

COUNTRY REPORT (FINLAND)



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1. Finland in brief

The **population** of Finland is 5.5 million, 18.1 inhabitants per km². The life expectancy of men is 78 years, and of women 84 years. The official languages are Finnish (spoken by 87.9%), Swedish (5.2%) and Sámi, which is the mother tongue of about 1,900 indigenous Sámi people of northern Lapland. The majority of Finnish people are Lutherans, 74 %. A small minority are Orthodox. There are also other religions, mainly due to the growing immigrant population. In practice the Finnish society is fairly secularized.

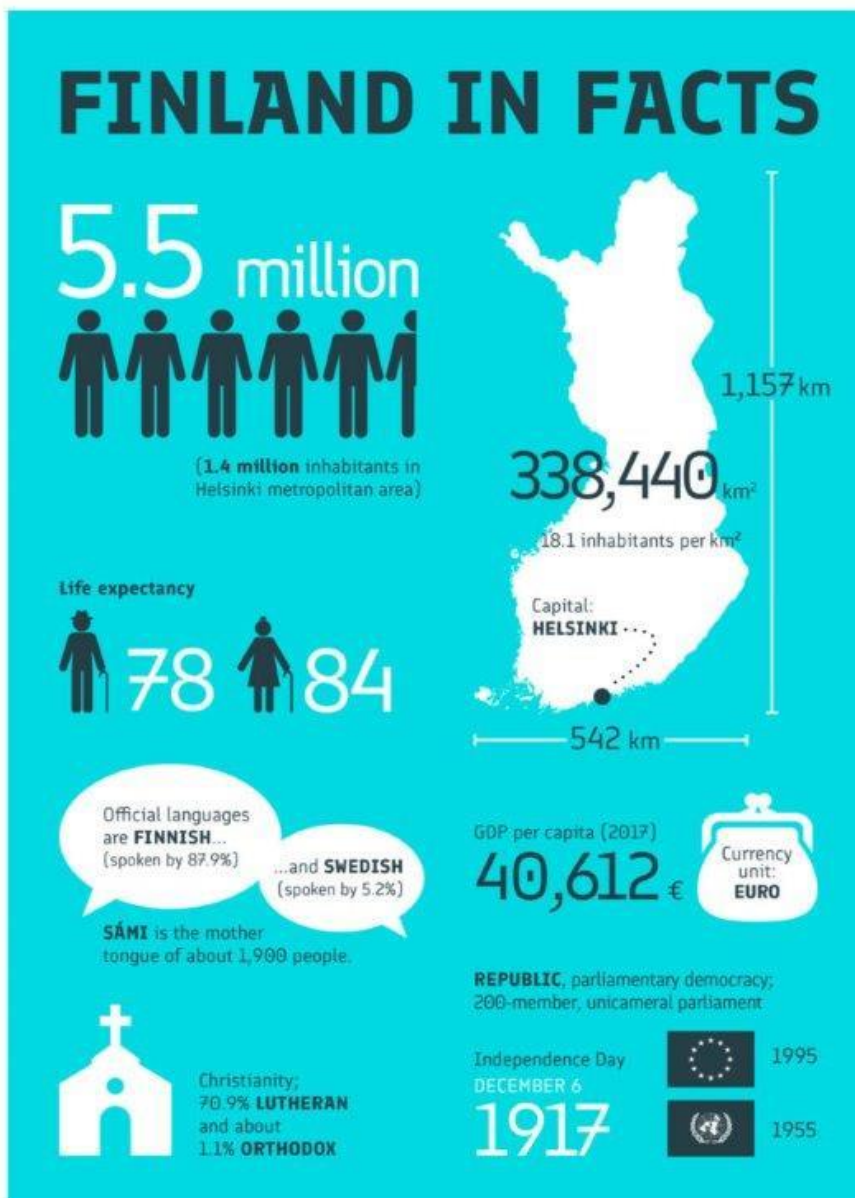


Image 1. Facts about Finland

Brief history

Finland's independence was declared on December 6th of 1917. Previously Finland was a grand duchy in the Russian empire for 108 years, and a part of Sweden for 600 years before that. Civil war in 1918 divided the nation but Winter War in 1939 and Continuation War in 1944 reunited the people. A new era of industrialization, urbanization, and development of welfare state began. Finland joined the European Union in 1995.

Geography

Finland's area is 338,440 km² (131,991 square miles) and it is the fifth-largest country in Western Europe. Greatest length from north to south is 1,157 km (717 miles) and greatest width from east to west: 542 km (336 miles). The capital is Helsinki with about 650 000 inhabitants, and with 1.4 million inhabitants in the larger Metropolitan area. The climate is varying with cold winters and fairly warm summers.

Every fifth of Finnish lives in the Metropolitan area, which consist of Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Kauniainen and surrounding cities Hyvinkää, Järvenpää, Kerava, Kirkkonummi, Tuusula, Nurmijärvi, Sipoo, Vihti, Mäntsälä and Pornainen (Image 2).

Finland has nine cities with a population exceeding 100,000: Helsinki, Espoo, Jyväskylä, Tampere, Vantaa, Turku, Oulu, Lahti and Kuopio. They account for one per cent of Finland's area, but for 30 per cent of the country's population, and for as much as 40 per cent of all jobs.



Image 2. Helsinki Metropolitan area

State, government and local authorities

Finland is a **republic** with a parliament consisting of 200 members in one chamber elected every 4 years in a direct vote. The government is run by Prime Minister Antti Rinne (Social Democratic) and consists of the following parties: Social Democratic Party of Finland, Left Alliance, Green League, Centre Party, and Swedish People's Party of Finland.

Head of State is **President of the Republic**, elected every 6 years, with the maximum of two-terms. The current President is Mr Sauli Niinistö, elected in 2012, and re-elected in 2018. Finland is a member of the United Nations since 1955 and of the European Union since 1995.

Finland has **311 municipalities** (2017). Over this decade the number of municipalities has decreased from 448 (2002) to 311 (2017). Despite of reunion of municipalities, they tend to be small, i.e. more than half of the municipalities have fewer than 6,000 residents. The largest municipality by area is Inari in Northern Finland (15.055 km²) and the smallest is Kauniainen in the Helsinki metropolitan area (5.9 km²). The smallest municipalities in the Finnish archipelago have fewer than 200 residents.

