



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

### 1. ACCESS, PROCEDURES AND PARTICIPATION

#### Key principles

- 1.1 Provision that is available and affordable to all families and their children.
- 1.2 Provision that encourages participation, strengthens social inclusion and embraces diversity.

#### *Legislation and policy at national level*

Guiding questions	Country responses
<p>1. Is there a national policy and legislation that gives the right to all children, without exception, from at least 3 years onwards, to attend mainstream Early Childhood Education (ECE)?</p>	<p>The National Law on Education (2011) aims to ensure the welfare of all children living in Lithuania. The Law includes creating conditions for every child to live a happy life, be protected against all forms of violence and exploitation, be properly cared for and be able to participate in public life. The policy focuses on ensuring access to, continuity of and social equality of education. It also aims to expand the provision of pre-primary education, especially for disadvantaged and at-risk children, through the creation of an information and counselling system for parents, the provision of equal starting opportunities for children’s compulsory education and the development of a universal pre-primary education system which provides purposeful educational and cultural assistance to all socially at-risk families with children.</p> <p>Early childhood education in Lithuania is not considered to be formal education, but falls under the category of informal education together with arts, music, sports education and training.</p> <p>Pre-primary education institutions are under the authority of local governments who also implement centralised pre-school and pre-primary admission procedures.</p> <p>Attendance in pre-primary education settings is optional in most cases. However, in certain circumstances, such as high social risk families, it might be obligatory.</p>



Guiding questions	Country responses
<p>2. Is there support available to enable every child to attend ECE?</p>	<p>The Law on Education (2011), in line with the procedures established by the Minister for Education and Science, the Minister for Social Security and Labour and the Minister of Health, states that pre-school and pre-primary aged children and their families are entitled to comprehensive educational assistance, social support and health services.</p> <p>Local authorities are responsible for ensuring that every child under their jurisdiction has access to education including an adapted learning environment and resources and any additional psychological, educational or social support, if needed. However, this support is not always accessible to families in need due to a lack of specialists and/or placements available locally.</p> <p>Recommendations for special educational needs (SEN) support for 3–5- or 6-year olds are the responsibility of the Child Welfare Commission, Education Support Service or the Pedagogical-Psychological Service within the local authority. Support for those under 3 years old who have additional needs is normally provided by Child Development and Early Rehabilitation Services. State-funded specialist support or services for children with developmental disorders such as ASD (autism spectrum disorder) are only available periodically.</p> <p>There are a few problems in the area of support for families with young children, especially those with additional needs. Mainstream kindergartens do not have enough well-trained specialists to effectively serve all children’s needs and families have to apply for placements in specialist kindergartens where there is a better chance of the child having their individual needs met. Many parents decide to hire additional specialist support privately. The role of the personal assistant in mainstream settings is only just starting to appear, and is often limited to personal care rather than assisting with learning and skills development.</p>
<p>3. Is there a period of compulsory ECE before school</p>	<p>Pre-school and pre-primary attendance is optional, except in cases specified by the Minister for Education and Science and the Minister for Social Security and Labour. If parents decide</p>



Guiding questions	Country responses
starts?	<p>that their child will not attend a pre-primary setting, they can receive free educational support at home, through specialist consultations and visiting tutors. These are arranged individually, depending on local authority regulations.</p> <p>A current amendment to the Law on Education states that pre-primary education will become compulsory for children from the age of 6, starting in September 2016. Around 93% of all 6-year-olds attended pre-primary settings in 2014.</p>
4. Are arrangements in place for transition from home to ECE and from ECE to primary education for all children?	<p>Measures to facilitate transition from pre-school to pre-primary, and from pre-primary to primary education are in place regionally as ECE and school admission policies are devised and carried out at local authority level. Moreover, the transition from pre-school to pre-primary settings is further facilitated by the continuity of the National Pre-School and Pre-Primary Curricula.</p> <p>Transition from home to pre-school or pre-primary setting might be more complicated depending on the area and access to information. Some local authorities, such as Vilnius, use centralised admissions systems which allow parents to request a placement closer to home, or prioritise the same setting for siblings. Several websites provide comprehensive information to parents about the admission procedures, such as <a href="http://www.ikimokyklinis.lt">www.ikimokyklinis.lt</a> and <a href="http://www.smm.lt">www.smm.lt</a>. Local authorities also post information about local ECE settings on their websites. Generally, each setting will arrange any additional support needed to ease the transition, based on individual cases.</p>
5. Is inclusion stated as a goal of ECE provision? Is there a policy making ECE accessible to all children?	<p>The concept of inclusion is slowly making its way into Lithuanian ECE policies. The third goal of the National Education Strategy 2003–2020 emphasises the expansion of pre-school and pre-primary accessibility to all children, including those requiring special support in terms of physical or health needs or learning difficulties, those from social risk families and in rural areas.</p>
6. Is there a policy that obliges	<p>The Law on Education (2011) states that parents have the right to choose their preferred type of ECE, whether at home or in</p>



