical University.</p> <p>The methodological guideline “Collaboration between family and kindergarten” was developed and published.</p>	

Are any of these programmes targeted specifically toward the vulnerable, poor, disadvantaged or excluded? If so, which ones? (Please provide/attach any additional and relevant information if available).

Early intervention programme and programmes for children with special needs in the centers of development and rehabilitation of children with special needs. PORTAGE programme for children with special needs.

4.2. Is there a national-level system for monitoring children’s development or school readiness prior to entering primary school?

The national standard “Preparedness to school”; National ECD standards (developed with assistance of UNICEF) are under approval.

4.3. Is there a policy on early childhood (ECCE, ECD, etc.) that has been accepted? If not, is there one under development?

In November 2005, the Better Parenting programme was assessed by the international UNICEF consultant Emily Vargas-Baron. During the official meetings with Deputy Minister of Education and First Deputy Minister of Health the guidelines for preparing ECD policy was presented by the consultant (she is the author of the “Planning Policies for Early Childhood Development: Guidelines for Action” developed with support of the Working Group for Early Childhood Development, Association for the Development of Education in Africa, UNICEF and UNESCO, 2005). The ECD policy paper is one of the priorities for the UNICEF 2006-2010 programme cycle.

[Main source: *National Report of Belarus on the Development of Education, 2004. Additional information provided by the National Institute of Education and UNICEF, December 2005.*]