Finland has **19 regions**, of which 18 are located on mainland. The autonomous province of Åland is an island off the country's southwest coast. Every region has a [regional council](#), which is the region's statutory joint municipal authority. Every municipality must be a member of a regional council.

Local authorities, i.e. municipalities or joint municipalities have broad **responsibility for the provision of basic public services** for their residents. Municipalities have strong self-government based on local democracy and decision-making, and the right to levy taxes. Finnish local and joint municipal authorities employ over 422,000 persons (2015), which is approximately 20 per cent of Finland's workforce.

Society and Economy

Finland is known abroad about its high standard of education, social security and healthcare, all financed by the state with public means. GDP per capita is 40,612 euros (2017). Finland exports e.g. electro-technical goods, metal products, machinery, transport equipment, wood and paper products, and chemicals. The country imports raw materials, investment goods, energy, consumer goods (for example cars and textiles). The Finnish currency is Euro.

Architecture and design

Finland is known for its architecture and design. The most famous architect is Alvar Aalto, who's modern, minimalistic and aesthetic lines are present in contemporary Finnish society. The newest trend is wood architecture. A striking example of it is the Helsinki Central Library, open as of December 5, 2018. The new library received the name Oodi (Finnish for "ode"). Finland is also known for its every day design, like textiles (Marimekko, Finlayson, Pentik), furniture (Artek), or clothes (IvanaHelsinki, Halti, Rukka, SamsoeSamsoe).

2. Child and family policy

Number of families with children

According to Statistics Finland, there were 1,469,000 families in Finland at the end of 2018. In 2018 the number of families declined by 2,800, and thus continued on the downward path that started the year before. The contraction is almost at the same level as the annual growth some years ago.

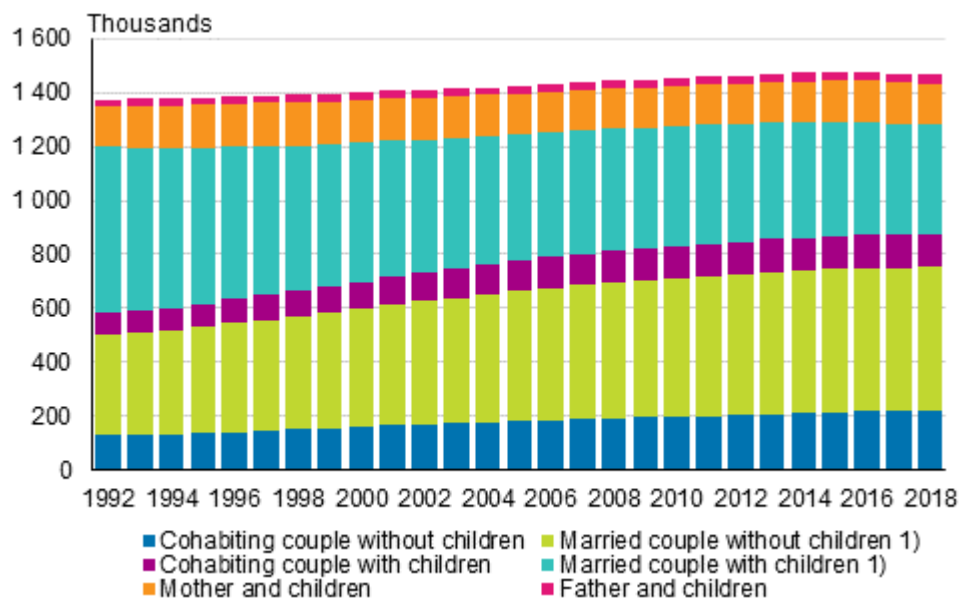


Image 3. Number of families in Finland during 1992-2018

At the end of 2018, around 38 per cent of the population belonged to a family with children. The number of families with children was in total 562,000. Of all families with children

- 58 % were married couples,
- 20 % cohabiting couples,
- 19 % mothers with children,
- 3 % fathers with children,
- 785 families of same-sex couples.

The Finnish Constitution guarantees the right of all people living in Finland to adequate social and health services, basic income security and essential subsistence and care. The social protection system includes various forms of financial support and benefits designed to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to take part in working life and society in general. The aim of Finland's family policy is to create a safe environment for children to grow up in and to provide parents with the material and psychological means to have and raise children. In Finland, support for families consists of three elements: financial support, services and various types of family leaves. The most important forms of support for families are child benefit, early childhood education and care services, and maternity and child health clinics.

Family leaves and benefits

Maternity grant

Every expectant mother who is a permanent resident in Finland is entitled to a maternity grant when her pregnancy has lasted at least 154 days, provided that she had a health examination before the end of the fourth month of pregnancy. Maternity grants are also available to adoptive parents.

Expectant mothers can choose to receive their maternity grant either as a lump sum in cash or in the form of a maternity package. The maternity grant is tax-free. The maternity package contains clothes and childcare items needed for a new-born child. Most families consequently opt for this "baby box" rather than the cash benefit.



