



*Dear guardians,
This brochure is a short
description of early
childhood education and care
and the changes taking
place in it when the new
curricula for early
childhood education and
care are adopted as
from 1 August 2017.*

Reforming early childhood education and care



Responding to the child's needs, listening to the child, taking into consideration the child's interests, responsible care and enabling play and learning are central aspects of early childhood education and care.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) has recently been a frequent topic of discussion and it has been renewed in many ways. Recent studies have highlighted the favourable effects of ECEC on both the child and society. Qualified personnel is responsible for the planning and implementation of diverse ECEC. Only high-quality ECEC will provide the desired results.

New curriculum for early childhood education and care – what will change?

The new Act on Early Childhood Education and Care entered into force in 2015 and at the same time, the old concept of daycare was replaced with early childhood education and care (ECEC). ECEC is currently regarded as a part of the Finnish education system. The Act on Early Childhood Education and Care also defines 10 objectives for ECEC. You can familiarise yourself with them at [here](#) (in Finnish) and [here](#) (in English) You can buy your own copy if you are interested to read it in English.

The National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care 2016 (in Finnish) is a national regulation issued by the Finnish National Agency for Education. It is used as the basis for preparing the local curricula and children's individual early childhood education and care plans. ECEC is implemented according to these curricula and plans.

The National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care takes into account changes that have taken place in society and in the environment in which children grow up as well as the latest information provided by research. What this means for ECEC is that the ways of thinking and operating will be updated to meet today's needs. The National Core Curriculum defines the framework for uniform and equal implementation of ECEC across Finland. Each provider of early childhood education and care (local authority or a private education provider) has the obligation to draw up local curricula for early childhood education and care highlighting the local focus areas. The easiest way to find the local curricula is to go



to the websites of the local authorities or to the Studyinfo service of the Finnish National Agency for Education. [Have a look!](#) (in Finnish)

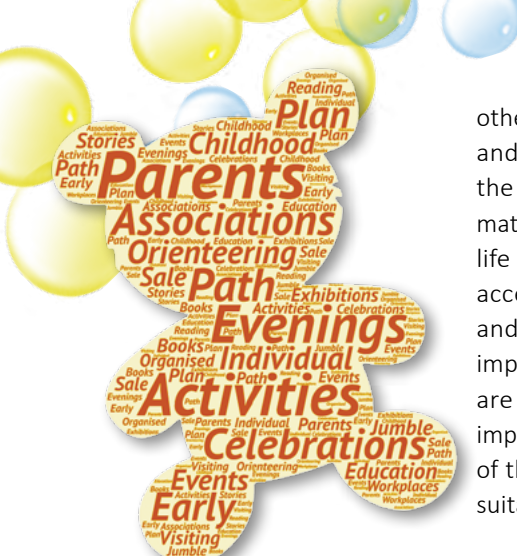
The child's individual early childhood education and care plan

The child's individual early childhood education and care plan is a plan for the implementation of the child's early childhood education and care. It is drawn up for each child in family daycare and ECEC centres. The individual plan is prepared in cooperation with the parents and the child. Many local authorities and private education providers use a form in connection with these discussions. The form is given to the persons attending the discussion in advance so that they can familiarise themselves with it and fill it in. A discussion on the individual plan is then carried out, listening to the child's wishes and opinions and taking them into account.

The individual early childhood education and care plan is a shared plan for promoting the child's individual development, learning and well-being systematically. It is based on knowing and listening to the child and on making observations. The individual plan highlights the child's strengths and resources. The implementation of the plan is discussed regularly with the child and the child's parents. The emphasis of the plan is on the objectives set for pedagogical activities, which are also assessed. If the child needs support in growing up, development or learning, the plan serves as a tool for planning the support.

Engaging children and parents

The thoughts, views and opinions of children should be listened to in the ECEC centre, family daycare and



other early childhood education and care. Children must have the possibility to have a say in matters related to their everyday life and to be understood and accepted as they are. Friends and belonging to a group are important to children. Children are engaged in the planning, implementation and assessment of the activities in ways that are suitable for them.

