



FINNISH EDUCATION
EVALUATION CENTRE

Leading, evaluating and developing ECEC in Finland

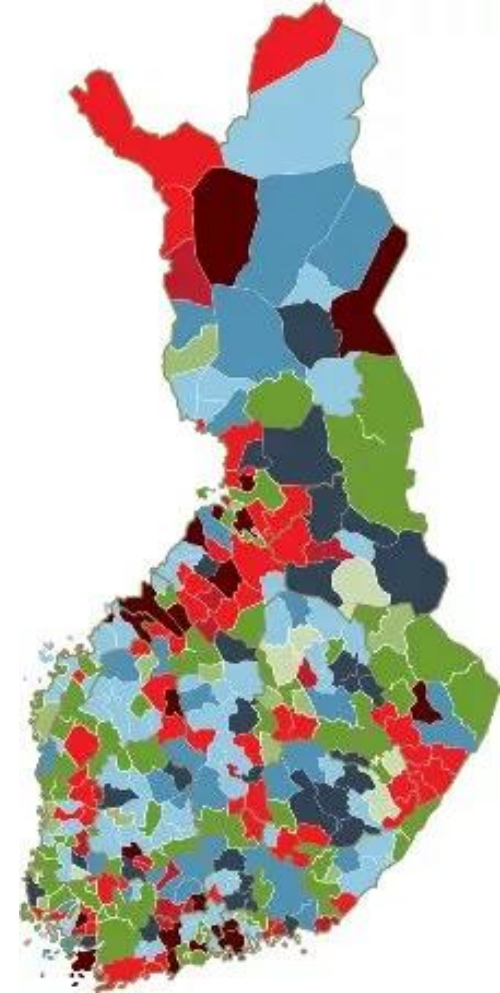
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Finnish ECEC comprises education, care and upbringing

- **293 municipalities** responsible for organising ECEC
- **232 926 children (77,2 % 1-6 y olds) in**
 - **3171 municipal centres**
 - 2376 municipal family day care
 - 330 municipal group family day care (centres)
 - **981 private centres**
 - 732 private family day care
 - 117 group family day care (centres)
- ➔ Private provision app 15 %, because centres are often smaller



Working in multiprofessional teams – changes in group structures and qualifications from 2030 onwards

- **Leader of ECEC centre**, minimum Bachelor's degree (ISCED 6) → **FROM 2030 MASTER'S DEGREE**
- **Teacher (ECEC)**, minimum Bachelor's degree in education (ISCED 6)
- **Social pedagogue (ECEC)** Bachelor's degree in healthcare and social services including studies in ECEC and social pedagogy, university of applied sciences (ISCED 6)
- **Childcarer (ECEC)**, vocational upper secondary qualification (ISCED 3)
- **Family daycare childminder**, VET qualification recommended (ISCED 3)
- **Pre-primary teacher**, university-educated ECEC teachers (Bachelor or Master of Education, ISCED 6-7) or class teachers (Master of Education, ISCED 7)
- **Special education teacher (ECEC)**, (ISCED 6)

- **GROUP STRUCTURE:**
 - Currently 1 Teachers, 2 childcarers → **from 2030 onwards 1 Teacher, 1 Social pedagogue, 1 childcarer**

National ECEC leadership evaluation: The current state, strengths and areas of development

Evaluation questions

1. What kind of leadership roles do leaders have and how do the different leadership roles and tasks affect their work?
2. What are the structures and practices of deputy or assistant leaders and how do these influence the work of the centre leader?
3. What expectations are placed on the work of the ECEC centre leader and what are the different ways in which these expectations are managed?