Guiding questions	Country responses
<p>mainstream publicly funded ECE to make adaptations so that all children can attend and participate? Please describe</p>	<p>an ECE setting. It also states that parents of children with SEN have a right to request placements at either a pre-primary setting located close to their home or any regional setting designated for learners with special educational needs.</p> <p>Local authorities are responsible for ensuring access to available services for all children in their jurisdiction. The Law on Education states that access to education should be ensured by adapting the school environment and providing educational support and resources. However, these guidelines are not enough to encourage mainstream ECE settings to adapt to all children’s needs. Most mainstream kindergartens are only able to include a very limited number of children with additional needs, either in inclusive classrooms or by establishing SEN classrooms, as this relies on local authority funding for specialist and additional support staff. What is more, availability of special needs kindergartens in their area encourages the parents to choose these as their preferred ECE setting and the Psychological Pedagogical Service to recommend them for children with SEN.</p>

***Practice at national level***

Guiding questions	Country responses
<p>1. What percentage of children attend mainstream ECE provision at ages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 years</li> <li>• 4 years</li> <li>• 5 years (if not primary)</li> <li>• 6 years (if not primary)?</li> </ul>	<p>In 2013 and 2014 respectively, 66.7% and 68.4% of all children aged 1–6 years attended pre-primary provisions.</p> <p>The 2013–2014 data shows that 31.9% and 33.1% of 1–2-year olds and 84.8% and 86.1% of 3–6-year olds attended ECE provision.</p> <p>In 2014, 88.8% of 5-year olds and 93.4% of 6-year olds attended mainstream pre-primary settings (<a href="http://osp.stat.gov.lt/">http://osp.stat.gov.lt/</a>).</p>
<p>2. What are the</p>	<p>Various social, cultural and economic factors have an impact</p>



Guiding questions	Country responses
main factors preventing some children from accessing mainstream ECE?	<p>on some children's access to mainstream ECE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– high level of poverty, unemployment and social risk in rural areas;</li><li>– some parents cannot afford ECE;</li><li>– children with health problems may face difficulties accessing ECE: problems with early diagnosis of SEN and availability of quality early intervention;</li><li>– only in very few settings are there agreements about gifted children and clear systems for their identification and support;</li><li>– children with SEN are often psychologically insecure (due to difficult assignments, bullying, etc.) and have lower academic achievements;</li><li>– settings lack competent specialists in the SEN field;</li><li>– parents are not satisfied with the help provided during the education period;</li><li>– some teachers still have negative attitudes towards children with SEN, they keep their distance from the unsuccessful and pedagogically abandoned;</li><li>– in bigger cities with higher populations there are not enough places for children in ECE (in 2015 there was a shortage of 7,000 ECE places in Vilnius);</li><li>– in rural areas, access to information about available support and transport arrangements to access ECE might be limited for some families;</li><li>– multilingual children, such as returning expatriates, mixed-nationality parents or ethnic minorities, might experience disadvantages in their attempts to access mainstream ECE.</li></ul>
3. Are there children who attend special ECE settings? Please	The 2015 data shows that 15.09% of all children (14,645 children up to 6 years old) in ECE settings have additional educational or health needs. Children with special educational and health needs are offered several ECE setting possibilities:



Guiding questions	Country responses
provide data if available.	<p>integrated mainstream settings, special needs groups in mainstream settings or special ECE settings, depending on the child's individual needs, parents' choice and available places.</p> <p>In 2015 there were 11 special ECE provisions in Lithuania, serving 1,244 children with SEN (8.49% of all children with SEN), which means that around 91% of children with SEN attending ECE were either attending inclusive mainstream settings or special needs groups within mainstream establishments. For example, in 2014, there were 1,801 children in special needs groups in 77 mainstream settings, whereas 15,549 children attended inclusive mainstream groups. This does not necessarily mean that these children were able to access the appropriate help they needed, however: specialist support in mainstream settings has been decreasing. In 2008 there were 684 speech therapists, but only 471 in 2014; there were 68 psychologists in 2008, but only 32 in 2014; 113 SEN teachers in 2008, and just 61 in 2014.</p> <p>Unfortunately, no data is available yet for 2015.</p>
4. Describe arrangements for inter-service collaboration to enable children's attendance and participation?	<p>Several different services in the areas of Social Care and Work, Education and Health work together to improve children's attendance and participation in ECE.</p> <p>All ECE settings have a Child Welfare Commission which monitors the attendance and welfare of children. If any concerns are raised, for example, if the child doesn't attend for prolonged periods of time, the commission assesses the situation and, together with parents and social workers, aims to better the situation. Social workers or the ECE administration might organise transport in rural areas.</p> <p>Similarly, the state Children's Rights and Protection Service and the local authority Child Welfare Commission, with help from social workers, identify socially at-risk families and recommend adjustments in order to enable children to attend ECE. These services evaluate children's needs and discuss possible ways of meeting these needs with parents. Where possible, parents are provided with options to choose from within local mainstream or other ECE settings. If the Child</p>



