



Finnish Early Childhood Education and Care

Curriculum of Early Childhood Education and Care 2019



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The story of Finnish-language Early Childhood Education and Care in Espoo and operating environment of ECEC in Espoo

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is part of Finnish educational system and life-long learning. Our operations are guided by the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care and curriculum for early childhood education and care where ECEC as pedagogical action is empathized.

Families in Espoo are using even more actively our diverse ECEC services. We live in a change where ECEC becomes above all a learning environment for children in which all children participate. Most parents are happy with ECEC and their children feel comfortable and are well. Our personnel are educated and knowledgeable, although the availability of qualified personnel has in recent years become more difficult. Population segregation and family poverty are threats to the well-being of children, but the realization of threats can be partially prevented by quality ECEC.

Towards the new decade

In the future, ECEC will become an increasingly valued part of the education and training system and of the path of lifelong learning. The participation rate will grow so that almost all children aged 3 to 6 and still a larger proportion of children under 3 years of age participating in municipal or private ECEC. Free of charge ECEC will be gradually increased and the aim is to guarantee all children equal opportunities to develop and learn. So that children's learning paths would be smooth, emphasis is placed on cooperation and harmonization of policies with basic education.

About a quarter of children already speak a language other than Finnish as their mother tongue, and in ECEC various cultures meet and diversity continues to increase. This enriches the content of ECEC and practices. International connections are increasing and more and more work communities will be multicultural in the future.

Our operating culture is encouraging, experimental and inclusive. Valuing childhood, children's well-being as well as answering to the changing needs of children's families, are starting points for the development of our operations. We create a culture that values community, where children, guardians and personnel experience inclusion, safety and continuity and where everyone can learn and develop.

The joy of being a child and the joy of learning is reflected in our daily lives. We make use of the most appropriate and up to date pedagogy for your children. We strengthen children's recourses by raising them into social skills, healthy lifestyles and cultural pursuits. Together with the guardians, we guide the children to adopt a sustainable lifestyle. We face the challenges of child's development and learning together with the guardians. We do constant cooperation also with social and health care services.

We are constantly developing our service network and use of space so that we can organize our services according to the need. We use facilities appropriately, efficiently and diversely. Effective counseling service and guidance as well as digital solutions support our operations.

Competence requirements are changing and still growing, and the level of education is rising. The weakening availability of qualified staff requires us to further develop recruitment and in-service training and other ways to increase competence. Well-being of work communities, good management as well as opportunities for experimentation and continuous competence development helps us with the recruitment of personnel. We work closely with educational institutions. We promote the cultural awareness of our personnel, language skills and the ability to work in a diverse environment.

We anticipate the changes happening in the operating environment. We boldly strive to be a pioneer in the evaluation and development of our services, content of ECEC and the working methods. We develop and experiment new ways of working together with local residents and partners.

Vision of Finnish-language early childhood education and care in Espoo

In ECEC, every child is allowed to learn, grow and develop. Children in our communities and their guardians experience inclusion, security and the joy of learning. Children are guided to embrace a sustainable lifestyle.

ECEC work communities are learning and caring. They encourage the personnel to continuously develop their work and professional skills as well as attract new skilled personnel.

The previous ideas work for the premises of the local curriculum for ECEC of Espoo. The ideas registered in the plan will promote the verification of issues mentioned above in the lives of children using ECEC services in Espoo.

In this document the text on white background is Espoo's own specifications. The text **on a colored background** is basic text prepared by the Finnish National Agency for Education.



I National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education

Pursuant to the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care¹, this National core curriculum for early childhood and care is a national regulation issued by the Finnish National Agency for Education (formerly Finnish National Board of Education). The local curricula for early childhood education and care and children's individual early childhood education and care plans are prepared and early childhood education and care is implemented in compliance with the national core curriculum. The formulation of the National core curriculum is directed by the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, in particular, which contains provisions on the right of the child to early childhood education, which is regulated under the Basic Education Act², is part of early childhood education and care. Pre-primary education is guided by the National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education, a regulation issued by the Finnish National Agency for Education.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is part of the Finnish education system and an important stage on the child's path of growing and learning. The primary responsibility for bringing up children rests with the guardians. ECEC supports and complements the home's educational task and bears its share of the responsibility for children's well-being.

The purpose of the national steering of ECEC is to create equal preconditions for the holistic growth, development and learning of the children participating in early childhood education and care.

The starting point for the preparation of this core curriculum reform is the current changes in the environment where children grow up and develop as well as the operating environment for ECEC. The core curriculum has been prepared in cooperation with stakeholders, utilising the findings of latest research and development efforts.

The National core curriculum for ECEC plan consists of three levels. It comprises the national core curriculum for early childhood education, the local curricula for early childhood education as well as children's individual early childhood education care plans.

In Finnish-language ECEC in Espoo, the national core curriculum for early childhood education and care and the Espoo's curriculum for ECEC is fulfilled by a group curriculum for ECEC prepared for each group of children, that

is made by taking into account the children's individual curriculum for ECEC. National core curriculum for ECEC, Espoo's own texts and the group's curriculum for ECEC forms a whole that guides the work of the personnel: planning of pedagogical activity, implementation and evaluation. In this document, the group's curriculum for ECEC is referred as group's learning plan. The child's curriculum for ECEC is referred as child's learning plan.

In Espoo Finnish-language and Swedish-language ECEC have their own, partially similar curriculum for ECEC. This document applies to Espoo Finnish-language ECEC, but to make it easier to read, the text supplements are written in a form where the name of the organisation is not in its entirety mentioned.

1.1 The National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care and related obligations

The purpose of the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care is to support and steer the provision, implementation and development of ECEC and to promote the implementation of high-quality and equal ECEC. Early childhood education and care refers to a systematic and goal-oriented whole consisting of education, instruction and care with particular emphasis on pedagogy.³

The National core curriculum for early childhood education and care specifies the key objectives and contents of ECEC, cooperation between the ECEC provider and children's guardians, cross-sectional cooperation as well as the contents of the child's individual ECEC plan.⁴

1 Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (540/2018)

2 Basic Education Act (628/1998) and Basic Education Decree (852/1998)

3 Section 2 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

4 Section 21 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

The National core curriculum for early childhood education and care is a regulation that is legally binding for ECEC providers. In addition to regulations, the core curriculum document contains descriptions that support understanding it as a whole. At the end of each chapter, a list of issue subject to local decisions is given. These steer the preparation of the local curriculum for ECEC and the implementation of early childhood education and care. The National core curriculum for ECEC also contains references to legislation. The purpose of these references is to clarify the connection between the core curriculum and its legislative foundation.

In this core curriculum document, the **ECEC provider** refers to a municipality, joint municipal authority or private service provider⁵. The concept of the guardian is used to refer to the child's parent or other legal guardian.

1.2 Local curriculum for early childhood education and care

The ECEC providers shall prepare the local curricula for early childhood education based on the National core curriculum for ECEC. The obligation to prepare a curriculum for early childhood education also applies to other ECEC produced by the municipality as well as the private ECEC, including private family daycare supervised by the municipality. Local curricula for ECEC are binding and they must be evaluated and developed. A local curriculum for early childhood education and care may apply to all forms of ECEC service (ECEC centre, family daycare and other ECEC services), or a separate curriculum may be prepared for each service form. The ECEC providers may also agree upon cooperation across the boundaries of providers regarding the formulation, evaluation and development of the curriculum.⁶

The curriculum for ECEC shall be formulated to determine, steer and support the organisation of early childhood education and care at the local level. When preparing the curriculum, the education and care provider shall take into account local special features, potential pedagogical emphases, the children's needs, and outcomes of evaluation and development work relevant to ECEC. Local curricula may add detail to the national curriculum, but they may not exclude any goals or contents stipulated by an act, a degree or the core curriculum for ECEC.

When preparing the curriculum for ECEC, other local plans and curricula are taken into account, including

- plans and decisions relevant to ECEC, children, and families
- the National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education
- the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education

- a possible curriculum for instruction preparing for basic education
- a plan for the well-being of children and young people referred to in the Child Welfare Act⁷
- an integration plan⁸.

The ECEC provider ensures that the personnel of early childhood education and care, guardians, and children are provided with an opportunity to participate in preparing and developing the local curriculum for ECEC⁹.

In order to secure the continuity and integrity of the child's growth and development path, representatives of pre-primary and basic education participate in preparing and developing the curriculum for ECEC. The preparation of local curriculum for ECEC involves cooperation with the different administrative branches in the municipality, especially the local social welfare and health care officials (Chapter 3.3.).

A curriculum for early childhood education and care shall be separately adopted by the ECEC provider for education given in Finnish, Swedish and Sámi languages and in other languages, where needed¹⁰.

An ECEC provider shall evaluate the early childhood education and care it provides and take part in external evaluations of its operations¹¹. The local evaluation of ECEC may utilise the national data warehouse for early childhood education and care Varda¹² as well as the evaluation materials and quality indicators of the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre¹³. For more detailed information of this evaluation, see Chapter 7.

The aim of Espoo's Finnish-language curriculum for ECEC is to support personnel in planning, implementing and evaluating actions in accordance with national regulations and highlight emphasis on ECEC in Espoo. In addition, the purpose of the curriculum is to provide information to guardians and partner agencies about ECEC in Espoo.

In Finnish-speaking ECEC in Espoo, the local curriculum for ECEC is drawn up on a municipality-by-municipality basis. The curriculum is followed in municipal daycare centres, in family daycare, open ECEC as well as other ECEC so that in organisation of activities, the characteristics of each type of activities are taken into account.

⁷ Section 12(1292/2013) of the Child Welfare Act (417/2007)

⁸ Section 15 of the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1386/2010)

⁹ Section 20 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

¹⁰ Section 8 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

¹¹ Section 24 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

¹² Sections 65-73 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

¹³ Act on the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (1295/2013); Criteria and recommendations for evaluating the quality of early childhood education, Publications of the Finnish Education Evaluation centre 24:2018

⁵ Section 1 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

⁶ Section 22 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care



In the Espoo's Finnish-language curriculum for ECEC, the entries from National core curriculum for ECEC and municipality alignments that complement them, are displayed. Espoo's Finnish-language curriculum for ECEC is also published electronically and it is available amongst other things on the espoo.fi website.

Some of the municipal alignments have been drawn up in cooperation with Swedish-language ECEC. Finnish-language curriculum for ECEC is approved by Finnish Education and Early Education Committee and the Swedish Education and Cultural Committee.

Private ECEC activities or private family daycare, supervised by the municipality, can either follow Espoo's curriculum for ECEC or draw up its own curriculum for ECEC. The purchasing service units follow Espoo's curriculum for ECEC.

During the preparation of Espoo's curriculum for ECEC, the personnel have been asked for their views and the texts of the curriculum for ECEC have been open for comments. Guardians and residents of the municipality have also had the opportunity to participate in drawing up the curriculum for ECEC via electronic survey. The thoughts of children in ECEC have been clarified via survey and also children have expressed their views in the form of participatory tasks in child groups. Basic education and social services and health care division as well as Cultural unit and representatives of sport services have had the opportunity to comment on the texts of curriculum for ECEC.

In Espoo, early childhood education and care is being developed pedagogically as a coherent whole. The goal is the well-being of children and a unified learning path that takes into account the different needs of children. Realization of ECEC is monitored as a part of evaluation and developmental work of ECEC and teaching.

The curriculum for ECEC for Espoo's Finnish-language early childhood education and care is supplemented, among other things, with the following plans and programs: Child and adolescent welfare plan, Multiculturalism program, Digital story of teaching and education, International and global education program of local education and cultural committee, Espoo sustainable development education report, as well as the Espoo Finnish-language ECEC sustainable development program and environmental education plan. In addition, the plan will be complemented by future workbooks.

1.3 The child's individual early childhood education and care plan

According to the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, each child in ECEC has a right to systematic and goal-oriented education, instruction, and care. In order to ensure this, an individual ECEC plan is prepared for each child in ECEC centre and family daycare¹⁴. The basis for the child's individual ECEC plan shall be the best interest¹⁵ and needs of the child. The objectives set out in the plan concern pedagogical activities. The goals arising from the children's individual ECEC plans are taken into account in the planning and implementation of activities for the group of children as well as development of learning environments and the operational culture. An individual ECEC plan is prepared for a child after he or she has started attending an ECEC centre or family daycare. The plan is revised based on the child's needs at regular intervals, at least once per year¹⁶.

¹⁴ Section 23 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

¹⁵ Section 4 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, HE 40/2018 vp: Chapter 2 of the Government proposal to the Parliament for acts to amend the Act on Child Day Care and certain associated acts

¹⁶ Section 23 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

A person qualified as a kindergarten teacher is in charge of preparing and evaluating the implementation of the child's individual early childhood education and care plan¹³. When preparing the individual early childhood education and care plan for a child in family daycare, the expertise of a kindergarten teacher shall be utilised¹⁴. If necessary, experts or other relevant actors supporting the child's development and learning participate in preparing the individual early childhood education and care plan for the child.

The child's opinion and wishes must be heard and taken into account in the individual ECEC plan process¹⁸. The personnel is responsible for defining appropriate methods for finding out the child's viewpoints. It is important that the observations and views of both the child's guardian and the personnel concerning the child's development and learning stage and ability to act in a group are taken into account in the child's plan.

When preparing an individual ECEC plan for a child it is important to be aware of the child's knowledge and skills, strengths, interests and personal needs. The child's background in terms of his or her language, culture, and worldview is also taken into account in the preparation process. If available, the child's previous individual ECEC plan, and pedagogical documentation are also utilised in preparing or revising the plan (Chapter 4.2) The objectives set in the child's individual ECEC plan describe how pedagogical activities are used to support the child's development, learning and well-being.

Where relevant, the child's individual ECEC plan must also include information about any support in development and learning needed by the child and its implementation (Chapter 5.4)¹⁹. If the child has a long-term illness that requires medical care, a medical care plan is prepared for him or her in health care services²⁰. To the extent that the information included in the medical care plan is necessary for the provision of the child's ECEC, these are recorded in the child's individual ECEC plan²¹. The implementation of medical care in ECEC is agreed locally.

The implementation of the child's individual ECEC plan as well as the child's need for support and the sufficiency and appropriateness of the support shall be assessed and the plan shall be revised at least once a year. However, the plan shall be revised whenever a reason based on the needs of the child for this exists²². The initiative to revise the plan may come from the persons working with the

child or the child's guardian. When assessing a child's individual ECEC plan, particular focus is placed on how the activities are arranged and how pedagogy is implemented.

The child's individual ECEC plan shall include the following:

- the child's strengths related to development and learning as well as his or her interests
- objectives supporting the child's development, learning and well-being as well as measures supporting these objectives and the evaluation of their achievement
- when necessary, the support needed by the child (Chapter 5)
- a medical care plan if needed
- matters agreed together by the child, personnel and guardians
- other possible experts who participated in drawing up the plan
- the date when the plan was prepared and revised and when it will be revised.

The child's individual ECEC plan is a confidential document²³. According to the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, the persons responsible for the child's ECEC and those involved in assessing the child's support needs, support measures or their implementation have, notwithstanding the obligation to maintain confidentiality, the right to receive from each other, and to disclose to each other and the ECEC provider, information that is necessary for the organisation, provision and implementation of support. The disclosure of information aims at safeguarding the implementation of ECEC in accordance with the child's best interest. The provision on receiving and disclosing information also concerns situations in which the child transitions from one ECEC service to another or to pre-primary education or basic education from ECEC. This concerns both municipal and private ECEC services. The child's client relationship in ECEC is public data. However, confidential information may be related to the provision of early childhood education and care for the child²⁴.

Daycares in Espoo and family daycare units, the child's curriculum for ECEC is drawn up and its implementation is regularly assessed in consultation with guardians. After the initial discussion on ECEC, the first learning plan discussion will take place at a stage when the child has been in early childhood education and care for 2-3 months. The child is involved in drawing up their learning plan according to

¹⁷ Section 23 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

¹⁸ Section 23 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

¹⁹ Section 23 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

²⁰ Section 8 of the Health Care Act (1326/2010)

²¹ Section 41 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

²² Section 23 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

²³ Section 40 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

²⁴ Section 41 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

and e.g. Section 24 of the Act on the Openness of Government Activities (621/1999)



Kuvittaja: Kaisa Rekinen

his or her age and development, assisted by his or her guardians. This is ensured by providing the guardians in good time with the child's learning plan sections, which is made to be filled at home. The child's learning plan is refined and evaluated by the discussions between personnel and guardians at least once per year and whenever necessary. For many children pre-arranged, actual child's learning plan discussions are held several times a year.

Planning and evaluation of child's early childhood education and care and drawing up individual curriculum for ECEC is a process entity that is led by the head of the early childhood education and care unit. In practice, process-like means that child's early childhood education and care planning also involves daily encounters and other communication with guardians.

All those working in the group, early childhood education and care teachers and nursery nurses, responsible for the child's care, upbringing and education, are involved in drawing up the child's learning plan. If needed, special needs ECEC teachers and language or culture teachers participate in planning as well. All of the professional groups mentioned above have their own contribution to the responsibility for ensuring that the

findings and information obtained from the child through pedagogical documentations are taken into account in the child's learning plan and practical activities. This is ensured in the joint discussions led by ECEC teacher.

With medication plan developed by a health care provider, the separate guideline recorded in Early Childhood Safety Handbook is followed and the medication plan is added as an appendix to the child's learning plan.

In daycares the group's learning plan discussions with the guardians are conducted by a group teacher who also records the agreed items on the plan form.

In family daycare units, the child's learning plan is prepared under the guidance of a supervisor or other ECEC teacher selected for the position. In home family daycare units, the discussion takes place and the entries are made by the family daycare nurse and in group family daycare units by the group nurse.

Policies related to the transfer of child-related information are described in the Child learning plan form. Those will be informed to the guardians during the initial discussion. The recorded pedagogical goal of activities written in the child's learning plan are taken into account in the group's learning plan (for more details, see Chapter 4.1).

II

Mission and general goals of early childhood education and care

Early childhood education and care is a societal service with a number of tasks. The mission of ECEC is to promote children's holistic growth, development and learning in collaboration with their guardians. ECEC promotes equality and equity among children and prevents their social exclusion. Knowledge and skills acquired in ECEC strengthen children's participation and active agency in the society. In addition, ECEC supports guardians in educating their children as well as makes it possible for them to work or study.

2.1 Obligations that direct the organisation of early childhood education and care

The municipality is responsible for organising early childhood education and care in compliance with the relevant statutes and this core curriculum for ECEC³⁰. A municipal body or office holder decided by the municipality, the Regional State Administrative Agency, and the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health are responsible for the steering, guidance and monitoring of private service providers³¹.

The municipality must ensure that the child can be provided with early childhood education and care in his or her mother tongue if the language is Finnish, Swedish or Sámi³². Chapter 4.6 issues provisions on other languages.

The obligations guiding the organisation of early childhood education and care are based on the Constitution of Finland, the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care and the Government Decree on Early Childhood Education and Care³³ as well as this National core curriculum for ECEC. The Administrative Procedure Act³⁴ and the Act on the Openness of Government Activities³⁵ also apply to ECEC. Pursuant to the Constitution of Finland, no one shall, without an acceptable reason, be treated differently from other persons on the ground of sex, age, origin, language, religion, conviction, opinion, health, disability or other reason that concerns his or her person³⁶. Obligations arising from other legislation and international agreements to which Finland is party must also be taken into account in the provision of ECEC. These include, among others, the Non-Discrimination Act³⁷, the Act on Equality between Women and Men³⁸, the European Convention on Human Rights³⁹,

organised in compliance with the relevant statutes and this core curriculum for ECEC³⁰. A municipal body or office holder decided by the municipality, the Regional State Administrative Agency, and the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health are responsible for the steering, guidance and monitoring of private service providers³¹.

