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Country profile prepared for the
Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007
Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education

Bulgaria

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes

Compiled by:
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BULGARIA

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 7-14 years.

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

(ISCED = International Standard Classification of Education)

1.1. National definition of ISCED 0 programs:

Pre-primary education (kindergarten)

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

3-6 years of age

1.3. ISCED 0 programs: statistics and indicators

1.3.1. Enrolment:

	Percentage	Year
Gross enrolment ratio	75.5	2004/05
Net enrolment ratio	70.9	2004/05
Percentage of children entering primary education with previous preschool experience	92.7	2004/05

Source: Ministry of Education, January 2006.

1.3.2. Enrolment ratio by age group, 2004/05 (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
	58.3	73.2	77.8	86.3	1.4
					88.5(*)

Source: Ministry of Education, January 2006. (*) Primary education enrolment ratio.

1.3.3. Teachers, 2004/05:

Total number of teachers	Of whom female (%)	Percentage of trained teachers (all)	Percentage of trained teachers (males)	Percentage of trained teachers (females)
18,847	99.8	100	100	100

Source: Ministry of Education, January 2006.

1.3.4. Funding:

	Percentage
Public current expenditure per pupil as percentage of the Gross National Product per capita	24.83 (2004)

Source: UIS.

1.3.5. Main source(s) of financing: Not available

2. OTHER ECCE PROGRAMS

(Generally preceding ISCED 0 programs)

2.1. National definition of other ECCE programs:

Not available

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

Not available

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

Not available

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

3.1. Legislation concerning ECCE:

Several important amendments were made to the Public Education Act (PEA) in 2002 and 2003, including the introduction of compulsory pre-primary training for all children carried out in preparatory groups at kindergartens and preparatory classes at school. It is now compulsory for children of 6 to 7 years of age to attend a preparatory group at the kindergarten or a preparatory class at school to get ready, in an organized way, for school.

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

The Regional Inspectorates of Education are responsible for pre-school educational control.

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.):

Government-funded pre-schools are prevalent (over 95%); however, a private sector is developing. Kindergartens are partially subsidized by local authorities; lower-income families pay lower fees. Pre-primary education is provided by day-care, health, special and half-day kindergartens, and school preparatory groups.

The state and municipal kindergartens are opened when at least 4, but not more than 8 groups (including 10-25 children) are formed. Most of the kindergartens are independent institutions, subordinated to the municipalities. They have an all-day operation regime and are accommodated in buildings constructed especially for them. In case there are fewer children, children groups are opened at the schools.

In connection with the application of the PEA amendments, more and more frequently half-day groups at the kindergartens are opened, in order to meet the demands of parents of those children, who are supposed to be in a preparatory group, corresponding to their financial capacities.

3.4. Type of personnel involved:

Teachers

3.5. Type of staff training (requirements):

Usually teachers are holders of a bachelor's or a master's degree.

3.6. Recent national policies and reforms:

Not available

3.7. Efforts targeted at vulnerable or disadvantaged children:

For economic reasons, many children are not able to attend kindergarten. In some cases, these children come from low-income and/or at-risk families. To combat this problem, the National Programme for the Development of Education has established new free (or charging a minimum fee) school preparatory groups and kindergartens. In addition, a network of playing facilities will be created and playgroups will be formed for children from marginal-income families and for neglected or homeless children.

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

Not available

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

A recent development in pre-school instruction is that the content of studies for different activities is determined by two programmes: firstly, the Programme for Education of Children Aged 2-6 and, secondly, Children's Activity in Kindergarten. These programmes are adopted at the national level and teachers are entitled to choose one or the other. The content of studies covers several global themes. The principle is for children to learn through play.

At the beginning of 2000, a reform of public pre-primary education started, which is directed towards the creation of programmes for the school preparatory groups. Since the year 2000, the programme "On the School's Threshold" is being implemented. It is approved by the Ministry of Education and Science (MES). Since 2003, one more programme for a preparatory group ("Hand in Hand") has been operating. Both programmes define educational contents (see below) and envisage special measures for children from minority ethnic/language groups gaining command of the Bulgarian language and obtaining social and psychological preparation for entering a school. Special attention is paid to children from problematic families, who have difficulties in their socialization and intellectual development.

3.9.1. Objectives and aims:

The main objective of the pre-primary education is directed towards providing opportunities for each child to maximally develop his/her abilities and prepare himself/herself for formal education in school, by introducing her/him to the physical/material and social environments; by giving orientation through universal values and by forming the skills and habits necessary for adaptation to school and formal learning. Kindergartens have the goal to preserve the children's individuality and to encourage the self-expression. The pedagogical process is aimed at the emotional, moral, aesthetic, intellectual and physical development of children.

An important task of the pre-primary education is to create conditions for building a positive attitude towards school and enhancing the motivation for studying, which are considered basic factors for success in the school as well as for an interest in life-long studying. The preparation for school is of special importance for disadvantaged children from Roma and Turkish minority families.

3.9.2. Learning areas and teaching-learning methods:

The children attending kindergarten education are classed in four groups according to their age. The first group includes children from 2.5/3 to 4 years, the second group children from 4 to 5 years, and the third one children aged 5 to 6 years. Children that are 6 years old are accepted in a group for preparation for school, in which they are trained according to a special programme. The distribution according the age criterion is not compulsory, and mixed groups are formed, where necessary.

The volume and character of the educational content for the different activities and the educational work are determined by two programmes for the children from 2 to 6 years age and two programmes for the school preparatory groups. They are adapted to the state educational requirements for pre-school age. The teachers choose the programmes for their work with preparatory groups.

The programmes for children from 2 to 6 years age are in effect since 1992. The above mentioned programmes "On the School's Threshold" and "Hand in Hand" offer educational content that can be categorised as follows: development of speech and enrichment of language, mathematics, preparation for reading and writing, acquaintance with nature and public life, arts, aesthetic and physical development.

The basic form for organization of the pedagogical interaction is the situation, while for the training in the preparatory group it is the lesson. Premeditated pedagogical situations, the game, conversations and observations are used as methods. Art occupies a special place in the pedagogical process.

The achievements of the children are assessed through teachers' observation, products of children's creativity and through games. Every week teachers inform the parents about what their children have learned and about the products of their activity. Two or three times a year the achievements of the children are directly demonstrated to the parents in open lessons or in other forms. At the end of each school year the teachers prepare a brief pedagogical profile for each child which is entered in the group's register. There are recorded changes in the physical, psychical and intellectual development of the child, as well as his/her achievements in the mastering of the compulsory educational content. At the end of the school preparatory group, an assessment of the achievements of each child is made, pointing at problems and difficulties he/she has.

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

For the third and the fourth groups, the time for organized occupation and training is 20-25 minutes. During the remaining time the children are organized for games, dances, swimming, walks and sleeping. The organizational forms of the pedagogical process are specific and differ from those in the school. The weekly loading is around 20 hours.

3.10. Any other relevant and pertinent information

Not available

[Main Sources: National Report on the Development of Education, 2004. EURYBASE, 2002/03.]

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

Information is not available

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		
As component of health and nutrition programmes, such as information about child development included in health and nutrition visits		
Parent groups that meet to discuss issues of their young children, including health, nutritional status, and development		
As component of adolescent, livelihood or literacy programmes		
Media broadcast, such as <i>Sesame Street</i> , with media for and with children		
Other (please specify)		

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).

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

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

[Information revised by the Ministry of Education, January 2006.]