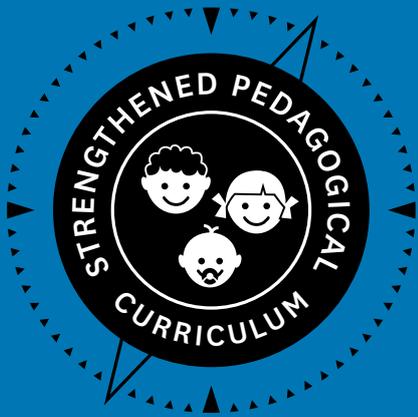


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# The strengthened pedagogical curriculum

Framework and content



Read more about  
the common pedagogical  
foundation and the  
six curriculum themes



MINISTRY OF CHILDREN  
AND EDUCATION

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# Introduction

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In Denmark, virtually all children between 0-6 years attend family daycare (0-2-year-olds), day nursery (0-2-year-olds) or kindergarten (2-5-year-olds) every day. This gives ECEC settings a unique role in supporting general wellbeing and development for all children. Research also indicates that high-quality ECECs have a markedly positive impact, particularly on children from homes where parents cannot adequately stimulate and support their children. Good ECECs therefore help more children to pursue their goals and dreams.

Since 2004, all Danish ECEC settings have had to work on children's learning based on a pedagogical curriculum. As a part of the pedagogical curriculum, ECEC settings have had to set goals for children's learning within six centrally established curriculum themes. As part of efforts to strengthen ECEC quality, the 2017 ECEC agreement *Stærke dagtilbud – alle skal med i fællesskabet* (strong ECEC settings – everyone must form part of the community) stipulated that a new statutory framework be established for work on the pedagogical curriculum in ECECs. The new regulations on the pedagogical curriculum were adopted by the Danish Parliament (the Folketing) in May 2018.

The amendment to the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) rests on the overall proposal for a strengthened pedagogical curriculum submitted by a master group and six working groups at the end of 2016. The new regulations are thus an extension of the Master for en styrket pædagogisk læreplan (Master plan for a strengthened pedagogical curriculum).

The amendment includes many new elements. Therefore, according to the new regulations, work on the strengthened pedagogical curriculum should be initiated at the entry into force of the Act on 1 July 2018, although it need not be fully implemented until two years after entry into force of the Act. This means that municipalities and ECECs are only required to have fully implemented the elements in the strengthened pedagogical curriculum by 1 July 2020.

The amendments mean that ECECs and municipalities will be working with new elements. Some places are already well underway. In any event, priorities must be set with regard to which new processes to initiate and when, how to support a change of practice, etc. Selecting, translating and setting the direction for work on the pedagogical curriculum is an important management task.



## What is new?

The new regulations are solidly based on the Danish ECEC tradition, so many elements will be familiar. Therefore several ECECs will already have implemented many of the initiatives in the strengthened pedagogical curriculum, whereas some of the initiatives are entirely new.

The following are central in the new regulations:

- A common pedagogical foundation with key elements (e.g. play, communities of children and a broad concept of learning) constituting the understanding and approach to work on children's wellbeing, learning, development and formation in ECEC.
- Establishing a pedagogical learning environment throughout the day, including in routine situations, planned activities and child-initiated play.

Descriptions of the six curriculum themes as well as new, broad pedagogical objectives for the relationship between the learning environment and children's learning for each theme.

- That the pedagogical curriculum should relate to vulnerable children, cooperation with parents on children's learning, continuity to preschool class as well as cooperation with the surrounding community.
- Establishing an evaluation culture in ECEC settings.

The municipal council no longer have to discuss evaluations of the pedagogical curricula and determine whether the evaluations give rise to further action from the municipal council. In addition, ECECs no longer have to set local goals for the child group.





## About this publication

The aim of this publication is to provide a sound basis for anyone who works with the pedagogical curriculum at ECECs with regard to the requirements for the strengthened pedagogical curriculum in the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care and the associated Executive Order. The publication is aimed at:

- Those responsible for or participating in the preparation of the local pedagogical curriculum in family daycare, the individual ECEC centre or unit at an ECEC centre.
- The municipal administration responsible for ECEC.
- ECEC pedagogues, assistant teachers, childminders or youth workers at an ECEC setting.

