Early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Europe – 2025
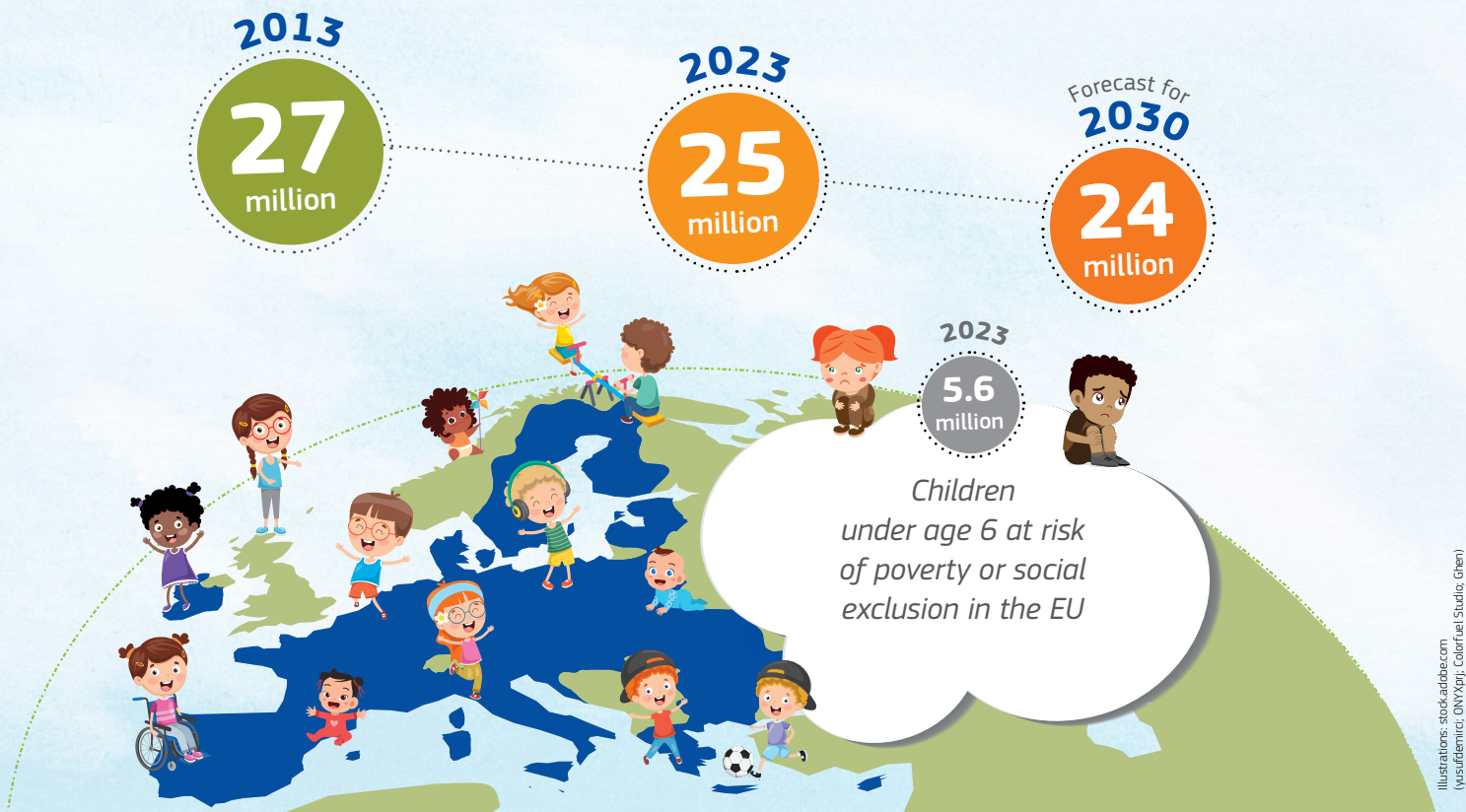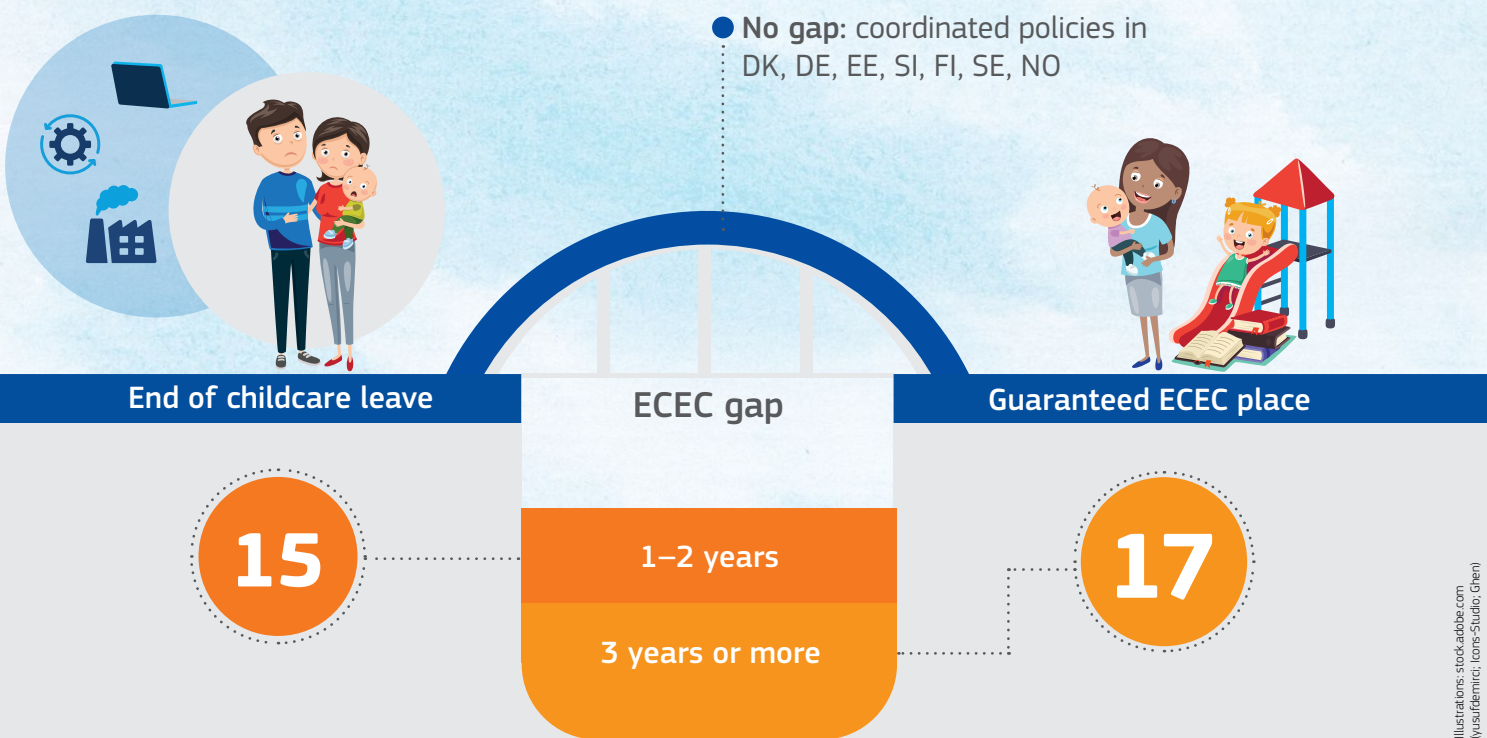
Overview of key areas identified in the Council recommendation on high-quality early childhood education and care systems – access, governance and funding, staff, curriculum, and evaluation and monitoring – across 39 education systems in the EU and neighbouring countries