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²⁷ Section 5(4) of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care

²⁸ Section 1 of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care

²⁹ Sections 1 and 12 of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care

³⁰ Section 5(2) of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care

³¹ Section 52 of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care

³² Section 8§ of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care and p.89 of HE 40/2018 vp

³³ The Government Decree on Early Childhood Education and Care (753/2018)

³⁴ Administrative Procedure Act (434/2003)

³⁵ The Act on the Openness of Government Activities (621/1999)

³⁶ Section 6 of the Constitution of Finland (731/1999)

³⁷ Non-Discrimination Act (1325/2014)

³⁸ The Act on Equality between Women and Men (609/1986)

³⁹ The European Convention on Human Rights 1990

⁴⁰ UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989

⁴¹ UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2007



the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child⁴⁰, UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁴¹, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples⁴² as well as the UN's Sustainable Development Goals⁴³. The development of ECEC is guided by the inclusion principle. All children may participate in ECEC together, regardless of such issues as their needs of support, disability or cultural background.

When a child's development and well-being needs to be supported, and the child is provided with the support measures and services of social welfare and health care, the Social Welfare Act⁴⁴, Act on Disability Services and Assistance⁴⁵, the Act on Special Care for Mentally Handicapped Persons⁴⁶ and Health Care Act⁴⁷ and other relevant provisions laid down on social welfare and health care services shall be applied.

The national goals of ECEC are laid down in the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care. These goals steer the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the National core curriculum as well as the local curriculum for ECEC and a child's individual ECEC plan.

According to the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care⁴⁸, the aim of ECEC is to

1. promote the holistic growth, development, health, and well-being of each child as determined by his or her age and development;
2. support the child's prerequisites for learning, and promote his or her lifelong learning and implementation of equality in education;

3. carry out versatile pedagogical activities based on play, physical activity, arts and cultural heritage and enable positive learning experiences;
4. ascertain that the children's ECEC environment promotes development and learning and is healthy and safe;
5. safeguard an approach that respects children and stable interaction relationships between the children and the ECEC personnel;
6. provide all children with equal opportunities for ECEC, promote equity and gender equality as well as help the children develop their capacity to understand and respect the general cultural heritage and each child's linguistic, cultural, religious, and ideological background;
7. recognise the child's need for individual support and provide him or her with appropriate support in ECEC if the need arises, in cross-sectoral cooperation when necessary;
8. develop the child's teamwork and interaction skills, promote the child's ability to act in a peer group as well as guide him or her towards acting responsibility and sustainability, respecting other people and becoming members of the society;
9. ensure that the children get an opportunity to participate and influence matters concerning them;
10. act together with the child as well as the child's parent or guardian to promote the child's balanced development and holistic well-being as well as to support the parent or other guardian in educating the children

An ECEC provider has the duty to inform the guardians about the goals and operation of different forms of ECEC. The guardian is provided with an opportunity to participate in and influence the planning, implementation and assessment of his or her child's ECEC. In addition, guardians

⁴² UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007

⁴³ Sustainable Development Goals - Agenda 2030. The UN General Assembly 2015.

⁴⁴ Social Welfare Act (1301/2014)

⁴⁵ Act on Disability Services and Assistance (380/1987)

⁴⁶ Act on Special Care for Mentally Handicapped Persons (519/1977)

⁴⁷ Health Care Act (1326/2010)

⁴⁸ Section 3 of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care

are regularly offered an opportunity to participate in the preparation and evaluation of local and unit-specific curricula for ECEC.

Factors that determine children's participation in early childhood education and care include families' choices, children's statutory rights, and decisions of the ECEC provides⁴⁹. These shall be taken into account when preparing local curricula. In early childhood education and care, the learning environment must promote development and learning and be healthy and safe, taking the child's age and development into account. The facilities and equipment shall be appropriate and take accessibility into account⁵⁰. Children in ECEC centres and in family daycare must be provided with a balanced diet. Meals must be appropriately organised and supervised⁵¹. ECEC shall not demand or lead to religious, philosophical or political commitment. ECEC may not be used as a channel of commercial influence. ECEC based on an alternative pedagogy or a particular worldview are specified in Chapter 6.

The requirements for ECEC personnel are provided for in relevant statutes on personnel qualifications and staffing⁵². The municipality must provide special ECEC teacher services according to the needs within ECEC⁵³. Provisions on personnel qualifications are laid down in the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care⁵⁴.

Provisions related to occupational safety and security, provisions the processing of personal data and data protection and acts on the checking of criminal backgrounds of persons working with children are taken into account in ECEC. Children are protected against violence, bullying and other harassment with systematic prevention and immediate intervention(Chapter 3.1)⁵⁵. Promoting safety must be systematic and regularly evaluated.

In providing early childhood education and care, the municipality shall work in close collaboration with actors in charge of education, physical activity and culture, social welfare, child protection, maternity and child health clinics and other health care as well as other relevant actors⁵⁶. ECEC personnel are also bound by the regulations pertaining to referral to social welfare services and making a child welfare notification to child protection services⁵⁷.

2.2 Forms of early childhood education and care services

The forms of early childhood education and care services include ECEC centre activities, family daycare and open ECEC activities⁵⁸. The goals of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care and the National core curriculum for early childhood education and care steer all forms of ECEC services. The Act on Early Childhood Education determines which part of the act apply to open ECEC⁵⁹. The forms of ECEC services differ from one another. There are differences for example in the learning environments, resources, education and qualification requirements for personnel, personnel structures, group sizes as well as in the children to personnel ratio. The characteristics of the different forms of services are taken into account in the preparation of the local curriculum for ECEC, and the objectives are specified for each service form.

It is important that guardians are provided with enough information about the contents and characteristics of each for of ECEC service. The municipality must provide guardians with guidance and advice on the available ECEC services. The form of service and scope of ECEC that best meets the needs and best interest of the child are discussed with guardians if necessary. Guidance and advice are provided not only when the family applies for the services, and as the child is already within the scope of ECEC services⁶⁰.

Early childhood education and care organised in ECEC centres is the most common for of ECEC services. ECEC centre activities are organised in groups. The groups of children may be formed in different ways, for instance, by taking into account the children's ages, sibling's relationships of needs for support. The groups must be pedagogically appropriate, and provisions on staffing and maximum group sizes are taken into account in forming them⁶¹. Multiprofessional personnel of an ECEC centre is a resource for high-quality early childhood education, as it allows the utilisation of everyone's competence and the appropriate implementation of duties, tasks and professional roles. ECEC centres must have a head responsible for the centre's activities⁶².

The Act on Early Childhood Education and Care puts emphasis on the significance of pedagogy and, at the same time, the pedagogic responsibility of ECEC teachers and special ECEC teachers⁶³. The ECEC teachers bear the overall responsibility for planning the activities for the groups of children, the implementation of activities with a goal-oriented and systematic approach as well as the assessment and development of the activities. ECEC teachers, special ECEC teachers, social pedagogue (ECEC), childcarers and other ECEC personnel plan and implement activities together.

⁴⁹ Sections 12 and 19 of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care

⁵⁰ Section 10 of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care

⁵¹ Section 11 of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care

⁵² Sections 25-33 and 75 of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care and the Government Decree on Early Childhood Education and Care (753/2018)

⁵³ Section 25 of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care

⁵⁴ Section 75 of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care

⁵⁵ Section 10 of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care

⁵⁶ Section 7 of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care

⁵⁷ Section 35 of the Social Welfare Act (1301/2014) and Sections 25 and 25 a of the Child Welfare Act (417/2007)

⁵⁸ Section 1 of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care

⁵⁹ Section 1 of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care

⁶⁰ Act on Early Childhood Education and Care 4 a 16

⁶¹ Sections 34-36 of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care

⁶² Section 25 of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care

⁶³ Sections 2, 25 and 35 of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care

Family daycare is realised in a small group. It is provided in private homes or other home-like places of care⁶⁴. Family daycare can be provided by one or two childminders or, under special circumstances, as ECEC jointly provided by three childminders⁶⁵. The number of personnel in a family daycare or the forming of groups of children must take into account children with disabilities or other support needs⁶⁶. Family daycare childminders are in charge of the activities of their groups. The pedagogical management and supervision of the activities of family daycare supports goal-oriented planning and implementation of activities by family daycare childminders.

The implementation and priorities of open ECEC activities depend on the decision made by early childhood education and care provider. Open ECEC activities can be organised, for example as playground of club activities. The activities are supervised and goal-oriented. Open ECEC activities may offer, for instance, outdoor activities, play, and art or physical education. Open ECEC activities may also provide guardians together with their children with opportunities to spend time together in organised activities. It also provides them with social interaction with other parents and children. The open activities must be planned so that the objectives of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care can be taken into account in them. The more regular and frequent the participation of children in the activities is, the more comprehensively and transversally must these objectives be taken into consideration. Based on the nature of the activities, more emphasis may be put on certain objectives than others⁶⁷.

Non-standard hour ECEC must be provided within the required scope for children who need this due to their guardian's work or studies. Non-standard hour ECEC may be provided in the evenings, weekends and nights as ECEC centre activities or family daycare. The participation of children in non-standard hour ECEC is often irregular. This must be taken into account in the planning and implementation of pedagogical activities⁶⁸.

Early childhood education and care in Espoo is organized in daycares, in group family daycare units and in family daycare. In daycares, ECEC is organized as a municipal, as purchasing services and as private services. Family daycare is organised as a municipal and private service in group family daycare centers and at the homes of family daycare nurses. Non-standard hour ECEC is organised in municipality daycare centers.

Open ECEC is organised in open daycares, resident parks and clubs. Open daycares are for children under school age and for adults operating with them. Resident parks activities are for children of all ages, their guardians and other adults operating with them as well as small school

children. Clubs offer an alternative to full-time or part-time ECEC. Espoo's open ECEC employs staff who have received pedagogical training. Open ECEC organised by the municipality is complemented by park activities for young children, organised by private service providers and club activities organised by parishes and organizations.

In the various activities of ECEC the general objectives of ECEC are implemented by utilizing the strengths of each forms of activity. Different activities cooperate with each other in the service areas by acknowledging customers' needs and regional specificities. The various activities of ECEC forms a uniform and versatile whole that meets the needs of children and families.

2.3 Early childhood education and care as part of the child's growth and development path

Early childhood education and care is an important part of the child's growth and learning path. ECEC lays a foundation for lifelong learning. Children take their previous life experience with them in the ECEC, and the interaction and attachment between guardians and children play a significant role in this. The personnel have the duty to create a confidential relationship with the child. Collaboration between guardians and personnel brings continuity and security in the children's lives. Open, respectful and equal encounters are key in agreeing on the goals of the child's ECEC. Regular cooperation is essential for the shared educational task of families and personnel to form a whole that is meaningful for the child.

Understanding the significance of childhood and awareness of children's growth, development and learning lay a foundation for pedagogical activity. Knowing each child and taking his or her individual development into account is equally important. For the personnel to know the children, the interactive relationships between the personnel and children need to be as stable as possible.⁶⁹

Early childhood education and care, pre-primary education that is part of it, and basic education form an entity that proceeds consistently in relation to the child's growth and learning and build a foundation for life-long learning. The starting point for a high-quality entity is that the personnel of ECEC as well as pre-primary and basic education are familiar with the education system and know the goals, characteristics and practices of different phases. In the interest of supporting the well-being and development of children and their learning, transition phases are also planned and evaluated.

⁶⁴ Section 1 of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care

⁶⁵ Section 2 of the Government Decree on Early Childhood Education and Care (753/2018)

⁶⁶ Section 38 of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care

⁶⁷ Section 3(2) of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care and p. 85 of HE 40/2018

⁶⁸ Section 13 of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care

⁶⁹ Section 3(1)(5) of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care



The ECEC provider creates practices for cooperation and transfer of information that ensure as flexible transitions as possible. Such transitions are the children's transition from home to ECEC, during early childhood education and care and from early childhood education and care to pre-primary education and from there to basic education. Collaboration with the guardian at the transition phases is guided by the best interest of the child. When transferring information, documentation collected during the ECEC describing the progress and learning of the children as well as the individual ECEC plan drafted for the child may be utilised. The currently valid provisions are adhered to in the transfer of information⁷⁰.

In Espoo, special attention is paid to the early stages of ECEC. All units follow the 'Welcome to Early Childhood Education' - operating model. An introductory period is arranged for the child at the beginning of ECEC. Educational cooperation with guardians begins as soon as the first contact is made, and an appointment is agreed. The ECEC teacher is responsible for planning a familiarization period with others working in the group. The staff shares responsibilities and acts with commitment so that the child and the family can have the best and safest possible start in a new ECEC unit or group.

The transition of a child and the related transfer of information from one group or ECEC unit to another is planned and carried out in cooperation with the guardians and the staff of the sending and receiving group. The most important form of work are talking to the guardians and a familiarization visit before moving to a new group. The responsibility for transferring information and arranging a study visit to the new group lies with the ECEC teacher from whose group the child moves. The transfer of information follows the instructions recorded in the child's learning plan.

At the ECEC unit, the possibility can be offered to the family that the employee visits the child's home and the child's own period of familiarization in the ECEC place is then carried out after the visit. The purpose of the home study visit is for the child to meet the employee for the first time in a safe environment. In addition, at the meeting, guardians' expectations of early childhood education and care will be heard. Above all, the child is given the opportunity to get to know the employee in peace. The home visit is carried out according to the plan made in the daycare unit, mainly for children under three years of age.

When child enters pre-primary education or school, practices agreed with the pre-primary education, basic education and social services and health care in Espoo are followed as well as separate guidelines supplementing the curriculum for ECEC. In addition, the various actors in ECEC, in cooperation with pre-primary education and basic education actors, create joint functional working methods that promote the pedagogical continuum from ECEC to pre-primary education and school.

2.4 Underlying values

The general principles of the underlying values of the National core curriculum for ECEC shall be the best interests of the child as the primary consideration, the right of the child to well-being, care and protection, consideration of the opinion of the child as well as the requirement of equal and equitable treatment and the protection against discrimination in accordance with the UN Convention on the Right of the Child⁷¹, the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care⁷² and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁷³.

⁷⁰ For Example, sections 40-42 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

⁷¹ UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989

⁷² Section 20 of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care

⁷³ UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2007

The intrinsic value of childhood

The task of early childhood education and care is to protect and promote the right of children to a good and safe childhood. ECEC is based on the concept of the intrinsic value of childhood. Each child is unique and valuable just as he or she is. Each child has the right to be heard, seen, noticed and understood as himself or herself and as a member of his or her community.

Growth as a human being

Early childhood education and care is based on respect for life, human rights and sustainable development as well as the inviolability of human dignity. The personnel support the children's growth as human beings who strive for truth, goodness, beauty, justice and peace. ECEC respects knowledge and ability, which manifest themselves in our attitudes to ourselves, other people, the environment and information, in the ways we act and in our willingness to do what is right. The personnel guide the children to act based on the underlying values and discuss values and ideals. Bullying, violence, racism or other types of discrimination are not acceptable in any form or by anyone.

The rights of the child

Children have the right to express themselves, their opinions, and thoughts. They also have the right to be understood in the different ways they are able to communicate. Every child has the right to good instruction, caring, and encouraging feedback. Children have the right to play, learn by playing and experience joy of learning, and build their views of themselves, their identity, and the world from their personal starting points. Each child has the right to experience togetherness and belong to a group. Children have the right to be provided with versatile information, to process emotions and conflicts, and to experiment with and learn new things⁷⁴.

Equity, equality, and diversity

Early childhood education and care promotes the democratic values of the Finnish society, such as equity, equality, and diversity. Children must have an opportunity to develop their skills and make choices independently of reasons associated with, for instance, gender, origin, cultural background or other reasons related to the person. The personnel are responsible for creating an atmosphere that respects diversity. ECEC is built on a diverse Finnish cultural heritage, which continues to be formed in interaction between the children, their guardians, and the personnel.

Diversity of families

An open and respectful attitude towards diverse families and their varying languages, cultures, worldviews and religions, traditions and views on education creates preconditions for good educational cooperation⁷⁵. Children's family identities and familiar relationships are supported so that each child can perceive their own family as valuable.

Healthy and sustainable way of living

The task of early childhood education and care is to guide towards ways of living that promote health and well-being. Children are provided with opportunities to develop their emotional skills and aesthetic thinking. The principles of a sustainable way of living are followed in ECEC, taking its social, cultural, economic and ecological dimensions into account. ECEC lays a foundation to ecosocial knowledge and ability, allowing people to understand ecological sustainability as the preconditions for social sustainability and the realisation of human rights.

In Espoo, the value base of ECEC is formed after the values described in National Core Curriculum for ECEC and the decision of the City Council of Espoo values of which are; resident and customer orientation, pioneering spirit and fairness. In ECEC particular emphasis are on sustainable development and inclusion values and the pursuit of a sustainable lifestyle and the fact that the virtues chosen together in the communities guide all activities.

In all ECEC units, the group's learning plan is written under the management of ECEC director, how the community verifies the values in their practical operation.

Espoo is resident and customer oriented. In Espoo, it is important that everyday life goes smoothly. The best assets in Espoo are residents, communities and businesses. Resident active participation in the development of services and cooperation with partners guarantee effective services that meet the needs of the residents.

Children, guardians and staff work together to make sure that every child gets the best conditions to grow, develop and learn. Children, guardians and partners actively build ECEC services together. The child's learning path from ECEC through pre-primary education to basic education and to upper secondary education is built child orientally. The ECEC staff takes the initiative to build cooperation with the guardians. Children's development and learning are regularly discussed with the guardians. Children are

74 UN Convention on the Rights of the child 1989

75 Section 3(1)(6) of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care

active operators, and learning and activities are also discussed with them.

Espoo is a responsible pioneer. Pioneering means open-mindedness and creativity, openness, questioning the current and the courage to do things in a new way. Pioneering includes research and utilisation of international experience, experiments and also withstanding the failures associated with them. We are developing Espoo socially, ecologically and economically sustainable.

We are open-minded, creative and open to ways of operating. We utilise research information and experience gained from development projects is used in development of operations. We actively research and develop our own ways of working and learn from others. We want to utilise innovative ways of working, tools and learning environments. Socially, ecologically sustainable development is both the goal of education as well as the guided principle of all activities. Children are guided to make sustainable choices.

Children are seen as active and capable individuals with a desire and ability to interact with others. The staff will look together with the children natural ways of working, learning and developing their own skills to answer them.

Espoo is righteous. We act openly, fairly, equally, humanely and tolerantly.

In ECEC everyone is treated with respect. The community creates a common understanding of the appreciative encounter. Acting in a fair and positive way, adults set a valuable example for children. Children are allowed to grow and learn in a mentally and physically safe environment. All children and their families have equal right and responsibilities. The idea of the best interest of a child guides the action.

2.5 The conception of learning

The national core curriculum for ECEC is based on a conception of learning according to which children grow, develop and learn in interaction with other people and the immediate environment. The conception of learning is also based on a view of the child's active agency. Children are naturally curious and wish to learn new things and revise and repeat what they have learned. Learning is holistic and occurs everywhere. It combines knowledge, skills, actions, emotions, sensory perceptions, bodily experiences, language and thinking. Among other things, learning occurs when children observe and examine their surroundings and as they imitate the actions of others. Children also learn by playing, moving, exploring, working on different assignments and expressing themselves as well as through activities based on arts.

In ECEC, children's previous experiences and their interests and competences are the starting point for learning. It is important that new knowledge and skills learned by children are connected to their developing competences as well as the



world they experience and their cultural backgrounds. Children learn best when they are feeling well and secure. Positive emotional experiences and interactive relationships promote learning. The peer group and the experience of belonging to a group are key to the child's learning and participation. Children are entitled to the support and guidance of the personnel for their learning. Interesting, goal-oriented and suitably challenging activities inspire the children to learn more. Each child is entitled to gain experiences of success and joy in his or her actions and of himself or herself as a learner.

Play is a significant for the learning of children of early childhood education and care age. It motivates the children and brings joy while allowing the children to learn many skills and acquire knowledge. In ECEC, it is necessary to understand the intrinsic value of play for the children as well as the pedagogical significance of play in learning and children's holistic growth and well-being.

In Espoo, the concept of learning of National core curriculum for ECEC is complimented by the perspective of positive pedagogy. Children's sense of ability is strengthened by helping them identify and utilize their own strengths and interests. In practice, this is reflected, for example, in children's shared experiences and experiences of success in daily games and movements. Encouraging guidance and supportive feedback increases children's confidence in their own opportunities and promotes children's interest and desire to learn. Employees ensure that the child receives daily positive experiences of working together and learning. In addition, the staff promotes the well-being of the children's mind, among other things through supported playing together.