ECEC creates good conditions for children’s development, learning, participation, safety, well-being and sustainable way of living. Children and their guardians play an important role in the building and development of shared operating methods and agreements.

Cooperation with families is a central part of ECEC. It is essential that the important adults in the child’s life learn to know each other and share the child’s life and experiences every day. Together they can reflect on what is the best way to support the child’s development and learning. Linguistic and cultural diversity and the diversity of families are taken into account in the cooperation. Encounters in which the personnel and families appreciate each other lay a foundation for good cooperation.

Cooperation in an atmosphere of trust is based on the personnel and families genuinely listening to each other and actively catching up with the child’s daily events. When the cooperation takes place in an atmosphere of trust, it is also easier to bring up more difficult issues concerning the child. The personnel’s work becomes easier if the children’s families learn to know each other, and parents also have an opportunity to find peers and network with them.

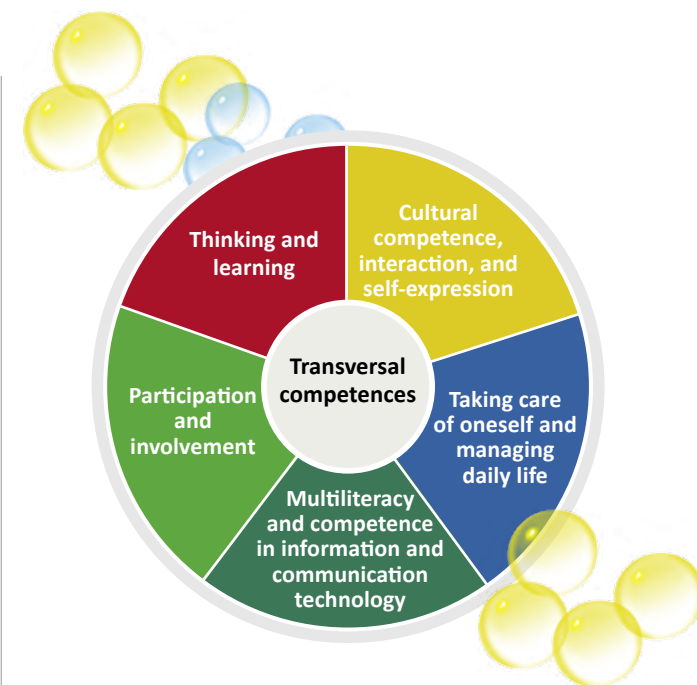
All activities in ECEC are based on shared values and a shared conception of learning, on play and on broad-based competence and content of learning areas (National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care 2016)

The important role of play in children’s life

Play has a significant role in promoting children’s well-being, learning and interaction with others. Play inspires children and provides joy. At the same time, children also learn new skills. They process matters that are important to them through play. ECEC personnel ensure that each child has an opportunity to participate in a variety of play and shared activities. It is important for the personnel to also discuss the importance of play with the child’s guardians.

Knowledge and learning

Later in their life, children will need a variety of skills and knowledge. Skills already start to develop in early childhood and their development continues throughout life. All daily situations in ECEC are meaningful in terms of learning. For example, linguistic and mathematical skills can be practised through nursery rhymes and songs and play when children put on their clothes and at meal times. The themes of the learning areas are combined and applied according to the children’s interests and abilities. Children are provided with opportunities to learn different kinds of new skills through versatile activities. For example, children are encouraged to be physically active, media



and dance performances are created to practice ways of expression with them and trips are made to explore nature and the nearby environment.

The activities are planned in cooperation with the children, for example, by discussing what kind of play environments could be built. A versatile environment, children’s spontaneous and structured play, exploring, physical activity and artistic expression contribute to the child’s learning and development.

In ECEC, children have an opportunity to develop their skills and make choices independently of reasons associated with gender, origin, cultural background or other reasons related to the person.

