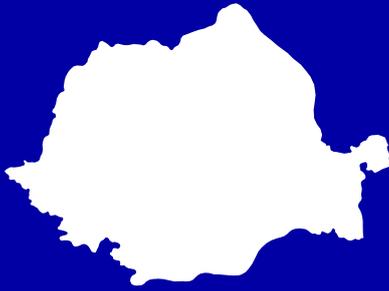


first years
first priority



Early Childhood Development in

ROMANIA

Country Profile 2021*



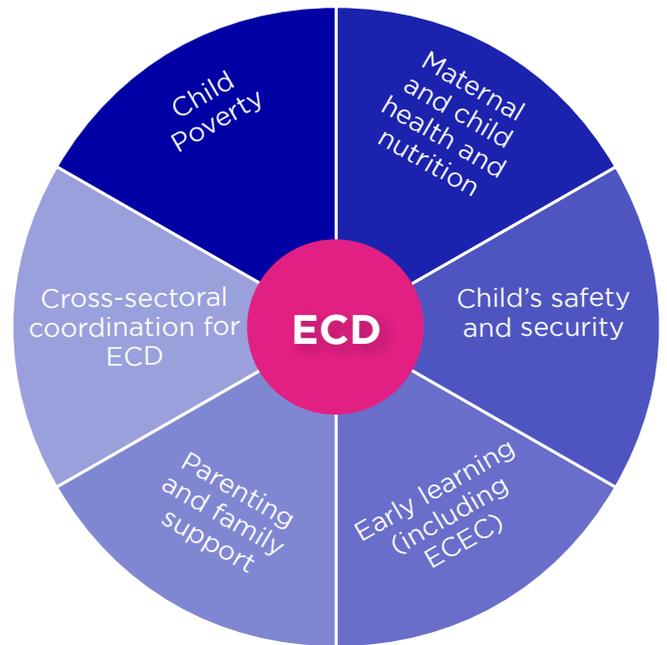
Romania has made important progress over the past years in delivering some **early childhood development (ECD)** policies and in supporting families with young children. Government commitment enforce for early childhood education and care (ECEC) was enacted in 2020 when ECEC was included in the National Defence Strategy (2020-2024). This broad legislation codifies and operationalises prior laws including, but not limited to, compulsory preschool. Another interesting development to be noted in 2020 is the amendment of the Tax Code allowing special credits for those companies that pay ECEC services for their employees up to 300 euros per month. However, both policies, the amendment to the Tax Code and the legal provisions for funding the ECEC services for children under three years of age, are still waiting for clarifications regarding their implementation.

There is no legal framework, however, supporting ECD policies holistically through a national law or act that guarantees access to basic ECD

Country PRIORITIES

- Track data about poverty for families with children under three years of age, with particular attention to families with many children, single parents and parents with a lower level of education.
- Track data on maternal and child health indicators with a special emphasis on vulnerable families, taking into consideration regional disparities.
- Monitor child safety and protection indicators, especially for children from disadvantaged groups.
- Increase the access to and availability of ECEC services for children under three years of age, especially the most vulnerable.
- Finalise the legal framework for an integrated ECEC system for children from birth to six years of age.
- Revisit the initial and continuous training programmes for ECEC staff, especially for those working in services for children under three years of age.
- Improve the coordination between different government structures to ensure coherent and effective ECD policies.

services in Education, Health, Nutrition, and/or Social and Child Protection for all children under six. In addition, there is no policy to support the coordination across sectors and services to support young children in vulnerable situations, including Roma children, families with children with disabilities, migrant and refugee children, children in alternative care, and those living in extreme poverty. There is a lack of sufficient data across ECD policy areas, and where it exists it does not inform an integrated approach to ECD policies, indicating the high demand for a holistic approach to investment in ECD.



POLICY AREAS IMPACTING ECD →



CHILD POVERTY

In Romania, there is a **lack of data on child poverty and social exclusion** for children under three. Data available for children under six indicate that in 2019 a high percentage of children were at risk of poverty and social exclusion and were suffering from severe housing deprivation. In addition, available data from 2019 for children up to 18 years indicate that families with many children and single parents are particularly likely to experience poverty and need targeted support. This is also the case for children under six whose parents have completed primary education, as indicated by data available from 2019.