Survey in September 2022

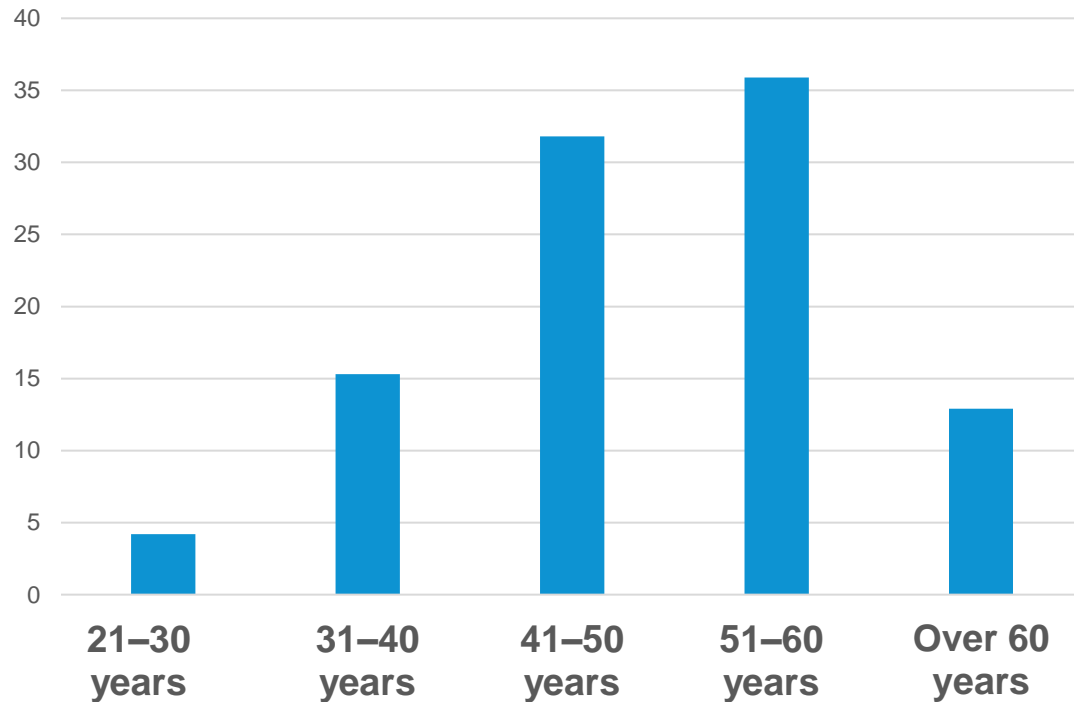
- Target group: all leaders of municipal and private ECEC centres in Mainland Finland (n = 293)
- A total of 1 429 responses were received from 245 municipalities
- The response rate was 56%

Group interviews in January 2023

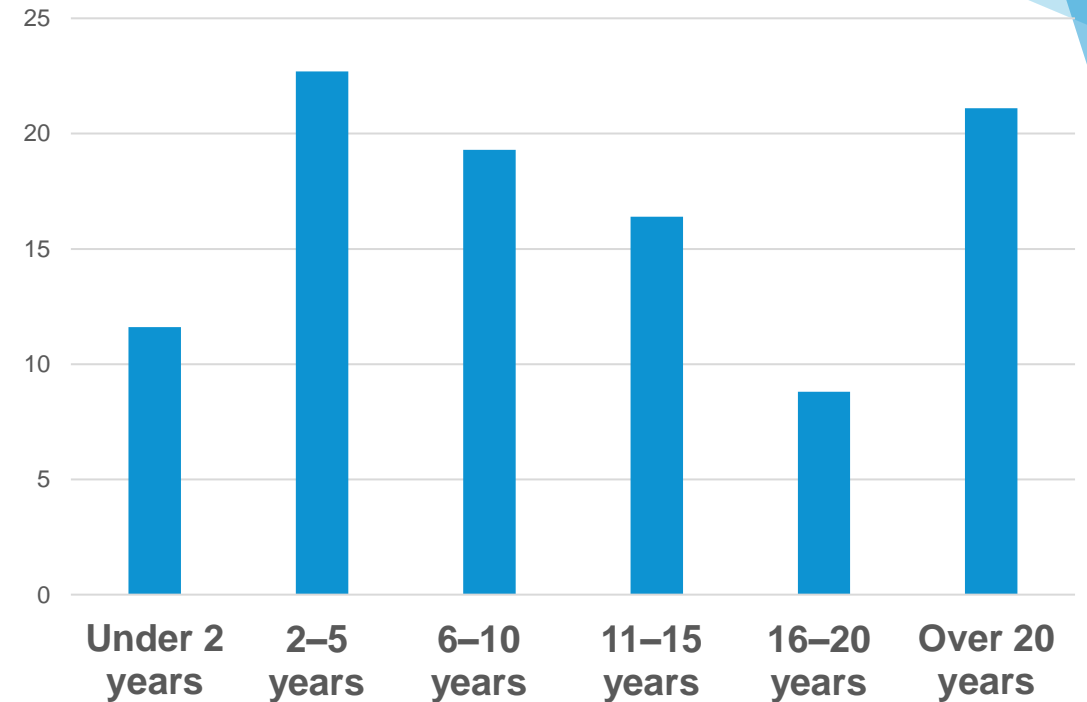
- Interviewees were selected taking into account the region, employer and language (Finnish/Swedish)
- 13 focus groups were conducted
- The total number of interviewees was 54, representing 41 municipalities in Mainland Finland
- The interviews were conducted both face-to-face and remotely

Who are the centre leaders?

