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Instructions for preparing a child's early childhood education and care plan

The preparation of a child's early childhood education and care plan (later ECEC plan) is based on the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (540/2018) and the National core curriculum for early childhood education and care (2022).

The basis for a child's ECEC plan should be the child's best interest and needs. The ECEC plan sets out how systematic and goal-oriented education, instruction and care are delivered to each child attending early childhood education and care in keeping with inclusive principles. Inclusive principles include equal rights for all children, equality, equity, non-discrimination, appreciation of diversity as well as social inclusion and togetherness¹. Any support for individual development, learning and wellbeing² provided for the child (later support for the child), its delivery and any support services are also recorded in the child's ECEC plan.

As a pedagogical plan, the child's ECEC plan is part of the pedagogical documentation process in early childhood education and care. The ECEC plan is an evolving document that forms a continuum while the child is attending early childhood education and care. This means that the objectives and measures recorded in the ECEC plan are up to date and essential from the perspective of the child's development, learning and wellbeing. The objectives set in any previous ECEC plan prepared for the child and their attainment are also taken into account in the ECEC plan to be prepared.

An ECEC plan is drawn up for each child at an ECEC centre and in family day care. When preparing an ECEC plan for a child, it is important to be aware of the child's knowledge and skills, strengths, interests and personal needs. The ECEC plan brings together the child's, the guardian's and the personnel's observations and views. The objectives recorded in the ECEC plan describe how pedagogical activities are used to promote the child's development, learning, well-being and participation in the group. Its preparation is also guided by areas of transversal competence and learning. In addition, the child's linguistic, cultural and worldview-related background is taken into account when preparing the plan. The objectives arising from the children's ECEC plans are the starting point for planning and carrying out the child group's activities and developing learning environments and ECEC culture. The objectives recorded in the ECEC plan refer to the personnel's pedagogical activities.

When a child attends supplementary ECEC in addition to pre-primary education, the objectives of pedagogical activities related to early childhood education and care can be recorded in the child's learning plan for pre-primary education. The contents of the ECEC plan related to supplementary early childhood education and care should be recorded in the child's learning plan for pre-primary education. If no learning plan for pre-primary education is drawn up, the child's ECEC plan is prepared, which may take into account the objectives of pre-primary education and describe how the child's learning, growth and well-being are supported in pre-primary education. The learning plan of a child receiving intensified support and the individual educational plan (IEP) of a child receiving special support take ECEC that supplements pre-primary education into account as set out in the National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education (2014). With regard to early childhood education and care

¹ Chapter 1 of the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care 2022

² Section 15a of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (540/2018) and Chapter 5 of the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care 2022



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that supplements pre-primary education, any support must be coordinated with the support provided in pre-primary education and recorded in the child's ECEC plan.

Stages of the ECEC plan process

The ECEC plan process consists of different stages. (See Figure illustrating the ECEC plan continuum):

- **Initial preparation:** the personnel's observations and the child's and the guardian's views are taken into consideration, and the schedule of and responsibilities for the ECEC plan process are agreed.
- **Drawing up a plan:**
 - o an ECEC plan discussion is conducted with the guardian
 - o the realisation of any previous plan is assessed and the next one is planned
 - o multiprofessional and multidisciplinary cooperation is accounted for
 - o the objectives of pedagogical work and measures by which the objectives are reached as well as any other issues related to supporting the child's development, learning and well-being are set down.
- The personnel **discuss** and agree on how the objectives recorded in the ECEC plan are taken into account when planning and carrying out the group's activities.
- The objectives and measures are **assessed**, and detail is added to them as part of continuous development of activities.

The persons responsible for the child's instruction, education and care participate in the ECEC plan process as indicated by their training, job descriptions and responsibilities together with the guardian and the child. If necessary, other experts and requisite parties who support the child's development, learning and wellbeing also participate in the ECEC plan process. To ensure that as diverse a picture as possible can be built, the personnel discuss their observations concerning the child with the guardian and other necessary parties before preparing the ECEC plan.

