The new Finnish child strategy – an integrated system to better respond to the needs of children and families

*Shaping a healthy environment fit for children*

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Civil Society: Child and Family NGO’s

UN Committee for the Rights of the Child

Child policy projects in various previous governments

Where could Finland do even better as a nation for and with our children?
Which challenges should national child strategy help to solve?

Societal and economic sustainability
- Ageing society
- Sharply declining birth rate

How to improve wellbeing of children?
- To decrease the child poverty rate (13.9%)
- To stop the intergenerational cycle of social exclusion
- Keep up the social mobility
- Combat increasing inequality of child learning and well-being
Together with Ministries of Culture and Education & Social and Health Affairs
Broad based steering board, research network, consultations, dialogues, open process
Starting points of the "Child’s Time” 2040 - report

• Need for a comprehensive, broad based, long-run, cross-cutting strategy
  • Policies have so far been too fragmented, short-sighted and limited to one government term -> more continuity

• Committing all stakeholders in the society
  • Parliament, different political parties, ministries, municipalities, NGO’s, businesses, religious communities, universities etc
  • Families and children themselves

• Based on research and knowledge
  • More than 100 researchers participated in the process of defining "what is wellbeing” and how to promote it
  • Both academic and experience-related knowledge

• To define a common vision towards child and family friendly Finland
• Holistic and systemic perspective to governance
Child rights/Human rights based strategy

Finland has ratified UN convention for the rights of the child 1991. This is an agenda that unites all political parties and governments.

• Art 2: Human rights apply to every child (under 18) without discrimination (ethnicity, age, religion, disability, parents..)
• Art 3 The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions that affect children
• Art 6 Ensure that every children survive and develop to their individual full potential. Right to a good life.
• Art 12: Adults have to respect the views ot the child, consider their opinions and take seriously - irrespective of the age (evolving capacities)
What constitutes well-being of a child?

Human relationships
Learning
Participation
Health
Safety
Healthy environment for children
- message from the research panel for the LAPSI2040

- In order to promote mental health of children
  - To prevent symptoms/negative behaviours we should focus on whole developmental environment of children: parents, peers, day care, school
  - To combat bullying and loneliness in school and peer relationships (school operating culture, emotional skills)
  - Evidence based methods to support parenting
- Support the whole family in case of parents health problems (psychic, somatic, maternal depression, addictions)
  - ”Let’s talk about children” – method = software
- Family Center – model to integrate services = hardware
Lasten, nuorten ja perheiden hyvää arkea YHDESSÄ
Vision of the "Child’s time" 2040 report

• Every child and young person has safe adults in their lives who are close to them and act with their best interests at heart
• Every child, young person and parent or guardian is a member of a community and feels that they belong to it and can make a difference
• Families spend more time together and feel the positive effects
• Children and young people have stronger friendships and feel less lonely
• Every child and young person has a pathway to growth and learning that acknowledges individual differences
• People can have as many or as few children as they wish
• Child poverty will be reduced
Vision: Child- and family-friendly society

1. Every child and young person has safe adults who are close to them and act with their best interests at heart.
2. Every child, young person and parent/guardian is a member of a community and feels that they belong to it and can make a difference.
3. Families spend more time together and feel the positive effects.
4. Children’s and young people’s friendships strengthen and loneliness decreases.
5. Each child and young person has a pathway to growth and learning that acknowledges individual differences.
6. People can have as many or as few children as they wish.
7. Family poverty decreases.

Areas of wellbeing that emerged from the study:
- Inclusion
- Learning
- Relationships
- Security
- Health

Leadership methods: towards equality and non-discrimination in wellbeing and learning
- Administration and decision making based on the child’s rights and knowledge
- Evaluation of effects on children
- Budgeting for children
- Information on wellbeing and services
- Inclusion of children and young people
- Network management

Child- and family-led culture
- Shared view on children
- Significance of development communities
- Services and support that meet the needs of children, young people and families
- Overall wellbeing of families
- Standards of encounters and interaction

Experience-based and expert information, information from consultations

Child’s human rights and the related international conventions and national legislation

Child’s best interests, acknowledging children’s opinions, equality, a good life for children.
What next?

• Present government will nominate in this autumn a parliamentary committee to finalize the child strategy, evaluate the proposed vision, select indicators and to ensure the commitment of all stakeholders including local and regional governments.

• The general secretary for the child strategy just started her work (johanna.laisaari@stm.fi).

• Every government will in turn draft its own implementation program to promote the vision 2040.

• There are always political uncertainties but I look forward to the child and family NGO’s to keep us on track.

• Introducing Child budgeting – and child impact assessment – tools are on the agenda of present government.

• Ongoing training program for local and regional leaders (LAPE-Academy) 2019.

• ITLA-foundation will start in 2020 to train national leaders across education, social and health sectors.
Lasten, nuorten ja perheiden hyvä arkea YHDESSÄ
Thank you!