The number of children under age 6 is decreasing in the EU-27

2013
27 million

2023
25 million

Forecast for **2030**
24 million

2023
5.6 million

Children under age 6 at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU

Illustrations: stock.adobe.com (wusufdemirci; ONYXprj; Colorfuel Studio; Ghen)

Few European education systems guarantee ECEC immediately at the end of childcare leave

● **No gap:** coordinated policies in DK, DE, EE, SI, FI, SE, NO

End of childcare leave

ECEC gap

Guaranteed ECEC place

15

1–2 years

3 years or more

17

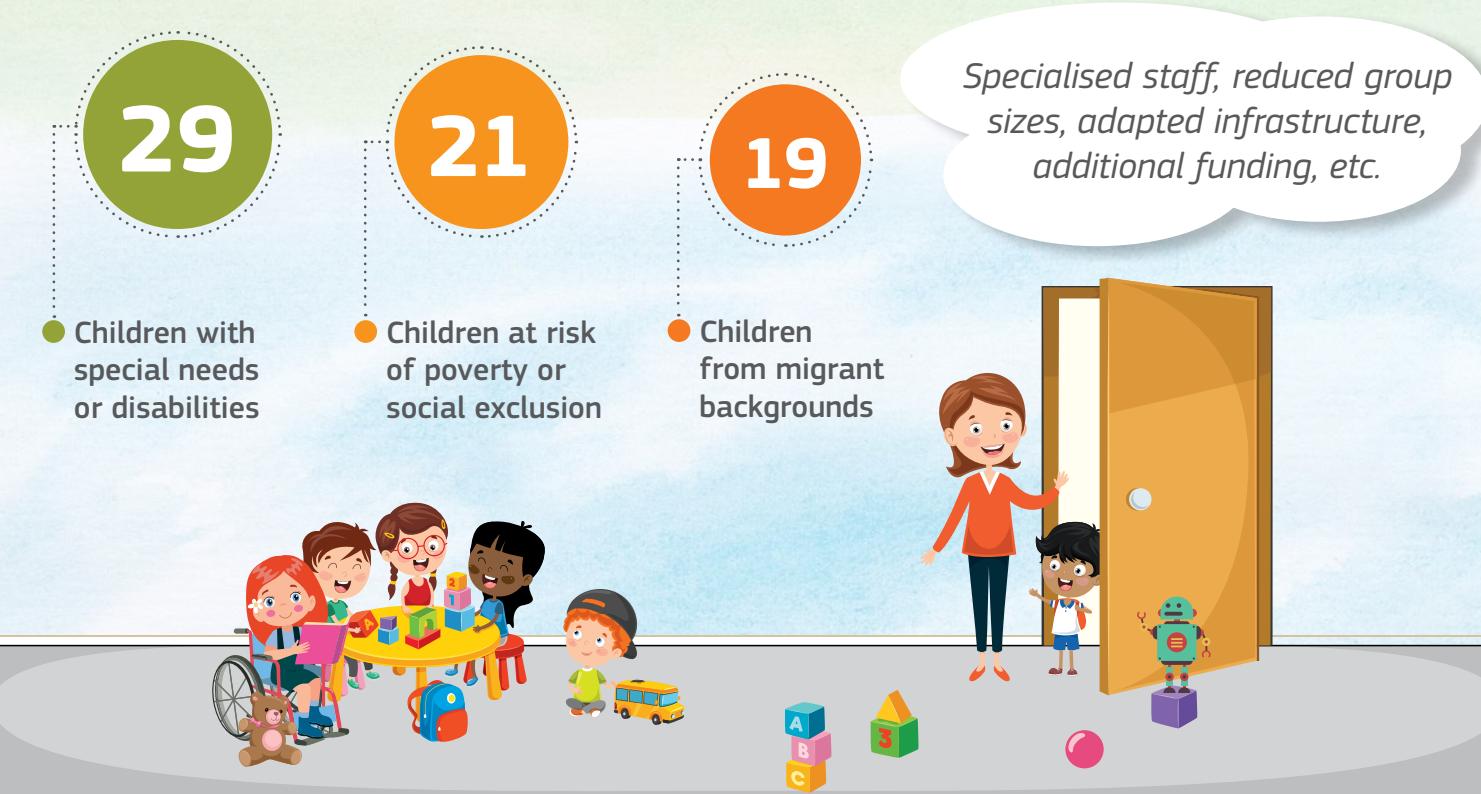Illustrations: stock.adobe.com (wusufdemirci; Icons-Studio; Ghen)