The publication is primarily a reproduction of:

- Legal provisions and preliminary work on the Act as adopted by the Danish Parliament (the Folketing). Preliminary work on the Act includes all explanatory notes linked to the Act and which elaborate concepts and describe how to understand the provisions regarding the pedagogical curriculum in the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care.
- Executive Order on pedagogical objectives and content in six curriculum themes.

This publication only describes the parts of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care that relate to the pedagogical curriculum.

## More inspiration

From summer 2018, *EMU Dagtilbud* (a common Danish learning portal) will include material to get started on the strengthened pedagogical curriculum. This publication is part of the collection of documents which also includes brief systematic reviews, dialogue cards, short films, examples of pedagogical programmes, etc. on selected elements of the pedagogical curriculum. Page 53 has a selection of the different material.

The *EMU Dagtilbud* portal also has a self-assessment tool that can be used to critically view own pedagogical practices, e.g. in relation to the broad concept of learning, play or cooperation with parents. Moreover, the portal has a tool with five approaches on changing and cementing a strong pedagogical learning environment.

# Framework for the pedagogical curriculum



# Objects provision for early childhood education and care (ECEC)

**T**he Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) includes an objects provision for ECECs. It describes the object and what should generally characterise work by ECECs.

The objects provision is relevant for work on the pedagogical curriculum, as it points the way for all work by ECECs.



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## WHAT DOES THE ACT SAY?

- ECECs should promote children's wellbeing, learning, development and formation through safe and pedagogical learning environments, where play is essential and where child perspectives are the point of departure.
- In cooperation with parents, ECECs should provide children with care and support the individual child's wellbeing, learning, development and formation as well as help children to a happy and safe childhood.
- Children in ECECs should have a physical, psychological and aesthetic children's environment that promotes their wellbeing, health, development and learning.
- ECECs should provide children with co-influence, co-responsibility and an understanding and experience of democracy. As part of this, ECECs should help develop children's independence and their ability to take part in binding communities and should help children develop cohesion with, and integration into, Danish society.
- In cooperation with parents, ECECs should ensure children a positive transition from home to ECEC.
- Moreover, in cooperation with parents, ECECs should ensure children a positive cohesive transition between ECEC settings and from ECEC to after-school care and school by developing and supporting their fundamental skills and their desire to learn.

**Section 7 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care**

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## What does the requirement entail?

### Pedagogical learning environment and child perspective

The objects provision stipulates that ECECs should promote children's wellbeing, learning, development and formation through a safe and pedagogical learning environment, where play should be essential and where child perspectives should be the point of departure. The child perspective is included in the objects provision to clarify that childhood has a value in itself, and that the pedagogical learning environment should be seen from a child perspective, whether it be everyday situations, child-initiated activities or adult-planned programmes.

### Formation

The objects provision also stipulates that ECECs should promote children's formation, where formation refers to a deeper form of learning, where children as active participants cement values and knowledge in their own personality as guidance to navigate and act in a global world as a considerate, critical and democratic human being.

Formation refers to pedagogical objectives as well as pedagogical content and form. Formation, equality and democracy should be integrated into the daily pedagogical practice, so that children feel involved and have a say in everyday life and activities, regardless of background, gender, age and culture. The formational content should be meaningful, challenge the child and be the outset for how children understand and act in a digital and global world. ECEC staff should encourage children to be active participants, encouraging children to contribute to their own learning and specific participation in democratic contexts created by the staff.

### Parent cooperation on children's wellbeing and learning

The objects provision also stipulates that, in cooperation with parents, ECECs should provide children with care and support the individual child's wellbeing, learning, development and formation as well as help children to a happy and safe childhood. The child's needs and development are central, and efforts should be planned in cooperation with parents.

