

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

Cyprus

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes

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CYPRUS

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECCE) programs

A. GENERAL INFORMATION, STATISTICS AND INDICATORS

Starting age of compulsory education (if applicable):

The compulsory education age range is 4 years and 8 months to 15 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 is the education that is offered in recognized institutions, public, community or private, which function under the jurisdiction and supervision of the Ministry of Education.

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

Children aged 3 to 5 years and 8 months (3 to 4 years and 8 months of age optional and 4 years and 8 months to 5 years and 8 months of age compulsory).

1.3. ISCED 0 programs: statistics and indicators

1.3.1. Enrolment:

	Percentage	Year
Gross enrolment ratio	60.7	2003/04
Net enrolment ratio	56.6	2003/04
Percentage of children entering primary education with previous preschool experience	...	

Source: Ministry of Education, December 2005. (...) Not available.

1.3.2. Enrolment ratio by age group (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
2.8	30.9	58.0 0.1(*)	76.2 1.6(*)	3.4 94.9(**)	0.2 98.1(**)

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics–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)
863	99.2

Source: Ministry of Education, December 2005. Data refer to 2004/05. (...) Not available.

1.3.4. Funding:

	Percentage
Public current expenditure per pupil as percentage of the Gross National Product per capita	15.20 (2002)

Source: UIS.

1.3.5. Main source(s) of financing:

	2002	2003
Government	71.9%	78.0%
Households	15.2%	10.8%
Parents Associations	12.9%	11.2%

Public kindergartens are entirely financed by the state. The Government pays the salaries of the teachers and helpers, educational materials and running expenses, construction and maintenance of school buildings. Children aged 4 years and 8 months to 5 years and 8 months attend public kindergartens for free, whereas younger children pay an average £25 (Cyprus pounds). Fee reduction is given to poor families or families with four children or above. Community pre-primary schools are subsidized up to £4,000 - £6,000 per year. Parents' associations contribute by paying

fees, through which they pay the salaries of the helpers and the running expenses of the kindergarten. According to the 2005 Annual Budget, £3,700,000 Cyprus pounds are estimated to be spent for the running of all public and community nursery schools.

2. OTHER ECCE PROGRAMS

(Generally preceding ISCED 0 programs)

2.1. National definition of other ECCE programs:

Day nursery schools, i.e. school-based education where the primary concern is the day care of pre-school children (in particular the age group 0-3 years) and are not classified under ISCED 0, mainly due to the teaching staff qualification.

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

0–5 years of age

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

The Gross Enrolment Ratio for the age group 0–5 years was estimated at 19.3% in 2005.

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

3.1. Legislation concerning ECCE:

Pre-school education is part of primary education, so a considerable part of it falls under the same law and regulations as those governing the operation of primary education. According to Law 12/1965, pre-school education administratively belongs to the Ministry of Education and Culture, as well as other levels of education.

In the Law regarding Primary Education (1997), the regulations on the operation of public schools of primary education and of public kindergartens are specified. In this law, the means of selecting the children, the age of the children to be enrolled and, in general, the regulations concerning the operation of kindergartens are determined.

The regulations that govern the operation of public and private kindergartens were prepared by the Ministry of Education and Culture and published in the Official Newspaper of the Republic (Gazette) on 25.7.1997.

Apart from being obliged to conform to these regulations, private kindergartens are expected to satisfy the relevant provisions as these are set by the Law related to Private Schools and Institutes (L. 5/1971). This refers to the regulations of establishing and operating private schools as well as the setting up of the Advisory Committee responsible for private education on the island. They are also

obliged to meet with the provisions of Law 25/1976, which refers to different types of schools, to the number of staff employed, to the age and enrolment of children as well as to the curricula and timetables.

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

According to the Law (L.12/1965) pre-primary education belongs administratively to the Ministry of Education and Culture. Therefore the regulations that govern the operation of both public and private kindergartens have been prepared by the Ministry of Education and Culture (R. 5/1961).

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.):

Kindergartens fall into three categories: public, community and private. These kindergarten schools can be staffed with one kindergarten teacher or with many teachers.

Public Kindergartens are funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture (M.O.E.C.) in co-operation with the Parents' Association and the Local Authorities. The Ministry of Education and Culture appoints the teaching staff and subsidises the necessary equipment, and covers the running expenses, the construction and maintenance of school buildings and the salaries of nursery school assistants.

