

**National Action Plan of Finland  
European Child Guarantee**

April 2022

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## 1. CONTEXT

The European Child Guarantee adopted in June 2021 aims to prevent social exclusion and ensure equal opportunities by guaranteeing children access to necessary basic services, such as early childhood education and care, schooling, healthcare, nutritious food, and housing. The European Child Guarantee is part of a larger package of measures outlined in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan and the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child.

The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan urges the Member States to define their national objectives for reaching the shared targets. One important headline target for the EU is reducing the number of people at risk of poverty or exclusion by at least 15 million by 2030. At a minimum, five million of these 15 million people should be children. In 2019, nearly 18 million children, more than 22 per cent of all children in the EU, were at risk of poverty and exclusion.

The EU's AROPE (At Risk of Poverty or Exclusion) composite indicator defines whether a person is a member of a relatively low-income (compared to the median income), quasi-jobless, or severely materially deprived household. The risk arises when just one of the factors occurs, but they may occur simultaneously as well. Finland has set reducing the number of people at risk of poverty or exclusion by 100,000 by 2030 as its national objective. One third of the 100,000 people should be children. The action plan for achieving the national objective is currently being prepared.

According to the income distribution statistics of Statistics Finland, there were 114,300 low-income children in 2020, down from 128,100 in the previous year. This means the portion of low-income children was reduced from 12.4 per cent to 11.1 per cent. Ages 0–3 saw the greatest reduction from 15.4 per cent to 13.4 per cent. Income transfers accounted for a large portion of the disposable income in poor families with children. In 2020, a total of 10.9 per cent of people under 18 lived in households that received social assistance (*toimeentulotuki*). Single-parent families are the largest group receiving social assistance, right after men living alone. These families also continue to receive basic social assistance for longer than other households.

According to the income distribution statistics, especially those families with children who are single-parent, low-education, unemployed, or students have problems with income. The children of families with multiple children or a foreign background were more commonly low-income and in resultant financial trouble.

The risks of exclusion are not only multi-generational but also cumulative. If a child's childhood family received social assistance for an extensive period of time, the child was more likely to have a low level of education, mental health disorders, personal income trouble, and experience teen pregnancy. Special attention should be given to children and young people who face multiple simultaneous problems with their welfare. The prevention of a multi-generational risk of poverty and exclusion requires a holistic approach and competent personnel in services for children, young people, and families.

In the implementation, it is important to realise and monitor the European Child Guarantee's recommendations with respect to the diversity of the Member States' systems. In Finland, the related national action plan is implemented within the framework of the National Child Strategy and its implementation plans. The strategy extends beyond terms

of government. Finland's first National Child Strategy was published on 23 February 2021 and it, like the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, is based on the commitments of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The preparatory parliamentary committee considered it important to execute the National Child Strategy methodically and by combining different branches of government and areas of society. With regard to the implementation, it must be ensured that strategy work is integrated into the central government's strategic planning and decision-making, and that permanent structures are created for the work to support implementation.

The parliamentary committee defined the strategy around three main ideas:

1. The strategy must result in a Finland that is genuinely sympathetic to children and families and respects the rights of the child.
2. Children's rights and status must be established, ensuring that children are consistently taken into consideration in all policies and activities alongside other members of society, and that they are informed of their rights.
3. Vulnerable children must be protected and their needs better identified.

The committee stated that the preparation, execution, and monitoring of the implementation plan must be coupled with carefully selected indicators to track the effectiveness of the strategy's policies and the measures to implement them during each government's term. The implementation's progress must be monitored regularly and the impact during a government's term must be reported.

Every future government must prepare and execute a detailed implementation plan to implement the policies of the National Child Strategy during its term. The first implementation plan of the National Child Strategy was approved by the Government on 7 October 2021. Authored by the government of Prime Minister Sanna Marin, the implementation plan will remain in effect until the end of the government's term in spring 2023.

The implementation plan covers the currently ongoing central government measures and projects that advance the policies of the strategy. In addition, it includes 30 separate measures. The plan also includes measures for creating the coordination structures for implementing the Child Guarantee.

## **2. CHILD GUARANTEE COORDINATORS**

Because the European Child Guarantee is implemented as part of the National Child Strategy, the strategy's Secretary General Johanna Laisaari of the Prime Minister's Office has been named as the Child Guarantee's coordinator. Other public officials working on the National Child Strategy during the current government's term have been allocated to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health's Children and Young People Unit. The National Child Strategy's public officials cooperate with the Children and Young People Unit and the units of other ministries in accordance with the strategy's objectives. Close cooperation also takes place across different administrative branches with other ministries, including the Ministry of Education and Culture, and a diverse group of stakeholders.

### **3. IDENTIFICATION OF CHILDREN IN NEED AND THE BARRIERS THEY FACE IN ACCESSING SERVICES**

The majority of Finnish children are doing well.<sup>1</sup> The welfare and success of children and young people are supported in many ways, including free comprehensive and upper secondary education, free school meals, free healthcare (with some exceptions), and the subjective right to early childhood education. Students have the right to receive free student welfare services as required to participate in education. Furthermore, students are entitled to individual student welfare services. Families with children are supported with many benefits.<sup>2</sup> All pregnant women, families expecting children, and preschoolers and their families are covered by prenatal clinic and child health centre services. Compared to other European countries, poverty among families with children and the social exclusion of young people are at a low level in Finland.<sup>3</sup> Even so, problems do accumulate for some children and young people, burdening them and compromising their welfare even in adulthood.

The following describes the challenges in realising children's and young people's welfare and rights in different areas of life and for different groups of children and young people from the perspective of the National Child Strategy.

The figure below describes the legal and social context of the National Child Strategy with eleven themes related to children's rights placed on the rim. These have been defined according to recommendations issued to Finland by human rights monitoring bodies.

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<sup>1</sup> OECD, <https://www.oecd.org/els/family/>; Official Statistics of Finland (OSF): Income distribution statistics.

<sup>2</sup> Kela: Families, <https://www.kela.fi/web/en/families>

<sup>3</sup> Eurostat: Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion, 2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20211028-1>

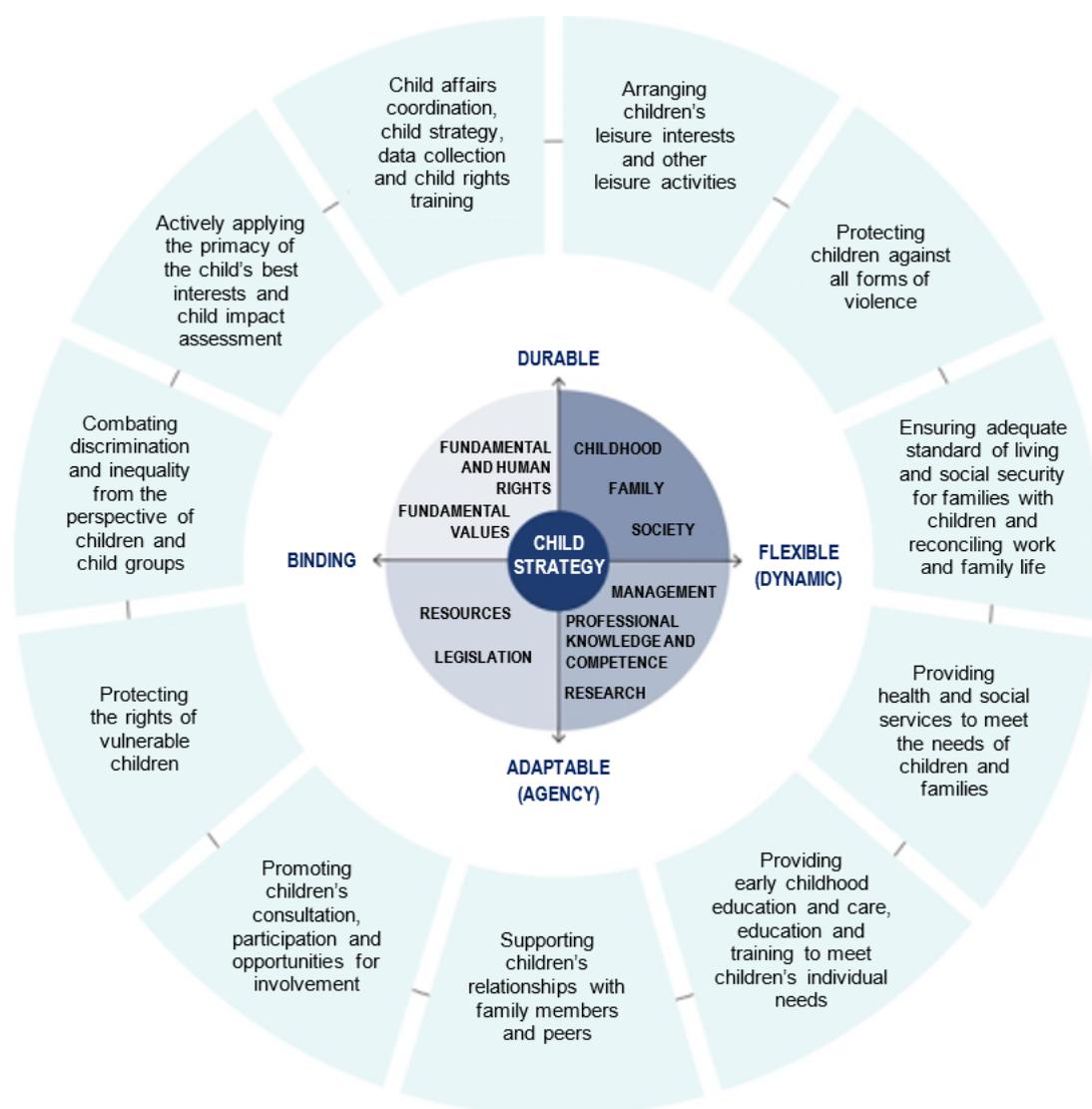


Figure 1. The position of the National Child Strategy as the basis for policy-making regarding children. The themes included in the National Child Strategy are listed in the outer circle.