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Europe – 2025

ECEC should be available, accessible and affordable for all

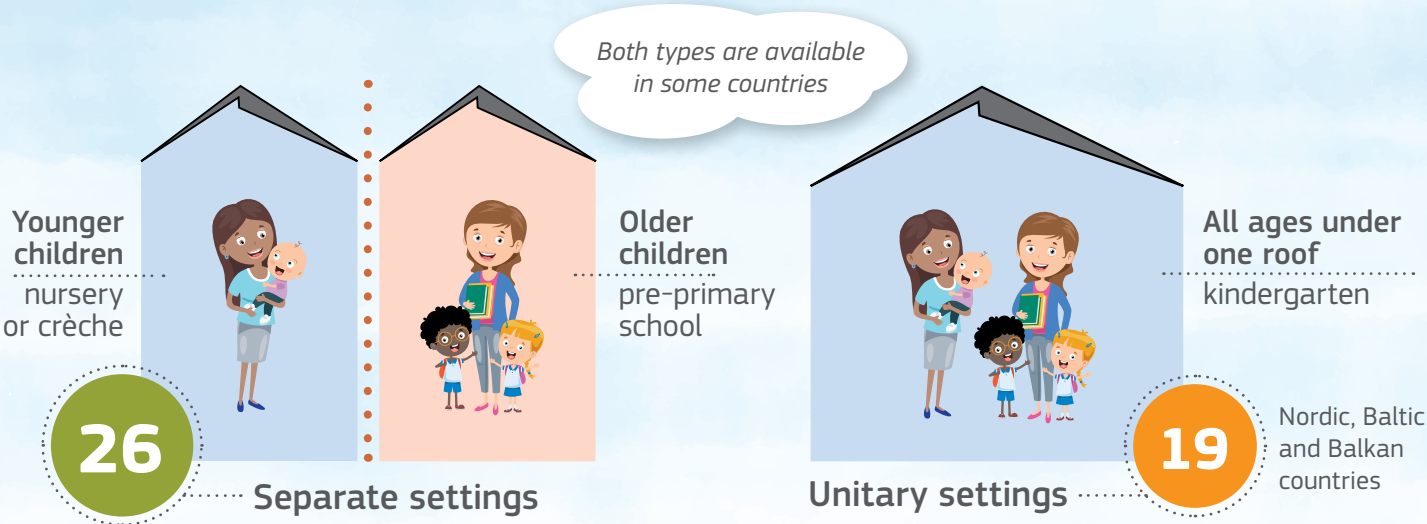*Member States aim to increase participation in ECEC by 2030*

96%

45%

Children under age 3
38 %
in 2023

Children aged 3 and over
93 %
in 2022

Illustrations: stock.adobe.com
(yusufdemirci; Colorful Studio; sticker2you; Ghen)

Most education systems try to ease access to mainstream ECEC for children facing barriers