### Care

Care is a necessary foundation for the child's selfconfidence and trust in the surroundings. This means that the child should receive the necessary physical care and attention and the necessary emotional contact at the ECEC.

### Children's environment

The objects provision also stipulates that the children's environment at ECECs should constitute an essential aspect with regard to ensuring wellbeing, health, development and learning for all children. A good children's environment refers not only to the physical layout of the ECEC, but also to the psychological and aesthetic aspects of the

ECEC, where these aspects together contribute to providing children with optimal conditions for developing and learning.

### Democracy and co-influence

Moreover, the objects provision stipulates that ECECs should provide children with co-influence, co-responsibility and an understanding and experience of democracy. As part of this, ECECs should help develop children's independence and their ability to take part in binding communities and should help children develop cohesion with, and integration into, Danish society. This means that children should be heard and taken seriously. This is also in line with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which stresses that children have a right to express their views in all matters affecting them.

In continuation of this, children should be able to influence and co-influence everyday life at the ECEC, depending on their age and maturity. The aim is to help ensure that children develop their independence, learn to assume co-responsibility, and develop their interpersonal skills and their ability to take part in binding communities.

All ECECs should build on the democratic values characterising Danish ECECs, and contribute to integration into Danish society, so that children can thrive in Danish society. This means that Danish is the main language in all ECECs, children should be introduced to Danish traditions, children should be involved, etc.

### Continuity

Finally, the objects provision stipulates that, in cooperation with parents, ECECs should ensure a good transition from home to ECEC. The transition from home to ECEC marks a new chapter for the child, where the child transitions from being cared for at home to starting in ECEC with a new setting and unfamiliar adults and children. It is therefore essential that the ECEC and parents together ensure as safe a transition as possible for the child.

In addition, in cooperation with parents, ECECs should ensure children a positive cohesive transition between ECEC settings and from ECEC to after-school care and school by developing and supporting children's fundamental skills and their desire to learn. The aim is that school should be experienced as a natural continuation of learning and development in the ECEC setting, and that the ECEC setting, parents and school cooperate to make the transition as smooth as possible for the child. Cooperation between ECEC and school does not necessarily mean that these should be working together directly. This could also be overall cooperation on the basis of the pedagogical framework, as children from ECECs often move on to different schools.

Preliminary work on section 7 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

# Who should prepare the pedagogical curriculum?

All ECEC centres and family daycare settings should prepare a written pedagogical curriculum. The pedagogical curriculum sets out the framework for all children's learning.



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## WHAT DOES THE ACT SAY?

- The pedagogical curriculum should be prepared for child groups aged 0-2 years and from 3 years up to school start.
- If the individual ECEC has organised children into other age groups, the pedagogical curriculum should be prepared on the basis of this organisation.
- Age-integrated centres may prepare one pedagogical curriculum taking into account all age groups.
- ECEC centres with several units should prepare the pedagogical curriculum taking into account the composition of the child groups and the children's different backgrounds in the individual units.

**Section 8(1) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care**

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## What does the requirement entail?

All municipal, independent and outsourced ECEC centres, private centres and pooled schemes should prepare a pedagogical curriculum, and so should the municipal family daycare and the private family daycare (section 21(2) and (3)).

The pedagogical curriculum should be prepared together for all municipal family daycare settings in the municipality or for districts linked to the municipal family daycare.

A private family daycare can choose to follow the pedagogical curriculum for municipal family daycare, prepare a pedagogical curriculum itself or prepare one overall pedagogical curriculum together with other private family daycare settings in the municipality.

If an ECEC centre is aimed at 0-2-year-olds (day nursery), for example, the centre is required to prepare one pedagogical curriculum for the entire group of children.

The reason that the pedagogical curriculum is to be prepared locally is that, when preparing the pedagogical curriculum, the individual ECEC setting can take into account local conditions such as the composition of the child group (age, gender, disabilities, cultural differences, family backgrounds, etc.), geographic location, physical facilities, etc.

There are no other formal requirements for the curriculum apart from that it must be in writing.

