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FINAL PROJECT REPORT

For the project *“Developing a Comprehensive Framework for the Monitoring and Evaluation of Early Childhood Education and Care in the Czech Republic”*.

JULY 2025



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This project was funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument and implemented by UNICEF in co-operation with the European Commission.

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List of acronyms

CSI	Czech School Inspectorate
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
EU	European Union
IT	Information Technology
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
MoRD	Ministry of Regional Development
NPI	National Pedagogical Institute
TSI	Technical Support Instrument
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
LO	Labour Offices

Overview of the project

This report concludes and consolidates the results of the project *“Developing a Comprehensive Framework for the Monitoring and Evaluation of Early Childhood Education and Care in the Czech Republic”* funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument and implemented by UNICEF in cooperation with the European Commission. For the Czech authorities the project was led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS).

The aim of the project was to support reforms to improve the quality of the early childhood education and care (ECEC) services in the Czech Republic and to ensure equitable access for all children. The project focused on children up to six years of age, with particular emphasis on those under the age of three, and vulnerable groups of children.

Importance of Accessible and Quality Early Childhood Education and Care – and the Motivation for a TSI Project in the Czech Republic

Early childhood offers a vital opportunity to shape children’s holistic development and lifelong success. In line with the European Pillar of Social Rights, every child has the right to affordable, high-quality ECEC, which plays a key role in promoting cognitive and social-emotional growth, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The availability of high quality ECEC also supports higher workforce participation, particularly among women. This is particularly important in the Czech Republic which faces one of the EU’s highest gender employment gaps and a large share of women who are economically inactive due to caregiving responsibilities.

In response, the Czech Republic prioritized ECEC within the European Child Guarantee, which aims to prevent and combat social exclusion by guaranteeing effective access of children in need to a set of key services including free ECEC. The ECEC system for children aged 0–3 has expanded significantly, with children’s group places growing from 10,000 in 2018 to over 26,000 by April 2025, supported by the European Union through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan and the European Social Fund+.

However, the split governance between the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports¹ has complicated the development of a unified monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework across the 0–6 age range. To address this, the Czech authorities sought technical support from the European Commission. With funding from the EU’s Technical Support Instrument, UNICEF, together with the European Commission, has been implementing the project “Developing a comprehensive framework for the monitoring and evaluation of early childhood education and care in the Czech Republic” over the past two years.

¹ The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs oversees children’s groups (legally for children aged 0–6 years, but in practice mainly for 0–3-year-olds) and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport oversees kindergartens (legally for children aged 2–6 years, but in practice mainly for 3–6-year-olds.). For more detailed information on the governance of the ECEC sector in the Czech Republic see Eurydice’s national description of education systems: <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/czech-republic/early-childhood-education-and-care>

Monitoring and Evaluation for Policy Enhancement, Service Growth, and Quality Assurance

Monitoring refers to the ongoing, structured collection of quantitative and qualitative data to assess system performance against predefined quality standards, criteria, and indicators. These benchmarks are periodically reviewed to ensure relevance and rigor. Evaluation entails the systematic analysis of ECEC programmes, policies, or systems to measure effectiveness, efficiency, and impact. Evaluations may focus on individual facilities, municipal-level services, or the national ECEC ecosystem. Both processes employ diverse methodologies, including facility inspections, classroom observations, child well-being assessments, stakeholder surveys, and interviews with educators, parents, and children. Evaluations may be conducted internally (e.g., self-assessments by providers) or externally (e.g., inspections, data-driven analyses).

The primary aim of M&E is to identify systemic strengths to amplify and challenges to address, ensuring continuous quality improvement across all ECEC tiers. This aligns with international frameworks emphasizing two core dimensions of quality, both structural and process.