In public kindergartens children of 4 years and 8 months to 5 years and 8 months of age are accepted. If there are vacant places, children of a younger age (3 years old) can enrol. The selection of children is done according to the Law regarding Primary Education (1997) and by the committee concerned with the selection of children according to criteria and procedures set by a circular issued by the Director of Primary Education. The parents of these children are expected to pay low fees—a symbolic amount—which is defined by the Minister of Finance and is deposited in the account of the Government.

It is possible for the Director of Primary Education to give permission to a child to postpone his/her attendance to primary school and attend classes in a kindergarten because of special education needs or immaturity. The enrolment of a child in a public school from another kindergarten takes place only if there are vacant places available.

Community Kindergartens operate only in cases where the public kindergarten classes available do not meet the needs of all the children in the community. They are founded and set in operation by the Parents' Associations or the local authorities and are registered in the Ministry of Education and Culture, which offers a substantial annual subsidy. They are not profitable organisations. Parents Association or the Local Authorities are responsible for the building and the basic equipment they also employ and pay the salary of the school assistants. They have qualified personnel and are supervised by the M.O.E.C. Children of 3 to 5 years and 8 months of age are accepted. Private Kindergartens are established and set in operation by individuals in the private sector after the approval of the M.O.E.C. Their operation is regulated by the Law regarding Private Schools and Institutes (5/1971, 56/1983 and 123/1986).

3.4. Type of personnel involved:

Qualified nursery teachers and school assistants

3.5. Type of staff training (requirements):

Kindergarten teachers must be university graduates

3.6. Recent national policies and reforms:

Pre-primary education has become mandatory from the 1st of September 2004 and is offered freely to children aged 4 years and 8 months to 5 years and 8 months who attend public kindergartens. The Council of Ministers approved the above innovation, while giving one year trial period for all agents involved, to adopt to the new regulations (Decision No. 59.824-14/4/2004). This decision was taken within the scope of the development programme of the Ministry of Education and Culture and aims at satisfying social and educational objectives of the Ministry.

According to the new legislation, children of the above-mentioned age are obliged to attend public kindergartens, community or private schools, which are registered and approved by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Younger children aged 3 years to 4 years and 8 months take up vacant places in public kindergartens and pay fees as set by the Ministry of Finance. Younger children are selected according to the criteria prescribed by the competent authority. Nonetheless, priority will be given to children with special educational needs, despite their age.

The State is responsible to cover all expenses for the introduction of this innovation while at the same time will continue to subsidize the functioning of community kindergartens. This reform is basically driven by social educational purposes, since it responds to the need for ensuring the children's safety and for enabling parents to balance family and work responsibilities. Additionally, the reform is expected to contribute significantly to the upgrading of the quality of primary education, since children are inducted in the educational environment earlier, therefore the foundation for an all-round education and personality are strengthened.

3.7. Efforts targeted at vulnerable or disadvantaged children:

Not available

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

Drawing on the government policy to provide pre-school children with equal educational opportunities, there has been a recent trend to establish regional kindergarten schools in rural areas. The existing regulations provide that a kindergarten school can be established in a community if there are at least 15 children in it.

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

3.9.1. Objectives and aims:

Overall, it is the purpose of pre-primary education to establish an educational programme that emphasizes the free activation of children and the values of love, support, trust, acceptance, and respect for personal uniqueness, in an environment that resembles the family environment of children as much as possible. The principle of satisfying the basic needs of the child is what determines the role of the kindergarten.

The general aims of pre-primary education are: to help children to adapt themselves to the broader school environment and to become an integral part of society; and to secure, preserve and promote the all-round development of the child to the highest possible level, according to his/her level of maturity. Within this framework, balance is sought among the psychomotor, affective and cognitive sectors, with special emphasis on affective and social education.

Moreover, pre-school education aims at:

- Promotion of creative expression and thought.
- Acquirement of abilities and correct attitude.
- Preparation for primary school and use of their capacities for school success.
- Development of personality characteristics, such as initiative, persistence, self-confidence, optimism.

3.9.2. Learning areas and teaching-learning methods:

The curriculum of the kindergarten is child-centred and problem-solving centred. This means that the attainment of objectives is sought through problems, the solution of which requires the activation of children with problem-solving activities and experimentation that extends to cover each and every field of knowledge that is relevant to the given problem. Cooperative learning and group work are also used in all the types of activities in order to encourage cooperation and sharing between the pupils, whereas differentiation of work is applied in accordance with the needs and abilities of the children.