ECEC plans at an ECEC centre

At ECEC centres, teacher or special education teacher in early childhood education and care is responsible for the planning, implementation and assessment of the ECEC plan process in cooperation with the other personnel members. A person qualified as a teacher (ECEC) is responsible for preparing and assessing the child's ECEC plan. The teacher (ECEC) is additionally responsible for planning the group's activities on the basis of the ECEC plans. A special education teacher (ECEC) participates in assessing the child's support needs, support measures or the provision of support measures as necessary. The teacher (ECEC) and/or special education teacher (ECEC) is responsible for planning multidisciplinary work and organising the tasks related to it together with the personnel otherwise responsible for the child group's education. The competence of a social pedagogue (ECEC) may be tapped in this process, particularly competence related to the service system for children and families³. It is extremely important that the observations, views and knowledge of the multiprofessional team are taken into account in the ECEC plan process.

³ Section 23 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care



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ECEC plans in family daycare

In family day care, guiding the ECEC plan process is important. Depending on what has been decided locally, a head of family daycare, the head of an early education centre or a teacher may be responsible for providing this guidance. A teacher or special education teacher may participate in the ECEC plan process of a child in family daycare and in planning and assessing support provided for the child. The family daycare childminder is responsible for reaching the objectives and carrying out the activities recorded in the child's ECEC plan as part of the group's activities.

Cooperation with the guardian and the child

Discussions with the guardians are part of the ECEC process. It is advisable that the personnel instruct the guardian to prepare for the discussion in advance. The child's opinion and wishes must be heard and taken into account when drawing up the plan. The objective is that the child participates and is heard in all stages of drawing up and assessing the ECEC plan. It is the personnel's responsibility to identify appropriate methods for finding out about the child's views and developing ways in which children can influence the content of activities.

Multidisciplinary cooperation

If necessary, the ECEC plan is prepared and assessed in multidisciplinary cooperation⁴ with experts of social and health services. The cooperation practices and principles are agreed upon with the child health clinic, child welfare services, family counselling centre and other municipal social welfare services. Multidisciplinary cooperation is primarily used subject to the guardian's consent, and it is guided by the principle of the child's best interests.

ECEC plan as a confidential document and transfer of information

The ECEC plan is a confidential document⁵. When information contained in the plan is disclosed, permission for the disclosure is requested from the child's guardian as a rule. Under the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, information necessary for the provision of ECEC can be transferred, however, notwithstanding the confidentiality rule. Information that is essential for the provision of ECEC may, for example, concern the support measures the child needs or the organisation of safe ECEC. The ECEC provider has the right to receive such essential information, for instance from other ECEC providers or from a social welfare and healthcare authority or professional. If the child moves to early childhood education and care provided by another ECEC provider, information essential for ECEC provision may be transferred between the previous and the current provider. The disclosure of information aims at safeguarding the delivery of ECEC in a way that serves the child's best interests.

Under a decision by the National Archives of Finland, the ECEC plan is a document that must be stored permanently and, together with its essential attachments, archived⁶. Rather than keeping them separately in the early childhood education and care file, statements received from social welfare and health care services are archived together with other social welfare and health care documents.

⁴ Sections 3.3 and 5.3 of the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care 2022

⁵ Section 40 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

⁶ National Archives of Finland 2018 (KA/13089/07.01.01.03.01/2018): From 1 August 2017, long-term digital preservation of all documents in digital format. Also note the instructions concerning documents generated before 1 August 2017, or for analogue documents produced after this date. For more information, visit the [website of the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities](#)



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Incorporating a medical care plan in an ECEC plan

To the extent that the information included in the medical care plan is necessary for the provision of the child's early childhood education and care, it is recorded in their ECEC plan.