The split responsibilities between MoLSA and MoEYS highlighted the escalating need for an integrated system which would enhance the connection and alignment between both types of services (children's groups and kindergartens). As an initial step towards this integration, this project—in cooperation with both ministries and other stakeholders—succeeded in developing a unified M&E Framework for ECEC for children aged 0–6. This Framework and the related recommendations are intended to further enhance coordination between the two ministries, and the new system would support strategic planning, facilitate smoother transitions between ECEC services, and ensure consistency in quality and approaches across the sector. This would create a seamless continuum of ECEC services for children aged 0–6 in the Czech Republic ensuring full benefits for children's development and parental employment.

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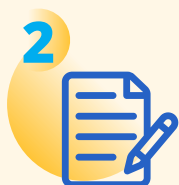


Main Phases of the Work

Aside from an inception and a closing phase, the project had three main phases of work.



The data collection and evidence generation phase: the first phase of the project helped the Czech authorities to gain comprehensive understanding of the current status, provision, and gaps regarding the monitoring and evaluation of early childhood education and care through conducting studies, mappings and deep dives into status, as well as learnings from other countries.

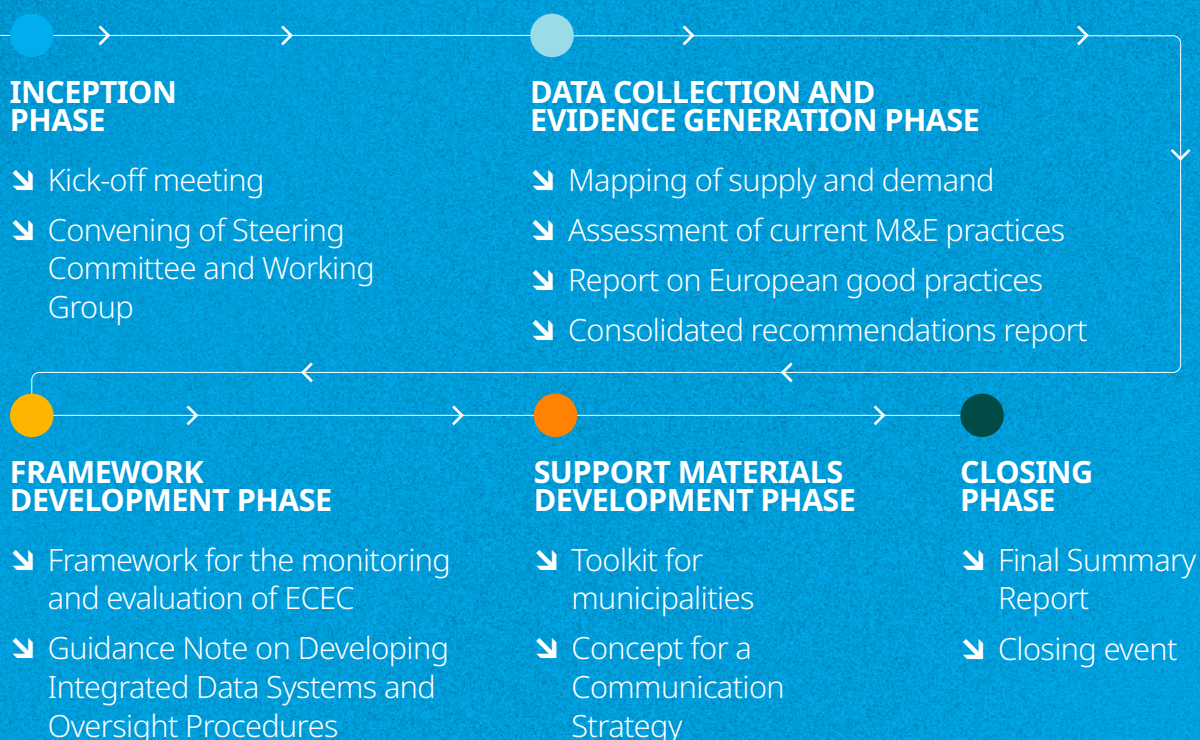


The framework development phase: in a second phase, the focus of the project was to support the Czech authorities to develop - jointly with all relevant ECEC actors and stakeholders - an effective and comprehensive system for the monitoring and evaluation of ECEC (children aged 0-6 years) with a twin focus on raising quality and improving access. The M&E Framework was complemented by the guidance on developing integrated data systems.