Image 4. The "baby box" can also be used as the baby's first bed

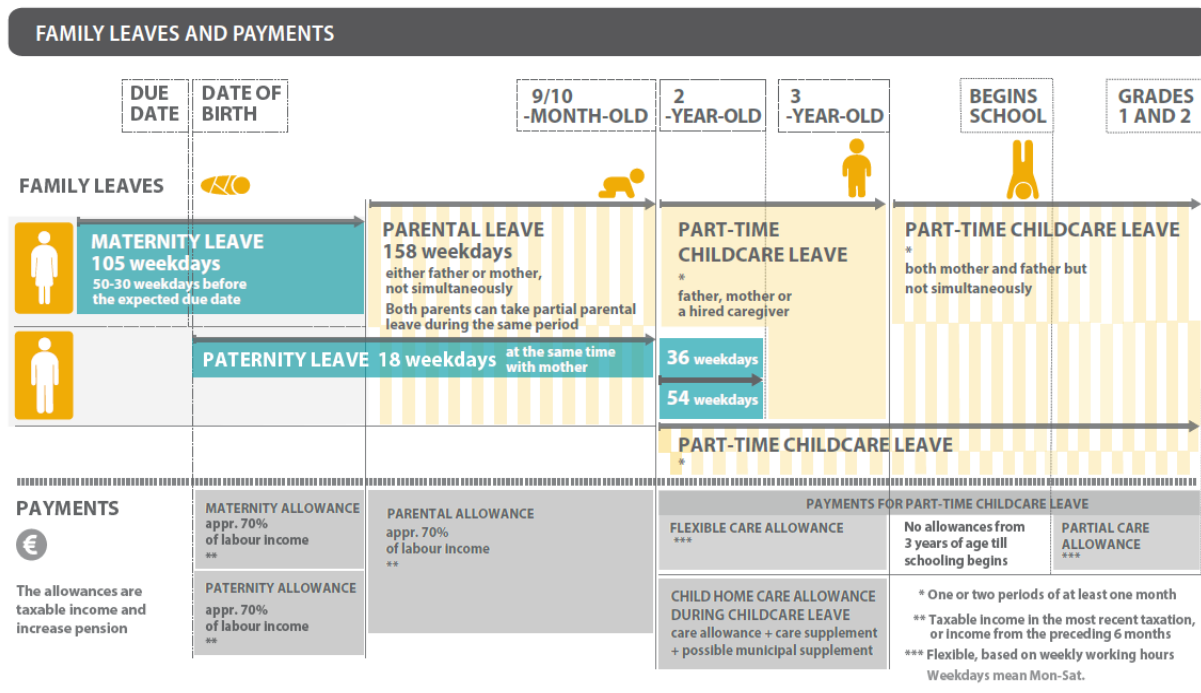


Image 5. Family leaves and allowances.

Family leaves

Parents are entitled to **maternity leave, paternity leave, and parental leave** based on pregnancy, birth and childcare. If the whole paternity leave is taken immediately after the parental benefit period, the child will be about 11 months old when the parental leaves end.

The parental benefit period starts after the maternity benefit period and its duration is about six months (158 working days). The parents decide together whether they will split the parental benefit period or whether one of them will use the whole period. Both parents may also take partial parental leave during the same period. Adoptive parents, single parents and parents with two or more new-born babies have right for extended parental leave.

Parental leave and childcare leave give both parents an equal opportunity to spend time caring for the child. The objective is to safeguard the child's wellbeing, the building of the relationship between the child and his or her parents and subsistence of the family, as well as to secure the workplace of a parent who returns to work after family leave.

Maternity allowance, paternity allowance and parental allowance are determined on the basis of previous income and paid for the duration of the leave. Persons with no previous income receive the minimum allowance. The purpose of the benefit system for children and families is to safeguard the subsistence of the child and those responsible for his or her care, and to support the care of the child. The benefits are applied for at the Social Insurance Institution, Kela. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is responsible for developing and preparing the legislation concerning family benefits.

Child benefits

Child benefit is paid from government funds for the support of every child under the age of 17 residing in Finland. Child benefit is tax-free income. Eligibility is not affected by the family's financial situation. The amount depends on the number of children in the family.

Of all parental benefit days 90 % are used by mothers. Father is more likely to take parental leave when having a spouse who highly educated and white-collar, his first child is born, he is employed in the public sector, his and his spouse's gender ideology is based on sharing paid & unpaid work ((Lammi-Taskula 2007). Approximately 20 % of fathers take no leave.

Childcare leave and child home-care allowance

As an alternative of early childhood education organized by the municipality, the family may apply for child home-care allowance. Parents of small children have a right to take unpaid leave from work to be able to care for a child until the child's third birthday. Both parents cannot be on child care leave at the same time. Families are entitled to care leave and home care allowance (HCA) with flat-rate benefit (€338/month) until child is 3 years old. The family is entitled to a child home-care allowance during child care leave. Recipients of HCA are mainly (93 %) mothers.

3. Services to families with children

Services aimed at families support parents or other guardians in their efforts to ensure the well-being and good upbringing of children. Services can be divided into health care services, social services, child welfare services and ECEC -services. Family centre integrates universal and early support health and social services for families with children (Source: STM)

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

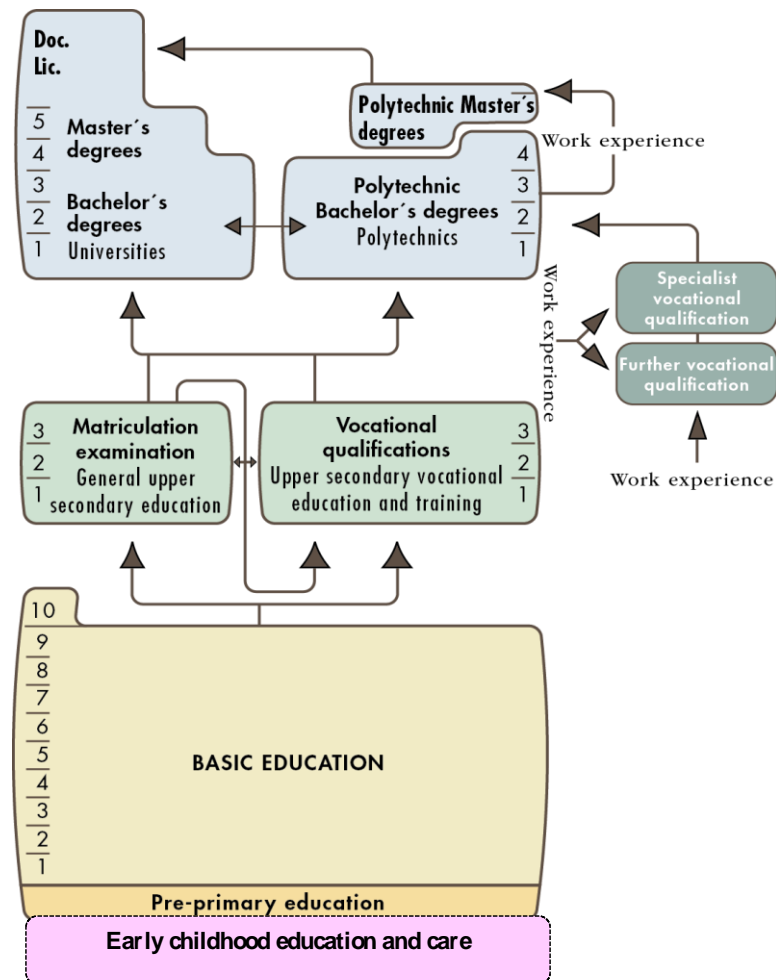


Image 6. Finnish education system

ECEC as part of education

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) refers to the systematic and goal-oriented entity that consists of upbringing, education and care of children, placing special emphasis on pedagogy. Finnish ECEC is based on an integrated approach to education, care and teaching, the so-called “edu-care” model. The system could be described as holistic as the provision covers both the goal-oriented early childhood education open to children and the day-care arrangements offered to families.

