

# UOE data collection on formal education

## Appendix A :

### Additional guidance on Early childhood education programmes

Prepared by the INES Informal Working Group on ISCED 0

## ISCED 0 - Early Childhood education level: Definitions and classification Criteria

### *Definitions*

Programmes at ISCED level 0 are typically designed with a holistic approach to support children's early cognitive, language, physical, social and emotional development and to introduce young children to organised instruction in an institutionalised setting. At this level, programmes are not necessarily highly structured but are designed to provide an organised and purposeful set of learning activities in a safe environment. They allow children to learn through interaction with other children under the guidance of staff/educators, typically through creative and play-based activities.

ISCED level 0 refers to those early childhood programmes that have an intentional education component. These programmes aim to develop socioemotional skills necessary for participation in school and society and to develop some of the skills needed for academic readiness and to prepare children for entry into primary education.

Along with an intentional child-development and educational focus, a key defining factor of ISCED level 0 programmes is the sustained intensity and duration of delivery of intentional educational activities. These are what differentiate ISCED level 0 from other programmes, such as childcare and occasional, after hours or vacation care.

ISCED level 0 programmes target children below the age of entry into ISCED level 1. There are two categories of ISCED level 0 programmes: ISCED 010 - early childhood educational development and ISCED 020 - pre-primary education. ISCED 010 has intentional educational content designed for younger children (typically in the age range of 0 to 2 years), whilst ISCED 020 is typically designed for children from age 3 years to the start of primary education (ISCED level 1).

Programmes classified at ISCED level 0 may be referred to in many ways nationally, for example: early childhood education and development, play school, reception, pre-primary, pre-school, *Kindergarten*, *Kita*, *Krippe*, or *educación inicial*. For programmes provided in *crèches*, daycare centres, private homes, nurseries, *Tagespflege* or *guarderías*, it is important to ensure that they meet the ISCED level 0 classification criteria specified below. For international comparability purposes, the term 'early childhood education' is used to label ISCED level 0.

For the full ISCED-2011 document, please refer to:

[www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/international-standard-classification-of-education.aspx](http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/international-standard-classification-of-education.aspx)

### *Data provision for the UOE collection*

Some countries internally define early childhood education more broadly than others. Thus, the comparability of international statistics on programmes at ISCED level 0 depends on each country's

willingness and ability to report data for this level according to a standard international definition, even if that definition diverges from the one that the country uses in compiling its own national statistics. In this regard, it is important to note that the data reported as ISCED level 0 programmes for the UOE data collection may differ from national reporting of early childhood education.

Throughout countries participating in the UOE data collection, the early childhood sector contains great diversity. The UOE data collection is designed to capture programmes with strong educational and developmental outcomes for children.

### *Criteria for ISCED 0 data reporting*

To ensure international comparability of data, several criteria need to be met to determine whether or not a programme should be classified as ISCED level 0 and included in reporting.

The 'Main Criteria' and 'Subsidiary Criteria' below are to be used to identify the programmes that should be reported. Once a programme is deemed reportable, the rules in the section 'Additional Guidance on Data Reporting' should be applied when collating data.

In defining ISCED level 0, this manual uses the term *information* to refer to system information or metadata used to assess the particular elements of programmes against the stated criteria, and the term *data* to refer to the statistics or figures for reporting.

#### *Main criteria*

For a programme to be reported as ISCED level 0 it must:

- Have adequate intentional educational properties; *and*
- Be institutionalised; *and*
- Be targeted at children within the age range starting from **age 0 up to the age of commencement in ISCED level 1 education**; *and also*
- Meet the minimum intensity/duration.

#### *Subsidiary criteria*

Programmes should wherever possible also:

- Have a **regulatory framework** recognised by the relevant national authorities; *and*
- Have **trained or accredited staff** as per the appropriate regulatory framework.

(See definitions below and examples in the annex)

Exclude:

- Programmes that provide only childcare (supervision, nutrition and health).

## Scope of ISCED 0 in data reporting

The following definitions apply to both ISCED 010 and 020 unless stated otherwise.

### *Non-Formal Education*

The boundary between formal and non-formal education is not as clear for ISCED level 0 as it is for other ISCED levels. However, as with other ISCED levels, only formal education programmes should be reported in the UOE data collection.

*ISCED 2011* “...underlines that non-formal education does not normally give access to a higher level of education unless it is appropriately validated in the formal education system and recommends using the criteria of equivalency of content and/or resulting qualifications for the classification of non-formal education programmes.” However, these criteria of formal qualifications are not applicable to ISCED level 0 programmes.

As a proxy measure, programmes may be included in ISCED level 0 reporting if they meet the main ISCED level 0 criteria as outlined in this chapter. Further, the subsidiary criteria of staff qualifications and existence of a regulatory framework may also help in distinguishing formal early childhood education programmes from non-formal ones.