It is the joint responsibility of the head of the ECEC unit and all staff to create positive caring atmosphere to the community as well as to the child groups where the interaction is warm and playful as well as the joy of learning is evident. It is the responsibility of the ECEC teacher to create a common way for the group to bring out everyone's strengths and ensure the opportunity for team members to influence to the activities. Similarly, it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that all everyday situations - including transitions, meal times and outdoor activities - are about doing things together, learning, playfulness and moments and places of joy.

2.6 The entity of education, instruction and care with a pedagogical emphasis

The pedagogy of the National core curriculum for ECEC is based on the specified underlying values as well as the conception of child, childhood, and learning. Pedagogy refers to systematic and goal-oriented activities based on multidisciplinary knowledge, particularly in the fields of educational sciences and early childhood education, that are professionally managed and implemented by professional personnel aiming to support children's well-being and learning. It is apparent in the operational culture and ECEC learning environments as well as in the entity of education, instruction and care. The emphasis of pedagogy⁷⁶ in the entity of ECEC requires pedagogical expertise as well as the personnel's shared understanding of how to best promote children's learning and well-being.

Early childhood education and care is realised in interaction between the personnel, children and the environment, in which education, instruction and care form a coherent entity. Although it is possible to examine these three as separate concepts, they are integrated as an entity in practical operations. This enables a holistic approach in promoting the child's growth, development and learning. Education, instruction and care are given different emphases in the activities of children of different ages as well as the different forms of ECEC services.

Education consists of activities that help communicate, shape and update cultural values, customs and norms. In part, the goal of education is to pass on cultural heritage and values and traditions considered important to the following generation. Education guides the children to form opinions and evaluate critically the prevailing ways of thinking and acting as well as to act in an ethically sustainable manner. The task of education is to consciously guide children in forming their personal identity so that the children learn to recognise the impacts of their actions on other people and their surroundings. Children's development is supported, ensuring that they learn to act as well as to use their competence also for the good of other people.

Instruction is based on the conception of learning defined in the National core curriculum for ECEC. The task of instruction is to promote children's learning and to help the children understand themselves, other people and the surrounding world. In ECEC, children are encouraged and motivated to learn new things as well as guided to use different ways of learning. The instruction supports and utilises children's natural curiosity and desire to experiment. The instruction takes into account children's developing skills, interests, strengths and needs for individual support. In addition, the instruction is based on

⁷⁶ Sections 2 and 23 of the Act on Early Childhood education and Care

the objectives set for learning environments (Chapter 3.2), transversal competences (Chapter 2.7) and pedagogical activity (Chapter 4)

Care entails taking care of physical basic needs as well as emotional caring. The goal is that children feel valued and understood, and experience a connection with other people. A reciprocal and respectful interactive relationship as well as positive touch and intimacy lay the foundation for good care and nurture. Daily situations, such as meals, dressing and undressing, rest and taking care of personal hygiene are an essential part of the child's day. In ECEC, the care situations are always both educational and instructive situations where the children learn, among other things, interaction skills, skills related to taking care of oneself and time management as well as adopt good habits.

- multiliteracy and competence in information and communication technology
- participation and involvement.

In Espoo, according to transversal competence, the pedagogical objectives are included in the child's learning plan (Chapter 1) and in the group's learning plan (Chapter 4.1). The ECEC teacher, together with the other staff of the group, is responsible that the group activity and group's physical, mental and the social learning environment promotes the objectives of transversal competence.

The following sections specify what the different areas of transversal competence mean. The task of ECEC in each area is also defined.

2.7 Transversal competences

Early childhood education and care lays the foundation for children's transversal competences. Transversal competence is an entity consisting of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and will. Competence also means an ability to apply knowledge and skills and act in a given situation. Children's use of knowledge and skills is influenced by the values and attitudes they have adopted and their willingness to take action. The need for transversal competence arises from changes in the surrounding world. Competences that cross the boundaries of and link different fields of knowledge and skills are a precondition for personal growth, studying, work and civic activity now and in the future. The development of transversal competence promotes children's growth as individuals and as members of their community. The development of competence begins in early childhood and continues throughout one's life. The objectives of transversal competence from a continuum from National core curriculum for ECEC to the National Core Curricula for Pre-primary Education and Basic Education. The objectives to transversal competence have guided the preparation of this document and shall be taken into account in the local curricula for ECEC.

High-quality pedagogical activities strengthen children's transversal competences. The development of transversal competences is affected by many factors: the approaches used, the way learning environments are used and how children's learning and well-being are supported. The objectives of transversal competence are taken into account when developing operational culture and learning environments as well as in education, instruction and care. The purpose of the learning areas described in Chapter 4.5 is to promote children's transversal competence.

Five interconnected transversal competence areas are described in the Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education:

- thinking and learning
- cultural competence, interaction and self-expression
- taking care of oneself and managing daily life

Thinking and learning

Thinking and learning skills are developed in interaction with other people and the surrounding, and they form the foundation for the development of other competences and life-long learning. Acquiring and structuring information and creating something new require creative and critical thinking, whose foundation is laid in ECEC. The task of ECEC is to support children's thinking and learning skills.

Children develop their thinking and learning through versatile and meaningful experiences. Room must be left for experiencing wonder, insights and joy of learning. Play provides children with an opportunity to use the imagination and creativity, try out their ideas together and explore the world. Children's ability to analyse, name, and describe elements in their surroundings is supported according to their age and development. Children are encouraged to ask questions and to question. Their successes are celebrated together and they are invited to encourage others. Children are also encouraged to persevere, not be disheartened by failures and come up with solutions in different situations. They are guided to direct and maintain their attentiveness. Engaging in sufficient, daily physical activity supports children's thinking and learning. Pedagogical documentation of (Chapter 4.2) and reflection on activities together help children keep track of their learning and recognise their strengths. This strengthens children's confidence in their own abilities.

Cultural competence, interaction and self-expression

The children are growing up in a culturally, linguistically and ideologically diverse world. This puts emphasis on the significance of social and interaction skills as well as cultural competence. Competence includes the ability to listen, identify and understand different perspectives as well as to reflect on one's values and attitudes. Interaction skills and the ability to express oneself and understand others have a major significance to the individual's identity, functional capacity

and well-being. Good interaction with people with diverse cultural backgrounds and worldviews requires familiarity with and respect for one's own cultural background and worldview as well as those of others. ECEC has the task of promoting children's cultural competence as well as their interaction and self-expression skills.

Children are encouraged to get to know other people, languages, and cultures. The personnel provide the children with a model for encountering other people and diversity in languages, cultures and worldviews positively. Children are guided towards friendliness and good manners. Activities based on cooperation create opportunities for practicing interaction and self-expression skills in different situations and with different people. The children are guided in putting themselves in the place of others and seeing things from different perspectives as well as in solving conflicts constructively. The strengthens children's social skills. Children are supported in building cultural identities. Experiences, knowledge and skills of cultural heritage acquired in ECEC strengthen the child's ability to adopt, use and change culture. For example, play, meal breaks and festivities provide opportunities for sharing experiences of different traditions and customs. Children are supported in creating a positive relationship with the diverse environment.

Taking care of oneself and managing daily life

Skills related to taking care of oneself, health and safety are important for everyone. The task of ECEC is to strengthen children's skills related to well-being and safety and to guide them in making choices in line with a sustainable way of life. ECEC supports children's positive attitude towards the future.

Gradual increase in the children's level of independence is supported. Children are helped and they are encouraged to ask for help when necessary. Different skills, such as getting dressed, eating meals and taking care of personal hygiene and possessions are practiced with the children. Children are guided to act responsibly and safely in ECEC learning environments as well as in the local nature and traffic. Issues promoting the children's well-being, such as the significance of rest, nutrition, physical activity and mental well-being, are discussed with the children. Children are helped in expressing and regulating their emotions. Children's emotional skills improve as they practice perceiving, acknowledging and naming emotions. Children are also guided to respect and protect their own and others' bodies.

Multiliteracy and competence in information and communication technology

Multiliteracy and competence in information and communication technology is required in the everyday lives of children and families, interaction between people and participation in the society. Multiliteracy and competence in

information and communication technology promote children's equality and education. The task of ECEC is to promote the development of these skills.

Multiliteracy is founded on a broad conception of text according to which different text may be, among others, written, spoken, audiovisual or digital. Multiliteracy comprises different types of literacy, such as visual literacy, numerical literacy, media literacy and basic literacy. It is closely connected to thinking and learning skills. Children practice naming things and objects and learn different concepts. Children are encouraged to explore, use and produce messages in different environments, including digital ones. In order to develop their multiliteracy, children need an example provided by an adult and rich textual environment, culture produced by children and cultural services appropriate for children.

The role of information and communication technology in daily life is examined and considered with the children, and the instruction includes familiarisation with different ICT services, services and games. Digital documentation is utilised in games, exploration, physical activity as well as in experiencing and producing art. Opportunities for experimenting and personally and collaboratively producing things using information and communication technology promote creative thinking, team work skills and literacy in children. The personnel guide the children in versatile and safe use of information and communication technology.

Participation and involvement

Active and responsible participation and involvement create a foundation for a democratic and sustainable future. The requires skills and a desire in the individual to participate in the activities of the community and trust their own possibilities of making a difference. The right to be heard and involvement in issues affecting one's own life are enshrined in the rights of the child. ECEC shall respect these principles central to the implementation of democracy. The task of ECEC is to support the child's gradually developing skills for participation and involvement and encourage him or her to take initiative.

Encountering children appreciatively, hearing their viewpoints and responding to their initiatives strengthen children's ability to participate and be involved. Children plan, implement and evaluate their actions together with the personnel. In doing so, children learn interaction skills as well as the significance of shared rules, agreements and trust. The personnel shall ensure that each child gets an opportunity for participation and involvement. Children develop their self-image, enhance their confidence and shape social skills needed in a communication through participation and involvement.

III The operational culture of early childhood education and care

An operational culture is a historically and culturally evolving way of doing things, which develops in the interaction of the community. The ECEC providers and those in charge of early childhood education and care are responsible for creating preconditions for developing and evaluating the operational culture in the different ECEC services and units.

The operational culture of ECEC is an entity comprising of, for instance

- values and principles
- interpretation of the norms and goals that direct the work
- learning environments and working methods
- collaboration in all of its forms
- interaction and atmosphere
- competence, professionalism and development approach of personnel
- leadership structures and practices
- the organisation, planning, implementation and evaluation of work

Some of the factors that shape the operational culture are acknowledged, while the personnel is not aware of others, and some factors are occasionally also unintentional. All members of the community influence the operational culture, while the operational culture affects all within its sphere, whether its significance and impacts are recognised or not.

All working methods in early childhood education and care shall support the child's development and learning. There shall also be pedagogical justifications for all methods applied. It is important for the personnel to acknowledge that the ways in which they act and interact with others are communicated as a model to children, who adopt values, attitudes and customs prevalent in their early childhood education community.

The operational culture affects the quality of early childhood education and care. It plays a key role in implementing ECEC and accomplishing its goals. An operational culture supporting the goals of ECEC creates favorable conditions for children's development, learning, participation, security, well-being and sustainable way of living.

Leadership significantly affects the operational culture of ECEC, and its development and quality. The leadership of ECEC is based on promoting the well-being and learning of every child. Preconditions for developing the operational culture include pedagogical leadership, which entails goal-oriented and systematic leadership, assessment and development of the entity of ECEC. It includes all measures used to create preconditions for the personnel's good working conditions, utilisation and development of their vocational competence and education as well as pedagogical activities (Chapter 4.1).

3.1 The development of the operational culture and the principles guiding it

The operational culture of a community is in constant transition and must also be evaluated and developed. Commitment to shared goals promotes the implementation of the underlying values and the conception of learning. Considering the impacts of the operational culture and recognising and rectifying its undesirable features are an important part of its development. The basic precondition for constantly developing the operational culture is that the personnel understand the significance of the values, knowledge and beliefs underlying their actions and are able to assess these. Dialogue that is characterised by respect for others, ensures the participation of all members of the community and inspires trust is the key to the development. Primarily, the planning, provision and development of ECEC must take the child's best interest into account. The child's best interest must be taken into consideration on a case and situation specific basis from the viewpoint of the child, group of children, and children in general⁷⁷.

The heads of ECEC centres and family daycare promote an operational culture that encourages active participation by creating structures for professional discussion. The head also encourages the working community to regularly develop and make innovations on the operational culture of the community

⁷⁷ Section 4 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care and p. 85 of Government proposal HE 40/2018

The head supports the community's development into a learning community where competence is developed and shared. The aim is that the shared operational concept and the goals of the activities are apparent in the practices. The head is in charge of ensuring that shared working practices are made visible and regularly examined and assessed. Children and guardians are involved in developing and evaluating the operational culture.

The following principles are followed in developing the operational culture of ECEC:

A learning community at the heart of the operational culture

Early childhood education and care work as a community where children and personnel learn together and from each other. There is room for different opinions and emotions in the learning community. Children and personnel are encouraged to share their thoughts and experiment with different working approaches confidently. A community constantly evaluating and developing its operations challenges itself as well as recognises and utilises its strengths. The learning community appreciates respectful and thoughtful behaviour. The community encourages experimentation, trying one's best and persevering, and also allows making mistakes. The community is strengthened by working together and through participation.

The personnel are encouraged in self-assessment, sharing of knowledge and competence and, at the same time, professional development. Reflecting on jointly agreed goals and tasks, regularly assessing one's work as well as the feedback obtained from guardians and other partners promote the learning of the community. Learning is also promoted by drawing on information received through development efforts, evaluations and research.

Community encouraging play and interaction

An operational culture that encourages children to play recognises the significance of play for a child's well-being and learning. The personnel recognise factors that set limits to play and develop approaches and learning environments that promote playing. The children and personnel have the opportunity to experience the joy of doing things together and playing together. The community encourages everyone to use their inventiveness, imagination, personal expression and creativity. Playing may be seen and heard. Room, time and peaceful settings are given to children's initiatives for playing, experiments and experiences. Playing children and adults are given an opportunity to concentrate on play.

The operational culture of ECEC includes cooperation among personnel and with guardians and the local area. The members of the community respect each other and appreciate the collaboration. The community encourages children in good interaction and acting as members of a group. The personnel support the emergence of peer relationships among the children and foster friendships. A safe community intervenes in conflicts and the children learn constructive ways of solving them.

Participation, equality and equity

An inclusive operational culture promotes participation, equality⁷⁸ and equity in all activities. The initiatives, views and opinions of children, personnel and guardians are respected. This requires conscious development of structures and practices that promote participation. Children develop their understanding of the community, rights, responsibility and consequences of choices through participation. Participation is strengthened when the children are encountered sensitively and when they experience that they are seen and heard. The involvement of children and guardians in planning, implementing and assessing the activities promotes their participation. Each member of the personnel is an important part of the educational community.

Members of the community are encountered and treated as equals, independently of personal characteristics⁷⁹. Equity does not mean that everyone is treated the same. In order to develop the operational culture, it is important that attitudes towards equity and equality are discussed in the working community. The way in which attitudes related to such aspects as language, ethnicity, worldview, disability, gender and its diversity manifest themselves in people's talk, gestures, actions and operating methods should also be considered. Models of interaction and language use as well as ways to act according to stereotypical presumptions are passed on to the children. Early childhood education and care is gender sensitive. The personnel encourage the children to make choices without gender-related role models or any other stereotypical roles or presumptions related to other personal characteristics. The personnel recognise features that lead into inequality in encounters between the children and intervene in them with tact and consistency. Positive and encouraging interaction supports the development of the children's identity and self-esteem.

Cultural diversity and language awareness

Early childhood education and care is part of a culturally transforming and diverse society. Cultural diversity is perceived as a resource. The community recognises the right to one's own language, culture, religion and worldview as a fundamental right. ECEC appreciates and draws upon the Finnish cultural heritage and national languages as well as cultural, linguistic and philosophical diversity in the community itself and in its environment. To facilitate this, personnel members must have knowledge of different cultures and worldviews and an ability to see things from different perspectives and put themselves in the place of others. The children and personnel constructively discuss different ways of thinking and acting, and also create new ways of acting together. This also enables them to promote culturally sustainable development.

Early childhood education and care with language awareness acknowledges that languages are present constantly and everywhere. The personnel understand the key importance of language for children's development and learning, interaction and cooperation and for the building of identities and belonging to the society. Making

⁷⁸ Section 3(1)(6) on the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

⁷⁹ Sections 7 and 8 of the Non-Discrimination Act (1325/2014)



multilingualism visible supports children's development in a culturally diverse world. The personnel must acknowledge that they act as a linguistic model for the children and pay attention to their personal language use. The personnel encourage children in diverse language use. Children's individual prerequisites are taken into account, and they are provided with time and opportunities to practice in varying situations.

Well-being, safety and a sustainable way of living

Healthy, safe and physically active ways of living are valued in early childhood education and care. The children and personnel of ECEC are physically active indoors and outdoors. Children are guided to avoid sitting for long periods. Children's well-being is promoted by providing them with an opportunity for calming down and resting during the day as well as versatile, healthy and sufficient nutrition. When developing the operational culture, attention is paid to the right to an environment that is free of urgency and that promotes concentration. Clear and systematic, but also flexible, daily structure promotes well-being.

The physical, mental and social security of the entire community must be ensured in ECEC. Children must be protected against violence, bullying and other harassment⁸⁰. Children are entitled to being consoled whenever needed. Bullying, violence or harassment is not tolerated. Bullying recognised, intervened in, and consciously and systematically prevented as part of developing the operational culture. Supporting the peer relationships between children and well-

being in the community is essential to the prevention of bullying. The personnel play a key role in supporting children in practising and developing their social and emotional skills. Children practise recognising and resolving conflicts in a constructive manner. Any incident or harassment, bullying or violence is discussed with the children's guardians and solutions are sought together. The promotion of safety also entails systematic prevention and monitoring of accidents, safety education and looking after the facilities and equipment. ECEC requires functional and committed safety management as well as personnel competent in aspects of safety.

All activities taken into account the necessity of an ecologically, culturally and economically sustainable way of living. Everyday choices and actions reflect a responsible relationship with nature and the environment. ECEC promotes the shared use of equipment and facilities, moderation and economy in using them as well as repairing and reusing them.

In ECEC of Espoo, the key principles; sustainable development, sense of community and inclusion, form an important basis for developing school culture. Positive school culture and virtues chosen by the community virtues create the conditions for positive pedagogy, solution-orientation and playfulness as well as promoting the empowerment of the child. In addition to the above, the goals of developing school culture are the diversity of customer families as well as consideration of the diversity of personnel as a resource.

Sustainability thinking is related to everything in ECEC activities. Systematic thinking helps to find different connections between different things and impact of own actions on one's own community and more broadly is detected.

⁸⁰ Section 10 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care



Learning procedures and practicing that take others into account are supported and community spirit is emphasized. Sense of community is promoted by directing children to pay attention to one's own and others' feelings, to experience compassion as well take care of their friends. Working together and interacting with others creates an experience of relevance.

In accordance with the principles of sustainable development, the reasonableness of one's own wishes is considered in ECEC and assessing how many different items are sufficient, whether new ones are always needed or whether old ones can be renovated together. Children are guided to value the existing and taking care of it. In the use of equipment sharing is utilized within ECEC unit as well as regionally.

The school culture of Espoo's ECEC is being built on the principles of good management and virtue work defined in Espoo as well as interaction they have with staff, children, parents and carer. The head of the ECEC unit uses jointly agreed tools relevant to management to develop school culture. These include the annual plan for pedagogical management, discussions of group's learning plan and team agreements, development discussions and continuous improvement approach and regular observation and feedback of group activities.

The development of school culture is assessed through multi-level curriculum for ECEC work. In Espoo, in addition to this document and learning plans of children, group's learning plan (Chapter 1.4) and the practices of pedagogical documentation (Chapter 4.2) are included. In addition, the development of school culture and evaluation is included in ECEC development and evaluation work described in Chapter 7.

In addition to the perspectives mentioned above, it is the educator's responsibility to identify children's interaction initiatives and support children's interaction by appropriate means (including observation of non-verbal communication, image communication, support signs). An educator by their own example shows children that by interacting has relevance and impact on matters concerning the individual.