ECEC is provided for all children under compulsory school age (7 years). The final year before compulsory education, when the child is 6 years, is called **pre-primary education**. Pre-primary education is provided either in schools or in day-care centres, depending on the municipality.

In Finland ECEC is part of the education system. The overall planning, guidance and monitoring of the services are the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture. This applies both to private and public ECEC services.

Local authorities are responsible for ensuring that ECEC is provided in accordance with the needs of children and families. ECEC is provided as centre-based activities, family-based activities and open ECEC activities, all of these either by local authorities or private service providers. The various forms of open early childhood education activities for children and their families are organised by municipalities as well as clubs run by local parishes and other non-governmental organisations. There are also round-the-clock services for children, whose parents work in shifts.

Children can participate in early childhood education and care on a full-time or part-time basis. According to the ECEC Act (2018/540) there is a 20-hour weekly unconditional right to early childhood education and care for all children once parental leave comes to an end (at about 10/11 months). If parents work or study ECEC is provided full-time. Full-time service is also provided if the child or family needs additional support or there are other reasons why a full-time place would be beneficial for the child.¹ Pre-primary education is provided 700 hours/year, which is 20 hours weekly during the academic year. Municipalities provide also morning and afternoon activities for school children on first and second grades. For this the municipalities receive a state subsidy, but parents still have to pay a small fee for the service.

Participation in ECEC

The parents or guardians of the child decide whether or not their child participates in early childhood education and care. Participation in pre-primary education has been compulsory since August 2015.

¹ A new Government Bill to change the Act is in process. After the Parliamentary process, unconditional right to full time ECEC will be restored in August 2020.

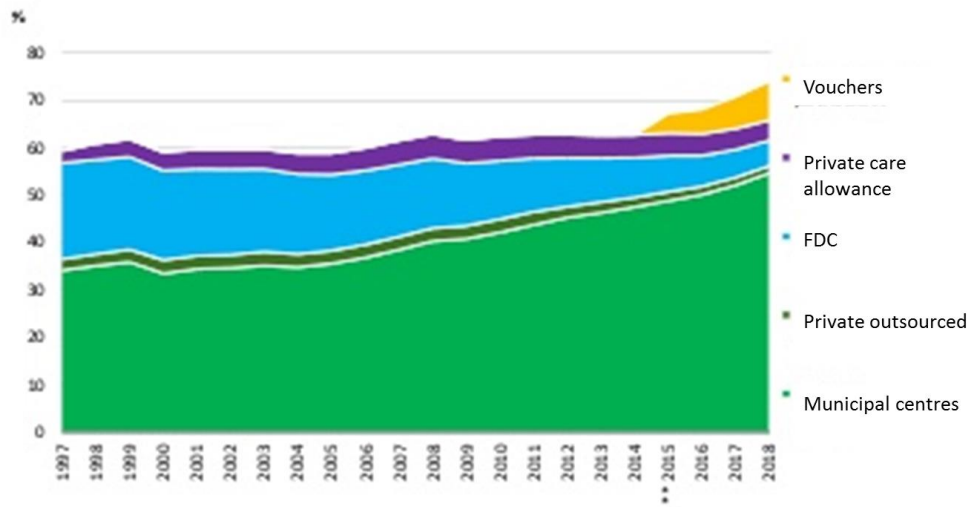


Image 7. % of Proportion of children attending ECEC according to the service provider

The number of children attending ECEC has increased over the years, although the birth rate is falling. The share of family day-care (FDC) has decreased and centre-based ECEC has increased during the last 20 years. Municipalities have provided vouchers to promote private ECEC services since 2015. Before that it was more common to outsource services to private providers. The share of privately organised ECEC services is around 15%.

Basically all children at the age of 6 attend pre-primary education.

Table xx shows that the participation in ECEC increases with age. Pre-primary education, the participation rate of which is 100%, is not included in the table. However, the figure shows that around 75% of children attending pre-primary education (20 hours weekly) need ECEC full time.

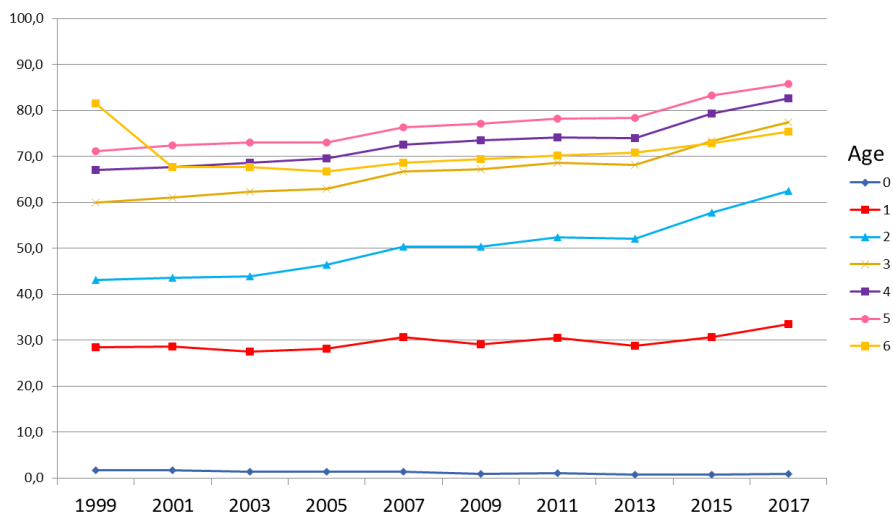


Image 8. % of children attending ECEC at different ages

Fees in ECEC

Parents pay a client fee in early childhood education and care. In services provided by municipalities, the fee depends on family size, income, and the number of hours that the child takes part in ECEC. The maximum fee per child in ECEC is 289€ / month. If the fee would be less than 27€/ month, parents do not pay at all. If there is more than one child in a family, the fee for the family's second youngest child is at most 50% of the fee for the family's youngest child, i.e. a maximum of EUR 145. The fee for the family's next children is 20% of the fee charged for the youngest child.

The prices for private early childhood education and care are determined by the service provider. To compensate the costs for families, municipalities may provide service vouchers for private services or a family can receive a private childcare allowance to help cover the costs. Pre-primary education (20 hours per week) is provided free of charge.

Day-care centres and family day-care provide children necessary daily meals (usually breakfast, lunch and a snack), the cost of which is included in the service fee. Meals are provided for free also in pre-primary education.

