



Education Sector
Division for Basic to Higher
Education and Learning
Section for Basic Education

Country Follow-up to the World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education

Prepared by the Section for Basic Education, UNESCO Headquarters

This report features recent accomplishments, ongoing actions and good practices in the area of early childhood care and education (ECCE) in various countries. It includes information about Argentina, Armenia, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, China, the Cook Islands, Cote d'Ivoire, Czech Republic, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Georgia, Greece, Honduras, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait Society for Advancement of Arab Children, Mauritius, Poland, Serbia, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria.

Argentina

Between 2008 and 2011, the Republic of Argentina implemented measures that target children from 0 to 5 years of age with the aims of: reinforcing the identity and objectives of early childhood education country-wide by supporting the implementation of the National Education Law, the provincial education laws and the Presidential Decree on Universal Allocation per child (Decreto Presidencial de Asignación Universal por hijo); expanding the supply and enrollment of early childhood education; strengthening educational policies and enriching pedagogical approaches through professional capacity-building and by improving conditions for teaching and learning; strengthening measures to guarantee access, retention and school-leaving with quality; creating review and standard-setting bodies in each jurisdiction; creating internal processes that allow for an improved management of the education system and for the implementation of the National Education Law.

The measures put in place after the World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education (Moscow, 2010), aimed at developing comprehensive early childhood education, are in line with the above mentioned goals, and have resulted in: the expansion of early childhood education coverage (rise in enrollment and number of schools); capacity building of teachers; cultural events; educational publications; establishment of libraries for early childhood teachers; opening of school playgrounds in urban and rural areas; national and regional forums culminating with a Federal Document to Pedagogical Units of children from 0 to 5 years old; roundtables at a national, regional, interprovincial and provincial level, as well as international meetings.

(Source: Ministry of Education, 2012)

Armenia

In the Republic of Armenia, education is regarded as a key factor in tackling such issues as guaranteeing national security, ensuring sustainable economic development, addressing poverty, developing a democratic society and building a knowledge-based economy. Early childhood care and education

(ECCE) is seen as one educational component contributing to this process. Even though there has been an increase in preschool enrollment, overall enrollment is low compared with other countries. The government aims to expand access to quality preschool education, especially for children of national minorities.

The legal, organizational and financial grounds for implementing ECCE services are stipulated in the Republic of Armenia Law on Preschool Education. In the Strategic Programme on Preschool Education Reform in the Republic of Armenia for 2008-2015, the government places particular emphasis on ensuring efficient ways to prepare 5 to 6 year-old children.

In 2009, within the framework of the “Education Quality and Compliance” loan project, a pilot project that applies low cost preschool models was implemented in some communities. New preschool education projects were launched in 2011. With the technical assistance of UNICEF, over 300 hundred teachers and principals were trained by the institutions implementing preschool micro-projects. In 2011, World Vision provided support for the renovation of preschool facilities and installation of heating systems and equipment to improve and upgrade the learning environments in preschools. The Armenian branch of Save the Children supported preschool education projects in marginalized areas. The collaboration between international organizations and the Ministry of Education resulted in increased accessibility of preschool education and the continuation of expanded projects. The establishment of cost effective and sustainable preschool services is part of the 2012 government midterm expenditure programme, ensuring sustainability in the upcoming years.

(Source: Ministry of Education and Science, 2012)

Bulgaria

The Bulgarian government pays attention to preschool education. In 2010, the Ministry of Education not only adopted the legislation making it compulsory for 5-year-olds to attend kindergarten, but also provided a language training programme for children who do not speak Bulgarian well, since preschool education has a great impact on emotional intelligence of children. By 2020, 95% of children ages 4 and 5 will be included in early childhood education.

The main goals of the educational policies in Bulgaria are to promote equal access to education and to improve the quality of education. Therefore, efforts are being made in the area of preschool education to provide children with modern facilities and qualified teachers, and to integrate children with special educational needs by offering psychological and pedagogical assistance.