The opportunity to take initiatives and influence your own operating environment promotes children's learning and strengthens children's capability experiences. The experience of influencing encourages active participation and strengthens confidence in one's own opportunities for influence. Children willingness to influence on their own life is supported in a positive way through feedback, encouragement, and by making visible the things that children have influenced. In situations where children cannot influence, the educator justifies the restrictions in a way that is understandable for children.

The staff takes into account each child in accordance with their needs daily. Space and time are set aside for listening to children systematically and regularly.

The educator actively helps all children to express their thoughts and opinions. The children's thoughts and ideas are combined with educator's pedagogical skills forming common processes - everyday activities and projects. Staffs job is to document joint influence and help children assess the realization of their own inclusion and ensure that every child receives positive experiences of participation and influence.

Finnish-language ECEC in Espoo enables children's participation in planning of pedagogical activities, implementation and evaluation helping children to document their own thoughts and ideas for example, by storytelling, filming, and videotaping. To support joint planning and evaluation for example, children's meetings, joint inches and votes are used. In each ECEC unit, children must have the opportunity to participate in agreeing the rules of the group of children according to their age and conditions. These different ways of participating and influencing are recorded in group's learning plan and as part of group activity structures.

Prevention of bullying

In Espoo, bullying, violence and harassment are prevented by affecting the activities of the staff and the group of children. A school culture that is approving and in principle appreciative and respectful of each child and adult and development of it, is one of the most relevant in ECEC unit basic elements to prevent bullying. The head of the ECEC unit is responsible for ensuring that: bullying as a phenomenon is talked about and it is learned to be recognized as a matter that concerns every employee attitudes, attitudes towards each child, group of children and the work community, and the understanding that adults themselves influence the existence of the phenomenon.

Bullying is prevented by conscious, pedagogical choices that emphasize the entire school culture matters relevant to the subject: the adult that is present, community, good friendship, helping one another and compassion. Adults help children both to express their feelings and thoughts and to find workable solutions to situations of conflict. Children should be able to tell about their experiences and have the right to be heard and to be able to trusts that adults will take responsibility even in difficult situations. Children are taught that bullying is wrong, but instead telling an adult about bullying or defending a person being bullied is right and bold. However, if bullying happens, always focus on positive practices and teaching friendship skills over and over again.

All children are guided according to the child's age and development to respect both their own and another's body. The body is talked about in a positive tone and the child learns that all parts of the body are equally valuable and that is important to care for and appreciate your own body.

Children's questions are answered taking into account the age and perspective of the child. In addition, good and safe ways to touch are discussed with the children and child is taught to defend themselves positively, if necessary, if something feels tedious or scary and seek help if needed from an adult. Children are taught body skills as well as safety skills that help protect the child from bullying, harassment and violence. To help with this work material available on the Family Federation of Finland's website, among other things, can be used.

All ECEC units shall record in the unit-specific safety plan, how bullying, violence and harassment are identified (what they are or are not), how to prevent them and how to deal with abuses. Recorded in the security plan, also how situations are communicated to guardians and how matters are resolved together with the guardians. The relevant operating instructions are part of the unit's safety plan, which the groups specify in their own group's learning plans.

In every group of children, bullying, violence and harassment is addressed immediately. Documentation is done according to separate instructions and agreed pedagogical implementation of the measures is monitored through the group's learning plan.

3.2 Learning environments of early childhood education and care

The goal of early childhood education and care is to ascertain that the children's learning environment is development-oriented, promotes learning and is healthy, safe and accessible⁸¹. Learning environments refer to the facilities, locations, communities, practices and equipment which support children's growth, learning and interaction. In ECEC, the concept of the learning environments shall be developed so that the objectives set for ECEC can be achieved and support the development of the children's healthy self-esteem as well as social and learning skills. When building and developing the learning environments, attention is paid to ergonomics, ecological qualities, comfort and accessibility as well as the lighting, indoor air quality and tidiness of the premises.

Learning environments are planned and constructed together with the children. They shall support children's natural curiosity and desire to learn as well as guide the to play, be physically active, explore, express themselves through art as well as experience art. Children must have an opportunity to explore the world with all of their senses and their entire bodies. Learning environments provide the children with alternatives for

81 Section 10 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

doing things that they enjoy, physically activity in versatile and fast ways, games and play as well as rest and spending time in a peaceful setting. Children's ideas, play and outcomes of their efforts are visible in learning environments.

Diverse pedagogical activities can be carried out in the learning environments, which can be adjusted when needed. The personnel must take into account the children's interests, individual skills and needs as well as the implementation principles of ECEC (Chapter 4). In the ECEC learning environments, children act flexibly in groups of different sizes which allow each member of the community an opportunity to participate in the activities and interaction. Acting in pedagogically appropriate groups promotes concentration as well as child-focused activities.

Jointly agreed rules and operating methods help create a learning environment with a safe atmosphere that encourages showing respect for others and sharing responsibility. A safe atmosphere allows showing different kinds of emotions. It also helps the personnel to support children in expressing and regulating their emotions. Children are encouraged to ask questions, and they receive answers to their questions.

Learning environments are designed and developed to strengthen equity and gender equality. This enables breaking away from traditional gender stereotypes. The learning environments promote children's linguistic development and language awareness and make cultural diversity visible.

The natural environment as well as yards, playgrounds and other built environments also provide learning environments in ECEC. They provide experiences, materials and versatile opportunities for play and exploration. They are utilised in gathering experiences of physical activity and nature and also as places of learning.

An adequate amount of versatile and safe toys and equipment must be available for the children. These must take into account children's needs for individual support when needed. Information and communication technology is part of a versatile and participatory learning environment. Information and communication technology is used as a part of ECEC in the most suitable way. Children's own ICT devices, toys and other equipment are used in the manner defined by the ECEC provider, and the use is agreed with the guardians.

Cooperation with others stakeholders as well as visits, for example to libraries, museums, cultural heritage sites, the theatre and guardians' workplaces enrich the children's learning environments. The planning of learning environments also offers a natural opportunity for collaboration between personnel and guardians.

In Espoo, in addition to the ECEC unit and its immediate surroundings, the entire metropolitan area with its trip destinations as well as cultural and sport services is utilized as a learning environment for children. The rich and diverse nature characteristic of Espoo is used as a learning and operating environment as often as possible, for example through environmental pedagogy. For children is organized daily diverse opportunities for outdoor activities and outdoor learning. In Espoo, the use of forests and other outdoor spaces as a learning environment is an important part of developing the school culture of ECEC.

Physical learning environments in ECEC units are constantly evaluated and modified as part of the pedagogical activities in such a way that they remain dynamic and attractive. To enrich the imagination of children, high-quality play equipment, that are not over-finished, are acquired and recycled and natural materials are utilized in the activities. Sports and play equipment as well as costumes are available for children and, if possible, children participate their acquisition.

The use of facilities is planned and learning environments are modified together with children and the agenda is viewed from different, fresh perspectives so that that even small spaces can be moved and for example there is time and space for role play. Changes in learning environments or policies agreed with children are recorded in group's learning plan. Realization of changes are monitored and evaluated.

Information and communication technology tools are used as a natural part of pedagogical activities, for example as a tool for research and recording in projects. Information and communication technology devices are used to extend learning environments beyond walls, forests, land, and spaces. When choosing the equipment, special attention is paid to their life cycle, compatibility, versatility and operational safety.

ECEC staff is responsible for monitoring the physical, mental and social learning environment of the child group and the children's well-being and activities are followed on daily basis. Learning environment's physical, mental and the social dimension must enable every child's inclusion and functionality. Child group's high quality and changing learning environment should respond to the child's age and development, giving them challenges as well as offering opportunities for interesting activities, self-motivated thinking, research, experimentation and problem solving. With the support and guidance of a sensitive adult the learning environment attracts the child to learn and helps them to enter their zone of proximal development in such a way that they can work on challenging tasks that suit them. Child learns best when they can practice the things they find meaningful, things they are currently learning but not know yet properly.

The task of the staff is to ensure that there is an opportunity and space to build different plays in the learning environment.

Equipment and materials for children are selected taking into account the principles of sustainable development, they are available to children and children are instructed and encouraged to take care of them appropriately. The learning environment should inspire children and give them a chance to both have experiences together as well as make effort, and the joy of learning. Experiences of aptitude increase a child's self-belief and strengthen their mental health.

In Espoo, the functionality of learning environments is evaluated and regularly developed, for example through team meetings. Discussions consider observations of children, pedagogical documentation and the needs coming from child's learning plan, the strengths of children and their interests. In assessing of learning environments, help of group's learning plan is used but also aids that are agreed together can be used, such as context analysis, which looks at learning environments from a physical, mental, and social dimension.

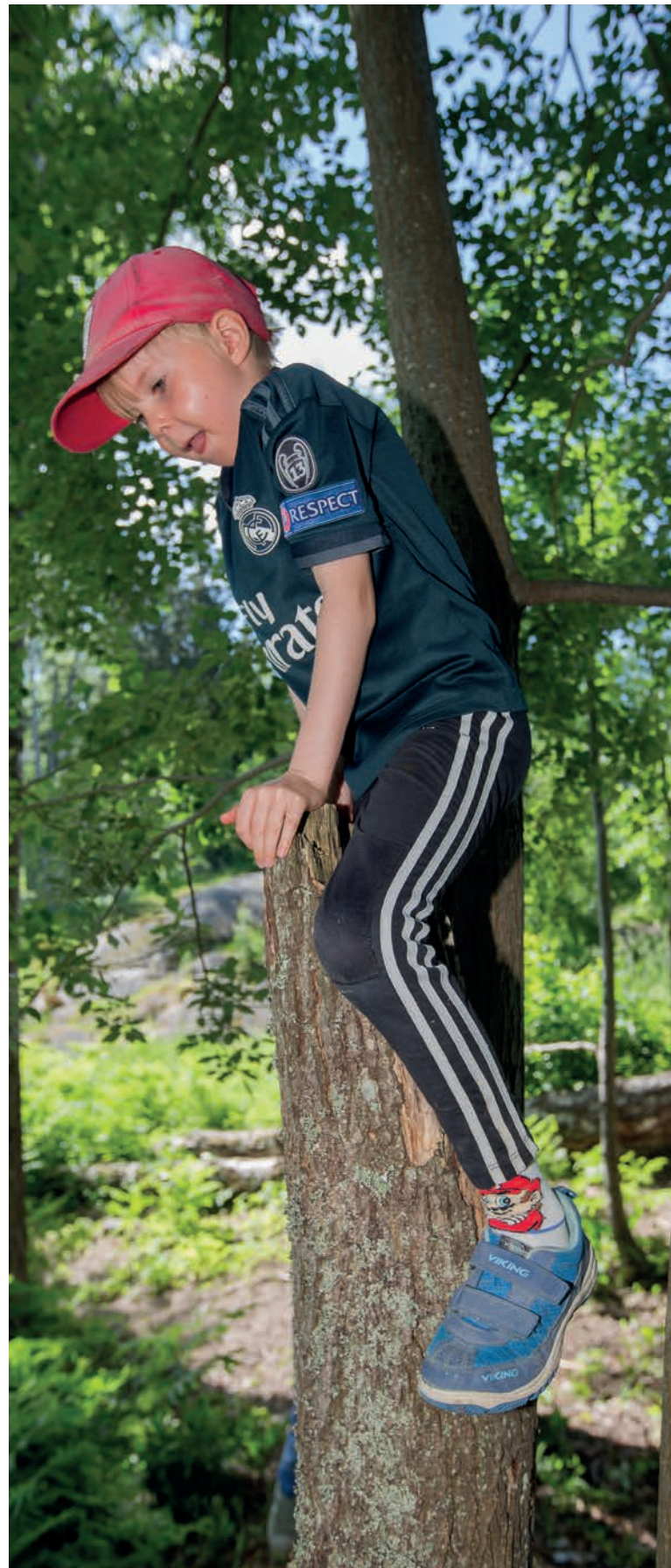
3.3 Cooperation in early childhood education and care

The co-operation supports the organization of the child's ECEC so that each child receives their own development and education, teaching and care according to their needs. The responsibility for the implementation and planning of the cooperation lies with the organizers of ECEC. They answer also that cooperation is carried out in a multidisciplinary manner if needed.

Cooperation with guardians

The significance of cooperation with the guardians is highlighted in ECEC82. The cooperation aims to promote joint commitment of guardians and personnel to children's healthy and safe growth, development and learning. This educational cooperation is supported by the building of trust and equal interaction and mutual respect of participants.

The values, goals and responsibilities related to educational work are discussed both among personnel and with guardians. The cooperation is interactive and required the personnel of ECEC to act with initiative and actively. The cooperation takes into account the diversity of families children's individual needs and questions related to guardianship and parenthood. An interpreter may be used in the discussions to ensure mutual understanding⁸³.



⁸² Section 3(1)(10) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

⁸³ Sections 18 of the Language Act (423/2003) and section 203 of the Aliens Act (301/2014)

Cooperation may have different roles and take various forms during the child's early childhood education and care. Children's daily events and experiences are shared with the guardians. Encouraging feedback that describes the child's learning and development is important. Discussions between the guardian and personnel on the child's day lay a foundation for safeguarding the child's holistic well-being.

The cooperation plays a particularly important role in transition phases, such as when children begin in early childhood education and care and the transitions during ECEC as the children change ECEC centres or begin pre-primary education. Joint discussions have a special task when an individual ECEC plan is drafted for the child (Chapter 1.3). The significance of cooperation with the guardian is highlighted in the planning and implementation of the support for children's development and learning (Chapter 5). An atmosphere of confidence also enables cooperation between guardians and personnel in challenging situations, such as when there are worries regarding the child's well-being.

Children's guardians must be provided with an opportunity to participate in planning and developing the early childhood education activities and goals of educational work together with the personnel and children. Information and communication technology is utilised in the cooperation with the guardians. The cooperation may also support interactions between guardians. Networking and the guardians' joint activities at various events enhance community spirit and support the work of the personnel.

In Espoo's ECEC, building trust is seen as important in all encounters with guardians. The staff meets the family positively, warmly, and appreciatively. Equal interaction arises in everyday situations through listening, dialogue and courageous but sensitive questioning and discussion.

The aim of cooperation with guardians in Espoo is a confidential relationship. The staff has the interaction and communication responsibility of the individual child and in matters relating to the ECEC of a group of children. The staff is responsible for ensuring that the guardians are aware of Espoo's curriculum for ECEC. The head of the ECEC unit is responsible for communicating matters concerning the entire ECEC unit. Under their lead the ways of communicating with the unit's guardians is defined. The basic premise of communication is transparency. Job of the personnel is to make sure communication reaches every family. ECEC units use an activity calendar from which guardians can see their child's groups plan and implemented pedagogical activities.

Experiencing inclusion is individual and inclusion can authenticate in different ways. In each ECEC unit, functional meeting structures and practices promoting the involvement of guardians are created in cooperation with them. The role of ECEC staff is to ensure that all families have the opportunity to participate in the way they want, and which is possible for the ECEC unit activities.

Guardians are provided opportunities to influence the planning, implementation and evaluation of activities, for example in ECEC plan discussions and various unit events. In the absence of a common language, help of an interpreter may be used and also, for example, non-verbal communication, images and digital tools.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

The goal of cross-sectoral cooperation is to ensure that early childhood education and care is implemented in the units to meet the needs of the children. According to the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, the municipality shall organise ECEC in cross-sectoral cooperation and create the necessary structures for cooperation⁸⁴.

The partners of ECEC refer to all the regional and local actors with which early childhood education and care collaborates naturally. For instance, cooperation with actors providing education, physical activity, library and cultural services and other stakeholders in the local area add to the diversity of learning environments and support the goals of ECEC. It is important to have cooperation between municipal ECEC and the providers of private ECEC services operating in the area. Other partners of ECEC include associations, parishes, the police as well as catering and cleaning services.

Early childhood education and care is also implemented in cooperation with professionals in maternity and child health clinics, child protection services as well as other actors in health care and social services. The significance of cooperation is highlighted when any of these actors raise a concern related to the child's development or well-being or when support is planned and organised for the child. Extensive health examinations may include, with the written consent of the child's guardian, an assessment produced by ECEC and pre-primary teaching personnel on the coping and well-being of a child of under school age. This assessment by the ECEC personnel is an important part of the assessment of the child's holistic growth, development and health as well as early recognition of the child's needs for support in cross-sectoral cooperation⁸⁵.

The main goals of multidisciplinary cooperation in ECEC in Espoo are a well-being of a child and appropriate services for families. In local education and culture, co-operation is carried out in agreed meeting structures and, for example, in joint projects together with Finnish-language teaching, Swedish-language teaching and ECEC cultural services, sports services and youth work.

⁸⁴ Sections 7 and 22 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

⁸⁵ Sections 7, 9 and 13 of the Government Decree on maternity and child health clinic services, school and student health services and preventive oral health services for children and young people and section 7 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

In addition to the above, cooperation between immigrant services, educational institutions, research institutes, with sustainable development actors, nature schools, parishes, organizations and neighborhood actors diversify ECEC activities and children learning environments. ECEC has comprehensive cooperative structures for maternity clinic, pediatric therapy services and with specialist care. Multidisciplinary co-operation is developed and evaluated in co-operation structures.

Multidisciplinary cooperation is always done under the influence of confidentiality and data transfer regulations. Permit issues related to data transfer and cooperation are agreed with the guardians separately. Staff of a group of children together with a special ECEC teacher (SET) guides the family, if necessary, to appropriate services and SET may, if necessary, write the consent in accordance with the commonly agreed consent criteria.

ECEC, children's rehabilitation services and a maternity clinic work together according to the so-called Triangle model. The aim of the triangle model is to clarify cooperation processes and ensure that support for the child is initiated as soon as the need for child support has been identified. The City of Espoo's Maple Portal has compiled common treatment path models and material for implementing support. Rehabilitation services and family counseling support ECEC staff also through guidance and consultation visits.

Cooperation with the maternity clinic is carried out in connection with the child's annual inspections. Daycares use a common Hyve model.

If concerns of the child's development, growth and learning arises, the agreed pages of the child's learning plan (3-4) will be sent to the maternity clinic with the permission of the guardians immediately after the learning plan discussion. In accordance with the Hyve model, in the four-year checkup, maternity clinic utilizes the ECEC discussion with parents and the information obtained from the discussions. In addition, in the visit child development will be reviewed more broadly.

Common approaches to ECEC have been agreed about how the family is guided by family and social work or child protection services. When the family has contact with child protection services, upon with family and child protection service workers is agreed on participation in children's meetings and the ways in which information is passed on between different actors. When child protection requests information about the child ECEC should respond to the request for statement. A child support planning meeting is always held, when ECEC is a support measure for open care of child protection. The procedures are described in more detail in the Children's support manual.

ECEC and disability services have commonly agreed policies and cooperation practices. An employee of a disability service participates in a child support planning group if the child has a clientele in disability services or the customer relationship is being prepared. If necessary, the disabled service employee participates in a visit to the child's home with a coordinating special ECEC teacher. In the child support planning team is assessed whether the child belongs to special early childhood education and care.



IV

Planning and implementing pedagogical activity in early childhood education and care

4.1 The framework for pedagogical activity

A holistic approach describes the pedagogy activities to early childhood and care and their implementation. The aim is to promote children's learning and well-being as well as their transversal competence (Figure 1). Pedagogical activity is carried out in interaction and shared activities

between children and personnel. Children's free activities as well as those that the children and personnel come up with together or that are planned and led by the personnel supplement each other. Pedagogy is emphasised in all activity.



The framework for pedagogical activity in early childhood education and care

The underlying values (Chapter 2.4), the conception of learning (Chapter 2.5) and the operational culture (Chapter 3) based on these as well as versatile learning environments (Chapter 3.2), cooperation (Chapter 3.3) and working methods (Chapter 4.3) lay the foundation for goal-oriented activities. The planning of the activities begins with the children's interests and needs as well as meaningful aspects in the environment where children grow up. The learning areas described in Chapter 4.5 are also used as a basis for the planning. The precondition for high-quality pedagogical activities is systematic documentation, evaluation and development (Chapters 4.2 and 7). The objectives of transversal competences also guide the planning of the activities (Chapter 2.7).