### *Intentional educational properties*

To be included in reporting, the educational properties of ISCED level 0 programmes must be in accordance with ISCED-2011:

- An “education programme” is defined as a coherent set or sequence of educational activities or communication designed and organised to achieve pre-determined learning objectives or accomplish a specific set of educational tasks over a sustained period.
- “Educational activities” are defined as deliberate activities intended to bring about learning.
- That these activities are “organised” means that they are planned in a pattern or sequence with explicit or implicit aims, involving a providing agency (person/body) that facilitates a learning environment, and a method of instruction.
- Instruction typically involves a teacher or educator who is engaged in communicating and guiding knowledge and skills with a view to bringing about learning.

In addition to the above, the educational properties of ISCED level 0 programmes can be further described as follows:

### *ISCED 010 - Early childhood educational development*

The learning environment is visually stimulating and language rich and fosters self-expression with an emphasis on language acquisition and the use of language for meaningful communication. There are opportunities for active play so that children can exercise their coordination and motor skills under supervision and in interaction with staff. Typically aimed at very young children aged 0-2.

### *ISCED 020 - Pre-primary education*

Through interaction with peers and educators, children improve their use of language and their social skills, start to develop logical and reasoning skills, and talk through their thought processes. They are also introduced to alphabetical and mathematical concepts, understanding and use of language, and encouraged to explore their surrounding world and environment. Supervised gross motor activities (i.e., physical exercise through games and other activities) and play-based activities can be used as learning opportunities to promote social interactions with peers and to develop skills, autonomy and school readiness. Aimed at children in the years immediately prior to starting compulsory schooling, typically aged 3-5.

Programmes that do not meet these criteria should not be reported in the UOE collection.

#### *Institutionalised*

ISCED level 0 programmes are usually school-based or otherwise institutionalised for a *group* of children. As the institutions authorised to provide ISCED level 0 programmes vary between jurisdictions (e.g. centre-based, community-based, home-based), to be reported in the UOE collection both the *programme* and the *mode or institution of delivery* should be recognised within the respective early childhood education system.

Particular care should be given to programmes delivered from home-based settings – if the programme being delivered meets the criteria as set out in this document *and* delivery from a private home is recognised under the respective regulations, it should be included in reporting. Some ways of identifying an institution recognised for delivery of ISCED level 0 programmes are: whether it must report statistics to a central body, whether it is bound to regulations regarding early childhood education and/or whether it can be held accountable to an external body if deemed in breach of these regulations (where these structures exist in the relevant early childhood education system).

ISCED level 0 excludes purely family-based arrangements that may be purposeful but do not meet the UOE definition of a ‘programme’ (e.g. informal learning by children from their parents, other relatives or friends is not included under ISCED level 0). Also excluded are learning activities delivered from private homes or other institutionalised centres that are outside the jurisdiction of an appropriate national early childhood education authority or regulatory body, regardless of whether the activities are organised into the style of an approved early childhood education programme. An example of this would be a private citizen who of their own volition provides learning opportunities for young children, that nominally meet the ISCED level criteria around intentional education, intensity/duration and staff qualification requirements, but is not recognised by an authorising body.

Programmes that do not meet this criteria should not be reported in the UOE collection.

### *Intensity/duration of intentional educational properties*

It is the expectation that children enrolled in an ISCED level 0 programme will receive a sustained learning experience with the features of continuity and duration of intentional educational activities (excluding unplanned absences such as due to illness).

Where the first three Main Criteria (and preferably also the Subsidiary Criteria) have been met, to be included in UOE data reporting the intentional educational component of ISCED level 0 programme must also meet the equivalent of:

- an intensity of at least 2 hours per day; *and*
- a duration of at least 100 days a year.

Note that this is a *minimum* intensity/duration and it is possible for both the intentional educational portion of programmes and the programmes themselves to exceed this.

Care should be taken to distinguish between the intensity/duration of the intentional educational components of ISCED level 0 programmes, the expected intensity/duration of attendance of enrolled children and the opening hours of the institutions which provide them, as they are not necessarily the same. Programmes should be excluded if the expected attendance of enrolled children is less than the above minimum intensity/duration, regardless of both the hours or days that the programme is available or the intensity/duration of the provision of intentional educational content.

Examples of programmes to be excluded from reporting include:

- programmes where attendance can be ad-hoc or of a drop-in style where individual children will not experience a continuity of structured learning opportunities,
- short-duration programmes such as vacation care which may have an educational curriculum but not a sustained period of instruction or learning opportunities,
- programmes with intentional educational properties but with no minimum level of attendance, such as where parents are free to choose an intensity and duration of their child's attendance that does not meet the ISCED level 0 criteria
- early childhood services which are open for extended hours and providing intentional educational activities throughout these hours, but do not require a minimum intensity/duration of attendance or enrolment of children

If a programme meets the requirements set out in this manual and enrolled children are expected to experience intentional educational activities for at least the above intensity/duration, the programme may in its entirety be deemed an educational programme for reporting purposes, even where the programme includes additional activities that are somewhat less educationally-focussed. Where exact information on the intensity/duration of a programme's intentional educational components is not available, institution

opening hours or programme delivery hours should not be used as a proxy to determine a programme's inclusion in ISCED level 0 reporting. In these cases, estimation of the typical or intended intensity/duration of the programme's intentional educational properties should be used.