Administrative decision as part of the ECEC plan process

The ECEC plan can be used when making an administrative decision on provision of intensified or special support or support services for the child. If the child's need for support has been assessed in the ECEC plan, this assessment must be taken into account when issuing an administrative decision on intensified or special support, or a decision on general support services. The child's ECEC plan is updated in keeping with the content of the administrative decision.

Instructions for completing an ECEC plan template

1. Basic information

In the basic information section you record the names, contact details and telephone numbers of the child and the child's guardian or other legal representative. Examples of additional information on communication between the personnel and the guardians include shared custody or order of non-disclosure for personal safety reasons.

2. Preparation of the ECEC plan

The purpose of this section is to ensure that the child and the guardian have an opportunity to participate in drawing up and assessing the plan.

2.1 Name and contact details of the person responsible for preparing the plan

2.2 Other personnel members/experts who participated in preparing the plan

2.3 How were the child's viewpoint and opinions taken into consideration?

2.4 How are the guardians' views taken into consideration and how has cooperation been arranged?

This section can be used to record any wishes related to the family's linguistic or cultural background or worldviews and jointly agreed matters, including home languages, use of interpretation services, or how matters related to worldviews will be communicated about.

3. Multidisciplinary cooperation

In this section you can write down how multidisciplinary cooperation will be carried out, for example with the child health clinic or child welfare services. You can record here the organisations, names and contact details of actors in multidisciplinary cooperation. This section is also used for writing down any jointly agreed matters.

From the perspective of cooperation and services required for the delivery of potential support, attention is paid to

- cooperation with the child and the guardian
- responsibilities for providing support for the child
- use of specialist services
- guidance and consultation provided by social welfare and health care and other necessary professionals
- arrangements and responsibilities for possible transport.



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4. Assessment of how the objectives and measures in any earlier ECEC plan have been realised

The ECEC plan must be assessed and reviewed at least once a year, or more frequently if the child's needs so require. An assessment of the ECEC plan focuses on the realisation of pedagogical work, learning environments and arrangements for the activities as well as the impact of any support and provision of support measures.

ECEC plan reviews are based on assessing the ECEC plan together with the child and the guardian. The objective is to ensure that a child's ECEC plans form a continuum. In this section, you look at a previously prepared ECEC plan and assess the achievement of the objectives set down in it. If this is the child's first ECEC plan, such an assessment will naturally not be carried out. The objectives of the plan and their achievement are monitored and assessed on a regular basis.

Goal-oriented and systematic assessment is essential for maintaining and developing the quality of ECEC. The personnel assess the ECEC plan continuously between reviews, and the objectives are modified as the child's needs change.

4.1 Attainment of objectives and realisation of measures

Which objectives set for the activities have been attained, and which measures have been realised? How well have they succeeded? What has helped or prevented their achievement/realisation?

The focus of the assessment should be on the activities, arrangements, learning environments and pedagogy, not on the child. In connection with the assessment, the personnel, the guardian and the child reflect on how well the objectives set for education, instruction and care have been achieved and if the measures have been appropriate. How have the child's development, learning and well-being been promoted?

Example: The personnel have been practising getting dressed with Annie by using visual aids to guide her and by encouraging her. When we do this, she has no problem getting dressed, so we will continue to use the visual aids.

Example: The support measures described in the previous entry have mainly worked well and been effective, which is why it is worth continuing their use. Assessment of how the support has been realised: the facilities have been provided with visual aids and there are pictures describing the activities, but it is not always possible to use them, and this immediately affects Annie's behaviour. We will put even more emphasis on using visual aids in the future.

4.2 Assessment of support provided for the child

Have the support and support measures provided for the child been effective and adequate? How have the agreed pedagogical, structural and/or care-related forms of support been delivered and what impacts have they had? How have the agreed cooperation practices been realised?