The local curricula for early childhood education and care shall specify the objectives and principles for the pedagogical activities. When specifying the objectives, the different forms of ECEC services, their personnel structures and other characteristics should be taken into account. The local curriculum for ECEC as well as the children's individual ECEC plans (Chapter 1.3) shall be used as a basis for planning the activities for the group of children. The activities shall be implemented so that each child has the right to progress in learning, ensuring that ECEC and pre-primary education form a continuum that is meaningful for the child.

Group's learning plan

In Espoo, the group's learning plan is the most important part of the staff's pedagogical planning and a tool for implementation as well as a tool for monitoring and evaluation. In each group of children, a group-specific guide is drawn up to guide the daily upbringing and teaching work which is called group's learning plan. The group's learning plan process is led by the head of the ECEC unit, who responsible for ensuring that the unit's common the view of pedagogical activities is taken into account in the planning of group activities and thus also in every group's learning plan.

At group level, responsibility for planning children's activities, guiding pedagogy and developing group's learning plan has an ECEC teacher in day care centers and a nursery nurse in a group family day care center, but group's learning plan is a common tool for everyone working in a group. It ensures that all professional groups, nursery nurses and also special needs ECEC teachers and joint planning and evaluation of cultural and language teachers. With the help of group's learning plan pedagogical, meaningful activities for children are organized in each group. In addition to the above, learning plan is used by ECEC teachers and the unit head for joint pedagogy as a tool for discussion to ensure the quality of ECEC.

Group's learning plan is prepared process-based so that it takes into account the principles of the curriculum for ECEC and the Espoo's curriculum for ECEC as well as the set objectives for children's individual learning plans. Additions and refinements are made weekly based on children's needs, initiatives and points of interest.

Additions are made with child participatory practices such as discussions, sightings, joint thinking breaks, children's meetings, votes and jointly agreed group rules, and children's own outputs and documentation.

When preparing a group's learning plan, emphasis is also placed on the group selected objectives and contents related to the learning areas as well as play-supporting practices. With regard to practices that support play, the role of the adult in the play is discussed. It is important to agree on how and when adults are actively involved in the play, how they support the play plot and enrich play subtly or act as an observer.

4.2 Pedagogical documentation

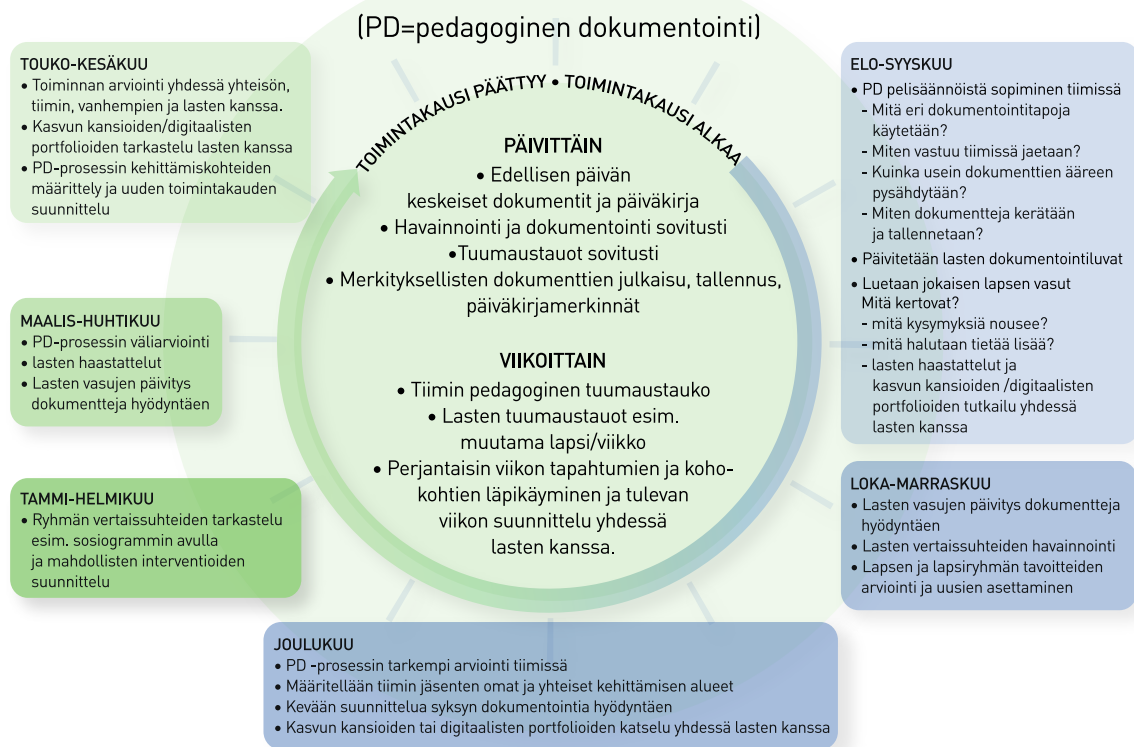
Pedagogical documentation is an essential working approach in planning, implementing, evaluating and developing early childhood education and care. This documentation is a continuous process where observations, documents and their interpretation in interaction create an understanding of pedagogical activity. Pedagogical documentation enables the participation of children and guardians in evaluating, planning and developing the activities.

Pedagogical documentation produces concrete and versatile knowledge about the children's lives, development, interests, thinking, learning, and needs as well as the activities of the group of children. Individual documents, such as photographs, drawings or the personnel's observations make it possible to examine the children's development and learning together with the children. The knowledge and skills already acquired by the children as well as their interests and needs are made visible through pedagogical documentation and used as a basis for planning the activities.

The aim of systematic documentation is that the personnel get to know individual children, understand the relationships between the children as well as the nature of the interaction between the personnel and children in the group. The purpose of pedagogical documentation is to implement ECEC in a child-focused manner. The knowledge and understanding acquired through documentation is utilised for such purposes as continuously shaping the working methods and learning environments as well as the goals, methods and contents of activities to better meet the children's interest and needs. The individual ECEC plan of a child is part of the pedagogical documentation process (Chapter 1.3). Systematic pedagogical documentation is also required in assessing the children's needs for support for growth and learning (Chapter 5).

Documents collected over a longer period of time are an important part of the evaluation of pedagogical activities and self-assessment of the personnel's actions (Chapter 7.1).

ESIMERKKI PEDAGOGISEN DOKUMENTOINNIN VUOSIKELLOSTA



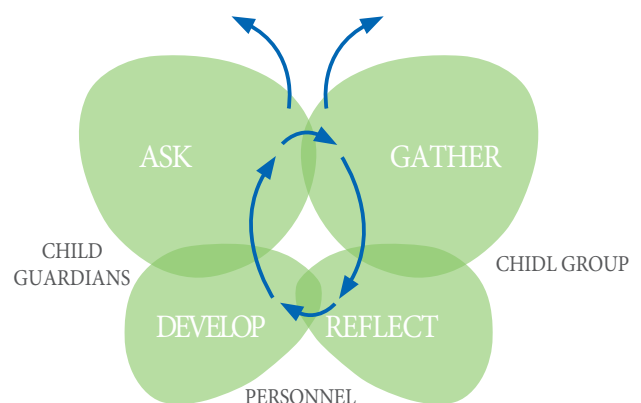
In Espoo, pedagogical documentation is utilized in making the strengths and successes of the individual child and the group of children visible, and planning and implementing child centered ECEC.

Various documents (such as children's drawings, thoughts, ideas, photographs, videos, fairy tales or observations recorded by staff) are subject to the common review. Documents are produced by staff, children and guardians appropriately in relation to the phenomenon under consideration. Documents are viewed together with the child, group of children, staff and discussing with guardians and building mutual understanding. Past and future pedagogical operations are discussed in everyday meetings of a child group with the help of documents. Perspectives and thoughts arising in common pondering aka reflection and the ideas are used, for example, in the learning plan planning process of an individual child, in the planning and evaluation of the pedagogical activities of a group of children, in recurring everyday situations and project activities, and in the strengthening the involvement of guardians.

The child's learning plan and the group's learning plan record the knowledge and understanding generated through the pedagogical documentation process. Documentation is utilized in children's learning plans and monitoring and evaluating the implementation of group's learning plan.

In addition to the above, pedagogical documentation is important children's play-supporting practice as well as a tool for reviewing the objectives and contents of the learning areas.

The task of the group's personnel is to utilize the resulting documentation in connection with the documentation process and understanding of the development of the learning environment and develop appropriate opportunities for children, but also in the evaluation of their own pedagogical activities and further development.



4.3 Versatile working methods

The tasks and goals set for early childhood education and care and the age, needs, prerequisites and interests of children guide the selection of working methods. Working methods that are functional and promote the creativity and participation of children provide natural ways of learning. These include children's supervised and free play, exploration, physical activity as well as experience of and expression through art. Information and communication technology is utilised in the activities. Versatile working methods are not only a vehicle for, but also a target of, learning. It is therefore important for the personnel to guide the children to experiment with and use different working methods in groups of different sizes as well as independently. When working, children are encouraged to ask questions and express wonder as well as to explore and solve problems together.

Professional competence and sensitivity to identify pedagogical possibilities in different situations are required of the personnel.

Among others, this is manifested as the personnel's ability to observe children's initiatives and emotions and redirect their own activities accordingly. The initiatives of younger children are often physical and non-verbal. Understanding and responding to these require sensitive and familiarity with the child.

Children participate in planning and selecting the working methods in line with their personal prerequisites. Children must have an opportunity to explore the world with all of their senses and their entire bodies as well as experiment with different working methods.

The varying use of working methods provides the children of different ages learning in diverse ways with experiences of succeeding. Versatile working methods require versatile learning environments. The competence of personnel and children is utilised in using the working methods and new working methods are experimented with and developed.

In Espoo, the key pedagogical principles are the integrity and comprehensiveness of operations and the fact that things and phenomena are viewed in many different ways. That is why in Espoo project-type, long-term approach is preferred and pedagogical solutions that naturally connect play, movement, artistic expression and knowledge and communication technology elements and allow operation in different sizes, appropriately variable or sometimes also in more permanent groups. Each ECEC unit supports children's emotional and social skills through a method chosen by staff.

In Espoo, know-how and its sharing are valued. Each ECEC unit regularly discusses the choice of diverse work methods, for example in pedagogical meetings for ECEC teachers.

4.4 Play as source of development, learning and well-being

Play is a key practice in early childhood education and care. The task of ECEC is to provide children with opportunities for different kinds of play and games. Play promotes the child's development, learning and well-being. While children learn by playing, they do not personally see play as a vehicle for learning but a way of spending time, living, and perceiving the world instead. Experiences that stimulate the children's emotions, curiosity and interest inspire them to play.

For the child, the significance of play lies in the play itself. Play produces joy and pleasure for the children. Children are active agents when they play: they structure and explore the surrounding world, create social relations and form meanings based on their experiences. Children construct ideas of themselves and others through play. Through play, children imitate as well as create new things and alter what they have seen. By doing so, they model and test their hopes and dreams. The use of imagination enables children to experiment with different roles and ideas which they could otherwise not carry out. Through play, children can process experiences that they find difficult. Play makes it safe to experiment, try and fail.

Play combines key elements that promote learning: enthusiasm, doing things together and challenging personal abilities. Play evolves and takes different shapes as children gain more experiences. Interactions between the personnel and children as well as among the children lay a foundation for the development of thinking, language and developing play skills. Children make observations, experiment and learn the rules of the community through play. When playing in a group, children learn to regulate their emotions and desires as well as to take the viewpoints of others into account. Play increases sense of community, which strengthens a positive emotional atmosphere.

Play is a key working method in early childhood education and care. In pedagogical activities, for example drama, improvisation or fairy tales can be combined in developing plots for play and constructing imaginary words. The personnel must acknowledge the significance of concentrated exploration, spontaneous creative expression as well as boisterous play and physical games on children's well-being and learning. Different situations may be enriched by introducing playful aspects to them. Nursery rhymes, wordplay, songs and playfulness strengthen a positive atmosphere, which supports learning and well-being.

The personnel has the duty to secure the preconditions for playing, supervise the play in a suitable way, and ensure that each child gets an opportunity to participate in playing together according to their skills and capabilities. The personnel must support the development of the children's play with a systematic and goal-oriented approach by either guiding it from outside or participating in it. The physical and psychological presence of the personnel support interaction among the children and prevent conflicts from arising.

The personnel must observe and document the children's play. Observation of play increases the personnel's understanding of children's thoughts and interests as well as their emotions and experiences. The observations are used in planning and guiding play and other activities. Subtlety, professional competence as well as gender sensitivity in detecting children's initiatives for play and responding to them in an appropriate way are required of the personnel.

Time, peace and space as well as appropriate toys and materials available for the children are necessary for sustained games and play. The learning environments must provide flexibility necessary for the play, as play and games can take place anywhere.

Knowledge of children's culture and media aimed at children help personnel understand the children's play. Different games and digital devices also provide diverse opportunities for play. In a learning environment that encourages playing, adults are also learners. The personnel together with guardians discuss the importance of play and observations related to children's games and play together with guardians. This makes it easier for the same games to continue at home or in ECEC.

Diverse play is emphasized in Espoo's ECEC. Activities and schedules for all groups of children designed so that there is space, time and opportunity for play. Playful methods are also used as working methods and are utilized in learning situations, for example intriguing and storytelling play. For the staff of the group the task is to ensure that the role of the adult in play varies according to the play situation and objectives. Adult can be a playful, active participant in the play an observer, a protector of peace, place and time of play, or playgroup creator.

In Espoo, the practices that support children's play are based on imagination enriching environments and content, as well as diverse work methods and project work.

The group's learning plan is important support tool for children's play. It allows for versatile play, playfulness, the meaning and development of play to be made visible into pedagogical activities. In Espoo, the daily rhythms of ECEC are also examined from the perspectives of the realization of play with the help of group's learning plan. Children are given the opportunity to influence their play environment by changing, evaluating and developing it. Regular discussions with ECEC teachers ensure that facilities and equipment are used in ECEC units versatility, appropriate play equipment is selected in accordance with the principles of sustainable development; and that they are accessible to children and that the interests of the children are taken into account in their presentation. In the selection of toys and equipment, particular attention shall be paid to that the environment is playful and attractive and all children regardless of linguistic or cultural background have

the possibility to find objects of identification in their play environment, and familiar but also imaginative things.

4.5 Learning areas

These learning areas describe the key objectives and contents of pedagogical activities in early childhood education and care. They guide the personnel in planning and implementing versatile and integrative pedagogical activities together with children. Children are entitled to gather versatile experiences of the different learning areas. Rather than being independent entities that are implemented separately, the themes of the learning areas are combined and applied according to the children's interests and competence. The learning areas have been grouped into five entities as in the National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education⁸⁶:

- Rich world of languages
- Diverse forms of expression
- Me and our community
- Exploring and interacting with my environment
- I grow, move and develop.

Integrative pedagogical activities enable broad-based examination and exploration of things and phenomena. Children's interests and questions serve as a key premise for the activities. For example, the themes may emerge from play and games, fairy tales, excursions or spontaneous interactive situations between the children and personnel or in the interaction among children. The ways in which the objectives of the learning areas are dealt with will depend on the selected themes, situations and the children's learning. The personnel have the task to ensure that the pedagogical activities promote the development and learning of children of different ages.

Rich world of languages

The task of early childhood education and care is to strengthen the development of children's **linguistic skills** and **capacity** as well as their **linguistic identities**. ECEC strengthens children's curiosity towards and interest in languages, texts and cultures. Supporting linguistic development is connected to the development of the child's multiliteracy (Chapter 2.7). It is also connected to, among other things, transversal competence associated with children's cultural skills and interaction. The developing linguistic skills provide the children with new ways to influence and to participate actively.

Language is both an object of and a vehicle for learning with children. It provides children with means to manage different situations and things as well as interact with others, express themselves and acquire knowledge. A versatile language

environment in ECEC as well as cooperation with guardians support children's linguistic development. In ECEC, children are provided with encouraging and consistent feedback on their language and interaction skills.

Children can simultaneously acquire several different languages, which may develop and be used in different situations. ECEC takes into account the fact that children are growing up in diverse linguistic environments. The ways of using language and interacting vary between families, and

several languages may be spoken in the children's homes. Linguistic and cultural diversity is made visible in early childhood education and care in cooperation with guardians. For its part, this supports the development of children's linguistic identities. Perspectives related to language and culture in ECEC are discussed further in chapter 4.6.

It is important for language learning to acknowledge that children of the same age may be going through different phases in different areas of linguistic development. **Linguistic identities develop** as children are provided with guidance and support in the main areas of linguistic skills and capacity.

Interaction skills	Language comprehension skills	Speech production skills	Language use competences	Linguistic memory and vocabulary	Language awareness
Developing linguistic identities					

The main areas of children's linguistic development in early childhood education and care



For the development of **interaction skills**, children's experiences of being heard and getting responses to their initiatives are important. The personnel's sensitivity and responses to children's messages, including non-verbal ones, are essential. The development of interaction skills is supported by encouraging the children to communicate with other children and personnel.

Children's **language comprehension skills** are supported with abundant linguistic modelling. Verbalising activities in a consistent manner and discussions support children in developing their vocabulary. Descriptive and accurate language is used in different situations. Images, objects and gestures are used for support when needed.

The development of children's **speech production skills** is monitored and guided. Children are encouraged to speak in different situations, both with adults and other children. This helps children use and understand spoken language. The children's attention will gradually be drawn to different tones of voice and emphasis.

Children's language use skills are guided and the use of language in different situations is reflected on together with the children. The aim is to strengthen language use with situation awareness. The children practice narrating, explaining and speaking in turns. Empathy, use of humor and learning good manners also strengthen children's language use competences. Familiarisation with different texts support the development of language use competences and helps children to notice differences between spoken and written language.

Children diversify their linguistic expression as their **linguistic memory** and **vocabulary** expand. The personnel has the duty to consciously support this development. The development of linguistic memory is supported by, for example, the use of nursery rhymes and singing games. Playing with language, naming things and using illustrative words promote the development of children's linguistic memory and vocabulary. Discussions, reading and telling stories in an unhurried atmosphere provide opportunities for considering the meanings of words and texts and learning new concepts in their contexts.

Observing different languages in the immediate surroundings support the children's developing **language awareness**. The personnel have the task of attracting and encouraging the children's interest in spoken and written language and gradually also in reading and writing. Language is observed and examined to direct children's attention from the meanings of words towards the shapes and structures of language, including words, syllables and phonemes. Children are encouraged to playful writing and reading.

Rich and diverse texts are used in early childhood education and care. Children are familiarised with versatile children's literature. Stories are told to them and their are also encouraged to make up their own stories.

Children's stories, nursery rhymes and verbal messages and texts among others are used alongside spoken language.

In Espoo, in all ECEC units have many discussions with children. They are given time to produce their own speech and children are encouraged to use the language, for example through dialogue reading. Fairy tale, story and rhyme books are in daily use with children and available for children in all groups. Children are read to every day and children are helped to focus as well listening to longer stories. Books are selected with thought and they are also borrowed from the library together with children. The personnel utilize Espoo's library services in many ways and families are also encouraged to use the library.

Diverse forms of expression

A task of early childhood education and care is to support the development of children's **musical**, **visual** as well as **verbal** and **physical expression** in a goal-oriented manner as well as to familiarise them with different art forms and cultural heritage. A holistic approach and creative combination of different ways to express characterise children's expression. Artistic experiences and expression promote children's learning potential, social skills and positive self-image as well as their capacity to understand and structure the surrounding world. Children develop their thinking and learning skills as they explore, interpret and create meanings by practicing different ways to express. The ability to imagine and evoke mental images is also key to the development of the child's ethical thinking. Familiarisation with cultural heritage, art and different forms of expression also strengthen children's competence in the areas of multiliteracy, participation and involvement.

Culture is an important part of the child's identity. ECEC provides children with opportunities to see and experience art and other culture diversely. The experiences related to art and culture strengthen children's ability to adopt, use and change culture. At the same time, the children learn to understand the meaning and value of art and cultural heritage.

Different forms of expression provide the children with means to experience and perceive the world in a manner that speaks to and inspires them. Artistic expression provides means for making observations, emotions and creative thinking visible in a way that motivates children. Children familiarise themselves with different forms of expression by using multiple senses, working methods and learning environments as well as the cultural offerings available in the local area. The aesthetic and inspiring qualities of the learning environments and versatile equipment and materials and sufficient guidance available in them are significant when children familiarise themselves with different forms of expression.