Support materials development phase: The final element of the project focused on developing and consolidating tools to support both the ministries and local authorities to expand ECEC services with quality.

The visual below shows the specific pieces of work which took place under each phase.



The project was implemented by the UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, in co-operation with the European Commission, and under the leadership of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. UNICEF was supported by the research team from the Faculty of Education of the Charles University, the GOODKIN communication agency, as well as individual consultants.

Coordination and Involvement of Stakeholders

Stakeholder engagement and active participation were essential to this project, given the split responsibilities for ECEC across two ministries and municipalities in the Czech Republic. Providing sufficient opportunities for collaboration among key actors — including representatives from different ministries (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Ministry of Health, and Ministry for Regional Development), local governments, service providers, and other sector stakeholders — was crucial throughout the course of the project.

There were a number of different platforms that were created by the project team for implementation in addition to the fortnightly coordination meetings held at operations level. These are shown in the table below.

Coordination body	Purpose	Members	Number of meetings
Steering Committee	High-level management, coordination and oversight of project	MoLSA, MoEYS, European Commission, UNICEF, Czech School Inspectorate, Charles University, International consultant	8 Steering Committee meetings
Working Group	To ensure co-creation of project outputs with ECEC stakeholders from across the Czech Republic	MoLSA, MoEYS, MoH, MoRD, CSI, NPI, associations of municipalities, European Commission, UNICEF, CSOs – umbrella organizations and platforms, professional associations and associations of service providers, research institutions, academia, parents groups	13 Working Group meetings including two validation workshops

The development of the M&E Framework, including formulation and final wording of the vision for early childhood education and care, as well as the development of the quality statements and related indicators, were the result of close collaboration within the project's Working Group. More than 70 experts from over 30 institutions and organizations across the Czech Republic actively contributed — including ministries and other government bodies, academia, early childhood education and care providers, professional associations, municipal associations, parent groups, and civil society organizations. Their consensus on the proposed framework is crucial for its future implementation into legislation and practical application across both sectors (MoLSA and MoEYS), at all levels (national, local, and facility/centre), and across various types of settings (children's groups, kindergartens, and informal services).

Project results

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One of the main project results

was the development of a robust body of evidence that served two key purposes. First, it informed the creation of the M&E Framework aimed at enhancing the system's long-term capacity to plan for and manage quality. Second, it supported the data-driven and quality-focused expansion of ECEC services, aligned with ongoing and anticipated investments including through the European Social Fund Plus and the Recovery and Resilience Plan. The three analytical reports produced as part of the project offered critical insights into the supply and demand for ECEC services, the existing monitoring and evaluation systems, and European best practices that could inform future reforms.

All project components were developed through a participatory process involving the Working Group. The findings were shared with ministerial leadership and other stakeholders to support the next steps of the project. Reports were also shared with other EU Member States, partner countries and stakeholder organizations through the European Commission's EEA Working group on Early childhood education and care.

Mapping of Supply and Demand for Formal and Non-formal Early Childhood Education and Care Services

The first report presents a thorough analysis of the availability and accessibility of ECEC services for children aged 0–6 across the Czech Republic.

Key findings include:

A discrepancy between demand and supply, with high demand for kindergarten services in urban areas and limited availability of childcare options for children under three years old.



A need for more comparable and integrated data to accurately assess service gaps and parental preferences.



A variety of parental needs, including greater affordability and flexible service options, which are not fully met by the current system.



Assessment of Current Monitoring and Evaluation Practice in the Early Childhood Education and Care Sector in the Czech Republic

The second report evaluates the existing M&E structures and identifies areas for improvement. **Key findings include:**

While kindergartens operate under a well-established M&E framework with clear statutory guidelines, children's groups and other less formal childcare services for the 0–3 age group would benefit from a more robust monitoring structure.