Several of the National Child Strategy's themes are directly linked to the European Child Guarantee's topics, and the topics also intersect the other themes.

### ***Combating discrimination and inequality***

Children's welfare has become polarised in Finland: most are doing well, but some children are suffering. This polarisation of welfare peaks in crises and emergencies, and the negative effects of crises accumulate for the most vulnerable. Problems with income weaken children's opportunities for equal, non-discriminatory participation in society. Inequality and deprivation experienced in childhood may have consequences that last well into adulthood, and the multi-generational effects of family poverty are also a concern.

Children face discrimination for a variety of reasons. Experiences of discrimination due to ethnicity, skin colour, religion, language, disability, illness, gender, or sexual orientation also happen to children. Many of these factors are recognised by anti-discrimination legislation, but much remains to be done in terms of preventing discrimination and improving equality in children's lives.

### ***Protecting the rights of vulnerable children***

There are different reasons why children may be vulnerable in a way that requires special attention from the authorities and other actors. Their vulnerability may be related to prolonged structural discrimination due to disability, illness, or skin colour, for example. On the other hand, vulnerability may occur situationally if a child receives child protection or is the victim of a crime or suspected or accused of one. It is essential to consider the child's actual circumstances carefully and situationally in all related decision-making and activities.

Currently, the children who are in a more vulnerable position due to whatever reason may not always receive the support and help that they require. Services for children are not always consistently and comprehensively available, and accessing them may require resources that the child or family does not possess. Many children also encounter discriminatory structures or inflexible practices in precisely the situations where they most need support or help. The situation a child is in may simultaneously include different factors that make them vulnerable in different ways.

### ***Protecting children from violence***

The challenge remains that violence and cruelty in a child's close and peer relationships too often remains unseen. The service system is not always capable of offering effective support. Physical, mental, or sexual violence experienced as a child is a major risk factor for welfare later in life, and children suffer not only from violence directed at them, but also from violence they observe in their close relationships.

Although violence towards children is not tolerated as much as before, many children still face violence, harassment, abuse, and cruelty in their everyday lives. Children also encounter violence outside their family, including at school and hobbies and in the digital world, and the seriousness of the child's experience is not sufficiently recognised. The welfare of a child may also be compromised by self-harming behaviours. In addition to the victims of violence not receiving timely and effective help, there is also insufficient help for the children who commit violence. Effective intervention is lacking for violence perpetrated by children among themselves and otherwise.

Digital spaces are an important part of children's lives, but also a channel for harassment and bullying. Online sexual harassment is a relatively common occurrence for children.

### ***Healthcare and social welfare services for children and families***

The basic social welfare and healthcare service system is fragmented and siloed, and especially those children and families who need multiple different services may, in actuality, be left without help and support. Problems have been identified in the compatibility of services between the base and special levels, as well as between mental health services and other social welfare and healthcare services. There are shortcomings in the coordination of services for disabled children and their families, which is a major hindrance for supporting the children's development. The problems of the service system are also evident in child protection.

Mental health disorders are a significant public health issue, and mental health services are not currently realised to the same level as other social and healthcare services. The treatment of mental health disorders and the reinforcement of sound mental health require

functional services and cross-cutting measures that prevent exclusion and the accumulation of problems.

The level of stress and turnover rate are high among the personnel of many social welfare and healthcare services.

### ***Early childhood education and schooling***

Compared to many other countries, Finland has a low rate of participation in early childhood education, but almost all children undergo pre-school education. An interruption in school attendance and weak learning results in comprehensive school pose a major exclusion risk. There is also the concern that disparities in learning between boys and girls are the largest in Finland among the OECD countries.

At their best, early childhood education and schooling serve to secure a child's right to learning and offer a good space for peer relations, communality, and long-term welfare. Therefore, welfare must be considered in conjunction with learning, and strong support and student welfare must be maintained. Learning generates welfare and welfare supports learning. Functional practices and resources are needed for anti-bullying and anti-violence efforts. In addition to skills and resources, it must be ensured that children are heard and included in early childhood education and schooling, consistently and comprehensively.

### ***Adequate family income and work-life balance***

Finland's national economy is burdened by the shifting dependency ratio and a low birth rate. The obstacles for forming families and the declining birth rate are also human problems.

A stronger everyday safety net for families is required to secure the rights of the child and prevent the stress and poverty of families from compromising the welfare of children. It is a fact that a family's low income and employment rate weaken the position of their children in many ways, and single-parent families have been identified as especially at risk in Finland as well. The poverty of families is not always linked to unemployment – half of all low-income families with children include one working parent.

At best, opportunities for flexible or part-time work help to both realise the rights of the child and meet the needs of the family and the economy. Currently, many obstacles exist for catering to different family situations and achieving a healthy work-life balance.

### ***Children's relationships with family, friends, and peers***

Not every child's close and peer relationships support their welfare, and many children suffer from loneliness, cruelty, and difficult family situations. These have a material impact on welfare that is often prolonged.

Loneliness often accumulates for children who are already vulnerable. Especially children who live in foster care or, otherwise, outside the family home may have very limited contact with their close relatives, and the income problems faced by families increase their children's risk to experience loneliness and exclusion. The child's perspective and the importance of good close relations are sometimes neglected in complicated divorces as well.

The digital world is increasingly important for children's close and peer relationships. Contacts and communication with friends and family often take place online, and remote

connections make it possible to spend time together flexibly in different situations. At the same time, the digital world emphasises the need to curb bullying, harassment, and other forms of violence with new measures, as it also provides new channels for harmful phenomena.

### ***Children's leisure time and hobbies***

Finland has a very active hobby scene and children actively take part in hobbies. However, hobbies that are too goal- or performance-oriented can have a weakened focus on the child and unduly pressure them. In particular, this point must be considered in the case of competitive sports and hobbies that start at a young age. Many children stop pursuing hobbies between the ages of 12 and 15. This could be avoided to an extent if the children were included more and they were given the opportunity to better express their needs and wishes at that age, and if the organisers were better informed about the transformations caused by puberty, especially in the areas of physical and emotional development.

The opportunities for hobbies vary by where a child lives, how wealthy their family is, and who their friends are, and not all children have the opportunity to participate in safe hobbies and leisure activities.

Children's hobbies are divided in Finland based on socio-economic status, which results in disparities in health and welfare well into adulthood. Not every hobby is expensive, but if a family's level of income is low, it is likely to limit their children's opportunities for choosing hobbies in line with their inclinations and maintaining peer relationships in their leisure time. A person's socio-economic background also affects the accessibility of culture and art hobbies in practice. Likewise, going to hobbies may be difficult or impossible for many families to arrange. This can be alleviated in part by hobbies that are organised during school days or near schools.

### ***Children, young people, and families during crises and in emergencies (including Covid crisis aftercare)***

A strong and resilient society is key in responding to changes, crises, and emergencies. Finland respects the rights of the child and supports the resources and resilience of children, families, and communities, protecting children's rights in the most difficult of circumstances. The National Child Strategy aims to prepare Finland to meet future challenges with skill and respect for children's rights.

The crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic made apparent the blind spots in children's and young people's access to support and services, and it highlighted the differences in the ability of families to respond to their needs. The pandemic also highlighted the problems with accessibility in student welfare and raised questions about the equality of care and education. It will take a long time to fix the lack and deficit in social and healthcare services. Children's best interests must be taken into account more for future crises.

Municipalities and wellbeing services counties play a major role in managing the Covid pandemic's aftercare, and this crisis has emphasised the importance of evaluating the impact on children, budgeting for children, and the inclusion of children. Promoting this work as part of the National Child Strategy's implementation helps integrate it with the central government's current activities and to reinforce the existing cooperation structures and establish good practices on all levels of government.