The child's need for support and the adequacy, appropriateness and effectiveness of support must be assessed and monitored, and the plan must be updated whenever the child's support needs change. This impact assessment of the support includes a description of the support measures, an assessment of how effective they have been and how they should be developed, and justifications for the types of support measures that the child benefits from and that optimally promote the individual child's best interests. If the child receives intensified or special support, the child's ECEC plan is updated in keeping with the content of the relevant administrative decision.



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4.3 Other observations on a previous ECEC plan prepared for the child

Example: Appointments with the occupational therapist have been cancelled and the child has not participated in the planned rehabilitation for a long time.

5. Objectives of pedagogical activities and measures for achieving the objectives. The objectives and measures apply to education, instruction and care as a whole and support provided for the child.

In this section you describe the child-specific objectives of pedagogical work and the measures for achieving them.

5.1. The child's strengths, interests and needs and how they are taken into consideration

The child's key strengths and interests as well as needs are described in the ECEC plan as the basis for setting the objectives and planning activities.

Example: Sam is very interested in building things. Sam's father tells us that Sam is very clever at building with Legos at home. Sam is slow at understanding the concept of numbers. We will start to use building toys as a way of supporting learning, for example when we practise numbers and colours. The personnel will name the colours of building blocks and say how many layers there are.

Example: Ellie is very active physically. Physical activity is indeed her strength, and she goes to a circus school with her mother. Ellie also wants to move around a lot during her day at the ECEC centre. We will incorporate physical activity in our plans for the group's activities. We will also take physical activity into consideration in transition situations: for example, children can use frog leaps when moving from place to place.

Example: When I talked to Sara and her mother, they told me that Sara is keen on building with Duplos, and she likes talking about their colours. We will also plan building activities at the ECEC centre and go through colours and other words (big, behind, in front of) at the same time.

5.2 Objectives of pedagogical work

In this section you record the key objectives of the personnel's pedagogical work. The child's strengths, interests and needs should be used when setting the objectives. The child's emerging skills and how they can be advanced through pedagogical work are taken into consideration in this section. It is essential to set down goals for the child's education, instruction and care. You also account for areas of transversal competences and learning in this section. In addition, any objectives relevant to support for the child's development, learning and wellbeing related to general support are recorded here.

Example: We will encourage Arthur to participate in group activities. Arthur has said that he does not want to speak in a large group (when there are lots of children, adults, sounds and noise around him). He talks a lot when alone with a personnel member as well as in play and games. We have agreed with Arthur and his guardians that we will practise the skill of courage together. (example continues in section 5.3)

Example: We will help Nea to calm down in situations in which everyone is required to sit still. Nea likes singing and participating in the singing sessions of the whole child group. (example continues in section 5.3)

Example: (Background information: Abdullah's family moved to Finland a year ago, and the child started attending ECEC two months ago.) We will help Abdullah to develop his Finnish vocabulary.



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5.3 Measures and methods for achieving the objectives

In this section you record the concrete pedagogical measures and methods used for achieving the objectives set for pedagogical work. The methods must be recorded in such concrete terms that assessing the success in their realisation will be possible.

Example in section 5.2 continues. We will encourage Arthur to say what he thinks in a group situation, for example by using the thumb up – thumb down method, and later verbally. We will talk about the skill of courage and about anxiety with all children and learn to encourage others. We will make sure that the atmosphere is encouraging.

Example in section 5.2 continues. We will try to minimise the time the children spend sitting still and enable physically activity between the activities if sitting is necessary. We have also tried using a weighted dog, and it would seem to calm Nea down. We asked Nea what would help her the most: “When I have the dog, its weight is here (pointing to her legs) and they don’t move. I don’t feel so much like running around then. Jumping would help, too.”

Example in section 5.2 continues. We name things and objects and use pictures both in daily recurring activities and when using less common words to develop Abdullah's Finnish vocabulary. The family can use the pictures attached to the diary to talk about Abdullah’s day with him at home.

5.4. Additional information related to language and culture

In this section you record the objectives of and methods for supporting the language proficiency, linguistic and cultural identities and self-esteem of foreign-language and multilingual children in a versatile manner.