Current M&E efforts primarily focus on structural quality indicators (such as facilities and staff qualifications) rather than process quality (such as child-teacher interactions and curriculum implementation).

Expanding self-assessment tools for educators and increasing the involvement of parents and children in the evaluation process could further enhance quality assurance.

Strengthening data collection and interoperability would improve the tracking of service quality across different types of ECEC providers.

Analysis of European Good Practices in the Monitoring and Evaluation of Early Childhood Education and Care

The third report examines best practices in European countries (inspiration from Finland, Ireland, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway) and offers guidance for improving ECEC quality assurance in the Czech Republic. Key recommendations include:

- Moving towards a more holistic, integrated approach to ECEC for the entire 0–6 age group through improved coordination or sector unification.
- Enhancing facility-level self-assessment practices as a means to support continuous quality improvement.
- Strengthening data collection and interoperability to ensure a comprehensive monitoring system, particularly with a stronger focus on process quality.
- Learning from countries which have successfully implemented quality monitoring tools and governance models.

Analytical reports, M&E Framework and other published project outputs are available [here](#):





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The second main result

was the project initiating and developing the Framework for the Monitoring and Evaluation of Early Childhood Education and Care in the Czech Republic. The framework establishes a continuous, systematic approach to collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, with the goal of supporting ongoing quality improvement and ensuring inclusive, accessible early childhood education and care for all children.

A significant achievement was the joint decision by the involved ministries and the Working Group to develop a single, comprehensive M&E Framework for the entire 0–6 age group. This integrated approach covers both children's groups and kindergartens, with the potential to extend to other types of ECEC services in the future.

The M&E Framework:

- Articulates a shared national vision for early childhood education and care in the Czech Republic.
- Defines five core quality areas—access, staff, curriculum, evaluation and monitoring, Governance and Funding—aligned with the European Union Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care.
- Introduces specific indicators linked to each quality statement, offering insights into both the structural aspects of the system (e.g., capacity, accessibility) and process quality (e.g., staff-child and staff-parent interactions, and children's experiences and wellbeing).

Additionally, the Guidance Note on Developing Integrated Data Systems and Oversight Procedures was developed providing support for the creation of robust data systems and collection of high-quality data to inform evidence-based policies and targeted interventions.

Early childhood education and care in the Czech Republic:

Vision: Every child has the right to quality and available early childhood education and care services.



Respects that each child is unique, supports their individual needs and focuses on the acquisition of competences and the promotion of active learning and exploration of the world, primarily through play;



Promotes the values of respect, social cohesion and sustainable development.

Provides a safe and stimulating environment where emphasis is placed on socialisation, relationships, communication and the overall wellbeing of children;



Respects children's right to make decisions and choose their own activities, while emphasising responsibility and educational goals;



QUALITY STATEMENTS



ACCESS:

All children have access to quality early childhood education and care that promotes participation and fosters social



STAFF:

In all types of early childhood education and care, the staff is appropriately structured and qualified for the number of children and their needs, and the stability of staff is ensured. All professional staff members continue to develop their professional qualifications, have decent salary or wage, and suitable working conditions, and are led by management with a clear vision and strategy for the development of the facility that reflects the needs of children, parents and the community.



CURRICULUM:

The legislation sets out clear and comprehensible aims, tasks and requirements for various forms of early childhood education and care. Early childhood education and care are guided by a curriculum based on educational goals, values and approaches that enable children to reach their full potential, taking into account their social, emotional, cognitive and physical development, and their well-being. The curriculum encourages staff to collaborate with children, colleagues and



EVALUATION & MONITORING:

Availability and quality are regularly monitored and evaluated in early childhood education and care based on data that is systematically and thoughtfully collected. The data is available to users in a form that allows for easy processing and visualisation. Monitoring and evaluation findings are systematically used to improve the availability and quality of ECEC.



GOVERNANCE & FUNDING:

The governance and funding of early childhood education and care are transparent, efficient, sustainable, relevant to the needs and based on constructive co-operation among all actors.