Guiding questions	Country responses
	<p>Welfare Commission considers it appropriate they might refer the family to the Psychological Pedagogical Service where children's development (from 3 years old) is assessed by a team of specialists. Children under 3 years old are referred to Early Rehabilitation Centres, which are part of the health care system. Children with specific conditions, such as visual or hearing impairments, are referred to specialist ECE.</p>
<p>5. What proportion of children is formally identified as having additional needs at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3 years</li><li>• 4 years</li><li>• 5 years</li><li>• 6 years</li></ul>	<p>Data from 2014 shows that 0.97% of 0–3-year olds, 15.64% of 3–5-year olds, and 26.94% of 6-year olds attending ECE settings had a formal diagnosis of special educational needs. It is important to note, however, that this data only provides information on those attending ECE. There is no data available on how many children with SEN were outside the educational system.</p> <p>The 2015 data is not yet available.</p>



## 2. WORKFORCE

### Key principles

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

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

### Legislation and policy

Guiding questions	Country responses
<p>1. What level of qualification is required to work in ECE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for teachers?</li> <li>• for other staff?</li> </ul>	<p>ECE teachers are required to have at least a bachelor’s degree in the field of early childhood education. Qualification requirements for specialist staff differ depending on the area of expertise, for example, psychologists require a master’s degree. Support staff, such as personal care assistants, do not require any formal training.</p>
<p>2. What regulation is there for staff-child ratios in ECE?</p>	<p>There can be up to 20 children in a class in a mainstream ECE setting, with 1 teacher and a domestic assistant. If children are under 3 years old, there should no more than 15 children per class. In mainstream settings the number of children will be lower if there are children with SEN attending the group, for example, there would be a maximum of 19 children in a group if at least one of them had SEN. State-funded ECE settings might hire additional support staff, such as personal assistants or teaching assistants, depending on agreements with the local authorities.</p> <p>Specialist ECE settings which are attended only by children with SEN will have a maximum of 6 to 10 children per class, depending on the level of support required.</p>
<p>3. What provision is there for additional staffing to support children with diverse and</p>	<p>Local authorities regulate staffing at state-funded ECE settings, therefore additional staff support differs accordingly. If a mainstream ECE setting accommodates children with additional needs then specialist support is made available, including speech therapists, occupational therapists, etc.</p>





Guiding questions	Country responses
additional needs?	However, only specialist ECE settings are able to provide higher levels of specialist support.
<p>4. Does the initial training of staff include understanding and supporting children with diverse and additional needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for teachers?</li> <li>• for other staff?</li> </ul>	<p>The teacher training system is developing the implementation of the <i>Profile of Inclusive Teachers</i> (2012). The <i>Descriptor of teacher training</i> (order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania No. V-1742, 2012.12.12) focuses on teachers' competence in recognising the features of development and special needs in children of different ages, their ability to find out and help to overcome children's difficulties with socialisation, development and learning and their ability to provide pedagogical and psychological help, among other things (Art. 13). The <i>Education study field descriptor</i> (2015) outlines a special competence which must be achieved by student teachers. They must be able to evaluate children's needs, including special needs and gifted children, as well as their interests, skills and learning style and to make changes to teaching practice, differentiating and individualising learning, teaching content and materials to ensure that children with special needs are able to participate in the educational process and to understand the learning potential of gifted children (Art. 28.1).</p>
<p>5. Does initial training include preparation for working in partnership with families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for teachers?</li> <li>• for other staff?</li> </ul>	<p>Colleges and universities which provide teacher training and training for other staff are now focusing more on understanding and supporting children with diverse and additional needs in the curricula: courses in general didactics, developmental psychology, social pedagogy, special pedagogy and pedagogical psychology are revised and renewed and new courses dealing with intercultural education are implemented. Colleges and universities (including Vilnius University, Lithuanian University of Education, Siauliai University and others) which provide teacher training and training for other staff are very active in international developmental project work dealing with inclusion issues and are also networking in this field (Comenius Association, etc.).</p>
6. Is there a policy for in-service	The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania has re-established the Department of Teachers'