It is plain to see that measures are needed especially to secure the welfare of children and young people in post-Covid aftercare and rebuilding. The impacts on children and young

people must be addressed comprehensively, and sufficient resources must be secured for ensuring the welfare of children, young people, and families. In particular, vulnerable groups of children and young people must receive special consideration.

In global terms, the COVID-19 crisis worsened the situation of vulnerable children, including disabled, street, migrant, and refugee children, as well as children separated from their guardians or belonging to ethnic minorities. The economic crisis resulting from the pandemic has increased child poverty worldwide, with many negative consequences. Families in financial trouble will need to rely on harmful methods of survival, meaning more child marriages, child labour, and school dropouts, for example.

The post-Covid aftercare also impacts the future of children and young people because global crises, such as the current climate crisis and armed and other conflicts, are a serious threat to the rights, welfare, and future of children everywhere.

#### **4. TARGETED GROUPS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN NEED**

The following describes those groups of children and young people and families in different situations whose welfare and rights will take special attention to protect in national child and family policy. Section 6 further describes the monitoring related to this section.

In Finland, there is significantly less poverty in families with children than in most of Europe. Despite this fact, reducing this type of poverty is a noteworthy target for Finland as well, as the impacts of poverty are echoed in education, health, and the labour status of adults. The situation of single-parent and immigrant families is especially concerning. The poverty of children with an immigrant background is markedly related to their family's low employment rate. (Lindroos, Sirniö, and Vaalavuo 2021)

In order to reduce inequality and prevent exclusion, the operating conditions of children's developmental environments, including homes, day care, school, and leisure time spaces, must be secured. Even if a child's family and life may include risks, protective factors exist that can shield their growth. Positive relationships are important, as are experiences of success at school and in hobbies.

The possibility of receiving enough good support and services is vital for those who need them. For example, in the Programme to Address Child and Family Services (LAPE), the support for children, young people, and families is realised by developing services with a low barrier of entry at family centres. These include parenting and family guidance, divorce services, home help, and social care for families. Family centres also offer mental health services and early support (for more, see LAPE, section 9). In addition, various allowances, benefits, and services for children, young people, and families have been included in national legislation. For example, the Social Welfare Act (1301/2014, section 13) states that children and their families have the right to receive the necessary social services for the child's health and development without delay and to the extent necessary, regardless of the time of day. Services support parents and other people responsible for a child's care and rearing in accomplishing these.

The groups of children and young people described in this section have been selected primarily based on the extensive groundwork of the National Child Strategy and the instructions of the parliamentary committee. The direct link between the National Child Strategy and European Child Guarantee efforts is evident in how one main idea of both is to protect vulnerable children and better identify their needs.

The general early childhood education was included in the reviewed themes because Finland has a low attendance rate in early childhood education, compared to many other Member States. One concern regarding education is the rise of disparities in learning and that some young people never complete their upper secondary education. The expansion of compulsory education aims to have every young person complete their upper secondary education – increasing competence requirements mean that employment now requires an upper secondary education at the minimum.

Another important theme is the resilience and crisis tolerance of services. This has been highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the war in Ukraine has further emphasised its importance. The National Child Strategy states that a strong and resilient society is key in responding to changes, crises, and emergencies.

1. Families in a weak socio-economic position.
2. Children, young people, and families who need support in everyday life.
3. Groups of children and young people vulnerable to discrimination or other harm, whose rights and welfare are assessed in the implementation plan:
  - 3.1 children and young people receiving child protection, especially those living outside the family home or in aftercare
  - 3.2 disabled children and young people
  - 3.3 children and young people in need of mental health services
  - 3.4 children and young people with an immigrant background.
4. The following in addition to the groups mentioned under the previous item:
  - 4.1 Roma children and young people
  - 4.2 Sami children and young people
  - 4.3 LGBTIQ children and young people
  - 4.4 children and young people who are victims of violence
  - 4.5 children and young people who abuse intoxicants.
5. Themes assessed in the implementation plan:
  - 5.1 early childhood education and schooling
  - 5.2 the resilience of services for children, young people, and families in crises and emergencies (including Covid aftercare).

## 5. OUTREACH AND AWARENESS

The opportunities of children to be included and heard, to receive information, and act as an active and capable member of society must be protected comprehensively and appropriate to the child's age. How children are included and heard is currently haphazard and not realised in all policy-making that concerns children. Another problem is that some children are repeatedly excluded and go unheard. Inadequate inclusion may lead to accumulative exclusion, which may well weaken the sustainability of society's decision-making and activities.

The National Child Strategy's objective is to consider the inclusion of children and their right to information and to be heard systematically in decisions and activities that directly or indirectly concern them. The content and significance of the children's views must be specified in the justification of decisions. The National Child Strategy aims to expand the idea of "matters belonging to children" and to cross boundaries between administrative branches, because reinforcing the inclusion of children also requires cooperative structures for authorities and other actors.

The strategy also states that it must be ensured that the adults working with children have sufficient understanding and competence regarding how to support children's inclusion and agency. Children's inclusion, right to be heard, and access to information will be improved by cross-administrative cooperation and by cementing good practices as part of structures and children's everyday life. Special attention will be paid to those children whose views are currently overlooked.

The preparation of the strategy and its first implementation plan have improved the means for inclusion and hearing to allow different children to feel heard and seen. Children have been heard by using different methods: electronic surveys in several languages and different workshops in cooperation with NGOs.

The National Child Strategy also delegated the hearing of children with regard to the preparation of the Council of Europe (CoE) Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2022–2027 in 2021. A total of 22 children participated in the workshops to present important information for the CoE strategy and the preparation of the Child Guarantee. In addition, the National Child Strategy has been used to organise hearing workshops in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice for the Voice of Children and Young People in Europe project. This project is part of the CP4Europe project coordinated by CoE.

The National Child Strategy's measures aim to improve the inclusion of children and young people and their awareness of their rights. The measures also emphasise communicating children's rights and welfare to the professionals, decision-makers, and parents who work with children.

National Child Strategy measures related to the inclusion of children and young people:

- A cooperative development project between ministries and stakeholders for the availability of services for children and young people is included as a measure in the strategy's implementation plan.
- Prepare up-to-date lesson packages for early childhood education and school about the National Child Strategy and children's rights.
- Implement a pilot project package for democracy and human rights education.

- Implement a training package for professionals about the rights of the child and the inclusion of children especially.
- Organise a campaign to collect ideas from children and young people regarding measures to promote their rights.
- Develop an operating model to support children's participation in society's policy-making through virtual councils.
- Create a handbook of child protection for children and young people.

## **6. INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS**

### ***Parties who supported the preparation of the National Child Strategy***

The National Child Strategy and its first implementation plan were prepared by a cross-branch working group of public officials with representatives from the Ministries of Social Affairs and Health, Education and Culture, Justice, Foreign Affairs, Interior, Environment, Agriculture and Forestry, Employment and the Economy, Transport and Communications, and Finance. The working group's term continues until 30 March 2023.

In addition to the working group, the preparation and implementation have been supported by the National Child Strategy's monitoring group with representatives from key stakeholders and authorities. These included child and family organisations, disabled people's organisations, the Iitla Children's Foundation, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, the Finnish National Agency for Education, the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), and the Church Council. The monitoring group's term ended in late 2021, and a networking group was appointed to continue its work between 31 January 2022 and 31 November 2024, working in conjunction with the Child Advisory Board. The network includes representatives from the Central Union for Child Welfare, the Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters, the Church Council, Lapsioikeusjuristit ry, Barnavårdsföreningen i Finland rf, Inclusion Finland KVTL, Finland for All Families, Suomen Vanhempainliitto ry, the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Education and Culture. The network is headed by the Prime Minister's Office and the Ombudsman for Children.

### ***Inclusion of children and young people***

Children and young people have been included in the preparation of the National Child Strategy and its implementation plan in the form of workshops, remote events, and electronic surveys. In addition to the above, the National Child Strategy has carried out pilots for hearing children and young people regarding the reform of the Child Welfare Act, the preparation of the Lanzarote Convention's implementation plan, and the preparation of the reformation of the Act on Legal Recognition of the Gender of Transsexuals. The promotion of opportunities for participation and influence for diverse children and young people is core to the National Child Strategy.

### ***Child Guarantee action plan hearing and discussion events***

The stakeholder hearing meeting for the European Child Guarantee's national action plan was held on 7 March 2022. Eight representatives from different organisations participated in the event: Inclusion Finland KVTL, Central Union for Child Welfare, the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare, Save the Children Finland, Pesäpuu ry, SOS-Lapsikylä, Caritas Finland, and the Finnish Committee for UNICEF. The hearing was also attended by Iitla Children's Foundation and Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare representatives, one from each. Eight actors left written statements: the Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters, Inclusion Finland KVTL, Save the Children Finland, Pesäpuu ry, SOS-Lapsikylä, Caritas Finland, the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, and an expert from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (regarding the social security reform).