The arts education includes both spontaneous and planned activities. The processes of expression and learning emphasise experimenting, exploring, practicing the different stages of doing things and documenting these. Each child's individual

Visual expression is supported and a sufficient amount of time and space is reserved for children's joint creative processes. Utilising special competence of the personnel, children and other actors enriches arts education.

The aim of **musical expression** in early childhood education and care is to provide the children with musical experiences as well as strengthen the children's interest in and relationship with music. Children are guided to immerse themselves in music and make observations on the sound environment. Children develop their capabilities for understanding music as well as the duration, volume tonal colour and strength of sound through musical activities. Children sing songs and enjoy nursery rhymes, experiment with different musical instruments as well as listen and move to music together with the personnel. Children gather experiences of basic beat, rhythm in words and making music with their bodies. Children are encouraged to use their imagination and express their thoughts and emotions stirred by music, for example by explaining them verbally, visually or through dance. Children also gather experiences of creating music together as well as the processes of practicing small-scale musical performances and the joy of success brought by the performances.

The goal of **visual expression** is to develop the children's relationship with visual arts, other forms of visual culture and cultural heritage. Children have an opportunity to enjoy creating images and gather aesthetic experiences through art. Children practise visual thinking, observation and interpretation of images through versatile visual expression. They develop their skills in producing images by using multiple senses and by building connections with other forms of expression. Children experiment with various methods, tools and materials for creating an image, for example by painting, drawing, building and making media presentations. In addition to the images independently produced by children, artwork, contents in the media, object and sited in the built and natural environment are observed with the children. Children are guided to interpret and explain their thoughts about visual messages. When examining images, attention is paid to such aspects as colour, shapes, materials, the artist, context of presentation, and emotions stirred by the images.

Planning skills and creative problem solving as well as knowledge of structures, materials and techniques are practised with crafting activities, such as clay modelling, building, sewing and woodworking. The goal of these activities and forms of expression is to bring to the children the joy of doing and experiencing things and making discoveries. These also provide joy in that children can see the result of their creativity and personal touch. Children are provided with opportunities to independently experiment with, explore and combine different soft and hard materials as well as to learn different techniques. Children get to produce and implement ideas for different kinds of artwork and objects. Crafting traditions related to the children's backgrounds as well as the local area can be observed and utilised in the children's crafting activities.

Children are encouraged to engage in **verbal** and **bodily expression**, for example through drama, dance and play. The

aim is that the exercises and games offer children opportunities to versatile verbal and bodily experiences, expression and communication. Topics arising from children's imagination of things experienced and perceived by them are worked on together. Children gather experiences of both spontaneous expression and a jointly planned, implemented and assessed creative process. For example children's literature, literary art, different forms of theatre, dance and circus are utilised diversely in the activities.

The goal of art education in Espoo is that every child in day care and family day care become acquainted with the offerings of culture and receive diverse artistic and cultural experiences suitable for their development and age. Every child should have the opportunity to find forms of art and expression that promote mental well-being and are of interest to them during their ECEC. Espoo's ECEC utilizes the opportunities for children to make and experience art offered by the surrounding area and the entire metropolitan area taking into account the points of interest. Expression in its various forms is part of daily pedagogical activity in every group of children, regardless of the form of ECEC.

The implementation of art education utilizes both children's and educators of different strengths. Organization of parties and events takes into account the different cultural forms and the role of children's cultural backgrounds in enriching the joint action. Events can be performing or collaborative moments with children, guardians and staff. Children participate in the planning of parties and events in a way that is suitable for their age and the level of development. At least one party of the year of operation in daycares should include sections in which children are in a performing role.

Art education is also organized in co-operation with the Espoo's Culture Business Unit in terms of Culture Call. Implemented in ECEC units, workshops, art projects, concerts and performances allows children to become acquainted with different cultural actors and gain diverse experiences in different arts. The Culture Call operating model is used to increase the interaction between different cultural actors and ECEC staff. Cooperation will increase mutual competence.

Art education can be implemented in daycares as well in collaboration with basic education. Institutions providing basic art education co-operate with ECEC in accordance with the principles adopted by the Finnish Education and Early Education Committee. Basic art education strengthens the ECEC unit's art education.

Me and our community

Children expand their living environment as they begin early childhood education and care outside their homes. In addition to the traditions, operating models, values and views of their homes, children come across different ways of thinking and acting. The mission of ECEC is to develop children's capabilities of understanding the diversity of the local community and practise acting in it. This topic is approached from the perspectives of **ethical thinking, worldviews, the past, the present and the future of the local community** as well as **the media**. For example fairy tales, music, visual arts, play, drama, different media contents as well as visitors, visits and events in the local area can be used diversely in the activities. The learning of me and our community particularly supports transversal competences related to the children's cultural competence, interaction and expression as well as their thinking and learning (Chapter 2.7).

The development of **ethical thinking** skills is supported by reflecting together on ethical questions that arise in different situations of that concern the children. For instance, the themes may be connected to friendship, telling wrong from right, justice of causes of fear, sadness and joy. Ethical questions are discussed with the children so that they feel safe and accepted. The rules of the group and their justifications are also reflected on with the children.

Worldview education in early childhood education and care primarily focuses on examining together the religions and other worldviews present in the group of children. Irreligion is investigated alongside worldviews. The goal is to promote mutual respect and understanding of varying worldviews as well as to support the development of the children's cultural identities and worldviews. The children are familiarised with different worldviews and related traditions. For example, annual celebrations and events as well as daily situations, such as dressing or meals, provide natural opportunities for examining worldviews. Room is given for the children's wondering, and life questions that puzzle them are reflected on together.

Worldview education is organised in cooperation with guardians, being aware of and respecting the background, worldviews and values of each family. Among others, worldview education supports transversal competences related to the children's cultural competence, interaction and expression as well as their thinking and learning (Chapter 2.7).

In Espoo's ECEC, all the languages, cultures and views used in groups of children are the subject of positive interest and a thing that enriches everyday life and celebrations. An open, curious and natural way for educators respond to the particular worldview present in a group of children; and religions reinforce every child's and family's sense of belonging to a group.

Particular worldview and religions are discussed openly and respectfully with educators, creating an understanding towards all type of diversity.

Particular worldview education in ECEC is discussed with guardians and the guardian's wishes, for example the child's participation in events or activities with religious elements shall be recorded on the form attached to the child's learning plan.

The worldview diversity of a group of children is reflected in the learning environment through the use of images, objects, books and in the forms of outputs created by children. Through pedagogical documentation, educators make things and phenomena visible that occur in a group of children and plan activities on this basis.

It is natural and easy for children to talk about worldview and matters related to religions. They come up with questions and issues to consider. ECEC worldview education includes discussion about emerging issues in an accepting and respectful atmosphere with children. Guardians discuss issues brought up by children with children in an open manner, promoting an open and accepting atmosphere. Important task for educators is to respect and highlight diversity in actions and in words.

Various cooperation is carried out in Espoo's ECEC communities of worldview and religious communities. The Basket Model developed by the Finnish National Agency for Education and the Church Council is used in cooperation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and in the planning of pedagogical activities.

If the unit organizes activities that has religious elements in which the guardians do not wish their children to participate similar parallel activities must be provided by the staff of the group that all children are offered. The child's participation in a religious event or alternative activity takes place always according to the guardian's wishes. Thus, the guardians must be informed of the planned activities in good time. When organizing activities, it must be in mind that it strengthens an accepting community and does not provide children with experiences of exclusion.

By discussing **the past, the present and the future of the local community**, children's interest is geared towards historical matters and building a good future. Diversity in the children's growth environments is also observed.

Children are offered possibilities to immerse themselves in past events and situations. The children and their personal histories, members of the local community and its environments and artefacts are important sources of information. In addition, the expertise of the children's guardians in their cultural heritage may be utilised. For instance, the games and music from the childhood of the children's grandparents can be used in familiarisation with past times.

The presence is examined by discussing current topics that concern or interest the children. Diversity in the local community is also respectfully observed with the children. Among others, the diversity of people, genders and families is exposed. The goal is to educate children to understand that people are different but equal.

In addition to the past and the present, it is important to reflect on the future and how we can influence the realisation of a favorable future. Anticipation of the future may be connected, for instance, to planning games for the coming season or personal learning environments. This can be done, for example, by constructing imaginary future worlds or talking about professions that the children find interesting.

The task of the **media education** in early childhood education and care is to support the children's possibilities for being active and expressing themselves in their communities. Children are familiarised with different media and producing media content is experimented with playfully in safe environments. The contents and reliability and truthfulness or media related to the children's lives are considered together with the children. At the same time, the children practise their developing source and media criticism. The children are guided in using media responsibly, taking into account their own and other people's well-being. Themes presented in the media may be dealt with the children, for example, through play with physical activity, by drawing or with the means of drama.

In Espoo's ECEC, every employee works for its part as a media educator. The staff directs and consciously guides children through their pedagogical choices as media users to analyze what they see and be critical of the media. Secure media content allows staff to promote children's abilities to reflect on media content from different perspectives and to act responsibly to others as a mindful media user. Promoted in Espoo equality and belonging to children and the prevention of exclusion, including through media education: all children are actively encouraged to create, express and participate in the production of media in their own in their learning environment.

Exploring and interacting with my environment

The task of the early childhood education and care is to provide children with a capacity to observe, analyse and understand their surroundings. The children are guided to explore and act in the natural and built environment. ECEC supports the development of the children's **mathematical thinking** and strengthens their positive attitude towards mathematics. ECEC also includes **environmental education** and **technology education**. Personal observations and experiences related to learning environments help children understand causal relationships and develop as thinkers and learners. Children's developing competence of naming

phenomena and using different concepts promotes their multiliteracy.

The goal of early childhood education and care is to provide the children with joy of invention and learning in different phases of their **mathematical thinking**. Children familiarise themselves with mathematics and its areas through illustrative and playful activities. Children are guided to pay attention to the shapes, amounts and changes they come across in their daily situations and environment. Children are encouraged to consider and describe their mathematical observations by expressing and examining them, for example by using their body or different devices and images. Children are provided with opportunities to classify, compare and rank different things and objects and to discover and produce regularities and changes. They are also encouraged to discover, consider and deduce problems related to the learning environment and find solutions to them.

The development of the concept of numbers is supported diversely in interactive situations, such as by utilising play and materials that appeal to children. Children are encouraged to perceive numbers and amounts in their environment and, as they advance their competence, to join them to numeral words in writing and numeric symbols as permitted by their skills. Number sequencing and naming skills can be developed, for instance, with nursery rhymes and rhyming. Measuring is experimented with and the concepts of location and relation are practiced with the children, for example through games involving physical activities, by drawing or using different instruments.

Different exercises are used to support children's perception of space and plane. Children are encouraged to examine objects and shapes and to play with them. In order to strengthen children's geometric thinking, opportunities for building, arts and crafts and clay modeling are arranged for them. The concept of time is explained, for example by observing the times of the day and seasons.

The goal of **environmental education** is to strengthen children's relationship with nature and ability to act responsibly in nature as well as to guide them towards a sustainable way of living. Environmental education comprises of three dimensions: learning in the environment, learning about the environment and acting for the environment. The local natural and built environments are not only objects of learning, but also learning environments.

Making field trips to natural and built environments and exploring the surroundings are an important part of ECEC. Through positive learning experiences, children learn to enjoy nature and the local surrounding, which strengthens their relationship with nature. Natural phenomena are observed through the use of different senses and in different seasons. They are discussed and examined. At the same time, children learn to use concepts connected to nature. Practice in identifying different plant and animal species strengthens children's knowledge of nature. Children learn to search for information on interesting topics. Nature can also be a place for aesthetic and peaceful experiences.

Children are guided to respect nature, its plants and animals. Environmental education promotes the children's growth into a sustainable way of living and the practice of skills needed in it. These practical skills include not littering while on excursions, learning moderation and being economical, responsibility related to meals, saving energy as well as decreasing the amount of waste by such means as recycling and reusing things. At the same time, children are guided to pay attention to the impacts of their actions.

In Espoo, all aspects of sustainable development are taken into account in the daily activities of ECEC. Culturally sustainable development is promoted through appreciation creative, cultural diversity, i.e. both the child's own cultural heritage and other cultures. ECEC supports the formation of children's cultural identity by promoting inter cultural interaction and understanding and supporting the child's development as well as their own cultural circle and as a member of Finnish society. A socially sustainable lifestyle is strengthened for example, by teaching children friendship skills and growing into communality. An ecologically sustainable lifestyle is supported, for example, by nature pedagogy. For everyone children are offered the opportunity for a good relationship with nature and that they can learn to study and protect nature. The proximity of the ECEC unit is regularly utilized as a learning environment. Financial perspective of sustainable development in children's activities is using recycled materials and learning both recycling and sorting skills. The staff directs children through every day with concrete examples to understand that each person's actions affect other people, nature and the economy near and far. Children are instructed to see and understand that small daily actions matter. The aim is to increase the number of citizens seeking hope for the future and ecological and social well-being.

Activities are used in all ECEC units supported by either Sustainable Development in Daycares -material or Green Flag program.

The goal of **technology education** is to encourage children to familiarise themselves with experimental and inquiry-based approaches. Children are also guided to observe technology in the environment and to come up with their own, creative solutions. Children are encouraged to ask questions, find explanations together and draw conclusions.

Technological solutions that children come across in their daily lives are observed with the children. Children familiarise themselves with ICT devices and their functions. Particular attention is paid to the safe use of machines and devices. Children are provided with opportunities to carry out their own ideas, for example by building things out of different materials and testing how different devices work. Children are encouraged to

describe the solutions they have made. The children solve problems and celebrate successes together. The goal is that their personal experiences help children form an understanding of the fact that technology is an outcome of human activity. Technological solutions available in the surroundings, such as toys, can be utilised in the activities and their operating principles can be examined.

In Espoo, technology education is implemented for children in terms of interest and play. Personnel enriches children's play and learning environment with technological elements and reacts actively when children show interest in everyday technology. Children can learn to understand the mechanics of their own lives and electronic phenomena and thus learn new concepts. The staff takes care of gender sensitive and inclusive perspective when exploring technology and encourages all children to try and become familiar with the devices.

In Espoo, technology is also used in providing children's support. Children's technology experiments are made possible and all children are encouraged to express themselves creatively and problem solving through technology. Staff discuss artificial intelligence and questions related to data with children. Technology education is also carried out without technological equipment. Coding skills, programming and for example robotics can be practiced with existing play and instrumental tools in everyday situations.

I grow, move and develop

The learning area of I grow, move and develop includes objectives related to **physical activity, food education, health and safety**. The task of ECEC is to build a foundation for children's way of living which values health and well-being and promotes physical activity together with guardians. This learning area particularly supports transversal competences related to taking care of oneself and managing daily life.

A goal of early childhood education and care is to encourage children to be physically active in versatile ways and to experience joy of **physical activity**. Children are encouraged to spend time outdoors and engage in physically active play during all seasons. In addition to supervised exercise, it is ensured that children get plenty of opportunities for independent physical activity both indoors and outdoors every day. Physical education must be regular, child-focused, versatile and goal-oriented. Sufficient daily physical activity is important for the child's healthy growth, development, learning and well-being. Physical activity refers to various kinds of activity with different levels of physical strain, including playing indoors and outdoors, field trips and supervised physical activity. Physical activity in a group develops children's social skills, such as interaction and self-regulation skills. Physical activity must be a natural part of the child's day. Together



with guardians, children are also encouraged to exercise in their free time both indoors and outdoors.

The task of early childhood education and care is to develop children's knowledge of their bodies, body management as well as fundamental movement skills, such as balance, locomotor, and manipulative skills. Different senses as well as equipment made out of different materials encouraging children to be physically active are utilised in the physical activities. Children's physical activities must be naturally versatile in terms of their duration, intensity and pace. Children must gain experiences of physical activity independently, in pairs and with a group. In ECEC, children gather experiences of different physical games, such as traditional outdoor games as well as moving to stories and music. Different seasons must be utilised so that children get opportunities for learning outdoors activities typical for each season.

Regular and supervised exercise plays a key role in children's holistic development and learning of motor skills. Therefore, it is important to observe the children's motor skills systematically. The personnel must plan the daily structure, indoor and outdoor environments as well as the contents of activities so that the children get an opportunity to enjoy physical activity diversely in different situations. Exercise equipment must be available for the children also during free physical activity and play. ECEC takes the safety of exercise equipment into account.

Exercise is an essential way of working in ECEC in Espoo. Learning environments are adapted to support mobility and educators develop their own ways of working so that it is possible to respond to children's initiatives, participate in play and throw oneself into activities. Activities are rhythmized so that calmer work and movement alternate in an appropriate proportion.

In Espoo, all units follow the recommendations of the Early Years of Physical Activity (OKM 2016: 21) and physical education is implemented in accordance with the Finnish National Agency for Education's Joy in motion program. Exercise plays and games are carried out on a daily basis as recorded in the group's learning plan both indoors and outdoors. Special attention is paid to that the transition situations are also operational, or sporty, meaningful moments for children to play and learn. Exercise is also used as a method of teaching and as a way of supporting a child's growth, development, and mental well-being.

The aim of **food education** is to promote positive attitudes towards food and eating and support versatile and healthy eating habits. Children are guided to eat independently and to obtain versatile and sufficient nutrition. Daily meals are organised in an unhurried atmosphere where the children learn to eat without disturbances and with good table manners. They are also familiarised with a culture of eating together with others. Children familiarise themselves with

foods, their origins, visual appearance, textures and tastes through the use of different senses and exploration. Discussions, stories and songs connected to food promote the advancement of the children's vocabulary related to food.

Issues connected to **health** and **safety** are considered together with the children in early childhood education and care. Children's capabilities for taking care of their health and personal hygiene are supported. The significance of exercise, rest and good interpersonal relationships to health and well-being are discussed with the children. Children learn about issues connected to safety in everyday situations. These may include situations where they are getting dressed, eating, playing and spending time outdoors. Children practise safety in traffic in their local area as well as rules and customs related to safe mobility. The goal is to support the children's sense of security and to provide them with capabilities for asking for and seeking help and for operating safely in different situations and environments.

4.6 Kieleen ja kulttuuriin liittyviä tarkentavia näkökulmia

In the National core curriculum for early childhood education and care, perspectives related to language and culture are considered to apply to every child participating in ECEC. Children's varying linguistic and cultural backgrounds and capabilities are perceived to enrich the community in a positive way. In linguistically and culturally aware ECEC, languages, cultures and worldviews are integrated in all activity.

According to the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, the municipality must ensure that the child can be provided with ECEC in his or her mother tongue if the language is Finnish, Swedish or Sámi. ECEC may be provided in sign language for children using sign language. ECEC may also be provided in the Roma language⁸⁷. Also other languages can be used in ECEC, provided that this does not risk the achievement of the objectives set in the core curriculum. In such cases, it shall be ensured that the development of Finnish/Swedish as the child's mother tongue is also supported. Cooperation between personnel, guardians and different cultural communities supports the cultural traditions of children and families as well as the children's opportunities for demonstrating their cultural backgrounds. Children are encouraged to interact in bilingual and multilingual environments.

In ECEC, there are children who speak both **Finnish** and **Swedish** as their mother tongue. It is important for the development of these children's language skills and identities that both languages are supported and the children are encouraged to use them.

A special objective of early childhood education and care of **Sámi children** is to strengthen the children's Sámi identity and awareness of their own culture and to provide the children with an opportunity to learn Sámi folklore and traditional skills. The Sámi people are an indigenous people whose right to their own language and culture is protected under the Constitution⁸⁸. The immediate environment and cooperation with guardians and the Sámi community shall be utilised in the activities. When ECEC is organised in one of the three Sámi languages, its special objective is to strengthen language development, comprehension and use. The aim is to improve the children's capabilities for acting in a Sámi language environment, to learn the Sámi language and to learn in the Sámi language. The personnel promote the preservation of the Sámi language and Sámi cultural heritage in cooperation with the guardians.

In the early childhood education and care for **Roma children**, a particular objective is to support the positive development of the children's identity and their awareness of their own history and culture as well as to increase their participation in the society. The linguistic development of the children is also supported in cooperation with the guardians and the Roma community. Whenever possible, opportunities are arranged for the children to use and acquire skills in the Roma language. The personnel promote the preservation of the Roma language and cultural heritage in cooperation with the guardians.