(Source: Government of Bulgaria, 2012)

Burkina Faso

In Burkina Faso, one of the objectives of the “Ten Year Development Plan for Basic Education” (Plan Décennal de Développement de l’Education de Base- PDDEB) was to provide quality preschool and primary education. Education was extended and improved, as was early childhood comprehensive care for both girls and boys, in particular for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. With the support of the private sector, state structures such as kindergartens, daycare centers, *bissongos* (cooperative community preschool centres) and other educational structures have been established in urban and

rural areas. The prohibition of corporal punishment and all forms of violence to children at preschool and elementary level was also emphasized.

Main strategies for achieving the national goal of ensuring free and compulsory schooling for all children ages 6-16 in Burkina Faso include (1) the development of preschool from 3% in 2010 to 11.5% in 2015 and 25% in 2021, (2) staffing each administrative village of Burkina Faso with a kindergarten or a *bissongo* by 2020, and (3) widespread introduction of dietary management of preschool learners and staff capacity building.

(Source: Ministry of National Education and Literacy, 2012)

China

China aims to provide every child aged 3-6 with early childhood education by 2020. To promote universal access to early childhood education, the following measures are being implemented: (1) constructing and establishing kindergartens, including mobile kindergartens for undertaking seasonal classes; (2) ensuring sufficient supply of kindergarten teachers with appropriate qualifications; (3) securing and allocating a reasonable level of funding to kindergarten education within the education budget; (4) enhancing the administration and management of kindergartens; (5) providing financial support to public and private kindergartens in rural areas in mid and western regions; (6) providing some financial support so that poor children, children of migrant workers and those with disabilities are able to attend kindergarten. In general, some cost of kindergarten attendance is to be undertaken by families, but special funds may be set up to support the poorest families.

Three-year action plans regarding kindergarten education are being implemented at local levels. They include a plan to operationalize 90,000 new kindergartens within the next three years (166,700 exist now, which is a 10% increase compared to the previous year). Funds have been increased overall in order to make this possible. The number of children in kindergartens has reached 34,244,200 this year, which is 4, 477,500 more children in kindergartens, representing an increase of 15% compared to the previous year.

Guidelines have been developed for creating and administrating kindergartens and for the construction of the facilities. There are also guidelines for both educators and parents which ensure proper teaching methods are used with children. A promotional campaign has been organized to give the new ECCE measures a favorable welcome from the population, which is diffused mainly through TV and through the Internet.

(Source: Government of China, 2012)

Cook Islands

In the Cook Islands, there has been notable progress in early childhood care and education, particularly in the following areas:

- **Learning environment:** It has been adapted to the learning style of young children. Locally made furniture has been distributed; and the Ministry of Education organized training for teachers on how to use it adequately. Guidelines have been set up and implemented to ensure high health and safety standards of early childhood education (ECE) centres.

- Programme: Teaching and learning of young children have been oriented toward a play-based style. Excursions are now encouraged and edible gardens are being established in the ECE centres. This new interactive orientation encourages children to use their five senses and to experiment with and explore the world around them.
- Teachers: ECE training was subsidized in 2007; and the University of the South Pacific USP ECE Certificate became the minimum certificate required in 2009. Teachers are then free to upgrade their qualification which improves their salary. Currently, 32 teachers work in 27 ECE centres. More women are interested in ECE teaching thanks to improved working conditions and salary. Monthly network meetings are organized by the Ministry of Education to allow teachers to focus on the delivery of quality programmes. Teachers are therefore growing in confidence and realizing the value of their work and the contribution they make toward a child's learning journey.
- Parental Involvement: The Ministry of Education continues to inform and encourage parents to participate in ECE through articles, TV and radio programmes. For instance, the Te Kakaia Initiative, a special programme that promotes positive parenting, was started in 2010. In this programme, parents learn to better understand their child's development and how to stimulate his/her brain.
- Resources: ECE centres are now better resourced thanks to higher legislative and administrative priorities given to ECE. Most ECE centres are now equipped with basic play equipment and teachers can confidently choose and purchase relevant resources.

(Source: Ministry of Education, 2012)

Côte d'Ivoire

Cote d'Ivoire is gradually returning to stability and national unity after a period of repeated conflicts since the inauguration of the new authorities in April 2011, which negatively affected the country's social wellbeing. In 2009, Côte d'Ivoire was ranked the 163rd (out of 182 countries) in the United Nations Human Development Index. Infant mortality (162.2 per 1000) and maternal mortality (543 per 100,000 births) rates are high. A significant number of children are infected and affected by HIV/AIDS (300,000 orphans and children made vulnerable by HIV in 2006).

