

The *Quality beyond Regulations* policy review was initiated to support countries and jurisdictions to understand and enhance quality in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings. This policy review places a particular focus on policies that support the quality of children's daily interactions through their ECEC settings, including with other children, staff/teachers, space and materials, their families and the wider community, known as *process quality*. This note discusses several policy levers that are at the core of children's daily experiences in ECEC, making them important for understanding quality beyond the complex governance and regulatory systems that surround ECEC.

## Switzerland

### Key findings

In Switzerland, just over half of children aged 3 to 5 were enrolled in ECEC in 2018, well below the OECD average for this age group. Pre-primary education for children aged 4 to 6 is compulsory, and its provision is almost fully public. Whereas all children aged 4 to 6 are granted 15 hours of free access per week to ECEC and 98% of 5-year-olds are enrolled in pre-primary education, provision for children under 4 is less available, although it has increased in recent years. The average expenditure per child in the 3 to 5 age group is above the OECD average.

The provision of ECEC involves both centre-based and home-based settings. While responsibilities for ECEC lie under cantons, the Swiss Conference of the Cantonal Directors of Social Affairs (SODK) has the central co-ordinating role regarding ECEC policies, co-operating closely with the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Directors of Education (EDK).

Two main curriculum frameworks are in place, one covering children from birth to 4 years, and another covering children aged 4 to 6, which is co-ordinated with primary and secondary school curricula. The curriculum for children aged 4 to 6 focuses on children's development goals and subject areas. It provides guidance on fostering children's skills, knowledge, competencies or attitudes. In the curriculum for children under 4, goals are broader, also including guidance on transitions, co-operation with families and use of materials.

Most staff working in regulated settings for children aged 4 to 6 have an International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) Level 6 qualification (bachelor's degree), whereas staff working in centre-based settings for children aged 0 to 4 obtain an ISCED Level 5 qualification (vocational educational training). A practical component is required as part of all initial education programmes.

Universities of teacher education, as well as other agencies, provide training programmes for staff in settings for children aged 4 to 6, i.e. on areas of the curriculum framework, pedagogy or inclusion. There are regulations in place on minimum yearly participation in professional development for staff and leaders working in settings for children aged 4 to 6. For centre-based and home-based childcare settings for children from birth to 4, regulations on professional development are mostly lacking. Staff and leaders in centre-based settings for all ages are generally offered time and financial incentives to

participate in formal training. Working conditions for centre-based and home-based settings are unregulated, and high ECEC staff turnover is partly related to poor working conditions.

The responsibility for monitoring, licensing and regulating centre-based and home-based settings is assigned to the cantons. The breadth of interactions monitored varies depending on the type of setting, although most of the interactions involving (or around) children are monitored in all settings. There is no systematic monitoring of professional development trainings, but some evaluations take place through general monitoring visits, as well as in the form of surveys and commissioned research projects.

## Governance, standards and funding

In Switzerland, responsibilities for ECEC lie under the cantons, including regulations and standards setting and curriculum development. Across the cantons, the Swiss Conference of the Cantonal Directors of Social Affairs has a central co-ordinating role, and it co-operates closely with the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Directors of Education regarding ECEC policies.

The provision of ECEC in Switzerland involves both centre-based and home-based settings. An inter-cantonal agreement on the harmonisation of schooling streamlined ECEC policies and standardised curricula for pre-primary settings for children aged 4 to 6, which are mostly public and state-funded. However, the landscape for centre-based settings for children aged 0 to 4 and for home-based settings remains diverse.

