The pre-school education and care has had a long tradition in Slovenia. Kindergartens have witnessed a steady development since after the Second World War and several important changes in the 70s and the 80s (programme development, higher qualification of education staff, better quality of playrooms and didactical aids, as well as an increase in enrolment).

In the middle of the 90s, another conceptual and curricular reform of kindergartens or pre-school education took place. Two key laws apply to the pre-school education: Organization and Financing of Education Act (en [1]) 1996 and the Kindergarten Act (sl [2]) 1996. They specify the terms and conditions for establishment, organisation and operation of kindergartens.

All public kindergartens and some kindergartens that hold a concession meet the principles, pursue objectives and apply the guidelines of the Kindergarten Curriculum (en [3]). Moreover, Slovenian kindergartens have to abide by the Rules on norms and staff requirements for pursuing the activity of pre-school education (sl [4]) as to the number of children and adults in a playgroup, as well as by relatively precise Rules on norms and minimal technical conditions for rooms and equipment (sl [5]) to provide for health and safety of children.

The system of pre-school education is set up unified for all children age one to six or compulsory school age, and it is state-subsidised. All children of 11 months and beyond have the right to a place in a kindergarten. The inclusion of a child is not compulsory; it is the decision of parents.

The pre-school education is part of the system of education and in the domain of the Ministry responsible for education [6] since 1993. It provides for the continuity between pre-school and compulsory basic school education. Moreover, the state provides for the national policy, legal framework and basic programme of pre-school education. It is the municipalities that set up kindergartens. They are responsible for the implementation of programmes for pre-school children. The pre-school education is pursued at kindergartens, but there is also a regulated system of at home registered child minders. The share of children under the care of at home registered child minders is small.

Kindergartens provide full care (meals, as well) and aim to provide children with quality and age-appropriate learning and social skills. Pre-school education complements family care, children gain experience and knowledge that they cannot get within the family environment. In Slovenia, there is a high employment rate for both parents. Thus, parents choose to include their children in kindergartens primarily to provide care for them while they are at work.

Parents pay for kindergarten. The fees are means-tested (in 2015/2016, 4.3 children attended kindergarten for free, and the highest monthly fee was €530, meals included).

Participation in public and private kindergartens has been on the rise in recent years. The share has increased from 63.6% in 2005/2006 to 74% in 2010/2011, and 81.7% in 2018/2019 (SURS [7]). Most
children attend public kindergartens (94% in 2018/2019).

See leaflet [8] (en) on pre-school education in the Republic of Slovenia.

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