The early childhood policy for children ages 0-5 falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education. The main line of the policy is to develop parental education for children from birth to three years, as well as community early childhood services for children 3-5 years of age. The Ministry of Education intends to develop preschool education for children of 5 years, especially for disadvantaged populations and those in rural areas, through the creation of large preschool classrooms. For children 6-8 years of age, their enrollment in primary education will be encouraged through the construction and rehabilitation of classrooms, especially in rural areas, and the introduction of free tuition and school canteens.

Recent achievements in ECCE in Cote d'Ivoire include: issuance of several laws and decrees for the benefit of early childhood education; regional consultations in 2009 leading to concrete improvements

in the overall environment for children; development of parental education; training of supervisors of early childhood services using the Early Childhood Development Kits; training of teachers on children's holistic development (including health, nutrition, protection, education, water, hygiene and sanitation issues); and provision for improved sanitation and outdoor play equipment by UNICEF.

However, some challenges remain. According to the National Institute of Statistics, only 6.2% of children ages 0-5 (12.6% in urban areas, and 1.4% in rural areas) were enrolled in formal preschool services. There is a need to raise awareness regarding the importance of preschool education and to mobilize people to create a change. Since preschool education is not included in the free education scheme set up by the Government, preschools do not receive the free distribution of kits and textbooks. In the early years of primary education, challenges include inadequacies regarding teachers, furniture and teaching aids, and inclusion of children with special needs.

The Ministry of Education intends to reduce urban-rural disparities by promoting preschool education for every child, and plans to increase the coverage from the current 6% to 20% by 2020. It also aims to achieve universal primary education by 2020, focusing on rural and disadvantaged communities, better integrate Islamic schools and resume the operation of inclusive schools.

(Source: Ministry of National Education, 2012)

Czech Republic

The Czech Republic aims to strengthen early childhood care and education through the liberalization and establishment of private kindergartens. European recommendations and regulations such as the "Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training ET2020" are taken into account in the modification of the national education system.

In order to fight social exclusion, measures will be taken to allow the less fortunate to attend school. Preschool education will be designed as a way of developing young children and not as a structure to provide adult supervision to children in need of custodial care.

One of the main issues the Czech Republic is facing is the large number of children per preschool class. This prevents teachers from giving sufficient attention to individual children and from ensuring their effective learning and engagement in various activities. Teachers demand higher investment in preschool education so that the number of children per class can be reduced or that assistant teachers can be hired to support in the classrooms. They seek a greater recognition of the importance of their job, and demand the allocation of sufficient funding to improve their working conditions so that they are able to carry out their role properly.

(Source: Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2012)

El Salvador

El Salvador launched the "Pact for the Comprehensive Development of Salvadorian Early Childhood" (Pacto por el Desarrollo Integral de la Primera Infancia Salvadoreña) during the 2012 Education for All Global Action Week, with the aims of establishing an intersectional cooperation between different government bodies and civil society - such as the Ministries of Education and Health, national institutes, NGOs and international organizations - and supporting the State to ensure public and private resources

in order to guarantee a child's right to comprehensive development. The Pact has two main lines of action: improving access and quality of Comprehensive Early Childhood Development and increasing investments from different sectors of society for early childhood development.

(Source: Ministry of Education, 2012)

Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, ECCE refers to a holistic and comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from prenatal stage to age seven, their parents and their caregivers. ECCE is provided mainly through parental education, health and early stimulation, preschool education and non-formal school readiness initiative. ECCE is understood as an important programme to help children become responsible citizens, and its success depends to a great extent on the cooperation at all levels of education, health and women affairs. At the launch of the National ECCE Policy in 2010, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Women, Children and Youth signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Since the establishment of the MOU, a number of activities have been carried out: e.g. distribution of the policy documents, awareness-raising activities in all regions, costing of the strategies and activities in the Policy documents, integration of ECCE into the Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP 4), Health Sector Development Plan (HSDP 4) and the 4-year Sector Development Plan of the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth. So far:

- 1,900,000 parents have participated in parental education programmes, 535 regional professionals were trained to be future parental education trainers, and manuals were created detailing early care and stimulation.
- Preschool enrollment for children ages 4-6 was raised from 5.2% to 16.8%; preschool teachers' syllabi have been developed and distributed in all regions; and prototype preschool materials have been developed for zero classes and community-based preschools.
- 461,080 6-year-old children participated in the non-formal Child-to-Child programme, which aims to promote children's school readiness; impact assessment of the programme, material adaptation and improvements are planned for December 2012.