Staff in ECEC

All staff in ECEC must be qualified. According to the regulation, in day-care centres 1/3 of the staff must be qualified early childhood teachers, who have a tertiary level education. This means either Bachelor level at the academic university or at the polytechnics (University of Applied Sciences). 2/3 of the centre staff must have a secondary level vocational education of practical nurse. Staff in family day-care must have appropriate training, which is mostly a competence based further vocational qualification. In pre-primary education all teachers must have either a Bachelor degree in early education, or the qualification of a class teacher (Master of Education).

The adult-to-child ratio in day-care centres for children under 3 years is 1 to 4, and for children 3-7 years 1 to 8². The ratio in family day-care is 1 to 4 full-time children plus 1 half time pre-school or first grade child. In pre-school the maximum group size is 13 children. This can be extended to 20 children if the teacher has an assistant.

ECEC curriculum steers the pedagogy

The Finnish National Agency for Education decides on the national Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care in accordance with the Early Childhood Education and Care Act. The guidelines cover all forms of publicly operated and supervised ECEC. Municipalities are to use them to assess the extent to which their ECEC services meet the standard and to specify the content and modes of action for different ECEC activities in their own curricula. The guidelines serve as a basis for local and municipal curricula and for the curricula implemented in the ECEC units. They emphasise the importance of ECEC in the educational continuum as part of lifelong learning. Hence, the content and aims are linked to the Core Curriculum for Pre-School Education.

The curriculum guidelines do not set goals to the child's development. All goals aim at the educational process and the environment. The guidelines challenge the educator communities to reflect upon their work and interaction in the community of children and adults.

² A new Government Decree to change the ratio of children 3-7 years into 1 to 7 is under process.

An individual ECEC plan is drawn up for each child in ECEC in collaboration with parents or guardians, while the implementation of the plan is assessed regularly. It consists of the objectives and measures to support the child's development, learning and wellbeing, and the need for special support where necessary. Attention can be paid to the child's individuality by discussing the child's interests, strengths, needs and future prospects. Drawing up the plan together provides a good basis for the child's day-to-day life and also for life as a whole.



Image 9. ECEC activities of children under the age of 3

Health services

Maternity and child welfare clinics, school health services, student healthcare services and oral health services provide healthcare, oral healthcare and medical care for children and young people. Maternity clinics support the wellbeing of expectant mothers, fathers and the foetus and newborn. Child health clinics monitor and support the physical, psychological and social development and healthy growth of children under school age, as well as the wellbeing of the whole family (STM).

- [Maternity and child health clinics](#)
- School health services
- Student healthcare services
- Oral healthcare

In maternity services there are 8-9 regular check-ups for each pregnant woman and 2 after the delivery. If there is a need for extra support, extra visits are given as well as home visits during pregnancy or after childbirth. Child health is monitored with nine (9) check-ups before child's first year and 6 between the years 1-6 (Hakulinen et al. 2018).

Social services

Municipal social services are services for persons with disabilities, special care services for people with intellectual disabilities, supplementary and preventive social assistance, child protection, rehabilitative work activities, conciliation in connection with child custody and rights of access, family work and informal care support. Social services are often grouped according to the lifecycle model into services for families

with children, services for adults and services for older people even if they are based on the same legislation. Services that benefit families with children include, among others:

- home services
- family work
- child guidance and family counselling
- supervision of contact sessions between parents and children.

Child welfare services

Child welfare promotes child development in situations where the parents cannot alone manage their child's care and upbringing. Child Welfare safeguards the growth, development and wellbeing of children and youth and to support parenting. The local authorities in each Finnish municipality are responsible for organizing child welfare services. Child welfare services varie from preventive actions to substitute care.

- Preventive child welfare
- Open care
- Emergency placement
- Taking into care
- Substitute care

4. Family centres and open meeting places

The family centre refers to an integrated set of services for children and families. Family centre aims to promote welfare, health, growth and development of children and families as well provide with early support, care and rehabilitation. Family centres provide services for all children and families. Currently there are 138 family centres and over 500 open meeting places in Finland.

Family centre model has been developed in Finland over three decades. NGO of Mannerheim League for Child Welfare made a first initiative in the end of 1980's to establish family-activity-centres accessible for all children and families. Alongside with NGO initiatives some municipalities started to develop accessible low-threshold family places and provide structured parenting support programmes early 2000s. The national FAMILY-project (2005-2007) launched the idea of family centre as an integrated service unit /network consisting of universal services and early support across social-, health-, early childhood education and school services. During The Program to address child and family services, (2016-2018, abbreviation LAPE) the family centre model was re-modelled to the current form.

Services

Development of family centre has progressed from a practice-based parent program approach to municipal-based service network and further to the county/joint municipal -based integrated service set. Family centres serve all families with children, including diverse forms of families like families with disabled child and families with an immigrant background. Services are meant also for young people. An integrated part of the family centre is one or several open meeting places. Family centre network integrates and coordinates: 1) Health services for families with children, 2) Social services for families with children, 3)

ECEC –services and activities promoting health and welfare, 4) Activities of non-governmental organizations and parishes.

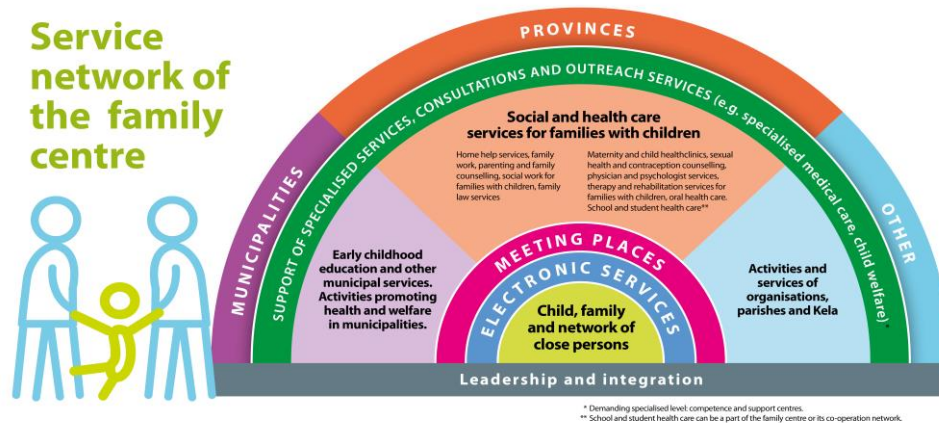


Image 10. Service-network of the Finnish family centre

Functions

Family centre provides help, support and care for all children and families. According to progressive universalism all children and families are provided systematic and regular health promotion and monitoring in maternity and child health care clinics as well as an opportunity for participation in group-based and peer support in open meeting places. In addition family centres provide early support in any everyday concerns, but particularly in case of separation /divorce, intimate relationship problems, domestic violence or issues related to multicultural or minority background (Perhekeskus verkkosivut, Lape muutosohjelma 2019).