The speeches and statements given at the stakeholder hearing meeting commended the linking of the European Child Guarantee's action plan to the National Child Strategy and its implementation, and emphasised the importance of cooperation with NGOs in the national implementation of the Child Guarantee. The speeches also highlighted ensuring that work continues on the National Child Strategy by establishing a National Child Strategy unit and allocating sufficient resources for it. The improving of children's and young people's equal opportunities for participation and the importance of information directed at children and young people were included in almost every speech and statement.

The Child Guarantee implementation plan presentation and discussion meeting for the National Child Strategy's official working group was held on 8 March 2022. A lack of knowledge, especially regarding vulnerable children and those susceptible to exclusion, was raised in the discussions. Likewise, the obligation for advancement stipulated by the Non-discrimination Act was raised, as it is a vital tool for identifying discrimination and promoting true equality. The official working group stated that the obligation for the advancement of equality requires a survey of the baseline, concrete measures, and monitoring, and, hence, also supports the deployment of the Child Guarantee action plan's objectives. The Ombudsman for Children issued their statement regarding the draft action plan on 9 March 2022. The Ombudsman for Children also considered it to be problematic that there are very few high-quality indicators for monitoring the welfare of children and young people and the realisation of their rights. According to the Ombudsman for Children, even the existing indicators are not used appropriately due to a lack of skill or understanding. In addition, the Ombudsman for Children underlined that the services received by adults (e.g. mental health services and substance abuse rehabilitation) must consider, more systematically, the position and rights of the children in those adults' immediate circle. This would improve the chances of stopping multi-generational deprivation.

The draft action plan for the European Child Guarantee was discussed by the Ministerial Working Group on Child and Youth Policy in their meeting on 18 March 2022.

### ***Cooperation network for the promotion of the Child Guarantee's implementation and monitoring***

A national cooperation network is required to promote and monitor the action plan for the European Child Guarantee. This type of support structure would assemble different stakeholders and actors to evaluate how the Child Guarantee action plan is being carried out, raise measures to promote the action plan's objectives, and spread information about the Child Guarantee through their own networks. The cooperation network would operate in conjunction with the National Child Strategy in a manner to be determined later.

There is a plan to designate a network to support and monitor the national implementation of the Child Guarantee. This cooperation network must also give a powerful role to NGOs, and several NGOs have also expressed their willingness to participate in the cooperation.

A joint, long-term networked effort will also be required to develop the national indicators of the European Child Guarantee's action plan and to evaluate the existing indicators. In particular, there are no sufficient monitoring tools for the effectiveness of services and the overall functionality of the multi-sectoral service system. The indicators described in the action plan for the European Child Guarantee are therefore preliminary, and will be specified through national development and monitoring.

## 7. QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE TARGETS

Section 4 listed various groups of children and young people, as well as themes, that the Child Guarantee's implementation plan assessments will target. This section specifies the monitoring of these groups and themes. Each item will specify the measures of the National Child Strategy's first implementation plan ("Background work for the development of monitoring") that support the ongoing governmental development project and supplement data collection and monitoring blind spots for the group in question. The implementation plan's measures will be carried out during the current government's term. The long-term success of the measures as part of the Child Guarantee's implementation is measured by how closely they can be made a part of and a foundation for long-term advocacy work.

Use of the School Health Promotion study organised by THL has been specified for the monitoring of the action plan regarding certain groups of children and young people. The School Health Promotion is a survey that produces regional and local monitoring data about the welfare, health, schooling, studies, and participation of children and young people, as well as how they receive help and how well services meet their needs. The survey is biennial, making it a suitable general indicator for the European Child Guarantee in a wider sense.

Below are described objectives related to the Child Guarantee action plan by population groups and themes, including their specified metrics and indicators.

### 1. Families in a weak socio-economic position

- The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan proposes that the EU reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or exclusion by at least 15 million by 2030, of which five million people should be children.  
Finland's Cabinet Committee on European Union Affairs decided that **Finland's national target** for reducing the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by 2030 should be **a reduction of 100,000 people, a third of whom should be children.**
- The situation of families in a weak socio-economic position will be monitored with the **AROPE rate**. AROPE (At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion) is an official composite indicator used by the EU that includes three dimensions: income poverty, severe material deprivation, and low employment rate.
- The situation of families in a weak socio-economic position is monitored based on the receivers of **long-term basic social assistance** in terms of families with children (number of receivers and duration of receiving).
- An obligation to **monitor the population's welfare and health** is included. The Act on organising social welfare and healthcare (612/2021, section 30) states that the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare must prepare an annual expert review of the organising of social welfare and healthcare on the national, collaborative area, and county level. Among other things, the expert reviews must analyse the state of the population's welfare and health by population group.  
The monitoring will produce data about the population's welfare and health on the national and regional levels. This helps to identify problems and also monitor the welfare and health of families in a weak socio-economic position.

*Background work for the development of monitoring:*

- Measure included in the implementation plan of the National Child Strategy: Produce a model for a comprehensive knowledge base for monitoring the welfare of children and young people.

## **2. Children, young people, and families who need support in everyday life**

- Little information exists about the effectiveness of services for children, young people, and families. Monitoring data has mostly been collected about customer volumes and the number of visits. More monitoring data is required, for example, regarding multisectoral services for children, young people, and families. Investigate a suitable indicator for monitoring.
- The primary objective of the Finnish model of hobbies is to improve the welfare of children and young people by making it possible for every child and young person to have an agreeable and free hobby in conjunction with their school day.

Currently, the model produces regular monitoring data about the number of participating municipalities and their children (absolute and proportional figures).

*Background work for the development of monitoring:*

- Implement a pilot project on outreach leisure activities and a cooperation model for youth work in cooperation with municipalities in the Finnish model of hobbies. The pilot will experiment with, support, and model outreach leisure activities with the youth work resource at the municipal level in order to reach the target group that may, otherwise, easily be left out of hobbies. The pilot will help investigate the obstacles of vulnerable children regarding hobbies and model ways that can better encourage children and young people and reinforce them socially through the work of hobby operators.
- Implement a development project for the availability of services for children and young people. It is important to ensure that children and young people receive actual information about different services and help channels.
- Implement a cross-administrative research project to investigate the situation of children and young people who are disadvantaged or at risk of social exclusion.

## **3. Groups of children and young people vulnerable to discrimination and other harm:**

3.1 Children and young people receiving child protection, especially those living outside the family home or in aftercare. Monitoring indicators set for the action plan:

- The number of social innovations developed in child protection during the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) term.
- National data about the welfare of children and young people in foster care (School Health Promotion, THL). Metrics relevant for the Child Guarantee will be selected for monitoring.

*Background work for the development of monitoring:*

- Preparing an up-to-date report on abuse occurring in foster care. Up-to-date knowledge helps to improve the welfare of children in foster care and ensures that foster care does not contribute to further experiences of abuse and violence.
- Prepare a national action plan to prevent unauthorised absences from alternative care facilities and for activities during an unauthorised absence and its aftercare.

3.2 Disabled children and young people. Monitoring indicators set for the action plan:

- The number of children with intellectual disabilities living in facilities (THL, Sotkanet).
- Right to inclusion and equality: The National Action Plan on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its indicators relevant for the Child Guarantee.
- National data about the welfare of children and young people with disabilities (School Health Promotion, THL). Metrics relevant for the Child Guarantee will be selected for monitoring.

3.3 Children and young people in need of mental health services. Monitoring indicators set for the action plan:

- The National Mental Health Strategy and Programme for Suicide Prevention 2020–2030 with included monitoring indicators. Metrics relevant for the Child Guarantee will be selected for monitoring.

*Background work for the development of monitoring:*

- Improve the effectiveness of mental health work for children and young people by surveying development needs and supporting good practices and competence. This measure includes the planning of an indicator system for the wellbeing services counties to enable the monitoring of children's and young people's mental health services as a whole with harmonised indicators.

3.4 Children and young people with an immigrant background. Monitoring indicators set for the action plan:

- National data about the welfare of children and young people with an immigrant background (School Health Promotion, THL). Metrics relevant for the Child Guarantee will be selected for monitoring.

#### **4. Other groups of children and young people:**

4.1 Roma children and young people. Monitoring indicators set for the action plan:

- Finland's National Roma Policy (ROMPO) and its evaluation and development (ROMPO 2 and 3). The ROMPO 3 programme is based on the European Union's common strategy and framework programme for the Roma. The framework programme started in 2021 and continues until 2030.

National monitoring indicators will be developed for the ROMPO 3 programme at a later date.

*Background work for the development of monitoring:*

- Prepare a report on the welfare of Roma children and the realisation of their rights in Finland.

4.2 Sami children. Monitoring indicators set for the action plan:

- Regarding the linguistic rights of Sami children: participation of Sami children in Sami language education at school.