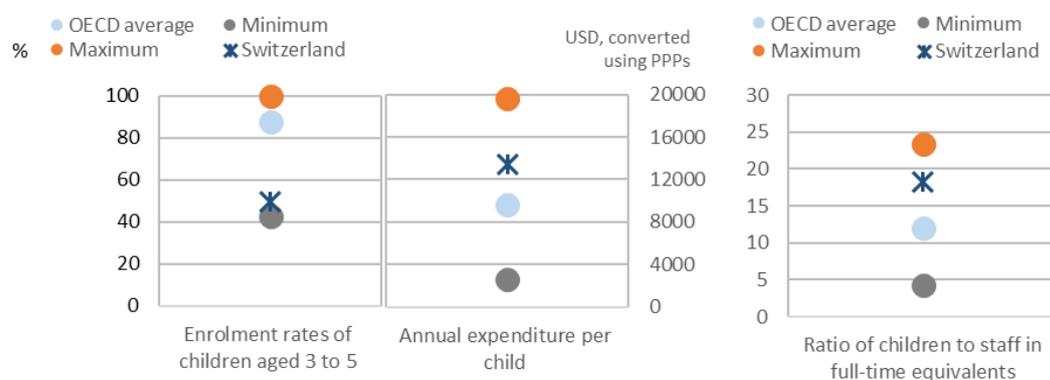
In Switzerland, 64% of children aged 3 to 5 were enrolled in ECEC in 2018, well below the OECD average for this age group. The starting age for compulsory education is 4, and children aged 4 to 6 are granted access to 15 hours of free ECEC per week. Almost all children aged 5 were enrolled in ECEC in 2018, mostly in public pre-primary settings (kindergarten), which are part of primary school. The average expenditure per child in the 3 to 5 age group is above the OECD average, and the ratio of children to staff in pre-primary is 18, above the OECD average.

Whereas all children aged 4 to 6 are granted free access to pre-primary education, the enrolment of children aged 0 to 4 in ECEC is less widespread. On average, 40% of children aged 0 to 4 attend centre-based ECEC, and another 7% are in home-based settings, according to national statistics. Although the ECEC provision for this age group has increased in recent years, it remains low, and there are regional differences across the country. Enrolment of children in ECEC is generally higher in French-speaking regions than in German and Italian speaking regions. In rural areas, the provision of centre-based ECEC is often scarce.

A wide variety of regulations and differences in quality exists in ECEC for children aged 0 to 4 depending on the canton and municipalities. There are also large differences in the proportion of public funding and the financial costs covered by parents in these settings across cantons. ECEC provision for this age group is mainly offered by private institutions such as associations and foundations, particularly in German-speaking regions.

Figure 1. Enrolment rates, funding and standards: Switzerland

2018



Note: Minimum and maximum values are across OECD countries and for total ISCED Level 0 unless specified. For Switzerland, annual expenditure per child and ratio of children to staff include only data on pre-primary education (ISCED Level 02), as data on early childhood educational development (ISCED Level 01) is missing.

The reference year is 2017 for relative proportion of private expenditure on early childhood education and care and annual expenditure per child.

Source: OECD (2020<sup>[1]</sup>), *Education at a Glance 2020: OECD Indicators*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>.

Although access to ECEC for all children continues to be a priority for the government in Switzerland, the focus of attention is currently shifting from expansion in provision to improvement of quality, in particular process quality. A significant step towards this has been the development of a curriculum framework for children aged 0 to 4 and the harmonisation of curricula for children aged 4 to 6 across cantons.

## Curriculum and pedagogy

In Switzerland, there are two main curriculum frameworks: the *Orientation framework for ECEC*, which covers children aged 0 to 4 in centre-based settings, and the co-ordinated curriculum (pre-primary, primary, secondary), which covers children aged 4 to 6 in pre-primary settings. This co-ordinated curriculum (pre-primary, primary, secondary) is mandatory, while all other curricula in Switzerland are recommended. In addition, a quality framework applies to centre-based settings for children aged 0 to 4. A specific framework exists to cover home-based settings for children aged 0 to 5. Finally, a curriculum framework covers after-school care for children aged 4 to 6 in pre-primary settings. Whereas the existence of curriculum frameworks covering all children in all settings can help support process quality, the multiplicity of frameworks makes alignment across settings difficult and may lead to additional complexity for staff, in particular when these overlap in the same settings, as in the case of the two frameworks that apply to centre-based settings for children aged 4 to 6.