- 1) Promotion and monitoring health and wellbeing of family and child, incl. growth
- 2) Serving as a communal meeting place and enabling peer support
- 3) Help for amiable separation and continuation of parenthood
- 4) Prevention of domestic and intimate partner violence
- 5) Support for parenthood and intimate relationship
- 6) Acknowledgement of diversity and multiculturalism of children and their families

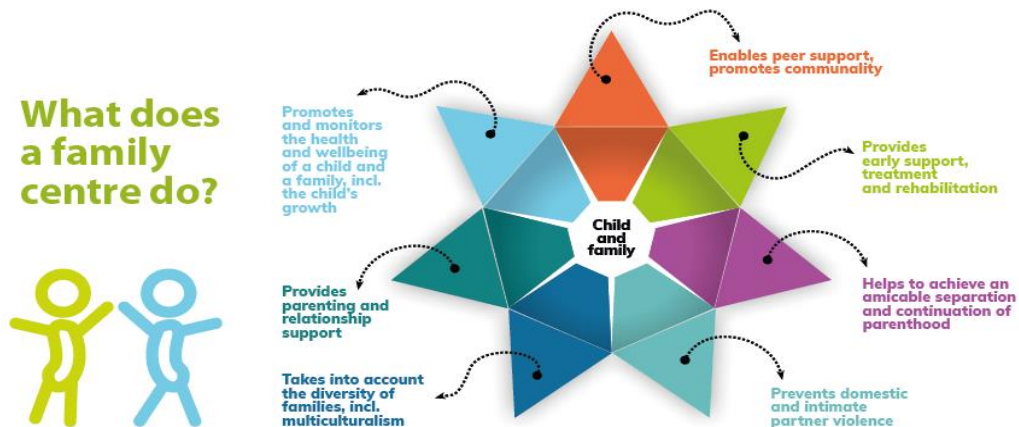


Image 11. Care and support available at the family centre

Open meeting places

An integrated part of the family centre is open meeting place. Open meeting place (OMP) encounters all parents, children and adolescents, and provides peer support for adults and opportunities for play and activities for children. The meeting place strengthens participation, interaction and resources of children and families and supports families' good everyday life. The activities enhance children's, adolescents' and families' health and wellbeing. The goal of the open meeting place is to:

- ❖ strengthen parenting resources
- ❖ establish peer relationships and friendships
- ❖ reduce experiences of loneliness
- ❖ make everyday life easier for families with children
- ❖ offer play activities and playmates for children
- ❖ promote adolescents' feeling of being encountered and helped
- ❖ promote integration of immigrant families into society
- ❖ build togetherness
- ❖ increase the equality of families.

Open meeting places are operated by provinces/joint municipalities, municipalities, non –governmental organizations and/or parishes. Volunteers and families themselves play an important role, especially in family cafes and houses run by NGOs. Open meeting places are operated in kindergartens, family houses, child and family clubs, family cafes, open meeting rooms.



Image 12. Network of open meeting place actors

Open meeting places provide low-threshold activities in form of informal interaction, peer support for parents, playing activities and facilities for children, support for young people early on and opportunities for voluntary work. Open places provide information, advice, lectures, guidance and counselling and assist families in accessing further support. Furthermore, OMPs provide professional help and expertise also for individual families and children. Professionals may guide family to seek extra support or professionals from other services.

Quality Criteria and assessment tool of open activities

In order to benchmark integration, accessibility and sense of communality of open meeting places, specific quality criteria were developed. Criteria help family centres, NGOs, municipalities' open ECEC services and parishes to develop activities in line with the Meeting Place's objectives and tasks. Criteria form a basis for local meeting place actors and family centres for organization and development. The quality criteria of open meeting places are:

1. Integration with the family centre
2. Systematic operation
3. Coordination of activities
4. Accessibility
5. Building togetherness and communality
6. Encounters and support
7. Information about activities
8. Competence and professional attitude

On the basis of the national criteria an evaluation tool for monitoring, evaluating and developing the activities was created. The evaluation may be carried out as a self-evaluation, peer evaluation or third-party evaluation.

The primary objective of the evaluation is to improve the Meeting Place activities. In other words, rather than ranking the Meeting Places by their performance, the aim is to support staff, volunteers and

participating families in improving their own activities. Peer observations help to identify strengths and areas of development which are sometimes difficult to spot or think about 'from the inside'. The assessment tool summaries in measurable form everything that is essential in an open meeting place. It provides actors, the stakeholders and funders a snapshot of the activity. Through it is possible to evaluate how well its objectives have been reached, follow it up and develop it.

Above mentioned eight (8) criteria for good quality in open meeting places are further broken down to 25 measurable indicators. The evaluation model of Open meeting places has been tested in three counties, and 50 peer evaluators have received training in using it. In autumn 2019, the model will be piloted in several counties, and national information on the activities and quality of the Meeting Places will be collected.

The Meeting Place assessment model has been developed in the Perheet keskiöön! ('Focus on Families!') project coordinated by the Central Union of Child Welfare in cooperation with the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare and Lasse Siurala, Adjunct Professor, Ph.D. (Aalto University) in 2018–2019. The model was originally based on a model for evaluating regional youth work developed in Kent County, and it has been applied in Finnish youth work.

Role of and activities of NGOs

From the perspective of the NGOs, the family centre activities in Finland are built upon existing public services provided for children and families with children. The activities are realized on the basis of local needs and resources. They are implemented through collaboration with families, NGOs and parishes in accordance with agreed principles. NGOs can provide a concrete means of support for children and parents universally, proactively and intensively. Support and activities are provided for individual families, specific groups and through the "the online family center". The concrete support is offered by professional personnel as well as by volunteers and peers.