A particularly positive result

of the project implementation and framework development process was the **strong collaboration and collegial spirit** that emerged among ECEC stakeholders within the project Working Group. The process also fostered valuable connections, mutual learning, and the exchange of experiences across sectors and institutions — bringing added benefits beyond the framework itself.

4 Another key achievement of the project

was the **development of practical support materials** aimed at strengthening strategic communication around the reform and helping municipalities and ministries expand ECEC services with quality. A dedicated toolkit was created for local governments to support their capacity-building efforts, promote access to services, and improve the quality of ECEC for all children. In parallel, a Concept for a Communication Strategy was developed to guide the authorities in the outreach to municipalities — highlighting the importance of inclusive, high-quality ECEC, particularly for families at risk. These tools contribute to reshaping the public narrative around ECEC as a foundational stage in children's development, a driver of social cohesion, and a smart investment in the future of society.

5 Finally,

the project also led to the development of **strategic recommendations** aimed not only at supporting the implementation of the M&E Framework but also at addressing related areas such as governance, funding, legislation, and workforce capacity — reflecting the interconnected nature of system quality and contributing to the overall strengthening of the ECEC system in the Czech Republic.

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Recommendations

Recommendations for the system to support the above-mentioned implementation were developed and are summarised in the table below. These recommendations relate to the implementation of the M&E Framework, but as the Framework is an ambitious document, and it exists within the context of the broader ECEC system in the Czech Republic, recommendations that relate to governance, funding, legislation, staff and their expertise are also provided in as much as these issues relate to M&E and overall system quality.

It is also critical to note that while there is a recommendation to move towards a more unified system, as this has been proven to strengthen quality and reduce fragmentation across a continuum, this does not mean homogenization of the system, with just one service type.

In fact, a quality system requires different service types based on parent and child needs. However, the recommendations refer to an increase in consistency of quality, access and inclusion across services and fewer discrepancies in standards and opportunities for early stimulation, learning and care.

The recommendations have been structured based on the M&E for ECEC Components Framework which has provided the theoretical scaffolding for this project:

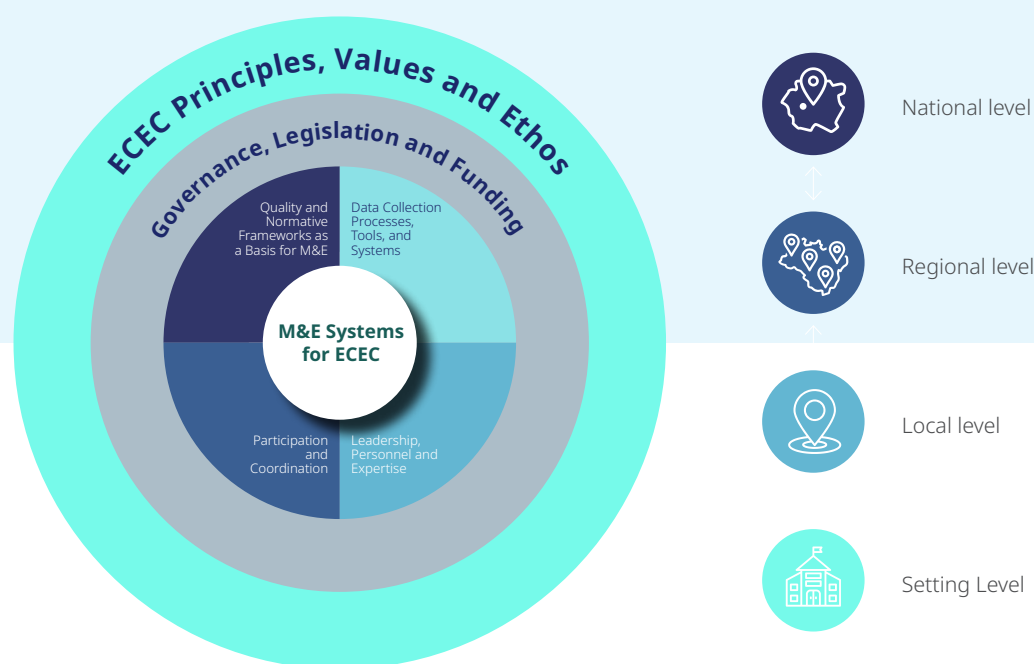


Figure 1 Components Framework for ECEC M&E Systems

Source: Brown, J. *M&E Components Framework*. 2024.