In curricula covering centre-based settings for children aged 0 to 4 and home-based settings, the goals for children's development are expressed in terms of broad strands of concepts, principles and values, such as physical and mental well-being, communication, belonging and participation, inclusion and acceptance of diversity. Curricula for after-school care include similar broad strands of concepts. Curricula covering children in pre-primary settings express their goals in terms of broad strands of competencies and academic subject areas, for example, body, health and motor skills, and time and spatial orientation, as well as language, mathematics and music.

The goals of the main curricula covering settings for the youngest children and pre-primary settings as well as the curricula for after-school care activities are broad and include the development of children as well as facilitating education continuity and transitions, providing guidance on material to be used with children,

and co-operation with families. In the curricula for pre-primary settings, goals focus on children’s development goals and competencies in subject areas, thus providing guidance on fostering children’s skills, knowledge, competencies or attitudes.

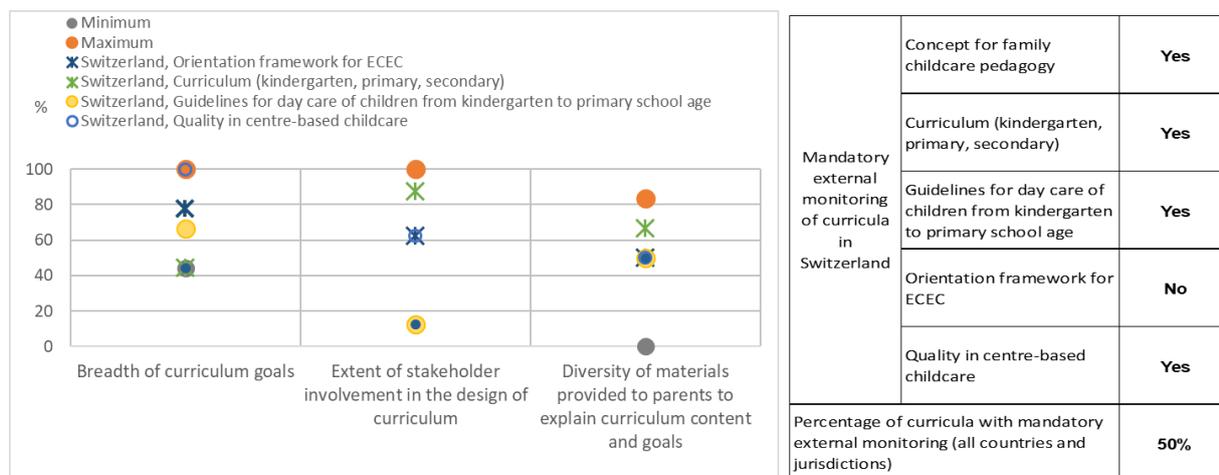
In Switzerland, both the curricula covering settings for the youngest children and pre-primary settings refer to children’s interactions with ECEC staff, with their peers and with their spatial-material environment. The relationships with parents, families and communities are also mentioned. However, none of these interactions is monitored externally as part of curriculum implementation in settings for the youngest children. The monitoring of curriculum implementation in pre-primary settings focuses on children-to-staff interactions. Process quality is therefore considered by curricula in Switzerland but not systematically monitored throughout settings.

A range of stakeholders is involved in curriculum design; however, none of the curricula in Switzerland involved children in their design, like the majority of countries and jurisdictions participating in the survey.

The curricula covering pre-primary settings is accompanied by guidelines that aim to support both ECEC centres, parents and local/regional governments in its implementation. ECEC staff can flexibly implement the curriculum and are free to choose their pedagogical approach. However, cantons may require ECEC staff to use certain teaching materials and subjects to implement the curricula. The coverage of certain content and the use of specific materials may therefore be compulsory, depending on the region.

Figure 2. Features of curriculum frameworks and pedagogy: Switzerland

2019



Notes: *Breadth of curriculum goals* corresponds to the percentage of goals included in the policy questionnaire (nine goals) stated in the curriculum. Goals include, for instance, “to provide guidance on the holistic development, learning and well-being goals for children”, “to provide guidance that facilitates educational continuity and transitions”, and “to highlight the importance of co-operation with families to support the goals for children”.