Ethiopia has set up various targets related to the provision of ECCE for 2014/15: for example, reaching 20% of gross enrollment rate for pre-primary by; attendance of all parents of pre-primary school age children to parental education classes; creation of at least one pre-primary classroom per rural primary school compound; proportion of trained pre-primary teachers from the current 36% level to 60%; percentage of under-five suffering from wasting at 3% (from the current 11%) and those suffering from stunting at 36% (from the current 46%) by 2014/15.

(Source: Ministry of Education, 2012)

Georgia

The administration and financing of kindergartens is decentralized in Georgia. The national programme on kindergarten education for 2009-11 included the creation of education standards, elaboration of indicators, development of handbooks for caretakers on information about how to promote good early

childhood development (e.g. through various activities and games adapted to young children to develop their skills and abilities). A guide for kindergarten leaders is also being developed and includes key principles of day-to-day management of a kindergarten. Moreover, the Ministry of Education and Science has developed a programme for ethnic minorities (principally for teaching Georgian), a teacher's training programme (mobilizing 11 university teachers to local municipalities), and a campaign to promote the importance of ECCE.

(Source: Ministry of Education and Science, 2012)

Greece

In Greece, pre-primary school is voluntary for children aged 4 and compulsory for children aged 5. It can be public, which is free of charge, or private, which is fee-paying. Classes are limited to 25 children, last 9 months (September to June) and can be either for half-day (from 8:15 am to 12:15 pm) or full-day (from 7 am to 4 pm). In the 2011-2012 school year, there were 101,845 5-year-olds and 54,051 4-year-olds enrolled in those schools. In specific cases (medical or comprehension problems) children can attend the preschool one extra year. Special attention is given to children who are minorities. Nurseries and childcare centres cater to children under the age of four, and are run by municipalities.

(Source: Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs, 2012)

Honduras

In 2010, the Interagency Early Childhood Committee launched the National Early Childhood Development Policy through a dynamic process involving actors from the State Government, universities, and civil society. Currently, efforts are being made for the Council of Ministers to approve the policy and to formulate and implement the policy's Strategic Plan and its Operational Plan for the first year with the financial support of UNICEF. Moreover, some early childhood programmes have been carried out. For example:

- The Healthy Schools Programme commenced on 27 July 1998 and became an official programme through the Executive Decree 1/2000 on 18 January 2000. It aims to provide healthy school meals, medical and dental care to children attending public primary schools and preschools in rural and marginalized urban areas, in order to facilitate their physical, mental, social and environmental development.
- The Glass of Milk Programme for Strengthening School Lunch – which began operating on 11 June 2010 and became official through the Legislative Decree 54-2010 – aims to ensure the incorporation of complementary nutritional supplies (school lunch and nutrition) for children in preschools and primary schools across the country, while supporting the mechanisms already established by the Healthy Schools Programme.
- The Live Better Joint Strategy aims to align policies, principles and plans to promote corporate responsibility among socially responsible private companies, municipalities, NGOs, Congress, grassroots organizations and the State Government. Its goal is to improve the quality of life for different communities, municipalities and participants involved in the project with a focus on:

registration of children; education and training; infrastructure; health, nutrition and food safety; housing and basic services.

Furthermore, alliances and partnerships with different institutions and organizations from the non-profit sector for early childhood development have also been forged.

(Source: Ministry of Social Development Preschool Education Unit, 2012)

Japan

In Japan, there are two different kinds of early childhood services. Kindergartens are schools in which children from the age of three up until admission into elementary school are enrolled. Kindergartens offer comprehensive instruction through play in a group environment in accordance with the development of each child. As of May 1, 2011, there were 13,299 kindergartens nationwide with approximately 1.6 million children enrolled. Nursery schools are child welfare facilities which cater to children from the age of zero up until admission into elementary school in place of the parents who are unable to take care of their children during the day because of work or other reasons. They aim to ensure the sound development of children's minds and bodies. As of April 1, 2011, there were 23,385 nursery schools nationwide with approximately 2.12 million children enrolled.