Early childhood education and care for children using **sign language** can be realised either in groups for sign language users or in groups consisting of children using sign language and spoken language. Sign language may be the child's mother tongue, first language or second language. Children using sign language may be deaf, hard of hearing, or of hearing. The goal of ECEC in sign language is to support and strengthen the children's linguistic and cultural identity by providing them with an opportunity to use and adopt sign language in Finnish or Finnish-Swedish in collaboration with guardians. The aim is also to improve the children's capabilities for acting in different language environments and to strengthen the children's Finnish or Finnish-Swedish sign language expression and reserve of signs.

The language skills of **foreign language speaking and plurilingual children**, as well as the development of their linguistic and cultural identities and self-esteem, are supported in early childhood education and care. The development of Finnish/Swedish skills is promoted with a goal-oriented approach in different areas of linguistic skills and capacity based on the needs and capabilities of children. Versatile interactive situations and learning environments are used to provide the children with opportunities to use and learn Finnish/Swedish as a second language. Concrete everyday language and its resource of expressions are the starting point for learning the Finnish/Swedish language. Language comprehension and production skills develop in connection with one another. Children learn to make observations as well as express their ideas, emotions, and opinions in a manner that is suitable for the situation and

87 Section 8§ of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care and p. 88-89 of HE 40/2018 and Sign language Act (359/2015)

88 Section 17(3) of the Constitution of Finland (731/1999)

natural to them. Some of the children only start familiarising themselves with the Finnish culture and Finnish/Swedish as they begin ECEC. Early childhood education and care supports the integration of children into Finnish society. Guardians are informed about the goals, contents and methods of Finnish ECEC. The family's linguistic environment, language choices, formation of plurilingual and multicultural identities as well as the stages and importance of the development of mother tongue(s) are discussed with the guardians.

Whenever possible, children are provided with opportunities for also using and learning their own mother tongue(s). Children's mother tongue and learning Finnish/Swedish as a second language lay the foundation for their functional bilingualism and plurilingualism. The family is primarily responsible for preserving and developing the child's mother tongue(s) and culture. If necessary, an interpreter should be used in the discussions with the guardians to ensure mutual understanding.

All languages and cultures in ECEC of Espoo are seen as enriching and valuable in life. In ECEC, the goal of all activities is that in addition to learning a rich Finnish language, both children and adults learn to appreciate a variety of language skills as well as different ways to communicate.

Parents of multilingual children are discussed about the importance of their mother tongue or languages and are encouraged to speak to the child their own mother tongue or languages. Parents are told about the possibility of using for example children's books in different languages.

Sufficient time is set aside for discussions with guardians and an interpreter is used if necessary. Plan support for one's own mother tongue or languages is drawn up in conjunction with the parents and recorded in the child's learning plan. The snack backpack, which is part of the language backpack material, ensures that the child's own mother tongue or one's own mother tongues develop at the age level.

In ECEC, the child's own mother tongue is supported where possible, for example with the help of employees who speak the same language. In addition, the child's own mother tongue is supported by participating in the fairy tale moments of different languages in libraries and / or by borrowing books in different languages to the ECEC unit and utilizing digital pedagogy. Staff encourages all guardians to participate in ECEC activities.

Implementation of different linguistic and cultural groups in Espoo

Children are actively supported in Espoo's ECEC about multilingualism and appreciation of one's own culture, language and worldview. Multilingualism is made visible in learning environments so that the languages used by children are on display, for example, in the form of greetings,

familiar words or music. Children's cultural backgrounds are considered in a way that flags and books in different languages are displayed.

The development of children's cultural identities and self-esteem is supported by bringing those cultures represented in the children's group appear in everyday life with different themes and celebrations. All ECEC units use a celebration calendar of cultures and use it to take into account the group celebrations of children's cultures in collaboration with guardians. International aspect is taken into account when purchasing materials and play equipment, and play equipment also represents different cultures (e.g. ethnic dolls and diverse costumes).

Parents' participation in parental evenings and in the planning and evaluation of activities is made possible by arranging the necessary interpreting services. In addition, planning the content of parental evenings takes into account the opportunity for multilingual families to participate actively.

Supporting Finnish for foreign and multicultural children's learning in Espoo

Teaching Finnish as a second language is a regular and purposeful activity in which a child's language skills are continuous and comprehensive observation and documentation is key. The development of language skills is monitored and evaluated with the help of small language backpack assessment material. The material is also used in Finnish as a second language teaching in planning and teaching. With a small language backpack is ensured that the assessment and teaching of language skills is based on the objectives set and is of uniform quality. The Small Language Backpack serves as a collaboration tool for the child in the transition from ECEC to pre-primary education, and to school.

Objectives for pedagogical activities for teaching Finnish as a second language is recorded in the child's learning plan. The staff acts as a linguistic model and is aware of the rich and varied language use in all interaction situations supports the child's learning of Finnish language. Child is being spoken to a lot and the language is used in many ways. The staff words repeatedly in all daily situations. In addition, the staff actively utilizes the methods that support the learning of the language in all activities, such as pictures and support signs. Children are encouraged to express themselves and self-expression is given time as well as space. The use of objects and images, for example, is encouraged to support self-expression. The staff is supported by ECEC language and culture teachers. They work in groups of children and promote the use of working methods and methods that support language and cultural education. The group's learning plan is used by the language and culture teacher and as a common tool for planning and evaluating staff activities. It also ensures that it works co-teaching achievements.

Bilingual early childhood education and care

Bilingual early childhood education and care is organised by decision of the municipality or a private actor. The goal of bilingual ECEC is to utilise the children's early sensitive period for language learning by providing the children with language education that is more versatile than mainstream education. Children are provided with opportunities for acquiring language skills and using languages functionally and through play, thus building a foundation for life-long language learning. The objective is that acting in a multilingual environment will stir children's linguistic curiosity and desire to experiment. This will also enable diverse cultures to meet naturally.

Bilingual early childhood education and care is divided into large-scale and small-scale bilingual education and care. The aim of small-scale bilingual ECEC education is to stir interest in and a positive attitude towards languages in children. The aim of large-scale bilingual ECEC is to create capabilities for the children to act in bilingual and multilingual environments.

Large-scale bilingual early childhood education and care

Early total immersion in the national languages in ECEC

Immersion of Swedish may be organised in early childhood education and care provided in Finnish and immersion in Finnish in ECEC provided in Swedish. Immersion in Sámi may also be organised in ECEC provided in Finnish and Swedish. Early total immersion in the national languages is a programme that begins in ECEC and continues until the end of basic education. The language of instruction and the second national language or Sámi combine to form an entity. ECEC is mainly provided in the immersion language. The development of the children's skills in their mother tongue(s) is supported in cooperation with homes and guardians. The aim in the activities is that each member of the personnel consistently uses one language only: either the immersion language or the language of instruction of ECEC. While children are encouraged to use the immersion language, they must also have the possibility to be understood in their mother tongue. The objective is to provide children with capabilities for continuing in pre-primary education and further on to basic education implemented as immersion.

Other large-scale bilingual early childhood education and care

Part of the activities (at least 25%) in other large-scale bilingual ECEC is implemented in a language other than the language of education and care laid down in the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care. Some children may speak this language as their mother tongue. The activities are planned so that the different language groups receive the support for linguistic development they need. The groups may also include children who speak neither of the languages used in the education and care as their mother

tongue. The ECEC provider decides on a case-by-case basis when these arrangements support the child's development by discussing the matter with the guardian.

The activities of bilingual early childhood education and care are planned so that the ECEC realised in two languages forms an entity where both languages are present and developed gradually through the modelling of the personnel and active participation of the children. If possible, each member of the personnel will actively use only one of the languages. Children must also have the possibility to be understood in their mother tongue, in Finnish or Swedish. Children are encouraged to use both languages. The objective is to provide children with capabilities for continuing in bilingual or Finnish/Swedish pre-primary education and basic education.

Small-scale bilingual early childhood education and care

Language-enriched ECEC

Language-enriched early childhood education and care refers to ECEC in which less than 25% of activities are regularly and systematically provided in a language other than the language of education and care laid down in the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care. The goal is to support language-learning, motivate children and diversify their language choices. A further aim may be to continue studies in language-enriched or other bilingual pre-primary education or a basic education or other early language instruction.

Language nest

In early childhood education and care, language nest activities refer to activities strengthening children's awareness of their own culture. They also provide children with an opportunity to learn an endangered minority or indigenous language. The principles of language nest activities may be similar as those of language immersion.

In Espoo's Finnish-language ECEC, Swedish-language language immersion teaching is offered as an activity of a few municipal daycares, mainly in pre-school groups. For the time being, other language immersion activities and also bilingual or English-language ECEC will be provided as a purchasing service or as a private service.

Language-enriched activities are planned. We encourage staff to use their own language skills to organize language-rich activities. Children are offered opportunities to play in different languages, to use them functionally. They are taught that all languages are valuable. The goal is that operating in a multilingual environment arouses children's linguistic curiosity and positive attitude towards other languages. Children can also get acquainted with the methods of language-rich activities through play to the service languages of Espoo, i.e. Swedish and English.

V

Support for the child's development and learning

In early childhood education and care, the child's development and learning is supported as required by the child's needs. It is important for children that the support forms a continuum of coherent education during ECEC.

5.1 Principles that guide the provision of support

Support for the child's development and learning is part of high-quality early childhood education and care activities. Each child in need of the support is entitled to receive it. The child's need for support shall be recognised and appropriate support shall be arranged for him or her as the need arises, in cross-sectoral cooperation if necessary⁸⁹. Sufficiently early and correctly targeted support may promote the child's development, learning and well-being. At the same time, the support may be used to prevent problems from emerging. ECEC is developed in accordance with the principles of inclusion.

The organisation of support is based on each child's strengths and needs related to learning and development. The support for development and learning meets the children's individual needs as well as those related to the ECEC community and learning environment. It is ensured in ECEC that each child feels accepted as himself or herself and as a member of the group. Encouraging children and providing them with opportunities for experiencing success support the development of the child's positive self-image.

Cooperation with children, their guardians, ECEC teacher, special ECEC teacher and other ECEC personnel is needed to identify the children's need for support and to plan, implement and evaluate support measures. The entire personnel are responsible for observing children's needs for support and providing support according to their education, job descriptions and duties.

*The competence of special ECEC teachers is utilised in the special needs education and other educational tasks for children in need of support. It is also utilised when consulting and guiding other personnel⁹⁰. When necessary, social and health care service experts participate in planning, implementing and evaluating children's needs for support⁹¹. When requested by the ECEC provider, the experts must participate in carrying out an evaluation if this is necessary for assessing the child's support need⁹².

The support needed by the child is included in the individual ECEC plan of the child in an ECEC centre or family daycare. The plan shall include the responsibilities and division of duties related to supporting the child's development and learning as well as their implementation and assessment methods⁹³.

Support for children's development and learning is organised as part of the daily activities of early childhood education and care. Primarily, support is provided through diverse flexible arrangements in the child's own ECEC or family daycare group. When evaluating the size of the group of children, the issue taken into consideration include the best interest and support needs of the children in need of support as well as the ability to achieve the goals set for ECEC⁹⁴.

Early childhood education and care may include child or group specific assistants, whose task is to support the child or children in the group as well as to enable their participation in activities. Support can also be partly or fully provided in a special needs group if necessitated by the child's best interests⁹⁵.

Support may also be provided in open ECEC as decided by the ECEC provider. It may also be agreed together with the guardian that the child will transfer to regular early childhood education and care in an ECEC centre to get the support he or she needs.

⁸⁹ Section 7 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

⁹⁰ Section 30 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care and p.103 of HE 40/2018

⁹¹ Section 7 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

⁹² Section 23 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

⁹³ Section 23 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

⁹⁴ Sections 34 and 35 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care and HE 40/2018 vp. p.105-106

⁹⁵ Sections 34 and 35 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care§

The principles that guide the organization of the support in ECEC in Espoo

Inclusive ECEC school culture and the continuous development of pedagogy is the basis for organizing support for development, growth and learning. European reference framework produced by the ecosystem model of ECEC describes the way of working in Espoo. According to the ecosystem model, the goal of inclusive ECEC is the inclusion of every child, realization of commitment and learning. Organizing support for development and learning considers the child's holistic well-being and learning by creating a healthy path and continuum in ECEC and the transition to pre-primary and further primary education.

Each regional service unit employs coordinating special ECEC teacher who plans and coordinates the organization of support together with the regional head of ECEC. Extensive special ECEC teacher works as a coworker of the heads of the ECEC units and works in groups of children in accordance with the principles of simultaneous teaching. The group teacher records in the group's learning plan the appropriate working methods accordance of their needs and is responsible for the implementation of those needs.

Each Espoo regional service unit also has pedagogically reinforced and special groups for children in need of stronger support. Espoo's Finnish ECEC, in the Child's Support Manual is described more specifically, the organization of support for development, growth and learning in Espoo.

5.2 Cooperation with the child, guardian and other experts during support

Early childhood education and care is organised in cooperation with the child and his or her guardian ensuring that each child receives education, instruction and care indicated by their development and needs⁹⁶. Cooperation with the guardian becomes even more significant when a child needs support. Children may also be provided with support from other services for children and their families, such as a child health clinic, an educational advice centre, a family counselling centre or services for people with disabilities. It is important that the local services for children and families form an appropriate entity for providing support for the child⁹⁷.

The possibility of receiving support and the key principles of support are discussed with the guardian. Children will participate in the cooperation in a way that is appropriate

and suitable for his or her age and development.

The personnel contact the guardian directly as developmental or learning problems appear of when there are concerns regarding the child's well-being. The guardian is provided with information on the handling of issues regarding the child and the provision, transfer and confidentiality of information. The goals of the support provided for children can be optimally accomplished when all actors collaborate. In ECEC, the child shall be provided with the necessary support for development and learning determined by the child's best interest even if the guardian is not committed to the collaboration⁹⁸.

The best interests of the child as the primary consideration shall guide the cross-sectoral cooperation. Collaboration practices and principles must be determined with the child health clinic, child protection services educational advice centre, family counselling centre and other services of the municipal social administration for situations where the child's issues are discussed or intervention by the authorities is required. The cross-sectoral cooperation is primarily implemented with the guardian's consent. Provisions on confidentiality and the disclosure of data must be complied with in the cooperation⁹⁹.

Early childhood education and care is also provided within the scope of specialized medical care. The cooperation between ECEC services and a hospital or some other institution ensure the continuity of the child's ECEC in line with his or her condition and coping. Particular attention is paid to maintaining the child's safe interpersonal relationships.

Children with severe disabilities or illnesses may require extended compulsory education¹⁰⁰. Decisions on beginning extended compulsory education are mainly made before the compulsory education starts. The child's guardian must be provided with timely information on matters related to the implementation of extended compulsory education. Decisions on and alternative ways of implementing extended compulsory education are specified in the National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education¹⁰¹.

Cooperation with child, guardian and other experts during the support

The aim of cooperation with guardians is joint commitment with guardians and staff of children's healthy and safe growth, development and learning promotion. Building trust and equal interaction and mutual respect support educational cooperation. In Espoo's Finnish-language ECEC, the daily encounters of guardians and staff and discussions on learning plans are the basis for cooperation.

⁹⁶ Section 3(1)(1) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

⁹⁷ Section 7 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care and p. 87-88 of HE 40/2018

⁹⁸ Sections 3, 4, 40 and 41 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

⁹⁹ Sections 40-42 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

¹⁰⁰ Section 25(2) of the Basic Education Act (628/1998)

¹⁰¹ The National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education 2014, Chapter 5.5 Special Support



The staff maintains an open, appreciative, diverse, and active interaction as well as ensuring that guardians receive on a regular basis the information about the child's development and learning. Cooperation is being built on initiative and its preconditions are being developed as a continuum from ECEC to pre-primary and primary education.

An ECEC teacher is suitable for conversation with guardians as soon as the child's guardians or staff raise a concern for the well-being of the child or when the child is experiencing developmental or learning challenges. The importance of working with a parent is emphasized when the child has support need. Identifying the need for child support as well support in the design and implementation of cooperation with the child's guardian, special ECEC teacher, ECEC teacher and other ECEC staff is important. Social and health care staff will be involved if needed in planning support of the child and evaluation. Multidisciplinary cooperation related processes and responsibilities are described in more detail in the Child Support Handbook.

The ECEC teacher and / or SET will tell the guardians of the support for development and learning and its key principles in the child's learning plan discussion or support planning group. With guardians agreed on the support to be given to the child and the forms of implementation of the support. The child participates in the cooperation in an appropriate way, appropriate to his or her age and stage of development.

5.3 Implementation of support in early childhood education and care

Participation in early childhood education and care lays a good foundation for the child's development, learning and well-being. Difficulties are prevented by pedagogical arrangements and different working approaches. These include systematic differentiation of activities, flexible changes of group and shaping of learning environments. Clear daily routines and rhythm of daily activities support all children.

A child's need for support may be short-term and limited. In this case, individual support forms or arrangements used to affect the situation as quickly and early as possible may suffice. Some children need more frequent and regular support or a combination of support forms that complement each other.

A child in early childhood education and care may be supported in many ways. The working methods and ECEC learning environments are altered according to the child's individual needs. The support may include **pedagogical, structural and other arrangements supporting well-being**. For example, the **pedagogical arrangements** may include consultative or periodic support of a special ECEC teacher¹⁰², personal guidance for a child, interpretation or assistance services as well as using special aids and information and communication technology. Use of signs and visual aids or other support for language and communication may also be included in the support provided for a child. **Structural arrangements** may include

¹⁰² Section 30 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

Pedagogiset järjestelyt	Rakenteelliset järjestelyt	Hyvinvointia tukevat muut järjestelyt
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Lapsiryhmästä nouseviin tarpeisiin vastaaminen (lapsen vasu – ryhmävasu) •Oppimisympäristön muokkaaminen ja jäsentäminen •Apuvälineiden käyttö •Kuvien ja viittomien käyttö •Laaja-alaisen veon kanssa sovitut jaksottainen tuki ja konsultaatiot •Kieli- ja kulttuuri-opettajan osaamisen hyödyntäminen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Erityisryhmä •Pedagogisesti vahvistettu ryhmä •Lisäresurssina lastenhoitaja tai lastentarhanopettaja •Avustamispalvelu •Laaja-alaisen veon tuki •jaksottainen tuki / osa-aikainen erityisopetus •konsultatiivinen tuki •Poikkeustapauksissa suhdeluvun väljentäminen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Asiakkuuden perusteella tapahtuva ohjaus ja konsultaatio •Lasten kuntoutuspalveluiden tarjoamat ryhmäkonsultaatiot •Yhteistyö perheneuvolan, lastensuojelun, perhetyön, vammaispalvelun jne. kanssa •Perheiden ohjaaminen tarpeita vastaaviin palveluihin

reducing the number of children in a group as well as solutions related to the number or structure of personnel. **Other arrangements supporting well-being** may include guidance and consultation provided by experts of the social and health care services.

When the need for support is caused by the child's severe disability, illness, delayed development or a support need related to socioemotional development, the child typically needs full-time, continuous and individual support. In such case, the child has challenges in an number of development areas or a particularly significant need for support in some area. Support for the child's development and learning in a peer group requires a systematic approach, special expertise and possibly various arrangements and special aids. The child needs help in acting in the group, functional differentiation and time for learning basic skills. In this case, the support may require strengthening the special pedagogical or nursing competence of the personnel or cross-sectoral cooperation with social and health care professionals.

Supporting development, learning and well-being requires constant observation, documentation and evaluation of the child's support needs and the impacts and sufficiency of the measures taken. The operating methods and learning environments as well as the suitability for the child are examined first. On the basis of this examination, it is assessed whether it is possible to implement more suitable pedagogical

solutions by changing these aspects. It is recommended that the assessment and the support planned on its basis rely on sufficiently cross-sectoral expertise.

Implementation of support in Espoo's ECEC: pedagogical, structural and well-being supportive arrangements

The support needs of children and groups of children can be met pedagogically, structurally, and with other arrangements supporting well-being. Of these, the pedagogical arrangements are priority approaches to shaping and strengthening pedagogy, which are structural and other arrangements that support well-being are supported and enabled. The table above contains a description of Espoo's ECEC support arrangements.