*Extent of stakeholder involvement in the design of curriculum* corresponds to the percentage of actors (e.g. ECEC staff, parents, children, researchers – eight categories in total) involved in developing the most recent version of the curriculum framework.

*Diversity of materials provided to parents to explain curriculum content and goals* corresponds to the percentage of types of material provided to parents to explain the content and goals of the curriculum (e.g. website, social media, meetings at the ECEC setting – six categories in total). Maximum, minimum and percentage values are taken over the 56 curriculum frameworks included in the survey.

Source: *Quality beyond Regulations* policy questionnaire.

## Workforce development

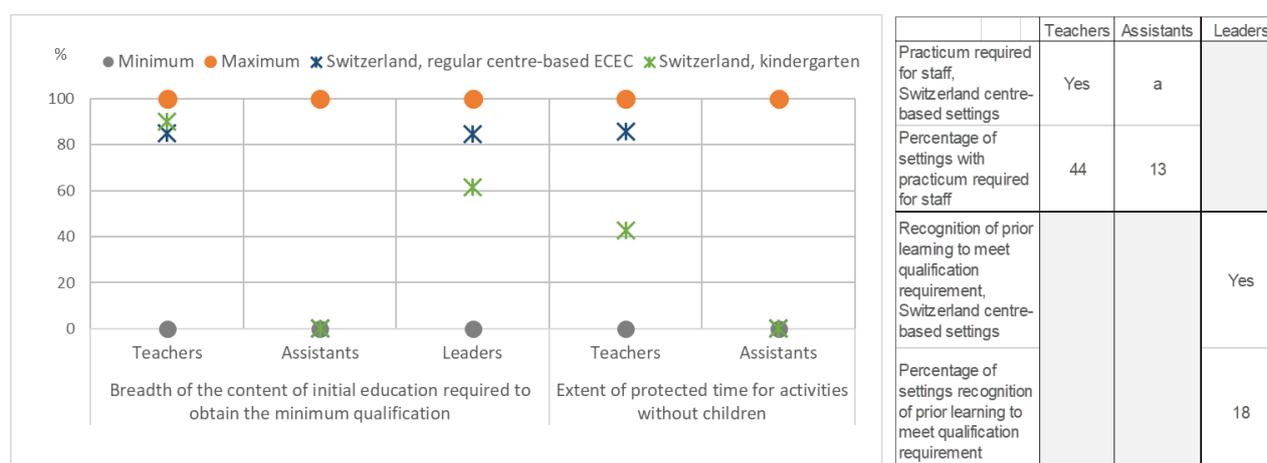
Pre-primary staff are required to hold a bachelor's degree (ISCED Level 6), but staff can work in centre-based settings for children aged 0 to 4 with a vocational educational training (VET) diploma (ISCED Level 5). For leaders, the minimum educational attainment required is an ISCED Level 6 degree in pre-primary settings and an ISCED Level 3 degree in centre-based ECEC for children aged 0 to 4, although most centre-based ECEC settings are led by leaders with ISCED Level 5 and further training. Initial training programmes for staff have to cover a broad range of areas including playful learning, transitions, diversity and family engagement. A practicum as part of initial education programmes is also required for all teachers and leaders working in centre-based settings for all ages. There are educational pathways in place for teachers with VET diplomas to work towards a higher education degree.

Regulations are in place on minimum yearly participation in professional development for teachers and leaders working in pre-primary settings. However, participation in professional development is mainly unregulated for all types of ECEC staff in centre-based settings for children aged 0 to 4 and in home-based settings, although teachers and leaders in centre-based settings typically do participate. ECEC teachers and leaders in centre-based settings are offered time incentives and promotions to participate in formal training.