Within the framework of the work done in kindergartens, a balance is sought among the three taxonomic aims set (that is, the cognitive, the emotional and the psychomotor) with special emphasis on affective and social education. The kindergarten teacher's role is to organise the programme having in mind the balance between structure and freedom, offering a variety of activities, which would expose the child to various environmental influences – challenges, and allowing him/her to choose an activity freely.

The child participates actively in the process of learning through his/her study of the specific, investigation, experimentation, application of scientific methods (i.e. observation, measurement, hypothesis, testing, production of generalisations-conclusions), as well as by activating the critical and creative thought process.

The daily programme of a kindergarten is a smooth succession of periods, which is determined by the kindergarten teacher who takes into consideration the needs, the abilities and the interests of the children. The order of activities is not fixed.

It can be changed depending on the particular traits of the kindergarten itself, the season or the occasion and the nature of the particular activity, as well as the children's needs, abilities, and interests. The duration of each activity is also flexibly determined with breaks totally lasting forty minutes.

DAILY TIMETABLE

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
07:45-08:25	Free Activities	Free Activities	Free Activities	Free Activities	Free Activities
08:05-09:05	Free Activities	Free Activities	Free Activities	Free Activities	Free Activities
09:05-09:45	Group Activity A'	Group Activity A'	Group Activity A'	Group Activity A'	Group Activity A'
09:45-10:25	Washing-Breakfast	Washing-Breakfast	Washing-Breakfast	Washing-Breakfast	Washing-Breakfast
10:25-10:45	OUTDOOR PLAY				
10:45-11:25	Group Activities B'	Group Activities B'	Group Activities B'	Group Activities B'	Group Activities B'
11:25-12:05	Music-Movement-Drama	Music-Movement-Drama	Music-Movement-Drama	Music-Movement-Drama	Music-Movement-Drama
12:05-12:25	OUTDOOR PLAY				
12:25-13:05	Quiet Activities	Quiet Activities	Quiet Activities	Quiet Activities	Quiet Activities

The main parts of programme are the following:

- Free low structured activities (80 minutes): A free choice of a variety of social, cooperative and creative activities such as art, role playing, experimenting, observation, basic reading, writing and mathematics activities.
- Group Activity A': (40 minutes) language, science, mathematics, health education, environment education, social education, and religion.
- Group Activity B': (40-80 minutes): story telling, theatre, music and movement, puppet shows, games, and poetry.
- Outdoor activities (40 minutes): physical educations, games, work in the garden, environmental observation.
- Quiet activities (40 minutes) in the last part of the school day: language, mathematics, individual or group work, which are structured and aim at developing necessary skills to facilitate the transition to the primary school.

In between these activities there are periods for tidying, washing, breakfast, snack and free playing (40 minutes). This timetable in Kindergartens is flexible and the teacher is free to choose her subjects according to the needs and interests of the children. Integrated curricula rather than thematic approaches are widely used in most kindergartens.

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

The school year for public kindergartens begins on 1st September and ends on 31st August, as in all primary public schools.

Kindergarten teachers start work on the first Monday of September and ends one week before the last Friday of June. Classes begin on the first Thursday after the first Monday of September and end on the Wednesday before the last but one Friday in June each year. It has to be said that children attending kindergarten for the first time, start their lessons gradually according to the induction programme set by each of the teachers and the school as a whole.

For organisation and planning purposes a school year is divided into three terms:

- Term 1: beginning on the first Monday of September to Christmas holidays
- Term 2: beginning from the end of the Christmas holidays to Easter holidays
- Term 3: beginning from the end of Easter holidays to the end of the school year

During the academic year there are the following holidays:

- two weeks for Christmas
- two weeks for Easter and
- 11 days corresponding to public, national or religious holidays.

All the above arrangements apply to public kindergartens, while for the community pre-schools there may be some extension of the teaching year, depending on special arrangements with the communities they belong to.

Children attend public Kindergartens for five days a week. Their day begins at 7:45 in the morning and ends at 13:05. At community kindergartens, there is the possibility of extending the day from 7.30 until such a time in the afternoon as it is mutually agreed between the parents' associations as employer and the teachers as employees. This arrangement aims at facilitating working parents.

3.10. Any other relevant and pertinent information

Not available

[Main Sources: EURYBASE 2001/02. National Report on the Development of Education, 2004.]

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

Information 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?

[Information revised by the Ministry of Education and Culture, December 2005.]