Guiding questions	Country responses
<p>training? Does it cover inclusive education skills?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for teachers?</li> <li>• for other staff?</li> </ul>	<p>Activities (2015). It is responsible for the policy and strategy in the development of teachers' qualifications, in the context of the implementation of the <i>Life Long Learning Strategy (2001)</i> and <i>Plan of action for the development of inclusive education for the period of 2014–2016</i>, approved by the Minister of Education and Science, 2014, law No. V-808.</p> <p>Local centres in each municipality have the duty and function of providing in-service training for teachers and other staff. Colleges and universities also offer in-service courses as part of their accredited activities. The course content is based on the general in-service teacher training policy and the demand of target groups. Regional training centres develop annual course plans.</p> <p>Training centres offer in-service courses for teachers and other staff in the fields of multilingual education, the education of gifted children, children with learning difficulties, etc. In some cases, the Ministry of Education and Science insists that every teacher has to pass a course in special pedagogy (a requirement in the <i>Descriptor of the requirements for teacher's qualification</i>, order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania No V-774, 2014.08.29, Art.9, if it was not taught to them in high school as part of their curriculum) which may be offered as a special and obligatory activity by regional training centres.</p>

***Practice at national level***

Guiding questions	Country responses
<p>1. What proportion of staff has the required qualification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for teachers?</li> <li>• for other staff?</li> </ul>	<p>The vast majority (more than 99.5%) of ECE teachers have the required bachelor's or higher degree in education qualification.</p>



Guiding questions	Country responses
2. Please describe any proposed changes to the required qualifications.	Data not available.
3. Describe the role of leaders of ECE settings in ensuring inclusive practice?	<p>Leaders of ECE, after signing an agreement with parents, have to implement statements of the Lithuanian Law on Education (2003), Art. 15.2.: Special needs education is provided by all compulsory and comprehensive education programmes. In order to meet the needs of a learner, these programmes have to be changed, adapted or new special educational programmes created; and additional assistance has to be provided.</p> <p>Leaders of ECE also have to follow the <i>Descriptor of the order of the organisation of education of children with SEN</i> (2011).</p> <p>In implementing the <i>Descriptor of the Achievements of Pre-school Children</i> (2014) and <i>General Programme for Pre-primary Education</i> (2014), leaders of ECE have to guarantee the quality of ECE services for children from socially at-risk families, multicultural or multilingual families, migrants, gifted and talented children and children with learning difficulties.</p> <p>Often funds allocated for these purposes are not enough at a municipality level and so ECE leaders have to be very inventive and flexible, ensuring the quality of inclusive services.</p>
4. Provide any data on staff–child ratio.	No data is available to show class teacher to child ratios in ECE. The data on all teaching staff (pre-school teachers, pre-primary teachers and arts teachers) to children (total number of children) varies from 9–15 children per teacher.
5. Please describe the range of specialist support that is available and how it is	The range of specialist support available at an ECE setting might include speech and language therapists, psychologists, special needs teachers (specialist pedagogues), social skills teachers (social pedagogues), surdo-pedagogues (teachers working with children with hearing impairments) and typhlo-



Guiding questions	Country responses
organised?	<p>pedagogues (teachers working with children with visual impairments). Moreover, some special ECE settings will also provide occupational therapy, kinesiotherapy or physiotherapy and other health services, such as massage therapy.</p> <p>The range of specialist support staff available at a specific ECE setting will depend on the type of provision the setting is supplying. For example, special needs only kindergartens might have one speech therapist per 10–12 children, whereas a mainstream setting serving 120 children might only employ one part-time speech therapist, depending on how many children at the setting require individual specialist support. Mainstream settings, at the discretion of the head teacher, can also hire visiting specialists for individual support for children with additional needs, for example a speech therapist, SEN teacher, etc. The practice and successful co-ordination of this depends on the quality of communication between the local Psychological-Educational Service and the ECE setting.</p> <p>Specialist support at the setting is normally organised by the head/deputy head for education together with the Child Welfare Team (a team of in-house, regular and specialist staff). Organisational aspects will be specific to each setting, however they must adhere to the individual needs of each child, their parents'/guardians' preferences and the formal recommendations of the Psychological-Educational Service, Education Support Service or Early Rehabilitation Centre. Usually, children will participate in the educational process together with their peers and to their best ability as described in the education plan, with or without individual assistance. It is common practice for a child with SEN to also receive up to an hour of individual sessions per week (this might vary depending on the setting) with a specialist, such as a speech therapist or SEN teacher (as recommended by the Psychological-Educational Service or Education Support Service).</p>
6. How do regular and support staff collaborate in IECE	Depending on the setting, collaboration between regular and support staff will face various challenges. Generally, it is co-ordinated by the Child Welfare Commission and the deputy



