Introduction

The Swedish Parliament (riksdagen) and Government (regeringen) set out the goals and guidelines for the preschool (förskolan), preschool class (förskoleklassen), leisure-time centres (fritidshem) and compulsory school (grundskolan) through the Education Act and the Curricula. The preschool, preschool class, leisure-time centre and compulsory school are all regulated in the Education Act (Skollagen SFS 2010:800). The preschool has its own curriculum while the preschool class and leisure-time centre are included in the curriculum for the compulsory school, see the sections below for each type of ECEC. The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) is the central administrative authority for the publicly organised preschools and school age childcare. The mission of the agency is to actively work for the attainment of the goals. The municipalities (kommuner) and the grant-aided independent schools (fristående skolor) are the principal organisers in the school system, they allocate resources and organise activities so that pupils can attain the national goals of education. The Swedish National Agency for Education supervises, supports, follows up and evaluates the school system in order to improve quality and outcomes. For statistics on ECEC, see chapter 2.8 Statistics on Organisation and Governance.

Early childhood education and care can with slight variations be divided into two age groups targeting children between the age 1-5 and 6-12. The following articles of chapter 4 will be divided based on the corresponding curricula. Organisational Variations and Alternative Structures in Early Childhood Education and Care is described in Organisational Variations and Alternative Structures in Early Childhood Education and Care.

The articles of Chapter 4 are divided based on:

- **The preschool:** corresponding to the curriculum for the preschool (Läroplan för förskolan 2018, Lpfö18)
  - Article 4.1
  - Article 4.2
  - Article 4.3

- **The preschool class and when relevant the leisure-time centre:** corresponding to the curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the leisure-time centre (Läroplan för grundskolan, förskoleklassen och fritidshemmet 2011)
  - Article 4.
The preschool

The preschool is a form of early childhood education and care in for children aged between 1-5 years who have not yet entered into the mandatory preschool class. Municipalities are required by the Education Act to provide preschool activities and childcare to all children that live in Sweden and are not enrolled in a preschool class or compulsory education. Generally children should be offered a spot in preschool from the age of 1. Children have the right to attend preschool to the extent necessary for their parents to be able to work or study or based on the child’s own needs. This requirement includes preschool for children whose parents are unemployed or on parental leave with another sibling. These children should be offered a place in preschool for at least three hours per day or 15 hours per week. All children are entitled to free preschool for at least 525 hours per year from the autumn term when they turn three years old.

In 2017 84 percent of children aged 1–5 years old attend preschool. The percentage is lower in larger cities and higher in smaller cities. The distribution between boys and girls is generally equal. The proportion of enrolled children has increased to some extent in all age groups. 47 percent of one year olds attended pre-school, 87 and 92 percent respectively of two and three year olds and 94 percent of all four and five year olds.

Sweden's maximum fee policy makes childcare affordable. Fees are calculated according to income with low-income families paying nothing while the cost is capped for all families. The upper income limit is 46 080 SEK (approximately 4450 Euro)/month in 2018. For more information on fees within ECEC, see chapter 4.1 Organisation of Pre-Primary Education (Preschool) [11].

Grant-aided independent schools and preschools can be organised in different forms. The municipalities distribute grants to grant-aided independent preschools and they are also responsible for ensuring that the operations meet the requirements of quality and safety. The same laws and frameworks apply to grant-aided independent preschools and municipal preschools. For more information on grant-aided independent education providers, see chapter 2.4 Organisation of Private Education [18].

The open preschool is an alternative option to the preschool. The open preschool is mainly for stay at home parents and their children. The parents together with the staff have the opportunity to develop educational group activities for the childrens’ development. The children are not enrolled in the open preschool and the attendance together with parents is volountary. For more information on alternative structures within ECEC, see chapter 4.7 Organisational Variations and Alternative Structures in Early Childhood Education and Care [9].

The preschool class

Starting from the autumn of 2018 the preschool class is mandatory for all children living in Sweden from the age of six. The compulsory school and the preschool class, as well as the leisure-time centre, share a common curriculum, the curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the leisure-time centre (Läroplan för grundskolan, förskoleklassen och fritidshemmet 2011 [14]). In 2016 a specific section was added to the curriculum covering the objectives and core content of the preschool class.

The activities in preschool classes should be considered as teaching in the same sense as in other types of education. The education in preschool class will encourage each child’s learning and development at the same time as providing a foundation for continued schooling. It is mandatory for municipalities to provide preschool classes and for all six year olds to be offered a place for a minimum of 525 hours. It is the school head that decides how to distribute these hours over the
school year. There are no regulations regarding how many days a week a pupil should attend the preschool class. The mandatory activity may however cover no more than 190 days per academic year and six hours per day. It is important to structure the education so that the children have sufficient opportunities to rest and play, based on their age and needs. The best interests of the child should always be the starting point when the activities in preschool classes are organized.