Working conditions for staff in centre-based settings are governed by national or subnational labour laws, and ECEC centres define the working conditions autonomously in compliance with these requirements. The wages of ECEC staff vary depending on the canton, but they are often lower than primary school teacher's wages. In pre-primary settings, teachers are offered promotions as a result of good performance, and they are granted protected time for a wide range of activities, such as individual planning of activities, collaboration with colleagues and parents, documentation of children's development, attendance of professional development activities, and participation in ECEC setting management. For teachers in centre-based settings for children aged 0 to 4, protected time is granted but to a lesser extent and it covers a more narrow range of activities than for pre-primary teachers.

**Figure 3. Characteristics of workforce development and working conditions: Switzerland**

2019



Notes: *Breadth of the content of initial education required to obtain the minimum qualification* corresponds to the percentage of content areas required to obtain the minimum qualification among the 20 considered areas that can be grouped into the following categories: child development, child health, curriculum and pedagogy, playful learning, classroom management, diversity, transitions, and family and community engagement.

*Extent of protected time* corresponds to the percentage of tasks for which there is protected time among the seven following tasks, namely: individual planning or preparing play and/or learning activities; collaborating and speaking with colleagues and parents or guardians within this ECEC setting; documenting children's development, well-being and learning; participating in the ECEC setting management, staff meetings and general administrative work (including communication, paperwork and other clerical duties); attending professional development activities; reflecting on work; laundry, tidying-up, cleaning, shopping or cooking.

For jurisdictions with multiple settings within an age group, indicators represent the average across settings in that age group. For jurisdictions with settings for different age groups, when values are the same in all age groups, no age group specification is made.

Maximum, minimum and percentage values are taken over 108 settings included in the survey.

Grey cell: information not asked for this category of staff.

"a" = not applicable.

Source: *Quality beyond Regulations* policy questionnaire.

## Data and monitoring

Within the federal structure of Switzerland, the responsibility for monitoring, licensing and regulating centre-based settings and home-based settings is assigned to the 26 cantons. External monitoring of the implementation of the curricula for pre-primary settings is mandatory and takes place at least once a year. In pre-primary settings, the monitoring of process quality is the responsibility of the school leader. Monitoring curriculum implementation in centre-based settings for children under age 4 is mandatory for one framework, the *Quality in centre-based childcare framework*, and the frequency of monitoring depends on the last monitoring results. The monitoring of curricula of home-based settings and after-school care for children aged 4 to 6 in pre-primary is also mandatory and takes place at least once a year. Local associations monitor the quality in home-based settings through yearly visits.

The breadth of interactions monitored vary across settings. In pre-primary settings, interactions among children and between ECEC staff and children are monitored. In centre-based settings for children aged 0 to 4, these interactions, as well as interactions between ECEC staff and parents, are monitored. In home-based settings, the interactions monitored include those among children, between children and the materials in the ECEC setting and between ECEC staff and children.

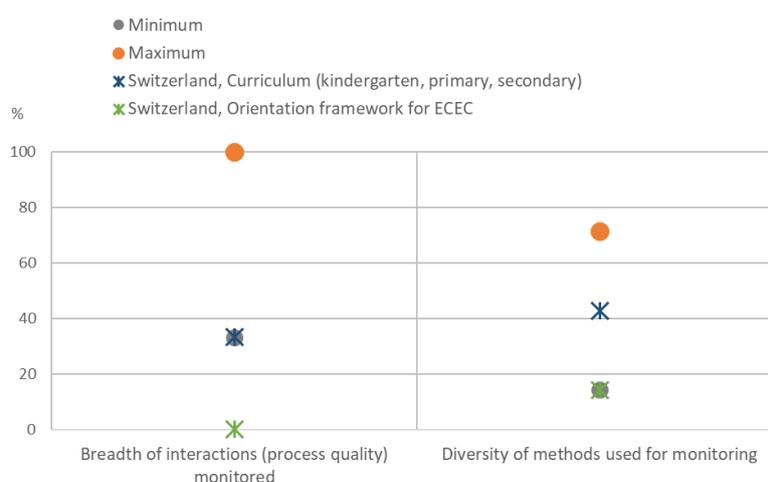
Initial training for staff in pre-primary settings is the same as for primary school teachers and takes place in universities. Vocational educational training for staff working with children under age 4 is regulated by

the state and needs to follow requirements for their educational plan and their courses, including on their titles, thematic orientation, duration and objectives, as well as requirements for training providers and the qualification procedure.

