



UNESCO webinar
Ensuring quality of learning and well-being for young children
in the context of the COVID-19
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Delphine Dorsi, RTE's Executive Director,
delphine.dorsi@right-to-education.org, [@delphinedorsi](https://twitter.com/delphinedorsi)

The Right to Education Initiative (RTE) is a global human rights organisation focusing on the right to education. We look at education through a human rights lens. According to international human right law, the right to education start at birth and is closely linked to young children's right to maximum development.

RTE's strategy for 2020-2022 includes a focus area on early childhood care and education (ECCE) given its critical importance for the development and education of a child and the need to strengthen its recognition and protection both in international and national law.

Access to quality early childhood care and education (ECCE) can be vital in determining future education and life chances. In the early years, children develop their cognitive and learning capacity, as well as their talents and personality. ECCE programmes 'have a positive impact on young children's successful transition to primary school, their educational progress and their long-term social adjustment' (CRC, General Comment 7). Despite the fundamental role of ECCE, there are currently huge inequalities in terms of access and quality, with often those who would benefit the most, accessing ECCE the least. The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted these inequalities as well as the specific needs for ECCE, including the presence of qualified teachers and other educational staff. The closure of kindergartens and schools for the youngest children during the pandemic has shown how vital these spaces are, including for enabling women to participate equally in the workforce.

In the Education 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, the international community encourages the provision of at least one year of free and compulsory quality pre-primary education and says that all children should have access to quality early childhood development, care and education. Despite these developments and the importance of ECCE, aside from the Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment 7, there is little express mention in international law of the obligation of states to provide educational opportunities or adequate facilities for young children before they attend primary school.

RTE aims to play a leading role in supporting global advocacy towards the establishment of an international legal framework that recognizes free quality pre-primary education, providing legal and empirical information, advice and tools, including defining specific indicators and offering guidance for monitoring this issue. In doing so, a particular attention will be given to the content and form of education, including children's right to play and rest, the risks of using digital technologies in early ages and the role of private actors in ECCE.

We have started to implement our strategic plan regarding ECCE, including looking at its legal protection at national level, in collaboration with UNESCO and pro-bono lawyers, and welcome further support and collaboration to make the right to early childhood care and education a reality for all.