Activities, support and services of NGO's (examples!)			
	Universal	Proactive/ early support	Intense
Individual families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doula- support • Mother or father mentor 	Home help for single parents	family work
Specific groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Baby comes home" –lectures • Childrens groups 	Baby-parent interaction supporting groups Peer groups	Family rehalibition e.g "day groups"
Community level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing and Meeting places - Family cafes, family houses • Voluntary work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation in family centers
Online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed Chats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet appointments

Image 13. Activities, support and services of NGOs in the family centre network

A large number of NGOs has been involved into development work of FC-model: Families to the Focus by Central Union for Child Welfare in Finland (LSKL), Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters (ETKL), Mannerheim League for Child Welfare (MLL), Save the Children, Martha Association, SOS Children's Village, Vamlas Foundation and Äimä Association; as well as parishes.

Parishes' role in cooperation

The Evangelical-Lutheran Church is the main religion (over 60%) in Finland. So there are many lutheran children in Finland. Many feast day traditions have references to religion and are part of the Finnish culture. Therefore it is natural to cooperate with the lutheran church and parish. Parish employees are experts in their own field and can be cooperation partners in world view education. For example the church building can be a learning environment.

The Evangelical-Lutheran Church and the parishes cooperates with ECEC –services but they are also part of the family centre network as a whole. ECEC –cooperation is based on the common understanding, that religion and worldview is a meaningful and important part of children's lives, representing cultural and social sustainability. The National Core Curriculum for ECEC acknowledges every child's right for his/her own religious or non-religious worldview. The diversity of religions and worldviews is increasing in Finland. According to the ECEC -curriculum all religions and worldviews are equal – none is presented better than the others in ECEC. Church cooperates particularly with municipal ECEC-services.

The model of four baskets

The model of four baskets is a way of telling about the purpose of cooperation with church and parishes and provide guidelines for it. It is intended for professionals in the education sector and decision-makers in society and the church, as well as for the information of parents. The principles included in each basket are aimed at ensuring the realization of the freedom of religion in early childhood education, schools and educational institutions. In the changing multicultural operating environment, the four-basket model creates clarity and gives people freedom to take action. The baskets are:

- 1st basket: teaching of general knowledge of religion/non-religious worldview,
- 2nd basket: traditional feast days,
- 3rd basket: religious events, and
- 4th basket: growth and welfare.

In ECEC children get to know those religions and non-religious worldviews that are present in their own group. All present worldviews are equal – also irreligion. Children get acquainted with different religions and worldviews by stories, music, art, play, drama, different visitors, visits and happenings. Discussions with the children and the families are also important.

5. Challenges and strategic approaches to solutions

Decline of the birth rate

Transition to parenthood takes place later than ever before in Finland. First-time parents (a new baby) are older than before. Average age of first-time mothers is (of the first born baby) 29 years and first-time fathers 30 years. The proportion of childless women at the age of 50 years increased from 13.6% in 1989 to 19.6% in 2016. Number of babies born has decreased and in 2018 only 47,577 babies were born compared to 2010 with 60 980 babies. Some reasons behind the trend: more women/couples are unsure about childbearing and choose rather childlessness, i.e. a life without children. Secondly, more mothers /families decide not to get the second baby.

According to Statistics Finland's data on population changes, the birth rate fell for the eighth year in a row. At the fertility rate prevailing in 2018, a woman would give birth to an average of 1.41 children. The figure is now the lowest of all times. A total of 47,577 babies were born in 2018, which is 2,744 fewer than in the year before (https://www.stat.fi/til/synt/2018/synt_2018_2019-04-26_tie_001_en.html).

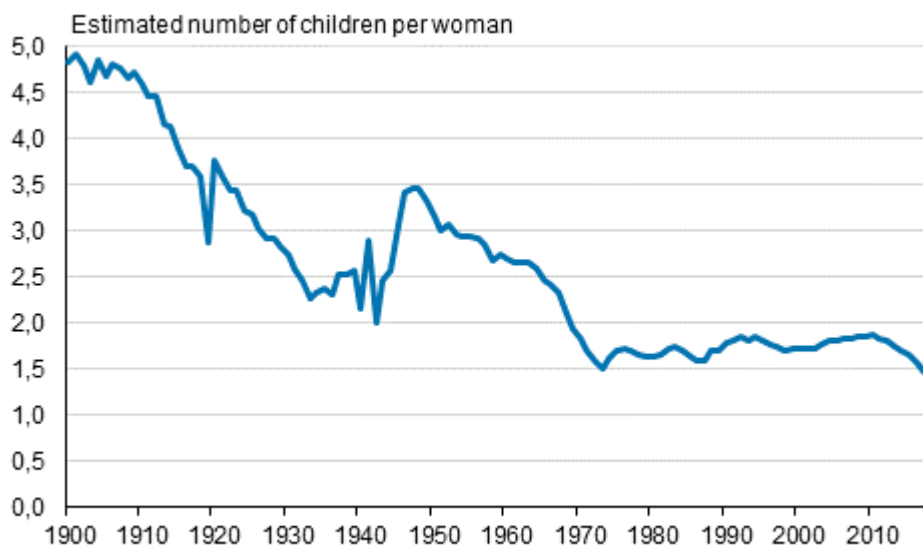


Image 14. Decline of birth rate in 1900-2010

Disadvantaged children – intergenerational transmission

According to Finnish cohort study of 1997 born young people, most of them are doing well and have got through their childhood without an accumulation of factors posing a threat to the family's welfare. However, some of the children have encountered challenges to their wellbeing on their journey to adulthood. Significant gender differences were also observed in several facets of wellbeing. According to registers approximately one out of five children in the cohort has received a psychiatric diagnosis (20.7 %). Of the entire cohort, 5.7 percent were placed outside the home, which is almost double the figure for the earlier cohort of 1987 born. About 3 percent of the young people in this cohort had not received a place in

secondary level education by the end of the follow-up period. Of those who did not receive a place, slightly over one half had not applied.

There is a clear link between the parents' level of education and financial situation and the children's wellbeing, for instance between success at school and the parents' financial situation. Children placed outside had far greater accumulation of factors that challenged their wellbeing than the rest of the cohort. Regional differences in children's wellbeing are major, and factors challenging children's wellbeing were more prominent in rural areas than in cities. Significance of social investments targeting families with children as well as the role of other growth environments in supporting early wellbeing are pointed out to be crucial in promoting well-being of children. (Ristikari et al. 2019.)

LAPE – Reform -Programme

In 2017 the Finnish parliament decided to fund the promising work of turning research into practice by the ITLA –foundation with 50 million euros. Further, in 2017-2018 the Finnish Government launched a program in order to address the reform of child- and family services (LAPE). In addition, National strategy for Children 2040 started in spring 2018.