*Background work for the development of monitoring:*

- Prepare a report on the welfare of Sami children and the realisation of their rights in Finland.

4.3 LGBTIQ children and young people. Monitoring indicators set for the action plan:

- National data about the welfare of LGBTIQ young people (School Health Promotion, THL). Metrics relevant for the Child Guarantee will be selected for monitoring.

*Background work for the development of monitoring:*

- Prepare a training package for professionals about the diversity of sexual orientations and gender, as well as LGBTIQ families.

4.4 Children and young people who are victims of violence. Monitoring indicators set for the action plan:

- The Non-violent Childhoods Action Plan for the Prevention of Violence against Children 2020–2025 and the Lanzarote Convention's implementation plan, including their metrics and indicators relevant for the Child Guarantee.

*Background work for the development of monitoring:*

- Create a guide and training package for difficult divorces and post-divorce violence.
- Create a website for the work to prevent bullying, sexual harassment, violence, hate speech, and discrimination targeting children and young people.
- Carry out a child victim survey.

4.5 Children and young people who abuse intoxicants. Monitoring indicators set for the action plan:

- Substance Use and Addiction Strategy – Joint Guidelines Until 2030. THL will prepare an evaluation plan for monitoring the strategy and assemble the monitoring indicators. The strategy's progress will be monitored for each government's term, and a more extensive interim evaluation will be carried out halfway through the strategy period.
- National data about the substance abuse of children and young people (School Health Promotion, THL). Metrics relevant for the Child Guarantee will be selected for monitoring.

*Background work for the development of monitoring:*

- Preparing an action plan for supporting children and young people who abuse substances as a symptom of their problems.

## **5 Themes assessed in the implementation plan:**

5.1 Early childhood education and schooling. Monitoring indicators set for the action plan:

- Monitoring of expanded compulsory education (completion of upper secondary education).
- The objective is to increase children's participation in early childhood education (the number of children in early childhood education, particularly children under the age of 3).

5.2 The resilience of services for children, young people, and families in crises and emergencies (including Covid aftercare). Monitoring indicators set for the action plan:

- The functionality of services and their crisis tolerance in emergencies. Investigate a suitable indicator for monitoring.

*Background work for the development of monitoring:*

Prepare a report on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the maintenance of children's close relationships and the protection of family life.

## 8. MEASURES, FINANCIAL RESOURCES, AND SCHEDULES

### *National Child Strategy*

The National Child Strategy comprehensively identifies those groups of children and young people whose rights and welfare require special measures to be realised. The objective is to identify the said groups and also to promote measures to help them.

The implementation plan of the National Child Strategy reviewed some 120 (see the attached Excel file) government projects, either in operation or preparation, that, in some way, further the objectives of the National Child Strategy. Many of these projects are related to the themes of children's rights and their promotion, which are also integral to the European Child Guarantee (Appendix 1).

The 30 measures of the National Child Strategy aim to improve existing structures, establish good practices, and survey and model new opportunities. The projects are intended to be cooperative undertakings between government agencies, NGOs, municipalities, and research institutes.

The National Child Strategy's funding is six million euros, which also covers the National Child Strategy measures listed in the Child Guarantee action plan.

### *The European Social Fund as a promoter of Child Guarantee objectives 2021–2027*

The Prime Minister's Office approved the Innovation and skills in the Finland 2021–2027 – EU Regional and Structural Policy Programme on 21 October 2021. It includes the following priority axes (*toimintalinja*, TL) funded by the ESF+:

TL 4. An employed, skilled, and inclusive Finland that aims to support employment, skills, the development of working life, continuous learning, and flexible education paths. This priority axis' special objective ET 4.1.7 "Equal inclusion – Development of services for children, young people, and families and advancement of welfare towards equality" has been allocated €23m of funding, and its cross-cutting operating method is to deepen everyday cooperation between different actors and branches of government. The national pilot and development projects focus on the following themes:

- Identifying vulnerable children, young people, and families and supporting their everyday lives by preventing multi-generational exclusion and disparities in learning, especially by actively supporting and motivating families, including children, young people, and parents, who are inactive in the labour market, low-income, or otherwise in a difficult situation.
- Improving the competence of various professionals who work with children, young people, and their parents by developing operating cultures and practices to promote the ability and inclusion of children, young people, and families and reinforcing resource-building guidance and support skills in early childhood education, at all levels of schooling, and in transition phases.
- Supporting children, young people, and their parents in active and equal participation in culture and sports services, as well as guided leisure activities.

TL 5. Socially innovative Finland. Focuses on the innovative development of child protection. Special objective ET 5.h "Safety nets for the future of young people" received €4m for its national coordination project and an additional €26m for regional operations.

The national coordination project supports regional pilots which share the following strategic objectives and focuses:

- Reduce the number of children between 13 and 17 in foster care with effective and high-quality everyday support measures, working methods, and services produced in child protection community care.
- Support the whole family, especially parenthood, during taking into care, foster care, its reversal, and other transitions to reinforce the family's interrelations and avoid anyone being left all alone.
- Reform aftercare into multi-branch support for adulthood to provide every young person with the capacity for independent life and to pursue their goals in education and employment.
- Improve the special care services of child protection foster care by directing special attention to individually tailored and implemented services and goal-oriented support after the special care period. This requires the results of the entire individual service package to be monitored and evaluated with the child and their close persons.

TL 6. Finland against material deprivation. The aim is to help those in a disadvantaged position by providing support for the purchase of food and basic commodities. At the same time, the aim is to provide other services that improve the situation of those receiving aid. TL6's special objective ET "Provisions for life" is funded by the Finnish Food Authority with a budget of €30m. The programme will primarily target those unemployed who have limited means, including their household. The material aid may be targeted, based on demographic or socio-economic factors, in order to improve its effectiveness. For example, target groups may include single-parent families and immigrants.

### ***Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA)***

The Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA) provides extensive funding to projects related to the welfare of children, young people, and families and the realisation of their rights. STEA also monitors the use of its grants and evaluates the results of the subsidised activities. STEA is partly responsible for ensuring that the proceeds of Veikkaus Oy are used for productive NGO activities.

The discretionary government grants for promoting health and social welfare funded from the gambling revenue of Veikkaus Oy can be granted to incorporated non-profit corporations and foundations. These grants are not intended to serve as funding for statutory public services or business or commerce. Annually, STEA grants €100–120m to projects that aim to improve the welfare of children, young people, and families.

Veikkaus Oy provides significant financial support to youth services and organisations whose activities promote the welfare of children, young people, and families and the realisation of their rights. In the new funding model (entering into force on 1 January 2024), the revenue of Veikkaus Oy will be taken by the state as general income without earmarking any uses. Parties that currently benefit from Veikkaus Oy funding will have their funding decided as part of the state's normal budget proceedings.

The level of discretionary government grants will be a political decision in the new funding model. The decision will be made for four years at a time in the central government decision on spending limits, meaning the whole budget planning period, in order to improve continuity and predictability. The annual level of appropriation for government

grants proposed in the budget proposal is decided in the budget proceedings. The model also proposes setting up a parliamentary advisory council to monitor the funding directed to non-profit corporations and operational development. The council would be appointed for each term of the Finnish Parliament.

*Regarding the schedules:*

The schedules and timing of funding are impossible to state in terms of the national action plan for the European Child Guarantee, because each government makes its own funding decisions during the plan's execution. Each government prepares an implementation plan for the National Child Strategy.

## 9. ENABLING POLICY FRAMEWORK

### *Evaluation of impacts on children*

The rights of the child will be realised in a haphazard and scattered manner if the impacts on children are not evaluated consistently in regulation, policy-making, and resource allocation. Currently, the extent of impact assessments varies according to how directly the policy-making or other activity targets children. In practice, the evaluation of the impacts on children may be narrow even when the decisions or activities may have substantial effects on the position of children.

Municipalities and wellbeing services counties play a major role in managing the Covid pandemic's aftercare, and this crisis has emphasised the importance of evaluating the impact on children, budgeting for children, and the inclusion of children. Promoting this work as part of the National Child Strategy's implementation helps integrate it with the central government's current activities and to reinforce the existing cooperation structures and establish good practices on all levels of government.

The National Child Strategy states that the evaluation of impacts on children and families must be included systematically in policy-making and activities on all levels of government, and that the above must be supported when the evaluation is introduced and implemented. This is especially important with regard to municipalities and wellbeing services counties. The content and significance of the impact assessments must be specified in the justification of decisions. The impact assessments should also be introduced in the preparation and monitoring of budget decisions.

The protocol and skills regarding child impact assessments and child-oriented budgeting must be developed extensively beyond terms of government. Data about children must be collected and analysed consistently, and any weak points in data collection must be identified and rectified. Data must be utilised in decision-making and activities.

The implementation plan of the National Child Strategy includes a special measure for child impact assessments: A training package for child impact assessments, child-oriented budgeting, and children's inclusion. Support material for municipalities and regions.