There is no systemic monitoring or evaluation of the professional development system in Switzerland. However, some evaluation of the quality trainings take place in the form of a survey for participants, and research projects are often commissioned to evaluate the effectiveness of the system. Also, during general monitoring visits carried out by the cantons, inspectors may identify staff needs for professional development and communicate this information to authorities developing training programmes.

**Figure 4. Characteristics of monitoring: Switzerland**

2019



Notes: *Breadth of interactions (process quality) monitored* corresponds to the percentage of types of interactions monitored among the seven considered types of interactions: between ECEC staff and children, among children, between children and the materials in ECEC settings, between ECEC staff and parents, between children and their communities, and between parents and children.

*Diversity of methods used for monitoring* corresponds to the percentage of methods used for monitoring among the six following methods: inspection, staff self-assessment/evaluation, portfolios, surveys, peer reviews, and child assessments.

Maximum, minimum and percentage values are taken over 108 settings included in the survey.

Source: *Quality beyond Regulations* policy questionnaire.

## What is the *Quality beyond Regulations* project and how does it apply in Switzerland?

The *Quality beyond Regulations* policy review was initiated to support countries and jurisdictions to better understand the different dimensions of quality in early childhood education and care, focusing on process quality in particular. The first phase of the project culminated in a literature review and meta-analysis of the links between different dimensions of quality and children's learning, development and well-being, published under the title *Engaging Young Children* (OECD, 2018<sup>[2]</sup>).

The second phase of the project builds on this research base to address the overarching question: How can policies enhance process quality and child development and what are good examples of these policies? To address this question, countries in the OECD's Early Childhood Education and Care Network were invited to share information on relevant policies by completing a questionnaire. Twenty-six countries responded to this invitation, resulting in a rich database of information on ECEC systems around the world and their efforts to promote high-quality ECEC as of the year 2019.

In addition, six countries (Australia, Canada, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg and Switzerland) participated in the *Quality beyond Regulations* project by completing in-depth country background reports. These reports

were undertaken by national governments, as well as provincial governments in Canada. The reports were based on a common framework developed by the OECD to facilitate comparative analysis and maximise the opportunities for countries and jurisdictions to learn from each other. The country background reports are complementary to the information collected in the policy questionnaire, and together, these two sources provide the data for the main analyses presented in this publication.

This note builds on information provided by Switzerland through the policy questionnaire and its country background report as well as other international databases (i.e. the OECD Education at a Glance database). In the policy questionnaire, Switzerland reported information on five curriculum frameworks covering five types of ECEC settings:

- The *Orientation framework for ECEC* covers children aged 0 to 4 in regular centre-based ECEC, in playgroup settings, and in family childcare ECEC.
- The *Quality in centre-based childcare* covers children aged 0 to 6 in regular centre-based ECEC.
- The *Curriculum* (kindergarten, primary, secondary) covers children aged 4 to 16. This curriculum exists in three versions:
  - *Curriculum 21*, for the German-speaking region
  - *Plan d'études romand*, for the French-speaking region
  - *Piano di studio* for the Italian-speaking region.
- The *Guidelines for day care of children from kindergarten to primary school age* cover children aged 4 to 12 in after-school care.
- The *Concept for family childcare pedagogy* covers children aged 0 to 4 in family childcare ECEC.

In the *Quality beyond Regulations* project, the term “teachers” refers to the individuals with the most responsibility for a group of children at the class- or playroom-level. They may also be called pedagogues, educators, childcare practitioners or pedagogical staff. The term “assistants” refers to ECEC staff whose role is to provide support to the teachers or lead staff member with a group of children. The term “leader” refers to the person who has the most responsibility for administrative, managerial and/or pedagogical leadership at the ECEC centres.

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**Note regarding data from Israel:** The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

## References

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