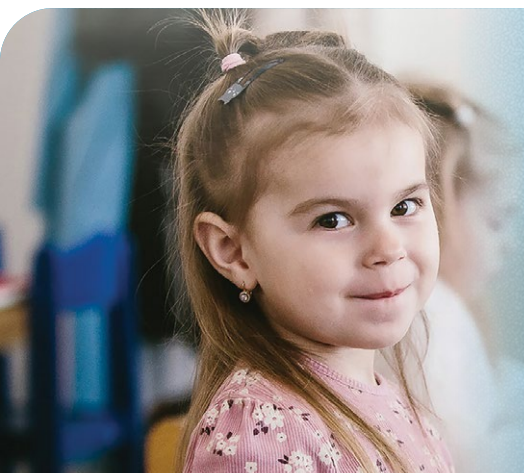




DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK FOR THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Brief on the EU technical support project
for the Czech Republic (2023-2025)

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 early childhood education and care (ECEC), which plays a key role in promoting cognitive and social-emotional growth, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. ECEC also supports higher workforce participation, particularly among women. The Czech Republic 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. 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 (MoLSA) and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) has complicated the development of a unified monitoring and evaluation 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.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND RESULTS

This two-year project concludes with comprehensive evidence, an integrated monitoring and evaluation framework, a guidance document on data systems, and a toolkit to support municipalities in expanding and improving local ECEC services.

The project worked towards the following outcomes:

OUTCOME 1

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.

Key outputs:

- *Mapping of Supply and Demand for Formal and Non-formal ECEC Services* – Provides an overview of service availability and accessibility for children aged 0–6.
- *Assessment of Current Monitoring and Evaluation Practice* – Evaluates existing M&E structures and identifies gaps.
- *Analysis of European Good Practices* – Highlights international approaches to improve ECEC quality assurance (inspiration from Finland, Ireland, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway)
- *Initial set of Consolidated Recommendations* – Synthesizes findings to inform the development of the national framework.

OUTCOME 2

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.

Key outputs:

- *Framework for the Monitoring and Evaluation of Early Childhood Education and Care in the Czech Republic* - Establishes a systematic, continuous approach to collecting both quantitative and qualitative data to enhance quality and ensure equitable access. It articulates a national vision, defines quality standards in five EU-aligned areas—Access, Staff, Curriculum, Evaluation and Monitoring, and Governance and Funding—and presents indicators to assess system capacity, accessibility, and process quality, including staff interactions and children's well-being.
- *Guidance Note on Developing Integrated Data Systems and Oversight Procedures* - Provides practical support for building robust data systems and collecting high-quality data to inform evidence-based policies and targeted interventions.

Early childhood education and care in the Czech Republic:



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;

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;



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

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

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.

OUTCOME 3

The final element of the project provided Czech authorities with specific tools to promote and support municipal expansion of ECEC services, including on communication, strategic planning, financing and quality assurance of ECEC at local level quality assurance of ECEC at local level.

Key outputs:

- *Toolkit for Municipalities* – Assists local governments in improving availability, affordability, and quality of ECEC for all children.
- *Concept for a Communication Strategy* – Guides municipal advocacy, emphasizing the importance of inclusive and high-quality ECEC, especially for vulnerable families.



ABOUT THE PROJECT:

About the project partnership

- This 2-year project was funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument (TSI).
- Technical support was provided by UNICEF Europe and Central Asia regional office's Early Childhood Development section, in co-operation with the European Commission.
- On behalf of the Czech authorities, the project was led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, in close partnership with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport.

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INFORMATION