### *Social security reform<sup>4</sup>*

The social security reform aims for a system that is clearer and more functional for its users and enables the balancing of working and social security in changing life situations. The objective is to develop the structure and functions of social security in the long term.

The reform is being prepared by a parliamentary committee that started its work in early 2020 and will continue until 2027. The committee will be in charge of reforming social security as a whole. It will address basic security, income security, and social assistance, including their funding and interconnections, as well as the enhanced compatibility of services with benefits. The reform will account for the diversity of people's life situations, related changes, and transitions from one benefit to another. The reform will also include the perspective of children and families with children, and a separate working group has been established for this purpose.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://stm.fi/en/social-security-reform>

The implementation plan of the National Child Strategy includes a measure for the social security reform: Implement a project to strengthen children's inclusion in the preparation of the social security reform.

### ***Reform of healthcare, social welfare, and rescue services<sup>5</sup>***

The reform of healthcare, social welfare, and rescue services will be a landmark governmental reform in the history of Finland. In 2023, the responsibility for organising social welfare, healthcare, and rescue services will be transferred from municipalities to 21 wellbeing service counties. The city of Helsinki is an exception. It will retain the responsibility for organising the above. Furthermore, the HUS consortium has a separate responsibility for organising specialised healthcare in its district, laid down by law.

The reform aims to:

- secure equal, high-quality social welfare, healthcare, and rescue services for the citizens of the county
- improve the availability and accessibility of the services
- reduce disparities in welfare and health
- guarantee the supply of qualified workers
- answer the challenges posed by the dependency ratio and declining birth rate
- curb the rise of costs.

The wellbeing services counties will develop operational structures and methods to produce user-friendly service systems. The aim is to further improve the cooperation of basic and special level services and make seamless the services of social welfare, healthcare, and rescue services. The wellbeing services counties organise basic healthcare, specialised healthcare, social welfare, dental care, mental health and substance abuse services, services for disabled people, and housing services for the elderly.

The cooperation of municipalities and counties will focus on promoting health and welfare in order to reduce the need for social welfare and healthcare services. Municipalities will still be responsible for early childhood education, schooling, sports, and culture, among other things.

### ***Three-tiered model for early childhood education support***

The reformed Act on Early Childhood Education and Care is set to enter into force on 1 August 2022. Even before the reform, children had the right to support, but the reform will further specify the levels and forms of support in accordance with the three-tiered model, including how the support is given. The aim is to ensure equality for all children everywhere in Finland. The model of three-tiered support classifies support tiers into general, intensified, and special support. The need for support is assessed based on the individual need of each child. The reform introduces changes to the working methods of early childhood education. Among other things, children will have the right to any aids necessary to participate in early childhood education, and the reform mandates a personal early childhood education plan for every child. The principle of inclusion will also be specified, i.e. enabling the full participation of every child in early childhood education with consideration for their capability.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://soteuudistus.fi/en/>

### ***Extension of compulsory education***

The aim of the Government Programme is for all students who finish comprehensive school to also complete an upper secondary education. The minimum school leaving age was raised to 18 years. In addition, student guidance and student welfare services will be improved, along with the capacity of comprehensive schools to provide everyone with the skills to complete upper secondary education. Expanded compulsory education entered into force in 2021.

### ***Separate Ministerial Working Group on Child and Youth Policy***

The Ministerial Working Group on Child and Youth Policy directs the implementation of the Government Programme's child and youth policy objectives.

### ***Programme to Address Child and Family Services (LAPE)***

The implementation of the Programme to Address Child and Family Services (LAPE) started during the government term of 2016–2019. It continues according to the current Government Programme between 2020 and 2023.

The programme develops the following areas: 1) family centres and early everyday support for children, young people, and families; 2) mental health and substance abuse services with a low barrier of entry for children and young people; 3) multisectoral child protection.

Support for children, young people, and families will be accomplished by, for example, 1) developing low-barrier services in family centres – parenting and family guidance, divorce services, home help, and social care for families; 2) improving support for growth, learning, and attendance for early childhood education and schooling; 3) adding mental health and substance abuse services in conjunction with schools and other educational institutions; 4) reinforcing cooperation between the social welfare and healthcare sector and the education sector; 5) investing in the education and individual support needs of children receiving child protection.

The LAPE programme will be implemented as part of the Future Health and Social Services Centres programme and in a separate project for child protection, *Lastensuojelun monialainen kehittäminen 2020–2022*. THL supports and coordinates the development work of the regions.

### ***Development of services and skills in the youth work sector***

The Ministry of Education and Culture develops the services and skills of youth work by supporting the operation of youth work expertise centres and youth centres. The expertise centres develop and promote youth work skills, expertise, and communication in accordance with the Act on young people. An annual appropriation may be included in the Budget to be allocated for the activities of the national youth work expertise centres.

The youth centres organise camping and nature tours, camps and courses for various youth groups and youth organisations, social youth work, and diverse international activities. The centres have also acted as development units for youth work methodology, especially for adventure education and Nuotta coaching. The youth centres are owned by municipalities, youth organisations, youth work organisations, and other organisations. The Ministry of Education and Culture subsidises the centres.

### ***The National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme 2020-2023 (VANUPO)***

VANUPO is Finland's statutory national programme for youth work and policy. The programme is approved for each term of four years by the Government, and it aims to improve the development and living conditions of young people. One of the primary objectives of VANUPO is to firmly install youth policy as part of public sector policy-making. VANUPO targets all young people in accordance with the Act on young people, people under 29, numbering 1.8 million Finns at the end of 2018. The programme's focus areas are especially centred around the core of youth, improving the development and living conditions of ages 12–25.

In line with the Government Programme, VANUPO has adopted the prevention of young people's exclusion and the strengthening of their inclusion as its main themes. Exclusion is best prevented by ensuring that every young person has the necessities for a meaningful life. The programme aims to fulfil these objectives through three units: 1) Young people have what they need to live an easy everyday life – reduction of exclusion; 2) Young people have the means and skills to participate and influence; 3) Young people trust society – stronger equality and security.

In addition to the government's youth policy objectives and related measures, VANUPO sets national targets for European and international youth work and defines the focus areas for choosing national youth work expertise centres.

### ***Government projects included in the implementation plan of the National Child Strategy***

The currently running government development projects were catalogued in conjunction with the preparation of the National Child Strategy's implementation plan, and they have been included as an appendix to the implementation plan.

### ***Several legislative reform projects***

Several legislative projects concerning children, young people, and families have also been identified as an enabling policy framework for the national implementation of the European Child Guarantee. During the current government's term, they include the Child Welfare Act reform, Act on Disability Services and Assistance reform, Student Welfare Act amendments, and Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration reform.

## **10.DATA COLLECTION, MONITORING, AND EVALUATION**

We use existing qualitative and quantitative metrics and indicators that will be specified further at a later date and may also be specified as monitoring evolves.

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## APPENDICES

ONGOING PROJECT OR MEASURE	Government action plan category, if any	Responsible ministries	Related to combating discrimination and inequality	Related to the rights of vulnerable children	Related to protecting children from violence	Related to social and health services for children and families	Related to education and early childhood education and care	Related to income for families and reconciliation of work and family life	Related to children's relationships with family, friends and peers	Related to children's leisure time and hobbies	Related to child impact assessment and child-oriented budgeting	Related to children's inclusion
Regional development; operating model and regional development decision (per government term)		Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment	X			X					X	
Development of anchor activities. The term of the development working group is 18 June 2020–30 April 2024.		Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Justice	X	X	X							X
A government proposal has been issued together with the Ministry of Education and Culture on the legislative amendments related to the organisation of school social worker and psychologist services required by the transfer of the responsibility for organising health and social services to the counties.		Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of Education and Culture		X			X				X	

Preparations for the transfer have been launched										
Setting a carbon neutrality target for 2050 for the EU and an emission reduction target of at least 55% for 2030	Globally influential Finland in Europe and the world	Ministry of the Environment						X	X	X
Promoting the expansion of the Barnahus model to help children who have experienced sexual abuse and violence.		Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	X	X	X	X				
Promoting the rule of law comprehensively throughout the EU	Globally influential Finland in Europe and the world	Prime Minister's Office	X						X	X

ONGOING PROJECT OR MEASURE	Government action plan category, if any	Responsible ministries	Related to combating discrimination and inequality	Related to the rights of vulnerable children	Related to protecting children from violence	Related to social and health services for children and families	Related to education and early childhood education and care	Related to income for families and reconciliation of work and family life	Related to children's relationships with family, friends and peers	Related to children's leisure time and hobbies	Related to child impact assessment and child-oriented budgeting	Related to children's inclusion
Promoting equality in alternating parenting	The Safe and secure Finland built on the rule of law	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ecosystem agreements		Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment	X							X		X
Preventing over-indebtedness and improving debt counselling services	The Safe and secure Finland built on the rule of law	Ministry of Justice		X	X	X		X				
Government proposal to Parliament on amending the Basic Education Act, General Upper Secondary Schools Act, Act on Vocational Education and Training. Intervening in bullying and harassment. A provision on the best interests of the child will be added to the Basic Education Act. The regulation on refusal will be specified in order to make it as safe as possible for the pupil to return to education. The Act on Vocational Education and		Ministry of Education and Culture	X	X	X		X		X			X

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Training and the General Upper Secondary Schools Act would be made to include anti-bullying provisions in accordance with the legislative motion LA27/2020. Parliamentary hearing in autumn, entry into force on 1 August 2022.