Recent progress and efforts in the area of ECCE are as follows:

- *Enhancing ECCE policy and legal frameworks:* In consideration of the importance of the early years, laws and guidelines related to early childhood education, such as the School Education Act and Kindergarten Education Guidelines, have been amended or revised. These changes are to promote smooth transition from early childhood to elementary education and to enhance assessments in kindergartens. As for nursery schools, Nursery School Care Guidelines were established and took effect in April 2009.
- *Providing child rearing support and resolving the problem of children on waiting list:* In response to the declining birthrate, the trend towards nuclear families and increasing needs for extra familial care, early childhood service provision and financial measures for families with young children have been strengthened. To tackle the trend of children being put on waiting lists, a Cabinet decision "The Vision of Children/Child Raising" was passed in January 2010, and childcare service is being expanded quantitatively. In addition, a "Project to Preempt the Problem of Children on a Waiting List" was implemented in 2011, and support is being given to local governments proactively working on resolving the problem.
- *Integrating kindergartens and nursery schools:* Functions of kindergartens and nursery schools are being integrated by promoting the establishment of shared facilities and ensuring consistency between early education and childcare. Since October 2006, the government has been promoting a new system to certify integrated facilities that provide early education and childcare. To further promote integrated provision, a bill was submitted to the Diet in March 2012 that proposes the establishment of 1) "childcare and education center benefits" integrating the financial measures relating to early education and childcare, and 2) "comprehensive childcare and education centers" which provide school education and childcare for children in an integrated manner.

(Source: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology; Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2012)

Jordan

According to the Jordanian Early Childhood Development Strategy, adopted in 2000, a working plan on the Early Childhood Development was developed during 2003-2008. The Ministry of Education has developed and implemented various programmes and projects that develop the skills and abilities of children, parents and kindergarten staff. The first project was the National Project for Developing Preschool Education supported by AGFUND where a national interactive curriculum for public kindergartens was developed and the teachers were trained. The other project is ERfKE, launched by the Ministry of Education in 2003. This project has two stages: ERfKE 1 (2003-2008), which had great achievements such as promoting readiness for learning through ECE; and ERfKE 2, which will be fully implemented by 2014. ERfKE 2 aims to enhance institutional and professional development, encourage parental and community involvement and expand quality kindergartens. It also includes the Kidsmart programme, which involves the use of computers in teaching young children, and the reception of Japanese volunteer workers who will contribute to strengthening the practice of kindergartens by providing them with drawing and music skills.

(Source: Ministry of Education, 2012)

Kuwait Society for Advancement of Arab Children

The following activities have been carried out by the Kuwait Society for Advancement of Arab Children in favour of young children:

- Publication of research studies and documents on specific areas concerning early childhood care and education;
- Organization of fourteen specialized scientific seminars, of which six specifically targeted teachers in order to present them with research on issues related to early childhood education in the Arab world;
- Publication of books for children of different ages, including young children, on various topics such as the environment, identity and belonging, friendship and respect for others;
- Implementation of a project with the late Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah to provide services and diffuse information about the consequences of war and children's reactions to trauma;
- Organization of a national seminar on the approach of Reggio Emilia to enhance the practice of kindergarten education.

(Source: Kuwait Society for Advancement of Arab Children, 2012)

Mauritius

Mauritius has launched a variety of initiatives to improve early childhood care and education. The government has developed an inclusive National Policy to meet the needs of out-of-school children and children with special needs. In order to facilitate access to ECCE, the government made great efforts such as the abolition of fees in public pre-schools; extension of the per capita grant to children ages 3-5 attending private pre-primary schools with the aim of ensuring that all children attend one to two years of pre-primary education; construction of pre-primary units; and provision of a child minding service. Since 2006, the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority has contributed to the Bridging the Gap Initiative project, which aims at ensuring a smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school. The National Parental Empowerment programme, emphasizing networking for a holistic approach and a sustainable early years literacy project has been implemented since 2010.