Guiding questions	Country responses
settings?	<p>head of the ECE setting. In specialist ECE settings, where there is a higher number of specialists (speech therapists, occupational therapists, etc.) and other support staff (teaching assistants), co-operation and team work is becoming the norm. Mainstream settings, especially those who invite specialist support in from outside the setting, sometimes struggle to meet children's additional needs due to a lack of communication between the class teacher and the visiting specialist. Continuity and consistency in implementing the individual education plan (IEP) throughout a child's day at the ECE setting suffers as class teachers are not always adequately trained in SEN. An important role in ECE settings is played by other staff or assistants, for example, each kindergarten group has a helper who provides domestic and care services, such as food service, cleaning and airing the classroom, helping children with toileting, etc.</p>
7. Describe the role of support assistants in the ECE setting?	<p>As mentioned above, each classroom in the ECE setting has a domestic assistant who is responsible for keeping the classroom to Hygiene Regulations. This role does not require any formal training in education.</p> <p>Another type of support staff is the Educational Support Assistant who attends to children with additional needs. This role is more common in special ECE settings and pre-primary mainstream settings.</p>



### 3. CURRICULUM

#### Key principles

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

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

#### Legislation and policy

Guiding questions	Country responses
1. Is there a national ECE curriculum for <i>all</i> children?	There are 3 national ECE documents in Lithuania: <i>Descriptor of the Criteria for the Pre-school Curriculums</i> (2011), <i>Descriptor of the Achievements of Pre-school Children</i> (2014) and <i>General Programme for Pre-primary Education</i> (2014). These are recommendatory guidelines and each ECE setting is allowed to follow, adjust and specify the curriculum at their discretion. The ECE curriculums are de-centralised at the moment.
2. Does it include skills and competences to be achieved by children?	The <i>Descriptor of the Achievements of Pre-school Children</i> (2014) and <i>General Programme for Pre-primary Education</i> (2014) include competences (attitudes/values, skills and knowledge) which children should achieve.
3. Describe how the curriculum facilitates inclusion?	<p>The abovementioned documents focus on the needs of every child, the potential of every child and the progress, achievements and maturity of every child; all are strongly committed to the principles of a socio-cultural approach: individualisation, integration, contextualisation and interaction in education.</p> <p>The concept of a child with additional needs is presented in the <i>Descriptor of the Achievements of Pre-school Children</i> (2014), which covers the curriculum from birth to 6 years. A special section (Chapter 3: <i>Signs of credible worry</i>) is included and indicators of unusual development and behaviour in children aged 1, 5 and 6 years are described.</p> <p>The <i>General Programme for Pre-primary Education</i> (2014) Art. 11 (11.1–11.3) declares and describes guarantees for equal</p>



Guiding questions	Country responses
	<p>education possibilities for all children with SEN in detail (adjustments of the curriculum, individual methods, learning materials, forms of co-operation with parents, measurement of learning outcomes, etc.).</p>
<p>4. Is the use of new technologies included in the curriculum?</p>	<p>The <i>Descriptor of the Achievements of Pre-school Children (2014)</i> and <i>General Programme for Pre-primary Education (2014)</i> both include a strong focus on new technologies and building children’s competences: competence as a learner, competence as a researcher, competence as a problem-solver, competence as a creator, etc.</p>
<p>5. Is the curriculum adaptable to meet the needs of all children?</p>	<p>There are 3 ECE documents listed above can be followed, adjusted and detailed at an institutional or group level, as the ECE curriculums are de-centralised at the moment.</p> <p>The documents all focus on the needs of every child, the potential of every child and the progress, achievements and maturity of every child; all are strongly committed to the principles of a socio-cultural approach: individualisation, integration, contextualisation and interaction in education.</p>
<p>6. How are parents involved in the adaptation of the curriculum to individual children?</p>	<p>In general, all parents participate in regular reflections/conversations about the achievements of their children with teachers (two such conversations a year are obligatory with every family in a pre-primary group) and the first reflection takes place in the autumn (usually in September). Teachers and parents decide if there should be any special support for the children (multilingual, gifted, etc.).</p> <p>In the case of children with SEN, the teacher initially detects a child’s problem and informs the parents. Only then can an initial assessment of the child’s special educational needs be conducted by specialists (the Child Welfare Commission at the ECE setting). They present their findings and recommendations regarding further modification of the programme for the individual child. If the child is still unable to cope with teaching requirements and achieves low results after this, the Child Welfare Commission recommends that the parents apply for further assessment at the local Psychological</p>