In order to reform the system of child and family services the former government implemented the LAPE -reform -programme (The Programme to address child and family services 2016-2018 (LAPE). One aim the program was to form set of integrated services on different level. The basic idea of the integration goes along the service path from low-threshold services to specialized and demanding services.

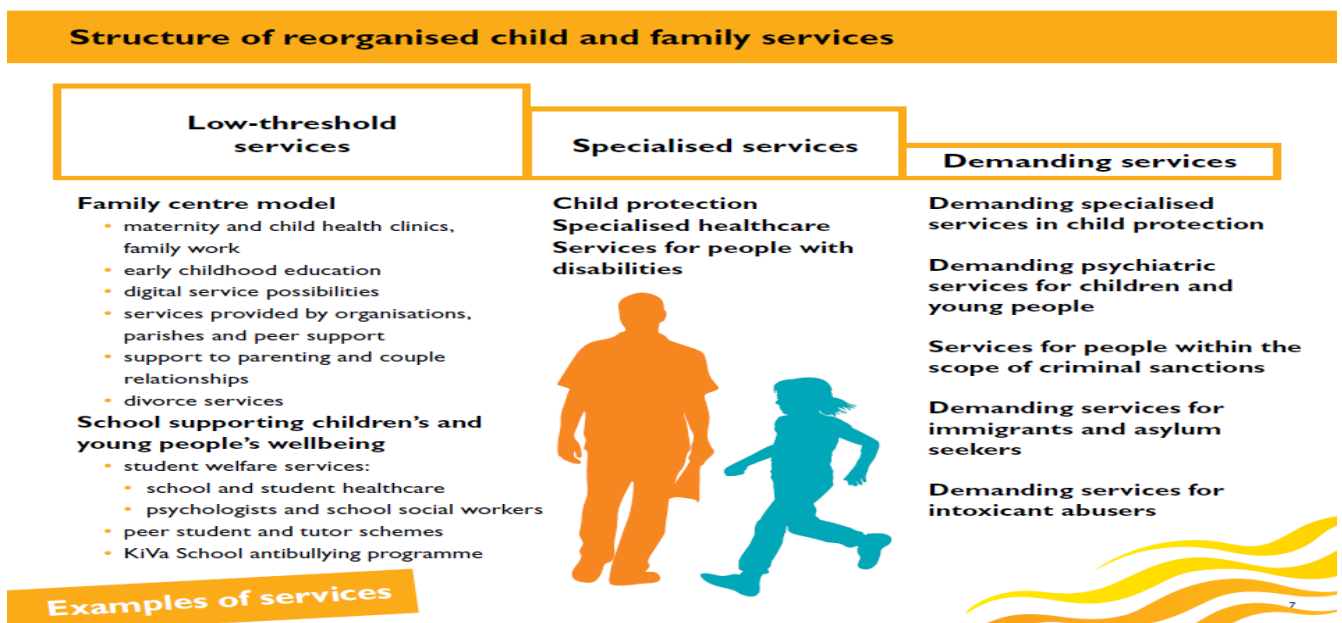


Image 15. Structure of reorganization of child and family services

National Strategy for Children 2040

Preparation of a national strategy for children was launched in Finland in spring 2018. The goal was to generate and conduct broad-based discussion on child and family policy and to make the Finnish society more child-friendly and family-friendly. The preparation of the strategy was based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

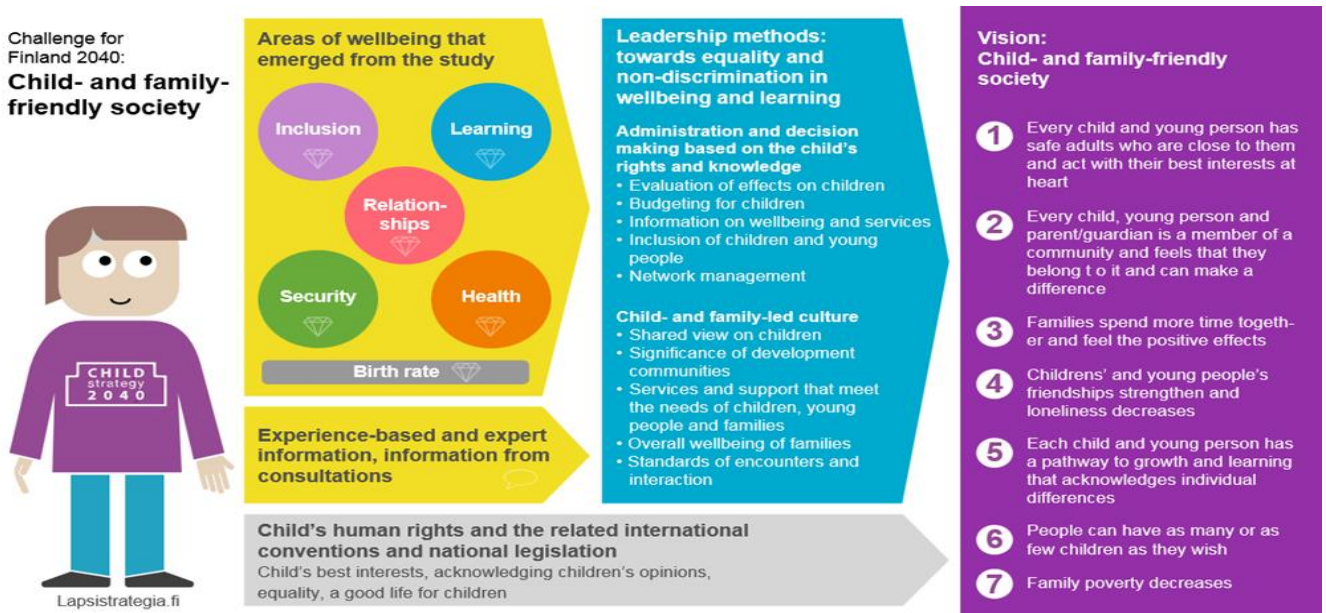


Image 16. National Strategy for Children 2040

The aim is to create a systematic, long-term Strategy for Children based on scientific data, international conventions on the child's human rights, and current legislation. The horizontal Strategy aims to improve the wellbeing of children, young people, and families. The Strategy provides a comprehensive overview of matters affecting the lives of children, young people and families in Finland.

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