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	Kind of structures Coverage	Average size of the groups	Official ratio	Staff jobs and initial training level		Legal participation conditions (free or obliged)	Financing aspect (parents costs)
Before preschool age	Official first key-stage (early childhood education), called nursery or the first infancy, is for 0 to 3 year-olds. Pu + PrA + Prw/oA  Other settings: Family areas Pu Play and Game areas Pu + PrA  • 39,3 of the 0-2 year old children attend ECEC (OECD, 2010)	0-1 : 8	0-1: 1/6-8	Jobs	In.Tr.lev.	Free	Pu: Each municipality has their own policy regarding financing and resources. Families need to "complement" the cost of managing the school, contracting the personnel...  PrA: Financing "only" comes from what the families pay. Average cost (including meals) 400 €
		1-2 : 12	1-2: 1/9-13	Early Childhood Education Practitioners	Level 3 (EQF 4)		
Preschool age	Official second key-stage (early childhood education), called kindergarten or pre- school, is for 3 to 6 year-olds. Pu + PrA(state partly funded) + PrA  • 99,3% of the 3-5 year old children attend ECEC (OECD, 2010)	2-3 : 18	2-3: 1/16-20	Support Staff (assistant practitioners)	Level 3 (EQF 4)	Free but <i>expected</i> : 95% of the children attend kindergarten	Pu : State funded. Parents do not pay for children's schooling.  PrA : State pays part of schooling and parents must complement the costs. PrA : Parents pay for children's schooling (the amount to pay
		K3, K4 and K5  25 children	K3, K4 and K5  25 children	Early Childhood Education Teachers	Level 6 (EQF7) = 3 <sup>rd</sup> year BA degree		



Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Infant Education Schools 0-3 In these centres it is guaranteed that the professionals who are in charge of the children have the appropriate training, that the ratios are those established by law (18/20 children in the 2-3 year-olds group), and that they comply with the safety rules. It is also required that a continuous relationship is kept with families, that there is an educational follow-up for each one of the children, and that an educational project is devised, as well as a project for the welcoming and adaptation process of children that is shared by all the members of the team. Some curricula (such as the Catalan one) define the concept of <i>infants</i> and their needs and they suggest centres to organise their daily life based on these needs (feeding, play, rest, hygiene, movement...).</li> <li>Family spaces These services also comply with the regulations concerning ratios, spaces, and professional training. Their greatest contribution is the fact that they provide the opportunity for children and their families to spend time together in a space appropriate for play, conversation among adults and reflection guided by experts.</li> <li>Play centres As these centres are not strictly regulated by law, it must be said that the only strength for families might be related to the flexibility concerning opening times that they offer (even though this is not beneficial for children).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Infant Education Schools 0-3 There is a great variation among centres and in most private centres the space is not really appropriate and the ratios are not always respected. Even though the administration controls accurately all the centres, this control is only focused on safety issues, training, management documents and ratios; the administration does not control whether children's needs are respected. There is a great diversity concerning educational models offered by different centres. Management of the centres 0-3 has become local in most areas, which has made many councils delegate this task to private companies. This fact has meant that there is a great diversity concerning types of contract and salaries and it has allowed companies belonging to other sectors (cleaning, building, food companies, etc.) to view schools 0-3 as a business opportunity.</li> <li>Family spaces Even though this is a good service for those families that decide not to take their children to infant schools, the number of centres offering this service is very limited and, in fact, they can only be found in towns with over 30,000 inhabitants.</li> <li>Play centres Only the person in charge of the service is required to have a specific professional training. The control of these centres is not carried out by the Education Department and they are only supervised by local administrations concerning safety rules.</li> </ul>

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Infant Education Schools 0-3 These centres often provide a very good opportunity for children and families. For children, it is a space where they can relate and play with other children, a space which offers opportunities for all sorts of development (affective, emotional, physical, motor, cognitive and social). In these centres, children are offered the support they need to understand the world around them. It is also here where early detection can be carried out. Infant education schools are also an enriching space for families, where they can share their worries on the upbringing and education of their children, and share celebrations with them. For many families, this is the space where they trust that they are leaving their children in expert hands.</li> <li>Family spaces For families using this space, it is highly educational and, therefore, preventive. For children, it might be the only place where they spend time with other children. This service allows for different ways of understanding education to meet and be integrated.</li> <li>Play centres These services provide more opportunities for families than for children. Families can leave the children here during specific times and days and the regularity in attendance required is minimal. For many, it is an economical service that can be adapted to their schedule.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Infant Education Schools 0-3 The diversity in models and the limited control carried out on the application of the curriculum, together with the differences in the training required to work in these centres has consequences such as the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many centres are too focused on solving families' problems with schedules, which means that many children spend too long hours in the schools or that the adaptation process is not always respected.</li> <li>To "sell" their product, some centres focus on how well the children are trained, which means that the work plan may become too academic and more appropriate for a primary school. Children end up carrying out tasks that do not respond to their needs.</li> <li>The professional training received by some is focused on the curricular planning of activities, and has left aside the critical reflection and the educational relevance of daily activities (mainly concerning basic needs).</li> <li>In many centres, ratios are too high to cater appropriately for individual emotional and affective needs. This may make it difficult for some children to adapt to the school or some may feel abandoned.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Family spaces No threat can be linked to these spaces. Maybe the only problem may be the fact that there are not many and, as they are loss-making at the moment, they are now also in danger of being reduced.</li> <li>Play centres Professionals working in these services are not always well trained. Children's development is not observed, play proposals are usually always the same, no curriculum is followed and no supervision by any educational institution is made. There is no educational project, nor any adaptation process provided. As it is an economical service, it is often used by disadvantaged families, whose children would actually be the ones in greater need of a high quality service.</li> </ul>