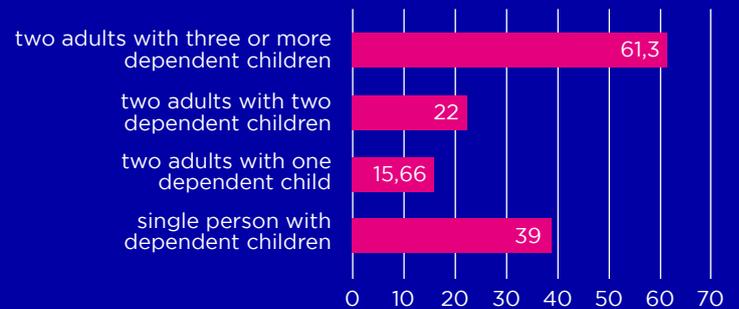


Child poverty (%)



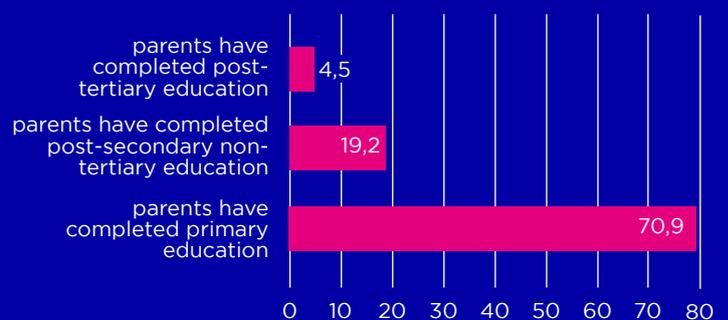
Source: Eurostat

At-risk-of-poverty rate per household type



Source: Eurostat

At-risk-of-poverty rate per parents' educational attainment



Source: Eurostat

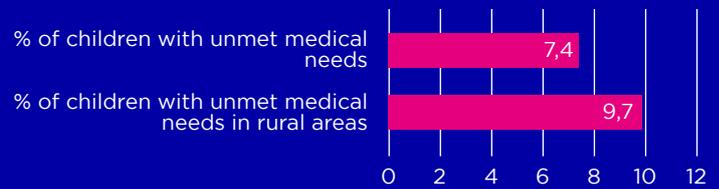
MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

In terms of maternal and child health indicators, there is a lack of sufficient data. In 2018, the percentage of antenatal care coverage was 76% for women aged 15 to 49. Data from 2017 indicate regional disparities in health coverage as the percentage of children with unmet medical needs in rural areas was higher than that of the overall child population.

In 2018, only 16% of children were recorded as being exclusively breastfed (<six months).

In 2019, 18% of Roma women mentioned they never went to a medical check during pregnancy. In disadvantaged communities, only 50% of the mothers go to medical checks during pregnancy.

Unmet medical needs (%)



Source: estimation made by UNICEF reports (2013-2018)

CHILD SAFETY AND SECURITY

In Romania, all children under six years of age are covered by social protection. Though data are not representative, in 2019, 0,5% of children under six were in alternative care. In 2020, 3.585 cases of children from birth to six years were reported for abuse.





4

EARLY LEARNING

The 2020 Country Report in the framework of the European Semester focused specifically on the inclusiveness and quality of education in Romania. It also highlighted systemic problems, including the fact that Romania has the lowest spending in the EU on education (2,8% of GDP versus an EU average of 4,6%), particularly at pre-primary and primary level. The rate of enrolment in education is also significantly below the EU average. The report points out that among children under three, only 15,7% are in formal childcare. Due to a long history of a split ECEC system, this percentage is higher for the next age group – between four and the compulsory school age – where participation is 89,6%; however, it is still lower than the EU average (95,4%). All these rates are significantly lower among children in vulnerable situations, such as children in rural areas and Roma children. In that regard, low participation in ECEC is a worrying

trend, as it increases the gap between children and enhances inequalities.