Recommendations are categorised according to the elements of the framework that they speak to. Descriptions of each component are provided in the table below followed by related recommendations.

Item	Description	Recommendations
ECEC Principles, Values and Ethos	The historic, political, and social value and perceptions of ECEC in the country, which in turn informs the legal basis as well as the approach to M&E and intrinsic purpose for which ECEC is both offered and assessed.	1) Establish a unified strategy and governance structure for ECEC The current ECEC system in the Czech Republic is fragmented, with responsibilities split between MoLSA for children's groups (children aged 6 months to 6 years, with a primary focus on children under 3 years) and MoEYS for kindergartens (children aged 2–6). In addition, there is a wide range of other informal services. This division of responsibilities between the two ministries has led to inconsistent quality standards and varied monitoring and evaluation procedures across settings serving children in the same age group. The current system does not guarantee equal access to high-quality ECEC services (for children aged 0–6); certain regions and localities face capacity shortages –particularly for the youngest children – and children with special educational needs or those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds do not always receive adequate support. The M&E Framework can only be implemented to its full potential if both ministries accept and support it. As recommended by the European Commission, greater coordination and integration of ECEC are needed, preferably within a coherent governance framework, by either unifying responsibilities under one ministry or by ensuring strong coordination between the two ministries. A unified strategy and governance structure for the entire (either unified or divided) ECEC system have been found to greatly improve alignment of goals, reduce duplication, and ensure that all stakeholders are working towards the same objectives. This strategy should emphasize accessibility, quality, inclusion and equity, ensuring that all children, regardless of age, health status, disability, or background, have access to high-quality early childhood education and care.

Item	Description	Recommendations
Governance, Legislation and Funding	The legislation and policies which mandate ECEC service provision, broad quality factors, and monitoring thereof. As well as the financial flows and financial responsibilities and the bodies/ authorities responsible for ECEC provision, quality assurance and M&E – and how these bodies interact.	2) Embed legislative and funding reforms within the strategy – designed to create a cohesive ECEC system, as a universal good Although MoLSA recently introduced a substantial amendment to the Children's Group Act, there still is room for further alignment between the legislative frameworks governing ECEC services under MoLSA and MoEYS. For example, the Children's Group Act (MoLSA) and the School Act (MoEYS) have different requirements for staffing, curriculum, and quality assurance of ECEC services. Additionally, funding mechanisms are fragmented, with disparities in resource allocation between regions and types of ECEC facilities. This creates inequities in access and quality, particularly for disadvantaged children and regions with limited resources. Given the scope of the recent legislative reform within the labour and social affairs sector, no further changes are anticipated in the medium term. 3) Establish a body for the oversight of ECEC at the level of Ministers, or embed a standing ECEC agenda item into existing ministerial body High level leadership is required for multi-ministerial reforms, and especially for an area as integrated as ECEC. Ultimately the M&E Framework is designed to improve quality and access, and both goals are more realistic with accountability at every stage, including high-level drive for change.
Quality and Normative Frameworks as Basis for M&E	The documents that set the vision and plan for ECEC implementation and quality. These would include Quality Frameworks, Curricula Frameworks, M&E Frameworks, Standards, ECEC programmes/ Plans etc. These can be standing alone documents or components included within other national / regional / local documents, or within broader policies or legislation. The documentation which provides the basis for indicators against which quality is measured and assessed.	4) Formally adopt the ECEC M&E Framework, and update supporting normative frameworks including the alignment and expansion of curricula and standards. Formally adopt the M&E Framework developed in the course of this project and work to systematically operationalize it. Align other normative frameworks guiding ECEC in the Czech Republic for the 0-6 continuum, including expansion of the Framework Education Programme and related inspection framework across 0-6.

