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Early childhood education and care is organised in the 'integrated system 0-6' that was introduced by [law 107/2017](#) [1] and is regulated by the [D.Lgs 65/2017](#) [2]. The integrated system is part of the education system and is organised into two separate levels that welcome children according to their age:

- the 'educational services for childhood' (*servizi educativi per l'infanzia*), from now on referred to as 'educational services', for children aged between 0 and 3 years;
- 'childhood school' (*scuola dell'infanzia*), from now on referred to as pre-primary school, for children from 3 to 6 years of age.

Educational services (ECEC 0-3) refer to a series of services that are both centre-based (nurseries, 'spring sections', playgrounds and centres for children and families) and home-based. This stage of ECEC is classified as ISCED 010 (except home-based provision). Attendance is not compulsory and families pay fees. Educators in public settings must hold a Bachelor degree (ISCED 6) in education sciences, specific for working in this type of settings (D.Lgs 65/2017). There are no top-level regulations regarding staff qualification in other types of settings.

Educational services are divided into three types of offer:

- 1) The most common, among the educational services, is the centre-based provision at nurseries (*nidi d'infanzia*) that welcome children between 3 and 36 months. Nurseries have organisational and operating methods that vary according to their opening times and sizes. However, their general purpose is to develop the autonomy, identity and competences of children, also ensuring their wellbeing, meals and rest. Nurseries work in continuity with pre-primary schools.
- 2) Pre-primary schools can welcome children aged between 24 and 36 months if they have a 'spring section' (*sezione primavera*) available. Spring sections are set and managed by the Regions or by the State and have to be considered as a separate organisation from the pre-primary school where they operate.
- 3) The integrated system also includes other supplementary educational services (*servizi integrativi*), which purpose is to meet the needs of families through a flexible organisation and structure. These supplementary services are playgrounds, centres for children and families and the home-based provision and are described in the '[Organisational variations and alternative structure](#) [3]5' section.

ECEC services for children aged 0-3 are run directly by the municipalities or indirectly by private and public subjects, based on the criteria defined by regional and central regulations. The Regions are in charge of the organisation of this ECEC level in their own territories. The Ministry of education has a general responsibility for the allocation of financial resources to local authorities, for the provision of educational guidelines, for the promotion of the integrated system at local level.

ECEC provision for children aged between three and six years is organised at 'childhood schools' (*scuole dell'infanzia*). This ECEC level is classified as ISCED 020. The responsibility for this stage of ECEC is of the Ministry of Education. However, the municipalities organise the offer at local level and are responsible for providing and maintaining the premises. Besides the State, also public and private subjects can run ECEC settings for children of this age range. This level of education is not compulsory and families do not pay fees. Educational guidelines for this ECEC phase are published at central level and are included in the guidelines that apply at primary and lower secondary education. In fact, this ECEC level is in continuity with the ECEC 0-3 and with primary education.

Teachers in State settings must hold a Master degree (ISCED 7) in primary education sciences and follow the same [initial education](#) [4] programme of primary school teachers.

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#### Links

[1] <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2015/07/15/15G00122/sg>

[2] <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2017/05/16/17G00073/sg>

[3] [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/italy/organisational-variations-and-alternative-structures-ecec\\_en#VariationsECEC03](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/italy/organisational-variations-and-alternative-structures-ecec_en#VariationsECEC03)

[4] [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/initial-education-teachers-working-early-childhood-and-school-education-38\\_en#ITE](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/initial-education-teachers-working-early-childhood-and-school-education-38_en#ITE)