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Ministry of Education and Culture

X

X

X

X

X

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ONGOING PROJECT OR MEASURE	Government action plan category, if any	Responsible ministries	Related to combating discrimination and inequality	Related to the rights of vulnerable children	Related to protecting children from violence	Related to social and health services for children and families	Related to education and early childhood education and care	Related to income for families and reconciliation of work and family life	Related to children's relationships with family, friends and peers	Related to children's leisure time and hobbies	Related to child impact assessment and child-oriented budgeting	Related to children's inclusion
Project to promote family reunification		Ministry of the Interior	X	X		X		X	X			X
Work against human trafficking	The Safe and secure Finland built on the rule of law	Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	X		X							
Continuing the ethical and secure development of the AuroraAI network	Dynamic and thriving Finland	Ministry of Finance (partly also Ministry of Social Affairs and Health)	X	X	X	X					X	X
Continuing the experiment on free early childhood education and care for 5-year-olds (4h/day) August 2020-July 2021	Finland that promotes competence, education, culture and innovation	Ministry of Education and Culture	X	X			X	X	X			
Continuing the Healthy Premises 2028 programme	Carbon neutral Finland that protects biodiversity	Prime Minister's Office	X			X	X					

Continuing the work to launch the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Concerning the Sámi People	The Safe and secure Finland built on the rule of law	Prime Minister's Office	X	X					X	
Substance Use and Addiction Strategy has been published and its implementation has been started. An action plan for preventive work in substance abuse and addictions has been updated and implemented. A government proposal on the Tobacco Act and the work of a tobacco and nicotine policy working group has been prepared. An assessment of the overall reform of the Alcohol Act has been prepared.		Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	X	X	X	X			X	X
Monitoring of the national urban strategy		Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment	X							



raising the age limit for the aftercare measures for unaccompanied minors entering Finland	and Employment				
Programme on funding municipal climate change solutions	Ministry of the Environment		X		X X
Overall monitoring of municipalities - tutkikuntia.fi; data content development	Ministry of Finance	X			

ONGOING PROJECT OR MEASURE	Government action plan category, if any	Responsible ministries	Related to combating discrimination and inequality	Related to the rights of vulnerable children	Related to protecting children from violence	Related to social and health services for children and families	Related to education and early childhood education and care	Related to income for families and reconciliation of work and family life	Related to children's relationships with family, friends and peers	Related to children's leisure time and hobbies	Related to child impact assessment and child-oriented budgeting	Related to children's inclusion
Rehabilitation, incl. the principles of referring people to medical rehabilitation		Ministry of Social Affairs and Health				X						
Launching the National Democracy Programme 2025	The Safe and secure Finland built on the rule of law	Ministry of Justice	X									X
Launching a development programme for health and social services centres	Fair, equal and inclusive Finland	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	X									
Launching a partnership programme for halving homelessness	Carbon neutral Finland that protects biodiversity	Ministry of the Environment		X								
Drawing up a housing policy development programme	Carbon neutral Finland that protects biodiversity	Ministry of the Environment	X	X				X			X	
Drawing up a national 'climate food' programme	Carbon neutral Finland that protects biodiversity	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	X				X					X



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Preparing a language policy programme that takes languages spoken in Finland other than the national languages, especially Sámi, Roma, Karelian and sign languages		Ministry of Justice	X				X					
Drawing up a third National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights	The Safe and secure Finland built on the rule of law	Ministry of Justice	X	X	X							
Drawing up an accessibility plan for higher education	Finland that promotes competence, education, culture and innovation	Ministry of Education and Culture										
Preparing an action plan on integration measures	Finland built on trust and labour market equality	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Preparing an education policy report	Finland that promotes competence, education, culture	Ministry of Education and Culture	X	X			X				X	X

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and innovation

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Drawing up a comprehensive action plan for promoting good relations within the population and an action plan against racism and discrimination to complement the national integration programme	The Safe and secure Finland built on the rule of law	Ministry of Justice	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Drawing up an action plan for combating violence against women	The Safe and secure Finland built on the rule of law	Ministry of Justice		X	X	X						

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Drawing up a programme to reinforce the learning of the second national language at school	Finland that promotes competence, education, culture and innovation	Ministry of Education and Culture	X				X					X
Drawing up a comprehensive action plan for better regulation	The Safe and secure Finland built on the rule of law	Ministry of Justice	X								X	X
Preparing a report on the placement of minors and young prisoners in prisons.		Ministry of Justice	X	X		X						
Preparing a national implementation plan for the Lanzarote Convention in Finland in cooperation with NGOs to prevent sexual violence against children and ensure services for victims.		Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	X	X	X	X						X
Preparing an action plan for gender equality	Finland built on trust and labour market equality	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X

Creating a model for the reliable and individual assessment of children's ability to attend school	Finland that promotes competence, education, culture and innovation	Ministry of Education and Culture	X	X				X		X
Preparing a National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme (VANUPO)	Finland that promotes competence, education, culture and innovation	Ministry of Education and Culture (coordinator), Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of the Environment	X	X	X	X	X		X	X

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Preparing the Government Human Rights Report	Globally influential Finland in Europe and the world	Ministry for Foreign Affairs	X	X	X						X	X
An overall report has been prepared on the special features, challenges and development needs in education provided in Swedish (published in March 2021); creating a long-term action plan to guarantee equality.		Ministry of Education and Culture	X				X				X	X
Preparing recommendations for the coordination of services by the authorities. According to a recommendation, minor prisoners' possibilities for being placed outside a prison should be assessed in accordance with the principle of the best interests of the child.		Ministry of Justice	X	X		X						
Working group on child-oriented budgeting		Ministry of Finance, Prime Minister's Office									X	

Work on physical activity recommendations for children and young people and related implementation (all ministries)	ALL MINISTERIES	X	X	X	X	X
Promoting children's and young people's functioning and related data production: the Move! system (National Sports Council)	Ministry of Education and Culture			X	X	X
The Strengthening National Child Participation Frameworks and Action in Europe (CP4Europe) project	Ministry of Justice					X

ONGOING PROJECT OR MEASURE	Government action plan category, if any	Responsible ministries	Related to combating discrimination and inequality	Related to the rights of vulnerable children	Related to protecting children from violence	Related to social and health services for children and families	Related to education and early childhood education and care	Related to income for families and reconciliation of work and family life	Related to children's relationships with family, friends and peers	Related to children's leisure time and hobbies	Related to child impact assessment and child-oriented budgeting	Related to children's inclusion
Increasing children's involvement in research and development of activities		Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare)	X	X								X
Increasing the use of apprenticeship training to ensure that young people get their first job and as a channel for re-training and adult education. Reforming the system for determining the compensation for apprenticeship training	Finland built on trust and labour market equality	Ministry of Education and Culture	X				X					X
Increasing employment and children's participation in early childhood education and care by reducing early childhood education and care fees (1054/2020)	Finland built on trust and labour market equality	Ministry of Education and Culture	X	X			X	X	X			
Creating a fast track for work permits in Finland for specialists, start-up entrepreneurs and their families	Finland built on trust and labour market	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment						X				

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equality

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Increasing the effectiveness of restraining orders	Ministry of Justice	X	X	X		
Expert work on dismantling multi-channel funding + parliamentary work	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health				X	
Report on the teacher register	Ministry of Education and Culture				X	X

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Developing the competence of teachers and teacher educators and reforming teacher education. The Teacher Education Forum and the implementation of the Teacher Education Development Programme.		Ministry of Education and Culture	X	X			X					X
Development programme for guidance counselling (Right to Learn programme)		Ministry of Education and Culture	X	X			X					X
Introducing a positive credit register	The Safe and secure Finland built on the rule of law	Ministry of Justice	X									
Improving the availability and quality of oral health care services		Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	X	X		X						
Survivors' pension reform		Ministry of Social Affairs and Health					X				X	
Establishing a round table on climate policy	Carbon neutral Finland that protects	Prime Minister's Office									X	X