29
Children with special needs or disabilities

21
Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion

19
Children from migrant backgrounds

Specialised staff, reduced group sizes, adapted infrastructure, additional funding, etc.
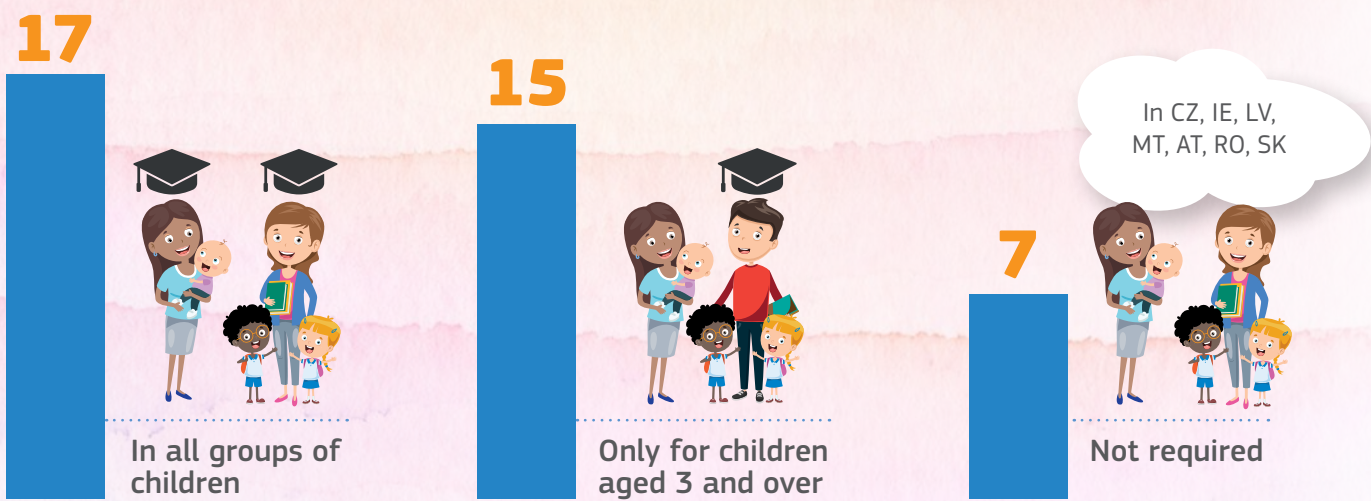
Illustrations: stock.adobe.com
(yusufdemirci; Veysel; Ghen)