(Source: Ministry of Education and Human Resources, and Early Childhood Care and Education Authority, 2012)

Poland

Poland has made progress in strengthening ECCE for children ages 0-5 in recent years through efforts in the following areas:

- *Development of national strategies:* (1) the Lifelong Learning Perspective includes a specific objective on providing diversified, accessible and quality ECCE, and proposes measures such as: the promotion of home-based crèches and kindergartens, multifunctional facilities for families with young children; development of family counseling services and provision of support to families from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds; (2) the Long Term National Development Strategy includes a project for universalizing access to high quality ECCE services, with a focus on providing support for parents with children ages 0-5; (3) the Human Capital Development Strategy includes specific components that seek to promote access and quality of ECCE, for example, by diversifying childcare service options for children ages 0-3, strengthening access to preschool education in rural areas, promoting public awareness of the importance of educational and care functions of kindergartens, and supporting parental involvement in preschool education; 4) the National Reform Programme includes improvement of access to kindergartens and other preschool facilities, and fulfillment of the right of every 4-year-old to benefit from preschool education by providing subsidies to municipalities for the purpose.
- *Care for children less than 3 years of age:* The Childcare Act for children under 3 years was adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2010 and took effect in 2011. The aim of the Act is not only to provide various childcare options but also to allow parents to take up employment. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy developed a programme entitled “Toddler” whereby municipalities provide training to child minders working in childcare services. It also set up an initiative called “Supporting measures for the reconciliation of professional and family life” to fund projects that promote a better balance between professional and family life and improved operation of children’s clubs and child-minding services.
- *Teacher education:* In 2012, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education adopted a new regulation on standards of education for the teaching profession. As set out in the regulation, a

prospective teacher who wishes to work in kindergarten and the first to third grade of primary school will receive the same training.

- *Preschool Education:* Main goals of preschool education in Poland include the encouragement of access to preschool education for children ages 3-5, and provision of free preschool education for 5-year-olds. In 2011, it became obligatory that every 5-year-old attends one year of preschool education; and schooling of 6-year-olds will become compulsory in 2014. To increase the number of children attending preschool, the Ministry of National Education has introduced legislative changes which facilitate access to preschool education for children less than 5 years of age. The Ministry is implementing a project called All Polish Campaign to widely implement lifelong learning. The first part of the project has focused on the promotion of early childhood education. Through the programme “Human Resource Development” of 2007-2013, education of 6-year-olds became co-financed by local and central governments. Poland has set the target of reaching preschool enrollment of 90% by 2020.

(Source: Ministry of National Education, 2012)

Serbia

In the Republic of Serbia, the legislation regarding additional support for children with intellectual disabilities and children of national minorities has been enacted. The Law on Foundations of the Educational System, as well as a separate law, provided the prerequisites for exercising the right to quality preschool education. There are also a variety of bylaws that provide additional support to vulnerable groups. Currently, intensive effort is being made to draft the Rulebook on detailed requirements for adopting a preparatory preschool programme. In addition, several projects are being implemented. ‘Improvement of Preschool Education in Serbia’ was launched in February 2011, and will continue for 3 years in order to enhance the conditions for vulnerable groups. ‘The Joint Inclusion Programme II’ set up by UNICEF, Red Cross and the Ministry of Education, and ‘Kindergartens without borders,’ drafted by UNICEF, all aim at including more children from vulnerable groups in early childhood education.

(Source: Ministry of Education, 2012)

Suriname

In Suriname, 38.5% of children between the ages of 3 and 5 attend preschool; 49.4% in urban areas compared to 29.5% in rural areas; 63.1% from rich households compared to 17.4% from poor households; and 88.4% of the children who are in primary school this year attended preschool the previous year, according to the 2006 Multi Indicator Cluster Survey. 85% of children spend two years in kindergarten where there is one teacher for 30 children, and then pass automatically to primary school. Kindergarten programmes aim to develop children’s skills such as singing, drawing, speaking and counting.

The kindergarten curriculum and teaching methods/goals have a strong orientation toward cognitive development, and pay less attention to emotional and social development. Children in remote areas and those of non-mainstream language backgrounds often feel “left out” and not motivated in these educational environments, because their social, cultural, and emotional needs are not being met in practice.