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biodiversity

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Updating the climate and energy strategy	Carbon neutral Finland that protects biodiversity	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment	X	X
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Updating the medium-term climate plan	Carbon neutral Finland that protects biodiversity	Ministry of the Environment									X	X
Building a programme for the promotion of digitalisation, which will make public services digitally available to citizens and companies	Dynamic and thriving Finland	Ministry of Finance	X	X	X	X				X	X	X
Building sports facilities, reducing their repair backlog and improving energy efficiency	Finland that promotes competence, education, culture and innovation	Ministry of Education and Culture								X		
Piloting an operating model for young people who engage in criminal activity as symptoms of their problems		Ministry of Justice	X	X	X	X					X	X
Investigating the practices related to aid granted to NGOs and government aid	Fair, equal and inclusive Finland	Ministry of Finance				X					X	

Examining the role of municipalities as service providers	Fair, equal and inclusive Finland	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health		X			X
Investigating the income limits set for legal aid		Ministry of Justice	X		X	X	
Investigating the joint effects of numerous legislative amendments and application practices made to the Aliens Act on legal protection (report published in 2/2021)	The Safe and secure Finland built on the rule of law	Ministry of the Interior	X				X

ONGOING PROJECT OR MEASURE	Government action plan category, if any	Responsible ministries	Related to combating discrimination and inequality	Related to the rights of vulnerable children	Related to protecting children from violence	Related to social and health services for children and families	Related to education and early childhood education and care	Related to income for families and reconciliation of work and family life	Related to children's relationships with family, friends and peers	Related to children's leisure time and hobbies	Related to child impact assessment and child-oriented budgeting	Related to children's inclusion
A report on the realisation of the educational and social rights of children in rural areas and archipelago after the closure of comprehensive schools and the impacts of the closures on the vitality of regions; as part of the implementation of archipelago and rural policy		Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Education and Culture					X	X	X	X		X
Monitoring the effects of the COVID-19 epidemic on children, young people and families		Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare)	X	X								
Committing to promoting gender equality in e.g. the budget process (1) and in all key reforms (2) see also 7 Finland built on trust, Objective 2 Making Finland a global leader in gender equality	The Safe and secure Finland built on the rule of law	Ministry of Finance	X								X	X

Social security reform to be prepared by the parliamentary social security committee	Fair, equal and inclusive Finland	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	X	X		X		X	X
The Barnhus project, funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health/coordinated by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, has also allocated funds to the police. The aim is to find best practices for investigating suspected offences against children.		Ministry of Social Affairs and Health		X	X				

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Adjusting the gradually stricter minimum staffing rate for child welfare	Fair, equal and inclusive Finland	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	X	X	X	X						
We will also lay down provisions on the equality and non-discrimination plans for early childhood education and care.		Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of Education and Culture	X	X		X	X				X	
Guaranteeing a job or work trial, traineeship, apprenticeship or rehabilitation placement for all young people aged under 25 and all graduates under 30 no later than three months into the period of unemployment	Finland built on trust and labour market equality	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment	X	X		X			X	X		X
Developing basic education in the arts in a child-oriented and youth-oriented manner		Ministry of Education and Culture	X				X		X	X	X	
Providing all children and young people with opportunities to pursue leisure activities	Finland that promotes competence, education, culture and innovation	Ministry of Education and Culture	X				X		X	X		X

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Promoting data production on physical activity and sports among children and young people, such as the LIITU study (Ministry of Education and Culture/National Sports Council), study of children and young people's leisure activities (National Sports Council And State Youth Council), a pupil survey (Ministry of Education and Culture) and indicator work on children's physical activity (National Sports Council)	Ministry of Education and Culture	X	X	X	X
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Tightening the treatment time guarantee in primary healthcare	Fair, equal and inclusive Finland	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	X	X		X						
Implementing the Report on Sports Policy	Finland that promotes competence, education, culture and innovation	Ministry of Education and Culture	X		X	X	X		X	X		X
Implementing the Paris Agreement and the pricing of carbon dioxide emissions efficiently	Globally influential Finland in Europe and the world	Ministry of the Environment									X	X
Implementing the minimum regulation of social rights effectively	Globally influential Finland in Europe and the world	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.	X	X		X		X			X	

Action plan to prevent bullying, violence and harassment in early childhood education and care, schools and educational institutions (Right to Learn programme) and to reduce loneliness	Fair, equal and inclusive Finland	Ministry of Education and Culture	X	X	X		X		X	
Implementing a development programme for the quality and equality of in early childhood and comprehensive school education (Right to Learn programme)	Finland that promotes competence, education, culture and innovation	Ministry of Education and Culture	X	X			X		X	X
Implementing and developing the monitoring of the health and wellbeing of children and young people to serve the planning and decision-making related to services.		Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare)		X		X	X		X	X

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Implementing the Sustainable City Programme	Dynamic and thriving Finland	Ministry of the Environment	X			X	X			X		X
Implementing an ambitious family leave reform that supports the wellbeing of families together with social partners	Finland built on trust and labour market equality	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	X	X		X	X	X	X			
Implementing the Programme for Promoting Walking and Cycling	Dynamic and thriving Finland	Ministry of Transport and Communications	X	X						X	X	
Implementing the quality and accessibility programme for general upper secondary education		Ministry of Education and Culture	X	X			X				X	X
Implementing a suburban development programme	Dynamic and thriving Finland	Ministry of the Environment	X	X		X	X		X	X		
Implementing a multiannual national development programme for work and wellbeing at work (WORK2030)	Finland built on trust and labour market equality	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health						X			X	

Carrying out an experimental scheme on negative income tax	Fair, equal and inclusive Finland	Ministry of Finance	X			X	
Carrying out a comprehensive reform of legislation on sexual offences	The Safe and secure Finland built on the rule of law	Ministry of Justice			X		
Implementing an action plan for the development of vitality and wellbeing in regions with declining population (Parliamentary working group on sparsely populated areas 2020-2023)	Dynamic and thriving Finland	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	X				X X

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Implementing a mental health programme for working life		Ministry of Social Affairs and Health		X		X		X			X	
Implementing a development programme for the quality and equality of in early childhood education and care (Right to Learn programme)	Finland that promotes competence, education, culture and innovation	Ministry of Education and Culture	X	X			X		X		X	X
Examining the feasibility and effectiveness of interventions promoting children's health and wellbeing		Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare)	X	X						X		
Implementation of the Work-life Balance Directive		Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment	X					X	X			
Reforming the Climate Change Act	Carbon neutral Finland that protects biodiversity	Ministry of the Environment	X				X				X	X

Reforming the guidelines for the impact assessment of legislative drafting		Ministry of Justice						X
Revising the Strategy for the National Languages of Finland	The Safe and secure Finland built on the rule of law	Ministry of Justice	X			X		X
Strengthening the implementation of the VET reform, increasing the number of teachers and increasing the level of funding	Finland that promotes competence, education, culture and innovation	Ministry of Education and Culture	X	X		X		X X
Preparing a mental health strategy	Fair, equal and inclusive Finland	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health		X	X	X		

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Preparing an amendment to the Pupil and Student Welfare Act (1287/2013) to lay down provisions on staffing in psychologist and school social worker services. The government proposal will be submitted to Parliament in autumn 2021 and the amendments are intended to enter into force at the beginning of 2022 (school social workers) and 18.2023 (psychologists).	Finland that promotes competence, education, culture and innovation	Ministry of Education and Culture	X	X	X		X				X	X
Drawing up a strategy for children through parliamentary preparations	Fair, equal and inclusive Finland	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Preparing the structural reform of health and social services	Fair, equal and inclusive Finland	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	X	X	X	X					X	
A government proposal to Parliament has been prepared on amending the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care: The licence requirement for private early childhood education and care. The proposal will be submitted to		Ministry of Education and Culture					X					

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Parliament in autumn 2021 and is intended to enter into force in 1/2023.

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Act on a Two-Year Pre-primary Education Trial 1046/2020 has been prepared. The purpose of the Act is to carry out a trial on two-year pre-primary education 8/2021-5/2024.

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Ministry of  
Education and  
Culture

X

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<p>An amendment to the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (540/2018, amendment 1395/2019) has been prepared, which restores equal rights to early childhood education and care for all children, and the Government Decree on Early Childhood Education and Care (753/2018, amendment 1586/2019) has been amended and the child to employee staffing ratio was restored to 1:7 for children aged three or over. The</p>	<p>Finland that promotes competence, education, culture and innovation</p>	<p>Ministry of Education and Culture</p>	X	X		X	X	X			X	

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amendments were adopted in 8/2020

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An amendment to the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (540/2018, amendment 453/2021) has been prepared to specify the section on staffing (section 36) and issue provisions on the reporting obligation of ECEC staff. The amendments were adopted in 8/2021

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Ministry of  
Education and  
Culture

X

X

X

<p>Development of ECEC education. The Forum for Developing Education and Training Provision and Programmes in Early Childhood Education and Care has prepared a development programme 2021–2030 (Published 1/2021) and the implementation plan (published 6/2021).</p>	<p>Ministry of Education and Culture</p>	X	X				
<p>The national Non-Violent Childhoods programme and its implementation</p>	<p>Ministry of Social Affairs and Health</p>	X	X	X	X	X	X