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Europe – 2025

Separate ECEC settings are the most common set-up in Europe

Both types are available in some countries

Younger children
nursery or crèche

Older children
pre-primary school

26
Separate settings

All ages under one roof
kindergarten

19
Nordic, Baltic and Balkan countries

Unitary settings

Not all education systems require a bachelor's degree for staff

17
In all groups of children

15
Only for children aged 3 and over
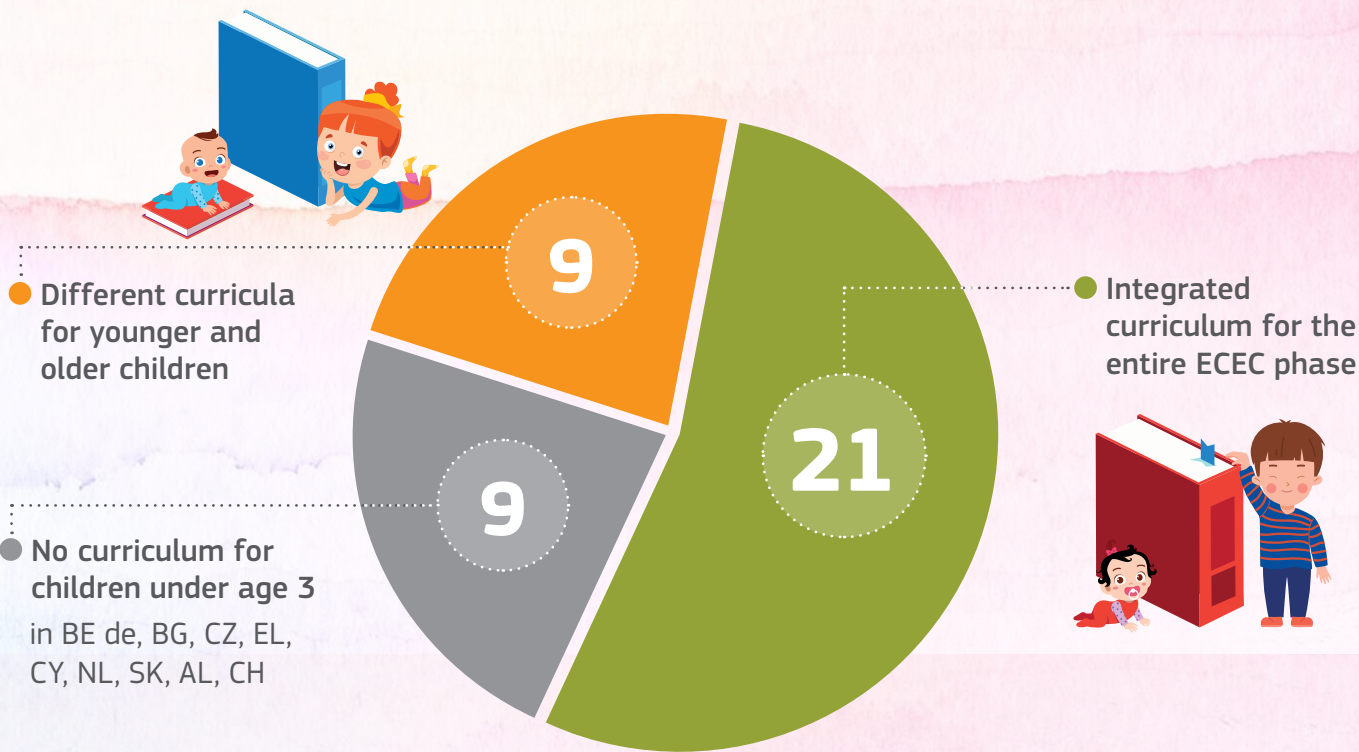
7
Not required

In CZ, IE, LV, MT, AT, RO, SK

Pre-primary and primary teachers tend to receive the same starting salary for the same level of qualification

In one third of European countries, pre-primary teachers earn less than primary teachers

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Europe – 2025

There is no national curriculum for pedagogical work with younger children in one quarter of European education systems

- **Different curricula for younger and older children** — 9
- **No curriculum for children under age 3**
  in BE de, BG, CZ, EL, CY, NL, SK, AL, CH — 9
- **Integrated curriculum for the entire ECEC phase** — 21

Illustrations: stock.adobe.com
(yusufdemirci; Colorfuel Studio; Feodora; rawpixel.com)

Sustainability education already starts in ECEC in most European education systems

Valuing sustainability

Promoting nature

Adaptability

21 From an early age

13 From around age 3

5 Not mandatory in IE, HR, NL, AL, BA

Illustrations: stock.adobe.com
(yusufdemirci; Picture?: tanyabosyk; kid1gin19)

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Europe – 2025

A majority of education systems include digital competences in ECEC

Information and data literacy — **17**

Digital content creation — **17**

Communication and collaboration — **14**
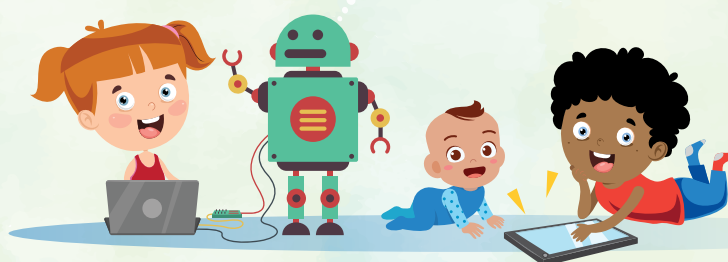
Safety — **12**

Problem-solving — **8**

Moderate, cautious and developmentally appropriate!

11

No digital education in ECEC: BE de, BE nl, BG, IE, HU, NL, PL, AL, BA, MK, TR

Illustrations: stock.adobe.com (yusufdemirci; Colorfuel Studio; Unchalee)

Most education systems assess children's readiness for primary school

ADMISSION TO PRIMARY SCHOOL

6 years Most common age to start primary school

32 **Age and maturity,** based on assessment or dialogue

7 **Age only,** postponement not possible in IE, ES, FR, LT, MT, AL, BA

Illustrations: stock.adobe.com (Colorfuel Studio; Icons-Studio; Gren)

Key data on early childhood education and care in Europe 2025

Key data on **early childhood education and care** in Europe **2025**

Erasmus+

This infographic depicts the main findings of the report *Key data on early childhood education and care in Europe – 2025.* The findings are based on analysis of policies in 37 European countries (39 education systems). The report covers the EU-27 Member States and Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Türkiye.

The full report is available at https://europa.eu/!xkBMkN.