Few parents' associations exist in Suriname, but their number is gradually increasing thanks to the work of NGOs. Moreover, tools such as manuals are being created to help parents with the education of their children with the support of the United Nations. A project to develop manuals for children ages 0-5 and for training educators of parents with the youngest children is to be implemented by the end of 2012. Inspection is not conducted regularly due to the lack of inspectors. A national early childhood development database created in February 2012 has contributed to filling some data gaps in the field of education. Projects supported by international organizations, such as UNICEF's Child Friendly Schools, are contributing to improving educational standards in Suriname.

(Source: Ministry of Education, 2012)

Sweden

Today, preschool in Sweden is a natural part of the daily lives of families with children ages 1-5, and is also a prerequisite for being able to combine parenting with work. Once part of family policy, preschool has become the first step in the coordinated education system since the late 1990s. The pedagogical task of Swedish preschools where care, development and learning form a coherent whole, remains in place and has become more important in the past decade.

A new Education Act approved by the Swedish Parliament entered into force on 1 July 2011. At the same time, the revised curriculum for preschool entered into force. Preschool is now an integral part of the school system, with the aim of consolidating its status as the first step of the education system and of enhancing its quality and equivalence. The pedagogical task of preschool has been strengthened by a clearer curriculum that includes new goals for children's development in language and mathematics, natural science and technology. In addition, the pedagogical responsibility of preschool teachers has been clarified, and new sections on the responsibilities of preschool heads and on follow-up, evaluation and development have been added.

Preschool staff are well educated and 54% are preschool teachers with 3.5 years university education. To strengthen the teaching skills of preschool staff, the "Boost for Preschool" in-service training initiative is being implemented during 2012-2014. Moreover, a new preschool teacher education programme started in autumn 2011, and a system of preschool teacher registration is to be fully introduced in autumn 2013.

(Source: Ministry of Education and Research, 2012)

Switzerland

The Federal Law on Financial Support for Childcare came into force on 1 February 2003. It aims at parents to combine their family and professional responsibilities through the extension of childcare facilities. 2,078 claims have been approved, and 37,000 new childcare facilities have been created (70% improvement).

Funding from employers, cities and regions are all centralized in a regional foundation. Regional networks are organized along with Care Vouchers for preschool, depending on income and level of lucrative activity.

The HarmoS arrangement for afterschool childcare allows for the development of childcare corresponding to local needs. Currently in Switzerland, around 86% of children go to preschool for 2 years. Almost all towns chose to make it compulsory to ensure that every town allows such facilities. By including those two years of preschool education into the compulsory school system, the HarmoS arrangement facilitates the harmonization of the cities' differences.

The first Swiss online database about municipalities' policy measures to reconcile work-family responsibilities (main part: childcare) has been implemented: www.travailetfamille.admin.ch.

Within the framework of the Youth Protection Programme, 8.65 million Francs have been allocated to implement 2 national programmes in order to improve the efficiency of violence prevention and to protect young people from the media. These programmes aim to facilitate the development of innovative practices, reinforce families' capacities to educate their young children, and allow them to be integrated socially and academically.

The programme "Schritt:weise/step by step" – partly funded by the Federal Office of Migration – provides training to socially disadvantaged parents for supporting their children's education from early childhood years.

National campaigns "Education gives strength" and "Link is strength" are being undertaken to place the theme of education at the center of public debate, and to support parents in educating and building a strong relationship with their children. A brochure has been published in 14 languages to be distributed to 220,000 parents between 2010 and 2013.

(Source: Federal Social Security Office, 2012)

Syria

Between January 2011 and May 2012, particular efforts were made to promote a holistic approach to early childhood care and education at the Regional Centre for Early Childhood based in Damascus. In 2011-2012, the Regional Centre provided training for kindergarten caregivers on how to promote young children's physical, cognitive, motor, social and emotional development (e.g. active learning, assessment tools, parental involvement, protection from violence, mental health, inclusion and special education, creativity, library use, issues of discipline). The Regional Centre also published toolkits, booklets and brochures and is conducting research on various topics including major disciplinary problems of children faced at the Centre, the training of teachers, and teacher competences for implementing inclusive education.

(Source: Ministry of Education, 2012)