Guiding questions	Country responses
	<p>Educational Service. After a further assessment and evaluation period, these specialists provide recommendations to parents and the institution that the child attends, indicating the kind of special assistance and education plan/programme that is to be implemented, what kind of special provision is required in order to support the child’s learning and teaching processes and when it is necessary to repeat the assessment and evaluation of the child’s special needs. The National Centre of Special Needs Education and Psychology will then become involved if problems still persist after serious input by the Psychological Educational Service.</p>
<p>7. Is there awareness of the impact of labelling on children's participation and learning.</p>	<p>In 2015 the Ministry of Education released the Pre-school Education Methodological Recommendations for ECE teachers to support the above mentioned curricula documents. These recommendations raise awareness of children who are ‘different’ or whose development is distinctive from others and encourage teachers to focus on children’s strengths rather than developmental difficulties.</p> <p>In general, there is a huge necessity for dissemination of information regarding developmental difficulties and special educational needs. Labelling is widespread in both mainstream and special ECE settings, as well as on a national level.</p>

***Practice at national level***

Guiding questions	Country responses
<p>1. Is there assessment of the learning and development of children from age 3 years?</p>	<p>Assessment of children’s learning and development is understood as a natural and obligatory element of the pedagogical cycle (planning – organisation – assessment – planning). ECE settings adjust and detail general documents of ECE at institutional and group levels and follow their recommendations concerning methods, frequency, documentation and presentation of achievements and progress in all spheres of a child’s development up to 7 years of age. The <i>Descriptor of the Duties of Pre-school Teacher</i> (2005) and <i>Descriptor of the Duties of Pre-primary Pedagogue</i> (2003) include a strong focus on the importance of systemic</p>





Guiding questions	Country responses
	collection of data regarding children’s achievements and the ways in which to use that data in the future, in planning the progress of each child, and in informing parents about this issue and how they can co-operate.
2. What arrangements are there for the screening of children’s functioning?	There is no screening system at a national level. Before the child attends an ECE setting any concerns raised will be by parents or health staff, such as a paediatrician, etc. Once the child is in the ECE system, their progress is monitored constantly using different methods: observations, conversations, discussion, the child’s narratives, art works, analysis of the products of the child’s activity, sound and video records. The child’s progress is compared only to their own achievements, and not to the achievements of other children. Methods of assessment depend on what is being assessed, whether knowledge, skills or attitudes and values, or a combination of things, based on the child’s individual competence. Assessment is based on longitudinal observations and information collection, followed by reflection by the care-givers. Children’s level of competence can be visible, generalised data about children’s activity in natural or purposefully organised situations, during play, in communication situations, during project work, outdoor activities, etc. Everyday information can be collected in a personal portfolio, folders, IT devices, etc. The conclusions of monitoring are formulated as short comments, describing a child’s strengths and pointing out areas to be improved or developed. The results of the assessment are discussed with parents individually; in very exceptional cases, there may be participation from members of the Child Welfare Commission, other specialists or leaders of the setting’s administration. The criteria for decisions about the quality of each child’s achievements are the competences, which are described in the general documents.
3. Is children's engagement and participation in ECE activities	Children’s engagement and participation are monitored constantly as natural parts of all the competences that are monitored – social, communication, cognitive, health and art.



Guiding questions	Country responses
monitored?	
4. How do ECE settings reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of all children?	In 2014, around 92% of children in ECE settings were Lithuanian speakers. Around 5% and 2% of children were educated in Russian and Polish respectively. Only 1 private ECE setting had an English-speaking class. Unfortunately, no data is available regarding the proportion of children from other linguistic or cultural backgrounds, for example Roma, refugee children, etc.
5. How do staff adapt (prepare and present) the curriculum and the learning activities to make them accessible to all children?	Teachers and other staff base adjustment of the curriculum on the results of the monitoring of children's achievements. Accessibility is achieved through the individualisation and differentiation of assignments, proposed activities, play and other materials, etc., and providing children with many choices.
6. How are parents involved in this process?	As parents are informed and take part in the monitoring process, they are invited to also take part in the decisions made regarding adjustments of the curriculum for their children. In the case of children with SEN, parent participation is more than required.
7. How are children themselves involved in this process?	Children participate in the process of monitoring their achievements through conversations about their outcomes, so they can judge which area of skill or knowledge is most important to them over short or long time periods.
8. How is ICT used to overcome barriers to participation and learning?	The use of ICT in ECE settings is gradually increasing across Lithuania. This is achieved by implementing governmental ICT development and action plans. A variety of ICT is used to benefit inclusion and active learning, such as interactive smart boards, computers and tablets. Learning and game apps and websites are of great interest among children, whereas teachers, especially in rural areas, require more training in the successful use of ICT. Some specialist ECE settings use Board Maker, which has been translated to Lithuanian, to help in communication with children with SEN. Also, the number of