As far as children under three years of age are concerned, there is no guarantee of a place in ECEC. For professionals working in ECEC services, there is no exclusive requirement to having a minimum of a Bachelor level qualification, irrespective of the age of the children they work with.

Types of policies available to facilitate ECEC access for children from vulnerable families

There is a social vouchers policy for children from disadvantaged families to support access to kindergarten. The vouchers were worth 11 euros per month, but this was due to be doubled in 2021. From 2016-2019, 161.500 out of 296.000 eligible children (three to five years of age) benefitted from this measure.

PARENTING AND FAMILY SUPPORT

In Romania, families with young children have at their disposal three different types of allowances. In 2019, 184.563 families benefited from the social allowances available to families.

Additionally, there are parental education programmes. Some of them are provided by the Ministry of Education and other relevant institutions, while most are delivered by NGOs (such as the Parental Education Programme under which parental educators worked with ECEC settings and parental programmes were implemented, with parents themselves being involved). However, although a National Strategy for Parental Education has been developed in the past years, it has never been officially approved.

Types of policies available regulating work and family life balance

Until recent changes, the legislation regulating working time in Romania was rather rigid. One of the objectives of the national strategy for the promotion of equal opportunities and treatment of women and men and the prevention of domestic violence (2018-2021) is to improve regulations on the balance between work and family life. Law 81/ 2018, which was updated in 2020, regulates teleworking.

Benefits available to parents with young children (child allowance/benefits)

- **A child-rearing allowance** is available for one of the parents (either mother or father) who can stay with the children up to two years (three in the case of disabled children) and receive 75% of their salary.
- **A maternity allowance** is paid to the mother for 126 calendar days while she is on leave. This period is made up of 63 days of leave before the birth (antenatal leave) and 63 days after the child is born (postnatal leave). The maternity allowance is equal to 85% of the average monthly income earned by the mother during the last six months prior to maternity leave.
- **A state allowance** is granted to children aged up to 18 who are legal residents in Romania. The state allowance for children is calculated according to the reference social indicator (RSI) and the child's age. The allowance is higher for children aged up to two years (or three years for disabled children).

CROSS-SECTORAL COORDINATION

In Romania, **there is no explicitly stated national multi-sectoral ECD strategy** (or any other policy document), nor a coordinating body with cross-sectoral oversight of ECD policies, or funding and spending at the national level. In addition, there are no formal mechanisms for coordination between services and across sectors in place.



*The information provided in this Country Profile reflects the situation at the end of May 2021.



Country Profile Contributor

STEP BY STEP CENTER FOR EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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THE PARTNERSHIP

Eurochild is a network of almost 200 member organisations from 35 European countries working with and for children throughout Europe, striving for a society that respects the rights of children. Eurochild influences policies to build internal capacities and facilitates mutual learning and exchange practice and research.

International Step by Step Association (ISSA) is an early childhood regional network founded in 1999, which through its programmes and services connects early childhood practice, research, and policy to improve the quality of early childhood systems in Europe and Central Asia. More than 90 ISSA Members from 43 countries implement programmes and cooperate to ensure quality and equitable early childhood services for young children, especially the most vulnerable.

European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) is Europe's leading NGO alliance advocating for better health. A member-led organisation made up of public health NGOs, patient groups, health professionals, and disease groups, EPHA works to improve health, strengthen the voice of public health and combat health inequalities across Europe.

Roma Education Fund (REF) was created in the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion in 2005. Its mission and the ultimate goal is to close the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma. To achieve this goal, the organisation supports policies and programmes which ensure quality education for Roma, including the desegregation of education systems.

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National Coordinators: Trust for Social Achievement (Bulgaria), Ensemble pour l'Éducation de la Petite Enfance (France), Central Union for Child Welfare (Finland), Family, Child, Youth Association (Hungary), Children's Rights Alliance (Ireland), Fundação Nossa Senhora do Bom Sucesso (Portugal), Step by Step Center for Education and Professional Development (Romania), Pomoc Deci (Serbia), Plataforma de Infancia (Spain).

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