

# Kazakhstan

## Country Overview

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Generated: 2024-12-01 10:46:21



## Country name

Kazakhstan

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## Introduction

The inclusion of children's early social and emotional skills (SES) in the preschool curriculum is a relatively new, albeit essential, focus of preschool education in Kazakhstan. SES is defined and monitored by state institutions. However, no information was found during this literature search on SES programmes, curricula or evaluation of such, even though several are known to be running in the country.

## Development

Kazakhstan maintains an integrated early childhood education and care (ECEC) system. The Ministry of Health Care and Social Development is responsible for children under 1 year of age, and the Ministry of Education and Science - for all children in ECEC between 1 and 6 years of age (Adamson & Litjens, 2016).

Kazakhstan has a centralised system with federal standards and curricula frameworks. Monitoring and financing are divided between national, regional and local authorities (Adamson & Litjens, 2016). In 2020, a new conceptual framework for pre-school education was developed. It includes updated goals, tasks, values and principles ("Концепция модели развития дошкольного воспитания" / "The concept of the developmental model of preschool education"). One of the main features is the replacement of old academic instruction centred practices with a more child-centred approach.

Additionally, SANA, the Centre for Scientific and Applied Psychology, specialises in studying, developing and implementing SES skills training for the Kazakh education system. This organisation has developed a programme called SANA skills, adapted to the Kazakh cultural context. This programme considers the most innovative developments in the SES training and is created in collaboration with international and local experts.

## Assessment

ECEC practices are scrutinised against national standards. The monitoring responsibilities in Kazakhstan are shared between federal and local authorities. The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for monitoring at the national level. However, it works along with the territorial departments of education and the control of education in the country's fourteen regions and two major cities. In addition, service and staff quality are typically scrutinised via external inspections and internal self-evaluations.

Child development is monitored continuously, with the same areas and competencies monitored throughout preschool. The tools used for assessment, based on age and skill evaluation, vary from checklists and scales to screenings and narrative assessments.

Direct assessments test children at a certain point in time. In contrast, narrative evaluations and observational tools survey children's development, including socio-emotional skills and autonomy, both assessed by observations and narrative assessments on an ongoing basis. Funding for monitoring ECEC services comes from national and municipal (local) public funds (Adamson &

Litjens, 2016).

However, detailed information on the assessment process and results from previous years are not available online in English.

## Intervention

There are several model curricula in place that explain what subjects and skills children should be taught and the objectives and expectations of ECEC. In 2009, the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan approved three model curricula (Algashky Kadam, or First Step; Zerek Bala, or Smart Child; and Biz Mektepke Baramyz; or We Go to School). Each ECEC setting is expected to adopt one of these frameworks. These frameworks aim to ensure that children are psychologically prepared for primary school. In addition, they stimulate their intellectual and artistic capabilities, curiosity and imagination and communication skills.

These programmes are presented with additional educational materials available to both educators and parents, such as a teacher's study guide, reading books/samplers, didactic materials and A-B-C copy books (Kazakhstan, 2014).

In addition to these curricula, the order issued by the Ministry also sets minimum regulatory standards regarding group size, sanitation, and health and safety. Hence, while no quality framework has been officially developed, minimum regulatory standards for ECEC settings and the government-approved curriculum frameworks implicitly define quality ECEC (Adamson & Litjens, 2016).

The State standards for preschool education define socialisation as a process of a child's entry into the social environment through the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities, norms, rules necessary for a full life in society. With this, the importance of several areas has been highlighted. Educators are given an overview of the methods and techniques of social interaction that a child needs to master in preschool, along with a set of measures aimed at the physical, intellectual and emotional development of a child from birth to 3 years of age (Государственный общеобязательный стандарт дошкольного воспитания и обучения [с изменениями и дополнениями от 05.05.2020 г.] / State obligatory standard of preschool education and training [with amendments and additions from 05.05.2020]).

Preschool education in Kazakhstan aims to develop children's skills in both social and academic settings. Part of the curriculum is dedicated to developing skills in a group setting, such as group communication, team-working, mutual respect and adherence to social norms, and self-control, with an accent on controlling one's impulses and desires. This curriculum encourages children to express their feelings and emotions, which in turn helps educators instruct them on how to regulate their emotional states in various situations. Preschool is also a place where children learn how to establish supportive relationships. Moreover, educators work along with children to help them learn not only positive peer-to-peer communication but also that with adults (both acquaintances and strangers).

To achieve those goals, educators stimulate a positive psychological environment in the group. As a result, children are nurtured to express themselves both independently and with their peers. They receive no condemnation but are often stimulated with both words and expressions of encouragement. Peers and adults participate in joint activities, and children are presented with stimulating problems and novel situations that help them master new skills and ways of interaction (Программа - Методические рекомендации для педагогов по определению уровня сформированности у детей раннего возраста социальных навыков и навыков самообучения, Нур-Султан, 2019, с. 21 / Programme - Guidelines for teachers on determining the level of formation of social skills and self-learning skills in young children, Nur-Sultan, 2019, p. 21).

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### Citation

This document was generated from the database used to create the Country Overviews Compendium:

Koltcheva, N., V. Coelho, (2022). Social and Emotional Development for Children aged 0 to 7 years old: European Countries Overviews Compendium. EU-SELF Project. ISBN 978-619-233-213-6 (can be downloaded from <https://euself.nbu.bg>)