Guiding questions	Country responses
	educational apps for children is increasing steadily.
9. What provisions are there for meeting children's additional needs?	<p>As mentioned before, in Lithuania there are 2 types of ECE settings – mainstream and specialist. Depending on a child's additional needs, a specific ECE setting may be recommended. It is common practice for children with more complex difficulties to be referred to a specialist ECE setting, which in most cases means that the child will continue to progress in special needs educational settings after the ECE.</p> <p>In addition to ECE provision, families can receive help at Early Rehabilitation Centres, the Psychological-Educational Service and Education Support Service in their local authority. There are also a number of private child development centres in the biggest towns, where parents often find options for more intensive early intervention.</p> <p>Art and music schools, both private and public, offer art education from an early age. There is no specific provision for gifted children.</p> <p>In terms of non-traditional ECE, Montessori and Waldorf pre-schools as well as Suzuki Talent School are currently practising in the biggest towns. Recently, as the legislation for private pre-schools has been loosened, an influx of new ideas, such as outside-only kindergarten, is evident.</p>
10. How is the environment adapted to the needs of all children?	<p>The majority of ECE settings have seen an improvement in their physical environment over the last few years due to the take in of EU funds. Old ECE buildings have been renovated and the condition of playgrounds has been upgraded.</p> <p>There is a lot of room for improvement in terms of adapting the environment inside the ECE settings to meet all children's needs, especially those in mainstream ECE. Teachers require more training to be able to establish inclusive practices, and a lack of support staff or specialist resources is often a barrier for adaptations to be made. For example, picture support systems or alternative communication systems (PECS, Makaton, etc.) are not implemented where they should be to meet the needs of children with ASD. Sensory activities, such as sensory tables/corners, or a quiet corner, are fairly new</p>



<b>Guiding questions</b>	<b>Country responses</b>
	concepts. There is an evident lack of national policy and recommendations on how to create successful inclusive settings for all children.



## 4. EVALUATION AND MONITORING

### Key principles

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

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

### Legislation and policy

Guiding questions	Country responses
1. What standards are in place for ensuring the quality of ECE at national level?	The <i>Quality Framework on Early Childhood Education and Care</i> (European Commission, 2014) is the general guiding document in the field of ECE quality assurance; <i>Methodology for the Internal Assessment of Pre-school Institutions</i> (2005), <i>Descriptor of the Criteria for the Pre-school Curriculums</i> (2011), <i>Descriptor of the Achievements of Pre-school Children</i> (2014) and <i>General Programme for Pre-primary Education</i> (2014) are other benchmarks of quality in ECE.
2. Describe the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the quality of ECE provision?	There is a system developed to monitor the quality of ECE provision. It is based on internal assessment, following the <i>Methodology for the Internal Assessment of Pre-school Institutions</i> (2005). This document includes assessment in six areas: Ethos, Teaching and Learning of Children, Achievements of Children, Support for a Child and Family, Resources, Governance of the Setting. Indicators of the institution’s activities in each of the areas are described. Each of the areas contains four quality levels.  Results of the regular assessment of leaders, teachers and other staff as part of the certification system is also a part of the evidence of quality of an ECE setting. The idea of obligatory external assessment of ECE settings is currently being considered.
3. How is the participation of all children reflected in the national quality standards	Participation of children is already visible as a value in the <i>Methodology for the Internal Assessment of Pre-school Institution</i> (2005), in which the term ‘culture of a child’ is indoctrinated. In the most recent documents, such as the <i>General Programme for Pre-primary Education</i> (2014), the



Guiding questions	Country responses
for ECE?	concept of the ‘voice of children’ is developed. The value of spontaneous activities for children, not just those that have been organised, is emphasised, the interaction between teacher and child without the teacher being a dominating role is described, etc.
4. How does national policy identify and address inequalities in participation in ECE?	The <i>Law on Education</i> and <i>National Education Strategy 2013–2020</i> both focus on the principle of equal opportunities in the education system in general.
5. How does research inform policy and practice in ECE?	<p>The Education Development Centre and the Ministry of Education have initiated several research studies over the last few years. These include, among others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– ‘Pre-school and pre-primary education in Lithuania. Current condition and future possibilities’ (2012);</li> <li>– ‘Study of management of pre-school and pre-primary settings’ (2009);</li> <li>– ‘Study of Coherence of pre-school, pre-primary and primary education’ (2012);</li> <li>– ‘Pre-school and pre-primary education content, application and quality analysis’ (2009).</li> </ul>