The purpose of **pedagogical arrangements** is to respond for the individual needs of the development, growth and learning of children in all child groups. Pedagogical arrangements are trans-formative, flexible and planned pedagogical working methods and solutions with group pedagogy is made more appropriate. Customizing the learning environment and time, space and group size related structuring support whole group's learning and well-being. Pedagogical arrangements ensure each child's inclusion, sense of belonging to the group and experiences of success in everyday life. According to the criteria of the curriculum of ECEC, pedagogical

arrangements may include, for example, child-specific guidance, the use of various aids, periodic and consultative support for special needs ECEC teachers and supporting the language and communication.

The periodic work of large-scale SET with educator teams supports the development of inclusive pedagogy for groups of children and is therefore also preventive work. Periodic support may include, for example simultaneous teaching, modeling, implementation of appropriate small groups, and modification of the learning environment. Identifying the needs and phenomena of a group of children and responding to them at an early stage together with educator teams is essential part of the work. Consultative work includes discussions with educator teams on the development of activities as well as discussions on a child-by-child basis, which, where appropriate, are multidisciplinary.

In groups of children, the competence of language and culture teachers can be utilized as a pedagogical arrangement alongside the development of language and culture-conscious pedagogy. In the design of pedagogical arrangements and the cooperation of the educator team is important in the implementation with large-scale SET and language and culture teachers. Agreed together pedagogical arrangements are recorded in the group's learning plan.

Assistive devices for child development and learning support usually come from specialist care. If necessary, Espoo ECEC rents out HUS aids from the aid center.

The **structural arrangements** of a group of children are solutions related to the reduction of the number of children in the group or the sizing or structure of the staff.

Support for the child's development, growth and learning is provided according to the child's personal needs in the first place through various flexible and appropriate arrangements in groups of children of different sizes in the child's own daycare or family day care in accordance with inclusion principles. The best interests of the child and the need for support can be organized in a pedagogically reinforced group. When a child needs special pedagogical support full-time and continuously, support can be arranged according to the number of children in a smaller special group. (Board of Education and Early Childhood Education 7 June 2018)

With comprehensive special teacher in ECEC (SET) support can also be targeted at the child as a structural arrangement for different periods of time in accordance with the child needs. Periodic support is implemented with goal-oriented ways of working set out in the group's learning plan. Support for comprehensive SET is not included in the ratio of children to staff. Comprehensive SET works together with the educator team if necessary, with rehabilitation services, maternity clinic, family counseling, psychiatric outpatient care for young children and child protection services.

The assistance service may be targeted for one or more children in need of support and can be part-time or full-time. The need to help a child can be long-term or short-term, for example in the early stages of ECEC or in the early stages of a child's long-term illness.



If one or two groups of children in an ECEC unit need additional resources for several children due to their need for support, a nursery nurse or ECEC teacher may be provided for the group instead of assistance services.

Other arrangements that support well-being mean for example, guidance and consultation provided by social and health care, which is materialized in Espoo through agreed multidisciplinary cooperation practices and recorded in the Handbook on Child Support. Other arrangements that support well-being can be made for a child or family on the basis of an existing clientship or they can be directed to the services according to the needs of a child and / or family with an accompaniment made by special needs ECEC teacher. In ECEC multidisciplinary cooperation is always guided by the best interests of the child and the need for support from the child and the family. It is implemented primarily together with guardians.

5.4 Individual early childhood education and care plan during the provision of support

The support needed by the child, the support measures and their implementation as well as the related responsibilities and distribution of duties are included in the child's individual early childhood education and care plan. An ECEC teacher and/or special ECEC teacher is in charge of preparing and assessing this document in collaboration with other personnel and the child's guardian. The participation of the guardian and the child in preparing and assessing the plan is supported. The child's opinion is heard and taken into account in preparing as well as evaluating the plan (Chapter 1.3).

The implementation of the support is evaluated, and the plan is revised at least once a year. The effectiveness of the provided support must be regularly evaluated, and the plan must be changed if necessary. Records must be kept of how the objectives of the activities have been achieved, and the goals must be revised to correspond with the changed need. The plan must indicate if support is no longer needed and the measures have been discontinued. The need for support is always assessed when the child begins pre-primary education. Regulations on support for the growth and learning of children participating in pre-primary education are given in the National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education.

In addition to what was stated in Chapter 1.3, when a child is provided with support for development and learning, his or her individual ECEC plan shall include the following:

Pedagogical and structural solutions

- solutions related to learning environments
- solutions related to the number of personnel and the group structure
- solutions related to the support provided to the child, such as differentiation of activities, individual guidance, small group activities and use of signs and visual aids

- interpretation and assistance services and the use of special aids

Cooperation and services required for the support

- cooperation with the child and the guardian
- responsibilities for implementing the support provided for the child
- use of special experts, such as special ECEC teacher services
- guidance and consultation provided by social and health-care professionals
- arrangements and responsibilities for possible transport

Monitoring and assessment of the support

- monitoring how well the objectives have been achieved
- assessment of the effectiveness of the support measured and the dates for assessment.

Child's learning plan during the support

In child's learning plan is recorded the support needed, support measures, their implementation and responsibilities and division of labor and possible termination of support. In learning plan is recorded the pedagogical and structural arrangements for the implementation of the support and other arrangements in support of well-being and agreeing on monitoring and evaluation of the support. The ECEC teacher is responsible for drawing up the child's learning plan. A comprehensive SET in ECEC will support the development, if needed. If necessary, social and health care staff is also invited to the discussion of the child's learning plan.

Activities in transition and data transfer related practices during ECEC and transition for pre-school education: in the transfer of information to a child in need as a tool, the child's learning plan with its attachments is used just like with other children. The data transfer is agreed with the guardian and a ECEC teacher, whose group the child is moving away is responsible for it. In pre-school education, the organization of support is guided by the three levels of support. If necessary, the ECEC teacher prepares a pedagogical assessment or report for the child entering pre-school education with support of SET. Pedagogical documents are processed in student welfare services staff after the start of pre-primary education. In need of support in the case of children in care, the role of the ECEC teacher is to invite a representative of the future pre-primary school unit and other necessary persons (for example, SET) to take part of the transfer meeting or otherwise in agreement with the guardian that the necessary information is transferred properly.

Development and learning support in private ECEC: A comprehensive or coordinating SET of ECEC provides telephone counseling to private care support sites in the matter related to support of children.

VI

Early childhood education and care based on an alternative pedagogy or a particular worldview

The goals and operating principles set for early childhood education and care in legislation, agreements and this core curriculum are complied with in all early childhood education and care. These goals and operating principles also apply to early childhood education and care based on an alternative pedagogy or a particular worldview.

The ECEC provider may provide an ECEC service that is based on an alternative pedagogy or a particular worldview. Examples of these services include the Steiner, Montessori, Freinet and Reggio Emilia pedagogies or ECEC services based on specific worldviews.

When a guardian selects an ECEC service based on an alternative pedagogy or a particular worldview, it must be ascertained that the guardian is provided with sufficient information about the special objectives and values of the activities.



VII

Evaluation and development of operations in early childhood education and care

The purpose of the evaluation of operations is to support the implementation of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care and development of ECEC. Pursuant to the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, the ECEC provider shall evaluate the early childhood education and care it provides and take part in external evaluations of its operations¹⁰³. The operations of ECEC must be systematically and regularly evaluated. Systematic evaluation requires the ECEC provider to have functional evaluation system. This evaluation helps promote the quality of ECEC, recognise the strengths of the activities, and highlight development needs and improve the activities.

7.1 Evaluation and development of pedagogical activities

The purpose of the evaluation of pedagogical activities is to develop the quality of early childhood education and care and to improve conditions for children's development and learning¹⁰⁴. The monitoring, regular evaluation and development of the local curriculum for early childhood education and the children's individual ECEC plans are part of this duty. ECEC operations are evaluated and developed at national level as well as from the perspectives of education and care providers, units and individuals.

At the national level, the purpose of the evaluation is to support the ECEC providers in matters concerning evaluation and quality management. The evaluation at the national level serves the development of ECEC at the local regional and national levels¹⁰⁵. The evaluation information may be also utilised in international comparisons.

The ECEC provider regularly monitors and evaluates the curricula for early childhood education and care and their implementation in the different forms of ECEC services. The ECEC provider decides on the practices used in the evaluation at the education and care provider and unit level. It is important that local decision-makers, guardians and ECEC personnel have current information about the implementation and quality of early childhood education and care. Key evaluation results must be published¹⁰⁶. Evaluation at the education and care provider and unit level is an essential part of the management and development of ECEC at the local level. Children and their guardians shall be provided with an opportunity to participate in evaluating ECEC regularly¹⁰⁷.

The personnel's goal-oriented and systematic self-assessment is essential for maintaining and developing the quality of ECEC. The targets of assessment may include interaction between the personnel and children, atmosphere in the group, pedagogical working approaches, contents of activities or learning environments.

Assessment at the level of individuals means the evaluation of the implementation of children's individual ECEC plans. It is important to always evaluate the implementation of the child's individual ECEC plan before revising it or preparing a new plan. In the context of evaluation, the child, guardian and personnel consider for their part how the jointly formulated goals of and agreements on the activities have been taken into account and how these have been accomplished in the ECEC activities. Evaluation of the child's individual ECEC plan is also part of the support for the child's learning and well-being. This evaluation duty is described in more detail in Chapters 1 and 5.

The issues subject to local decisions included at the end of each chapter of the National core curriculum for ECEC steer the preparation of the local curriculum as well as its planning and implementation. The ECEC provider revises the local curriculum and improves its quality and functionality. In addition, local needs and outcomes of development work guide the evaluation.

¹⁰³ Section 24 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

¹⁰⁴ Section 24 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

¹⁰⁵ Section 1 of the Act on the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (1295/2013) and Criteria and recommendations for evaluating the quality of early childhood education, Publications of the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre 24:2018

¹⁰⁶ Section 24 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

¹⁰⁷ Section 20 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

Evaluation as a whole in Espoo

The aim of the evaluation of ECEC in Finnish is to produce up-to-date information on the organization of early childhood education in Espoo and the quality of ECEC. The main requirements for organizing ECEC in Espoo arise from complementary norms guiding ECEC and from Espoo's own policies. Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (2018) has structured the recommendations at national and local level to assess the quality of the content of the structure of ECEC. In Espoo the above-mentioned recommendations and Espoo's curriculum for ECEC serves as a starting point for assessing the quality of ECEC.

Collection of evaluation information in Espoo

The evaluation of ECEC operation requires the collection of diverse quantitative and qualitative activity data. The evaluation information is compiled in Espoo based on ECEC assessment plan. In accordance with this, valuation information at the business unit level is compiled both ECEC operation and operation results. Operation and their results will be evaluated as well from the perspectives of management, staff and customers. Self-assessment data are collected for ECEC provided by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (2018) based on themes formed on the basis of quality structure and process indicators and criteria defined in Espoo.

According to the Assessment plan of Espoo's curriculum for ECEC, information on the operating environment for the organization of ECEC is collected annually from the population, the economy, staff and children and ECEC. Quantitative activity data related to children compiled, inter alia, on the filling and use of ECEC places. Structural indicator data are collected on the number of staff, adequacy, training background and staff well-being at work. Feedback information is collected from guardians, children and staff as detailed below.

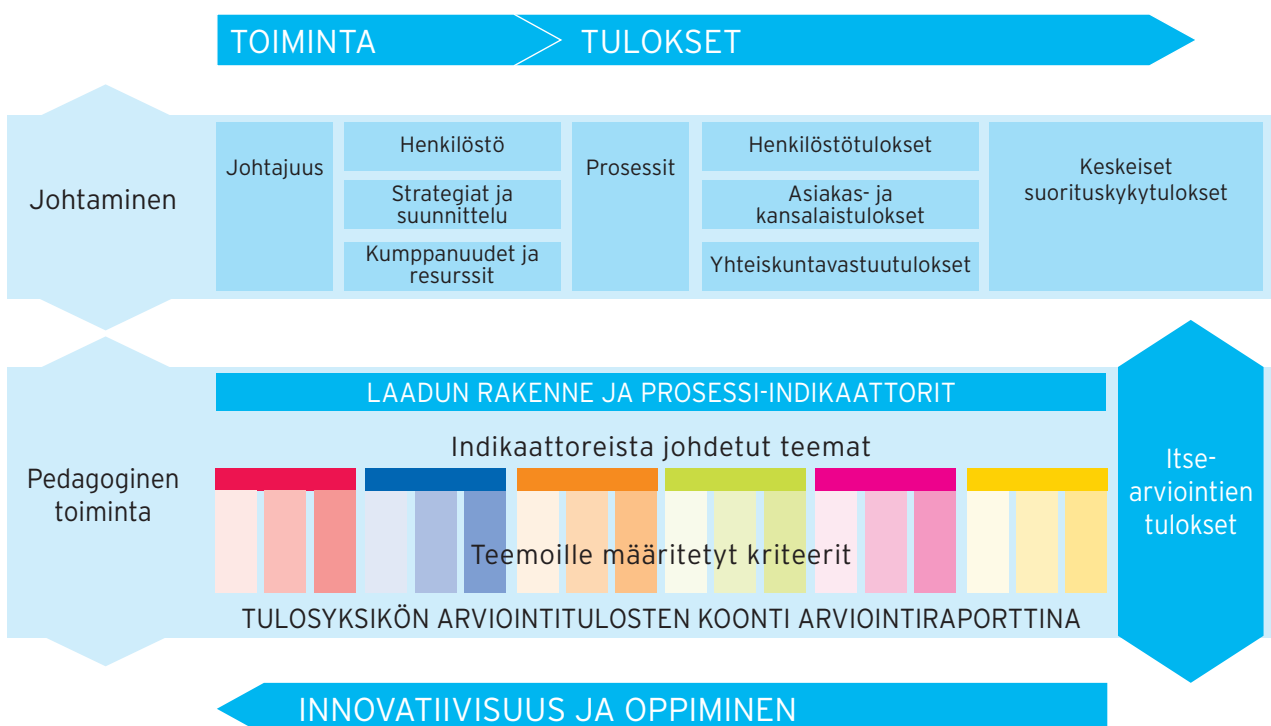
Ways to gather parental assessment feedback:

- electronic customer survey for guardians (twice during the year of operation),
- feedback system,
- emails
- structures for cooperation between early childhood education units; and
- child's learning plan discussions.

Ways to collect staff feedback:

- regular Municipality 10 survey,
- own personnel survey (twice a year during the year of operation),
- development discussion and
- management review (curriculum for ECEC review at the ECEC unit, which serves as a forum for exchanging and discussing experience between staff and management).

Arvioinnin kokonaisuus suomenkielisessä varhaiskasvatuksessa



Ways to collect feedback from children:

- observation of children's well-being and experiences,
- joint discussions between children and staff
- Conscious and planned ways of finding out of children's views in groups of children by different methods (for example, interviews, children's meetings, pedagogical documentation, storytelling, other ways of enabling a child to be active).

With the information gotten from quantified operational data collected as well as surveys made for ECEC staff, ECEC unit directors and guardians and feedback provided by children, the operational development needs are assessed and development measures are planned for the cycle of the continuous improvement operating model. Feedback information is also available in a multiprofessional cooperation. Cooperation with occupational health and others with staff-related partners is important both when collecting and analyzing evaluation data.

ECEC units also receive evaluation information about their activities through self-assessment and observation. On the basis of the evaluation information, development targets are selected, and their development is systematically monitored. The results of the assessments and the development work are discussed in the ECEC units with the guardians.

In municipal ECEC, the staff plans and evaluates the school culture, its development and regularly updates their unit specific local ECEC plans in their structures. Unit specific adjustments are recorded in each child group's own learning plan to guide the groups pedagogical activities and their evaluation.

Head of the ECEC Unit

- Prepares an annual plan for pedagogical management and evaluates its implementation at least once a year also with their supervisor.
- Supports the preparation of group's learning plans of its unit and evaluates the implementation of the pedagogical activities of the group together with the employees of each group, contributing to the realization of the group responsibilities.
- Evaluate with each employee their ECEC skills and the potential need for development of the skill and agrees on the skills development measures needed in development discussions.

ECEC staff

- Evaluate and develop in their weekly meetings under the guidance of an ECEC teacher, the group's school culture, children's learning plans and group activities, and their realization.

In open ECEC, the staff prepares a group learning plan to support and guide the organization of activities, and that takes into account the interests of children. The head of the ECEC unit directs the preparation and of the group's learning plan and evaluates the implementation of pedagogical activities together with the staff.

The head of the ECEC units will present at least once a year to the regional head of ECEC in the development discussion of their annual pedagogical management plan. In the same context, the unit's situation of group's learning plans and different forms of ECEC plan matters are dealt with. The situation will be assessed together, and the necessary actions agreed.

In Espoo, evaluation data is also collected through research and development projects in ECEC and using the Developing Feedback model. In the Developing Feedback model, a trained observer outside the child group makes a guided observation on pre-selected issues and store their findings in an electronic system. On the basis of the received information the content and methods of ECEC are evaluated and developed. The results of the Developing Feedback activity are also utilized in the development of staff competence and training planning.

Self-assessment in the cooperation

Self-assessment is regular in Espoo and is performed in ECEC units and under the guidance of the business unit and with self-direction. Self-assessment is performed in the Espoo Finnish-language ECEC assessment package assessing the implementation of the activities according to the self-assessment themes of the model. In addition, the units can voluntarily assess the realization of other issues that the ECEC unit considers important.

In Espoo, the evaluation emphasizes personnel and management collaborative self-assessment and review. Staff in charge of self-assessment must have confidence to their own strengths and want to see their own actions realistically as well as develop their activities parallel to meet the needs of children. Self-evaluation is especially emphasized in the joint evaluation of pedagogical activities and as an aid to the self-evaluation the information obtained through pedagogical documentation is used and raised understanding. Self-assessments raise areas for development of operations and management.

Regularity of self-assessment means evaluating the daily activities of each adult in a group of children as well as reflection done under the guidance of an ECEC teacher in team meetings about planned ECEC activities and group's own activities. The leadership of pedagogy and its implementation is seen as very important for the quality of ECEC from the perspective of the best interests of the child. The role and activity of the leader is very important both in the self-assessment and in the utilization of the results of the evaluations

in the various activities and ECEC units.

The child's learning plan discussions with the guardians take place and the statement shall be drawn up in accordance with common guidelines. On the basis of the implementation of child's learning plan, the assessment will be carried out jointly with guardians and the child. The child's experiences and views should be clarified before meeting with the guardians in accordance with child's age and development also from the child themselves. Before a child's learning plan discussion ECEC teacher will together with the staff of their group have an evaluative discussion of how the team feels successful in contributing to the child's well-being, development and learning. After a discussion with the guardians, the teacher discusses again with the staff of the group about the implementation of ECEC and the possible necessary changes for pedagogical activities of the group. If changes are needed in the activities or learning environment of a group of children, they are recorded in the group's learning plan. According to the model of continuous improvement for change, the staff of the group sets a common goal (development step) for themselves if needed, and its implementation will be assessed as agreed. Depending on the situation, other members of the group or partners may also participate in the evaluation.

The director is responsible for ensuring that pedagogical reflection and self-assessment are done systematically on a regular basis in team meetings and in the director-led pedagogical group of ECEC teachers, as well as other unit meetings.

The activities and school culture of the ECEC unit are evaluated regularly at bi-annual development and evaluation days. In accordance with the identified needs, the development utilizes the model of continuous improvement already mentioned and, if necessary, setting common small objectives, steps for development and develop the unit's operations through them.

Finnish-speaking ECEC personnel participate in management reviews or learning plan reviews looking at self-assessment and development work in one unit. Self-assessment of ECEC units is a continuous activity that takes place at different levels within the organizational structures and is specified in a separate evaluation plan.

Purchasing service and private ECEC

Purchasing service and private actors following the Espoo curriculum for ECEC present statutory documents and group visits in accordance with the valid instructions at the time of the control and monitoring visits. Private operators complying with their own local curricula for ECEC, the statutory and other required documentation and assessment practices are presented in the guidance provided as well as a municipal guidance and monitoring visit in connection with. The evaluation results are monitored in co-operation between the service provider and the supervisory authority.



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