Item	Description	Recommendations
Data Collection Processes, Tools, and Systems	The approaches used to collect and verify data, including distinctions between tools and processes for structural indicators compared to process quality data. The lifecycle of the M&E processes, what happens to the data, how it is collected, processed, used, and by who, and how often does this cycle take place for different data sets and/or settings. The tools (questionnaires, forms, feedback sessions, interviews etc) used for collecting data and assessing quality – used both for monitoring and for evaluations.	5) Develop tools, systems and processes to systematically operationalize the M&E Framework The current data systems for ECEC in the Czech Republic are fragmented, with MoLSA and MoEYS operating separate databases that are not yet interoperable. This lack of integration makes it difficult to track key indicators related to access, quality, staff qualifications, and governance across the 0–6 continuum. Without a comprehensive data infrastructure, policymakers and providers lack the information needed to make evidence-based decisions and drive continuous improvement. This could include – immediate joint-used and analysis of available data and systematically improving data collected. Elements of the Framework can be immediately put to use, and other require systematic phase in, based on further development of tools and the system. In any case, it is necessary to develop a culture of continuous improvement – in the longer term, the Czech Republic should establish a unified comprehensive data system under one body (such as MoEYS, as part of the education data system).
Leadership, Personnel and Expertise	The personnel from the national level down to the setting levels and their responsibilities vis a vis ECEC quality assurance and M&E. Status and needs of personnel related to training levels/ expertise, sufficient numbers, support, and any role overlap/ duplication. The role of leadership in quality assurance, especially at the level of the centre.	6) Strengthen capacity for data collection and use Many ECEC providers, local authorities, and ministry staff lack the training and technical support needed to collect, report, and use data effectively. This limits the full implementation of the M&E Framework, and the ability of providers to conduct self-evaluations and use data for quality improvement. Additionally, there is a need for regional support structures to help local stakeholders comply with national standards and contribute to the overall improvement of ECEC services. 7) Establish additional personnel in MoLSA and MoEYS to support the national directorate for ECEC and to support ECEC quality and monitoring nationally. The current teams responsible for ECEC at the MoLSA and the MoEYS are understaffed and not able to fully support the implementation of the M&E Framework, and the broader vision for the expansion of ECEC services, quality and inclusion. Establishing updated M&E processes and systems requires additional personnel.
Participation and Coordination	The levels of participation in the process, whether these are optional or mandatory, and if they include teacher, parent, children and/or broader stakeholders. How participation is mandated and managed. What coordination takes place between different bodies and stakeholders.	8) Enhance collaboration with stakeholders At the national level, strong collaboration with relevant stakeholders has been established through the course of the project, and this should be maintained and expanded. At the local level, collaboration between different services is needed (such as ECEC, social services, health), as is strengthened cooperation with parents, local communities, and civil society organizations – who are not always integrated into the design, implementation, and evaluation of ECEC policies and services. This limits the ability of ECEC services to respond to the needs of children and families.

Lessons learned

Reform is a process, not an end point

The M&E Framework is an aspirational document that marks an important step forward — but it is not the end point. Its full operationalization will require further reforms across key areas such as legislation, financing, governance, and workforce development. The project underscored that while not all recommendations can be implemented immediately, the Framework offers clear, long-term guidance for building a stronger and more coherent ECEC system. Crucially, this is a cooperative effort: no single actor can achieve systemic change alone. Success depends on the sustained involvement, coordination, and shared commitment of all stakeholders — from ministries to local governments, service providers, professionals, and families.

Shared vision helped bridge a fragmented system

Creating a shared national vision for early childhood education and care in the Czech Republic was critical for building synergies across the country's split ECEC system. By jointly examining the current state of services and M&E practices and defining quality statements and indicators for the whole 0–6 age group, stakeholders began to see the sector as a continuum — identifying the interventions needed for a more cohesive approach.