### *Regulatory framework*

Ideally, ISCED level 0 programmes should sit within, be recognised or approved by a regulatory framework.

A regulatory framework for ISCED level 0 programmes is defined as legislation, guidelines, standards or instructions issued or recognised by whichever relevant authority governs the provision of educational programmes to very young children (e.g. a ministry of education, other relevant ministry or affiliated institution). The regulatory framework may (but is not limited to) describe or designate the learning opportunities (pre-determined learning objectives or a specific set of educational tasks) provided to young children, set out the pedagogical qualifications, training or accreditation required by any person delivering an education programme to children in the years prior to primary school, as well as regulating providers.

### *Trained or accredited staff*

ISCED level 0 programmes are often delivered by staff of varying levels of qualification, depending on their role in the institution in which they are employed. For the purposes of reporting, reference should be made to the relevant regulatory framework (as defined above) for detail on requirements for persons providing or delivering an education programme to children in the years prior to primary school (such as pedagogical qualifications, training or accreditation at various staffing levels).

## **Additional guidance on data reporting**

Guidance for:

- Reporting of Full Time Equivalents for Enrolments
- Reporting of data from institutions that provide both education and child care programmes
- Reporting to ISCED 010 and 020
- Division of Programmes spanning ISCED 0 and ISCED 1

To further ensure international comparability of data, once a programme has been identified as an ISCED level 0 early childhood education programme by meeting the criteria above, the following rules then apply when collecting data on the programmes for UOE purposes. These rules are to be applied to programmes in their entirety (not just to the intentional education component/s):

### *Full Time Equivalents for Enrolments*

At this level of education, the concepts used to define full-time and part-time participation at other ISCED levels, such as study load, student participation and the academic value or progress which the study represents, are not easily applicable to ISCED level 0. Additionally, the daily or weekly hours that

represent a typical full-time enrolment in an educational programme at ISCED level 0 varies widely between countries. Because of this, full-time-equivalents cannot be calculated for ISCED level 0 programmes in the same way as for other ISCED levels.

A consensus has not been reached on a methodology for calculating FTE for Enrolments at ISCED 0 but it is recommended in UOE reporting to estimate pupils enrolled in Full-time equivalents by ISCED 0 Enrolment Headcount (ie all enrolments counted as full-time). Headcount is not a satisfying criteria for full-time equivalent for indicators such as expenditure per student (even if it is accepted for enrolment comparisons). But the majority of countries are in favour of this solution and will be able to provide the UOE data while the same guarantee was not offered by other estimation methods.

#### *Institutions that provide both education programmes and child care programmes*

In some countries, institutions providing early childhood education also provide extended day or evening child care programmes. Additionally, education programmes traditionally provided during the day may now be provided outside these hours to offer further flexibility to parents and carers of children. These must be given special consideration in reporting.

Where the Child Care components are distinctly separate from Early Childhood Education components (for example, the two components are offered as individual programmes that must be enrolled in separately), the Child Care components must be excluded from reporting. If the programme is in the form of extended day or evening programmes which meet all of the criteria in this manual, they should be included in reporting as educational programmes. (See also *Intensity/Duration* above for further clarification).

Where both educational and non-educational programmes exist and it is possible to enrol in each independently, only the educational programmes should be reported. It should be noted that it is acceptable to include integrated programmes where the non-educational portion is greater than the educational portion, so long as the educational portion meets the criteria in this manual.

For example, in an institution that offers a daytime educational programme as well as extended afternoon or evening child care programmes, and where parents may choose to enrol their child in either or both programmes, only the daytime educational programme should be reported in the UOE data collection.

#### *Reporting to ISCED 010 and 020*

For UOE data reporting purposes, countries should separate ISCED level 0 data into ISCED 010 and ISCED 020 by age only, as follows:

- Data for children below 3 years of age should be reported as ISCED 010;
- Data for children aged 3 to the starting age for ISCED 1 should be reported as ISCED 020;
- Data from age-integrated programmes designed to include children both below and above 3 years of age should be allocated to 010 and 020 according to the age of the children, as indicated above. This may involve estimation of expenditures and personnel at levels 010 and 020 respectively (see country examples in annex).



Data on enrolments, personnel and on finance need to be adjusted according to this coverage.

*Programmes that span ISCED levels*

The beginning of compulsory education is not a sufficient criterion to distinguish ISCED level 0 programmes from ISCED level 1 programmes, even though this may be the case in some education systems. However, with the exception of the difference in the target age, ISCED 1 programmes will generally automatically meet ISCED level 0 criteria (educational properties, institutionalised setting, intensity and duration, regulatory framework, trained staff).

For the purposes of UOE reporting, countries should report all children under 6 years of age in ISCED level 0, except for where the national starting age for ISCED 1 is younger or in the case of individual children who start ISCED 1 at an earlier-than-usual age.

*Special Needs Education*

Organised instruction for children with special needs should also be included at this level if either the participants are of a similar age as other students enrolled in early childhood educational development or pre-primary education, or if the instructional content is at a significantly lower level than that of the first years of primary education. This concerns in particular education provided in hospitals or in special schools or training centres.