Age of the leaders



ECEC leadership experience



What are the realities in which ECEC centre leaders work in Finland?

- ECEC centre leaders had an average of *direct* 24 employees (range of 1–75).
 - 36 % of leaders led one, 31 % led two, and 33 % led three or more centres.
- 34 % of the leaders worked also in a child group on a permanent or occasional basis.
 - 69% of the leaders working permanently in child groups worked in the private sector.
- 59% of ECEC centre leaders had one deputy leader, 17% of respondents had several deputies.
- 24% of leaders reported that they did not have a deputy leader at all.
 - The majority of these worked in either a densely populated or rural municipalities.
 - The majority of deputy leaders worked in a children's group.
 - The majority of deputy leaders spent 20% or less of their working time on management tasks on a monthly basis.
 - The deputy leaders' workload was concentrated on pedagogy and staff management.
 - Leaders described the role of the deputy as: “an equal partner, someone who takes over when I’m gone or someone who helps with the everyday tasks”

The management context explained the perceived job control

Leaders with fewer than 24 employees and one deputy leader experienced a higher sense of job control on average than others.

Typically, in rural or densely populated municipalities and in the private sector

Leaders with more than 34 employees and two or more centres experienced on average a lower sense of job control than others.

Statistically significant factor explaining the leader's sense of job control was whether sufficient time had been allocated to deputy management tasks.

Day-to-day management takes up most of the leader' time – no time for pedagogical leadership

- Leaders' duties were often seen as fragmented and difficult to predict.
- 56% of the centre leaders felt that they did not have enough time to do their (core) work.
- Majority of the working time of the interviewed leaders was spent on day-to-day management, administrative tasks and working shift planning, and in particular on finding (or trying to find) substitutes.
- The tasks and challenges of day-to-day management became more frequent as the workload increased.
- Some centre leaders did not have the time to lead long term development of the pedagogy nor to implement national reforms.
- This situation led to a conflict between expectations and the ability to influence the work.

Centre leader's ability to meet job expectations is linked to the received support

- Most of the expectations came from the staff, the organisation and the centre leaders themselves.
- Work-related expectations: day-to-day management, development of culture and pedagogy, administrative work and contracts, presence and encounter in everyday life, financial framework, evaluation and development, etc.
- More than 60% of leaders felt that expectations are not balanced with the resources available.
- The ability of leaders to meet and manage work expectations was linked to the support they received for their work.
- Often, leaders who described expectations as high also felt that they were solely responsible for too many things or for too much management.



Development recommendations

The management responsibilities of ECEC centre leaders should be limited.

The management entities should not be too large: the number of employees, the number of centres, and their location in relation to each other, as well as the different types of ECEC activities should be taken into account.

The role of the deputy or assistant leader should be a support structure for management, not a means to address the challenges posed by large management entities. The job description of the deputy or assistant director as well as the allocation of time to management responsibilities should be defined by the ECEC organisor.

Structures supporting the work of ECEC centre leaders should be created by the local authorities. In addition to a reasonable workload, regular cooperation and dialogue are important support structures. Interaction with the superior and colleagues, as well as opportunities to take care of their own well-being, are necessities.

An ECEC centre leader needs trained and qualified staff in order to achieve the objectives set for ECEC.

The attraction and the retentions of the sector needs to be strengthened in terms of wages, basic and further training and planned and long-term development.

The professional and managerial skills of leaders need to be developed. Systematic and comprehensive training in the various aspects of leadership are needed.

Support for pedagogical leadership and development: National system opened to all ECEC users in August 2023

A digital system that is laid down in the Act on FINEEC

Impactful information to support decision making



Support service for quality management and leadership (free of charge and voluntary)

Nationally unified, research based evaluation tools

Enhancement led and participative evaluation

**Thank you for
your interest!**

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