Realistic ambition is key to building long-term quality

Improving quality in early childhood education and care requires both ambition and realism. While it is important to set high goals for the sector, it is equally critical to start from where the system currently stands — considering the existing types of services, the capacities of providers and caregivers, available funding, and the legislative framework. Sustainable progress will depend on building step by step, through continuous improvement, learning, and adaptation. This process must be carried out in close coordination among all stakeholders to ensure that reforms are practical, inclusive, and aligned with the system's evolving needs.

Monitoring and evaluation need to shift from control to continuous quality improvement

Achieving systemic quality in ECEC requires more than data collection or inspection — it calls for a cultural shift in how quality is understood and supported. Rather than relying solely on control mechanisms, the focus of monitoring and evaluation

should move toward fostering trust, reflection, and shared responsibility. This means embedding a self-reflective, learning-oriented process where educators and providers are supported through methodological guidance, constructive feedback, and professional dialogue. A strong feedback loop, underpinned by a shared goal of continuous quality improvement, is essential — creating an environment where quality is built collaboratively, not enforced hierarchically.

International learning was a powerful driver of inspiration and alignment

Learning from other European countries was one of the most enriching aspects of the project. A key milestone in the project was the study visit to Norway, which provided the Czech delegation with a valuable opportunity to observe a high-quality, integrated ECEC system managed under a single ministry. Beyond the system design itself, the visit offered deep insight into Norway's reform journey — from expanding service capacity to enhancing quality — all while fostering a strong child-centred and inclusive approach grounded in shared societal values. The visit also significantly strengthened relationships between the Czech ministerial teams, creating space for informal exchange, building trust, and supporting greater alignment across sectors.

In addition to the study visit, exchanges with other European countries provided targeted lessons: Ireland demonstrated effective coordination in a split system; Finland shared practices for building a strong Monitoring and Evaluation culture; Lithuania highlighted the use of data systems to support planning and quality; and Belgium illustrated the key role of municipalities in service provision. These diverse perspectives offered practical insights and reinforced the importance of coordinated, long-term system development in the Czech context.

The co-creation approach was central to the project's success

Regular in-person meetings of the Working Group, supported by external facilitation (UNICEF), were instrumental in building trust, fostering open dialogue, and enabling the collaborative development of project outputs. Participants valued the safe and constructive environment for discussing both challenges and solutions. For future efforts, even greater value could be gained from more structured opportunities for in-person learning from other countries — whether by involving more stakeholders in international study visits or inviting international colleagues to share their experiences directly in the Czech context. Such exchanges offer not only inspiration and practical insights but also help deepen relationships and strengthen the shared commitment to reform.

Local expertise combined with international support is a powerful model

The partnership between a Czech research team and international experts proved highly effective. It ensured strong local ownership, efficient data collection, and context-sensitive recommendations, while also providing an external perspective grounded in international good practice

Strategic communication and stakeholder engagement require planning

Engaging ministry leadership was sometimes a challenge due to busy schedules and shifting priorities. However, consistent communication, early sharing of key findings, and a flexible meeting coordination mechanism improved participation. High-level political engagement remains critical for long-term success but requires creative strategies — such as showcasing good practices and involving children in advocacy efforts.

Structured coordination mechanisms are essential

The establishment of a Steering Committee, regular Working Group meetings, and fortnightly coordination calls with the core project team proved highly effective in keeping the project on track. These structures supported decision-making at both technical and ministerial levels and helped maintain alignment across a wide range of stakeholders.

Managing timelines amid broad consultation

Inclusive stakeholder engagement requires careful planning and strong coordination. The process of reviewing key documents — particularly the analytical reports — involved multiple rounds of feedback to ensure all voices were heard and reflected. The process was further extended by the need to work in parallel in both Czech and English. It is important to allocate sufficient time for these consultations and revisions from the outset, along with clear timelines and consistent follow-up by the project implementer. This approach not only strengthens the quality of outputs but also reinforces stakeholder ownership and trust in the process — making the effort both worthwhile and rewarding in the long run.



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and Central Asia Regional Office**

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