Finnish/Swedish as a second language is taught in ECEC with a goal-oriented approach and underpinned by pedagogical planning in different areas of linguistic skills and capabilities based on children's needs and abilities.⁷

In this section, you can also write down other, more detailed information about language and culture related to the pedagogical objectives and measures, including the Sámi language, Roma language and sign language.

5.5 Any other needs related to support provided for the child's development, learning and wellbeing as well as objectives and forms of support related to the delivery of support for the child (pedagogical, structural and care-related)

In this section you record any needs associated with support for the child as well as the objectives and activities related to delivering this support, or pedagogical, structural and care-related forms of support. Any support services provided for the child are also recorded here.

The ECEC plan can be used when making an administrative decision on the provision of intensified or special support or support services for the child. If the child's need for support has been assessed in the **child's** ECEC plan, this assessment must be taken into account when issuing an administrative decision on intensified or special support, or a decision on general support services. The child's ECEC plan is updated in keeping with the content of the administrative decision.

When the child receives support in early childhood education and care, any matters essential for pedagogical work/activities are recorded in child's ECEC plan:

⁷ Chapter 4.6 of the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care 2022



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Forms of pedagogical support

- solutions related to the structure and daily routines of the child's day in ECEC
- solutions related to learning environments
- the required special pedagogical methods
- interaction and communication methods, including the use of signs and images
- practices that enable the child to participate in the activities of the peer group, including addressing accessibility.

Forms of structural support

- building the personnel's skills in delivering support and competence in special pedagogy
- solutions related to the staffing ratio and structure
- solutions related to the size and structure of the child group
- interpretation and assistance services and the use of special aids
- a small or special group or other group form as required
- part-time or full-time teaching provided by or in consultation with a special education teacher.

Care-related forms of support

- methods related to basic care, attention and assistance
- health care needs, including assistance and aids related to the treatment, medication, diet and physical activity associated with the child's chronic illnesses.

In addition, any social welfare and health care services, including rehabilitation received by the child, are recorded in the ECEC plan if this is essential for organising the child's early childhood education and care.

Example: We use visual aids in all our activities with Eric. Visual aids help the child to concentrate on getting dressed and divide activities into smaller parts.

Example: Once a week, Vera participates in ECEC in an interactive playgroup supervised by a special education teacher with the particular aim of....

Example: We have noticed that especially a structured environment and permanence are important to Annie: we will split the tasks (challenging tasks first), ensure a quiet place for her to work in (especially sounds), we will provide visual aids for the facilities and activities (a special education teacher will create a folder of visual aids together with Annie's occupational therapist). Recurring daily routines and permanence in the personnel looking after the group would be important

5.6 Administrative decision on providing support for the child

If an administrative decision on support for the child has been issued, enter its date here. If the administrative decision is revoked, this date should also be recorded in the child's ECEC plan.

Other information related to the administrative decision can be recorded under other observations.

5.7 Detail added during the year as required by the child's needs

The purpose of this section is to ensure continuous monitoring of how the objectives and measures included in the ECEC plan are realised. Continuous assessment refers to adding detail to the objectives and activities based on observation and pedagogical documentation. It ensures that the child's ECEC plan is kept up to date.



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Example in section 5.3 continues: Arthur has already found the courage to say a few sentences in group situations.

Example in section 5.3 continues: Nea has participated in singing practice in the hall and, for the last two weeks, managed to sit still.

6. Any other issues to be addressed in the child's early childhood education and care

In this section you record any other issues to be addressed, including those related to naps, meals or getting dressed.

7. Documents and plans used in drawing up the ECEC plan

When drawing up the ECEC plan, any other plans, such as a medical care plan and a plan for learning Finnish as a second language, can be used.

8. Dates for monitoring and assessment

In this section you record information on any further plan agreed on with the guardians and the next date on which the plan will be assessed.