In the school year 2017/2018 almost 98 percent of all children aged six were enrolled in a preschool class. Over 10 percent of pupils attend grant-aided independently organised preschool class. The proportion of pupils attending independent facilities varies between municipalities and was highest in major cities and metropolitan municipalities.

According to the Education Act (Skollagen SFS 2010:800 [5]) and Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the leisure-time centre (Läroplan för grundskolan, förskoleklassen och fritidshemmet 2011 [14]), the preschool class should contribute to develop students with a mother tongue other than Swedish abilities to communicate in Swedish as well as in their mother tongue. In the preschool class, there were almost 31 300 students with a native language other than Swedish in 2016/17, this is approximately 26 percent of the pupils. The number of pupils with another mother tongue increased compared to the previous school year.

The leisure-time centre

Leisure-time centres are educational group facilities, operating during the times of the day and year when schools are closed for enrolled children whose parents are working or studying or for children who are in need of the facilities. Generally leisure-time centres are integrated within schools. Leisure-time centres are aimed at children from the age of 6 up to 12 years-old that attend preschool class or compulsory school. The leisure-time center should stimulate the pupils’ development, deepen their knowledge and experience and contribute to a meaningful leisure time and social community. The education should take into account the pupils' needs, interests and experiences and should also be adapted to their different conditions. In the leisure-time centre pupils have the opportunity to practice democracy, influence and responsibility. Play, movement and creative activities are important. The groups should have an appropriate composition and size and provide the students with a good environment. The leisure-time center collaborates with the preschool, preschool class and school to support the pupils long-term development. The leisure-time center is governed by the the Education Act (Skollagen SFS 2010:800 [5]) and the curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the leisure-time centre (Läroplan för grundskolan, förskoleklassen och fritidshemmet 2011 [14]). In 2016 a specific section was added to the curriculum covering the objectives and core content of the leisure-time centre.

Municipalities may charge a fee for the leisure-time centre. It is the municipality that determines how much a spot in the leisure-time centre will cost. All municipalities use the system of upper capped limits for the fee. The upper limit determines how much a spot in a leisure-time centre can cost for different families. The upper income limit is 30 733 SEK (approximately 2945 Euro)/month in 2018. For more information on fees within ECEC, see chapter 4 [11], 4 Organisation of the Pre-Primary Class (Preschool class and Leisure-time centre) [15].

Organisational Variations and Alternative Structures in Early Childhood Education and Care

In Sweden the alternative structures in early childhood education and care within the formal system primarily encompasses four types of care and activities for children up to the age of 12. These activities go under the name- Other pedagogical activities.
Pedagogical care ([pedagogisk omsorg](#)) in family daycare homes ([familjedaghem](#)) is run by registered childminders in their own homes, looking after children aged one to twelve while their parents work or study.

The Open preschool ([öppen förskola](#)) is for stay at home parents and their children. The parents together with the staff have the opportunity to develop educational group activities for the children. The children are not enrolled.

Open leisure-time activities ([öppen fritidsverksamhet](#)) is an alternative to leisure-time centres and educational activities for all children in the age group 10-12 years. The children are not enrolled and the families decide when and how often the children attend.

Care at uncomfortable times. According to the Education Act (Skollagen) the municipality should offer care for children during the times that preschool or leisure-time centres isn’t offered and it should be offered to the extent that is needed based on the parents work and the family situation in general.

For more information about alternative structures within ECEC, see chapter 4.7 Organisational Variations and Alternative Structures in Early Childhood Education and Care ([9](#)).

**Providers**

Alongside the municipal preschools and schools there are grant-aided independent preschools and schools. Grant-aided independent preschools and schools have a different principal organiser than the municipality or county council. For more information about grant-aided independent preschools and schools see chapter 2.4 Organisation of private education ([18](#)). Independently organised and grant aided childcare is more common in bigger cities and their suburbs. The table below shows the different kinds of institutions in early childhood education and care. It also shows how many of them that are independently organised (the statistics are from 2017 or the school year 2016/17).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2017</th>
<th>Number of institutions</th>
<th>Whereof independently organised</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preschool</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>9 813</td>
<td>2 693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical care</td>
<td>1 794</td>
<td>719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open preschool</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School-age childcare</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure-time centres</td>
<td>4 238</td>
<td>677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical care</td>
<td>1 794</td>
<td>719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open leisure-time centres</td>
<td>608</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preschool class</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016/17</td>
<td>3 643</td>
<td>582</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket [6](#))

Curriculum for the preschool ([Läroplan för förskolan Lpfö 18](#)) [10](#)

Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the leisure-time centre, 2011 ([Läroplan för grundskolan, förskoleklassen och fritidshemmet 2011](#)) [21](#)