### ***Practice at national level***

Guiding questions	Country responses
1. How do staff monitor and evaluate the participation and learning of all children?	Children’s engagement, participation and learning are monitored constantly as natural parts of all the competences that are monitored – social, communication, cognitive, health and art.
2. How are parents	In general, all parents participate in regular



<b>Guiding questions</b>	<b>Country responses</b>
involved in this process?	reflections/conversations about the achievements of their children with teachers (in pre-primary groups, two such conversations a year with every family are obligatory); the first reflection takes place in the autumn (usually in September).
3. How are children themselves involved in this process?	<p>Children (and parents) can suggest changes in daily schedules, propose themes for projects (with durations of a week or two or for longer periods), decide who they want to invite as guests, make suggestions about changes to traditions (birthday celebrations, etc.), propose changes in indoor and outdoor environments, etc.</p> <p>Children also participate in the process of monitoring their achievements through conversations about their outcomes, so they can judge which area of skill or knowledge is most important to them over short or long time periods.</p>



## 5. GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING

### Key principles

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

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

### Legislation and policy

Guiding questions	Country responses
1. Under which ministry(ies) / department(s) are ECE provisions regulated and funded?	<p>Mainstream ECE provisions are funded by a variety of sources, the main one being the Ministry of Education department of Informal Education. Additional funding comes from Local Authority Education departments.</p> <p>The funding allocated for the delivery of pre-school and pre-primary education curricula consists of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– learners’ basket funds: these are intended exclusively for education-related activities and are allocated from the state budget. They are special, targeted grants for municipal budgets that are distributed in accordance with methodologies approved by the Government;</li> <li>– school maintenance funds: these are allocated by the institution, exercising the rights and responsibilities of the ECE owner. The majority of ECE owners in Lithuania are municipal councils, and in this case maintenance funds are allocated from the municipal budget;</li> <li>– Additional funding for schools may be given from EU structural funds or through state investment programmes.</li> </ul>
2. How is intersectorial (health, social and education) collaboration	Partnership between education, social, and health sectors is essential to ensure access to inclusive support for families with small children, especially those with additional needs. In general, this co-operation is active on a local level, with the Child Welfare Commission at the ECE setting, Children’s Rights





Guiding questions	Country responses
promoted among all stakeholders in ECE?	and Psychological Educational Services working together to ensure every child's needs are met at the ECE setting.
3. How is free or affordable provision guaranteed to all children age 3 years and over?	On the national level, the Ministry of Education allocates 'learners' basket funds' to each child attending ECE. This 'basket' covers at least 4 hours per day (20 hours a week) of ECE attendance and children with SEN receive an additional 35% in their 'basket'. Additional funding is provided by the founder of the ECE setting, for example, the local authority. Usually each ECE setting provides additional services, such as after-school groups and clubs, meals, etc. for an additional fee from the parents. Contributions from parents and other private sponsors account for around 15% in pre-school education.
4. What additional economic measures are available for children with additional needs and their families to access mainstream ECE?	As mentioned above, children with additional (SEN) needs get allocated 35% more funding to their 'learner's basket' which is intended to cover specialist support and any educational resources the child requires. On the local authority level, additional funding might be allocated to hire support staff. Free and accessible transport might be organised locally to aid access to the ECE.
5. How is additional funding allocated?	Additional funding is usually managed at the local authority (municipality) level.

***Practice at national level***

Guiding questions	Country responses
1. How far does the standard of ECE provision vary across regions and localities?	The differences in standards of ECE provision across the regions are evident in terms of accessibility, for example, a lack of enough placements in the biggest towns and difficulties in reaching ECE settings in rural areas. Funding also varies depending on location, which might influence staff competences, resources available, etc.



Guiding questions	Country responses
2. How effective is collaboration between the ECE and health, social and other relevant agencies for children and families?	Co-operation between ECE and health, social and other agencies will differ depending on a range of variables, such as location (co-ordination and access to support services is better in bigger towns than in rural areas), funding and staffing, availability of specialists at ECE settings or locally, etc. There is no co-ordinating role, e.g. staff at the local authority, to provide parents with comprehensive lists or information about services available locally. Parents are left to their own devices and often collaborate with other parents regarding information about regulations, support available locally, specialists and ECE settings.
3. What proportion of children (3 years to primary education) make use of additional funding?	Data not available (approx. 16%).
4. How well does additional funding support inclusive education?	Additional funding allows for more children to access ECE, especially in rural areas. Additional funding can also go towards teaching resources, such as IT equipment, toys and materials, the use of which enables all children to develop skills and participate in learning. As said before, additional funding could be allocated to hire teaching support staff or train current staff in inclusive technologies or specialist knowledge and application, especially in those ECE settings where there are more children with SEN, however this will depend on the specific ECE setting and its leaders and will vary across the country.