(Preliminary work on section 8(1) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care)

# What should be included in the pedagogical curriculum?

The pedagogical curriculum is subject to the following requirements:

- It must be prepared on the basis of the pedagogical foundation (page 14), six pedagogical curriculum themes as well as the link between the pedagogical learning environment and children's learning (page 32).
- It must be evident how the individual ECEC setting throughout the day establishes a pedagogical learning environment, in which play, adult-initiated activities, spontaneous activities, child-initiated activities as well as everyday routines enable the children to thrive, learn, develop and be formed (page 14).
- It must be clear how the pedagogical learning environment supports children's general learning, including curiosity, drive, self-esteem and movement within and across the following themes (page 32):
  1. Comprehensive personal development
  2. Social development
  3. Communication and language
  4. Body, senses and motion
  5. Nature, outdoor life and natural phenomena
  6. Culture, aesthetics and community.
- It should be evident how the pedagogical learning environment takes into account vulnerable children to promote their wellbeing, learning, development and formation (page 26).
- It should be evident how the ECEC setting cooperates with parents on children's learning (page 24), how the ECEC setting involves the local community in establishing pedagogical learning environments for children (page 29), as well as how a pedagogical learning environment is planned in the children's last years at ECEC to ensure continuity to preschool class (page 27).
- Work on the physical, psychological and aesthetic children's environment in the ECEC should be integrated in pedagogical work on establishing pedagogical learning environments. The children's environment should be assessed from a child perspective, and children's perceptions of the children's environment should

be involved taking into account the age and maturity of the children (page 30).

The pedagogical curriculum is not intended to be a long report that describes in detail the ECEC setting's work on the pedagogical learning environment and children's learning.

On the contrary, with central elements from the pedagogical foundation and based on the pedagogical objectives and content descriptions for the curriculum themes, the pedagogical curriculum should serve as a pedagogical tool which, through short, relevant pedagogical considerations, reflections and examples, should form a clear common direction for the pedagogical practice at the ECEC, including that the intended pedagogical practice is present throughout the day and throughout activities, routines with the children, etc.

Thus the pedagogical curriculum should contain some overall relevant reflections and examples of how the pedagogical learning environment involves children's perspectives and communities of children as well as takes into account the composition of the child group and the children's different backgrounds and needs. Examples should be normative for the staff in everyday pedagogical practice with the children.

## Local development

Preparation of the ECEC setting's pedagogical curriculum should build on the local challenges, strengths and competences of the ECEC setting. The management should decide how best to design the pedagogical curriculum within the framework set by the Act and by the municipal council.

Work on the pedagogical curriculum can be based on various supporting materials. From summer 2018, EMU Dagtilbud (a common Danish learning portal) will include material to get started on the strengthened pedagogical curriculum.

# The pedagogical curriculum sets out the framework for pedagogical practice in ECEC

In relation to the pedagogical task, the municipal council should manage ECECs on the basis of the pedagogical curriculum.



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## WHAT DOES THE ACT SAY?

- The pedagogical curriculum sets out the framework for pedagogical practice.
- In relation to the pedagogical task, the municipal council should ensure that the pedagogical task is managed solely on the basis of the pedagogical curriculum and in accordance with the curriculum's view of the child and broad understanding of learning.

[Section 8\(8\) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care](#)

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## What does the requirement entail?

The municipal council may generally not impose requirements on ECECs regarding documentation, registration, concepts, management objectives and individual goals, or measurements for children or similar in relation to the pedagogical task which are not in accordance with the pedagogical curriculum, and which, above all, result in unnecessary red tape that takes time away from the ECEC staff's work with children. Documentation requirements, registration, concepts, management objectives or similar in relation to pedagogical practice that go beyond the pedagogical curriculum are generally not in accordance with the pedagogical curriculum.

The municipal council can continue to launch initiatives etc. in relation to the pedagogical task that are in line with the pedagogical curriculum. In addition, the municipal council can continue to launch relevant initiatives etc. regarding other activities at the ECEC. These may be in relation to budget and accounts, health and safety, etc.

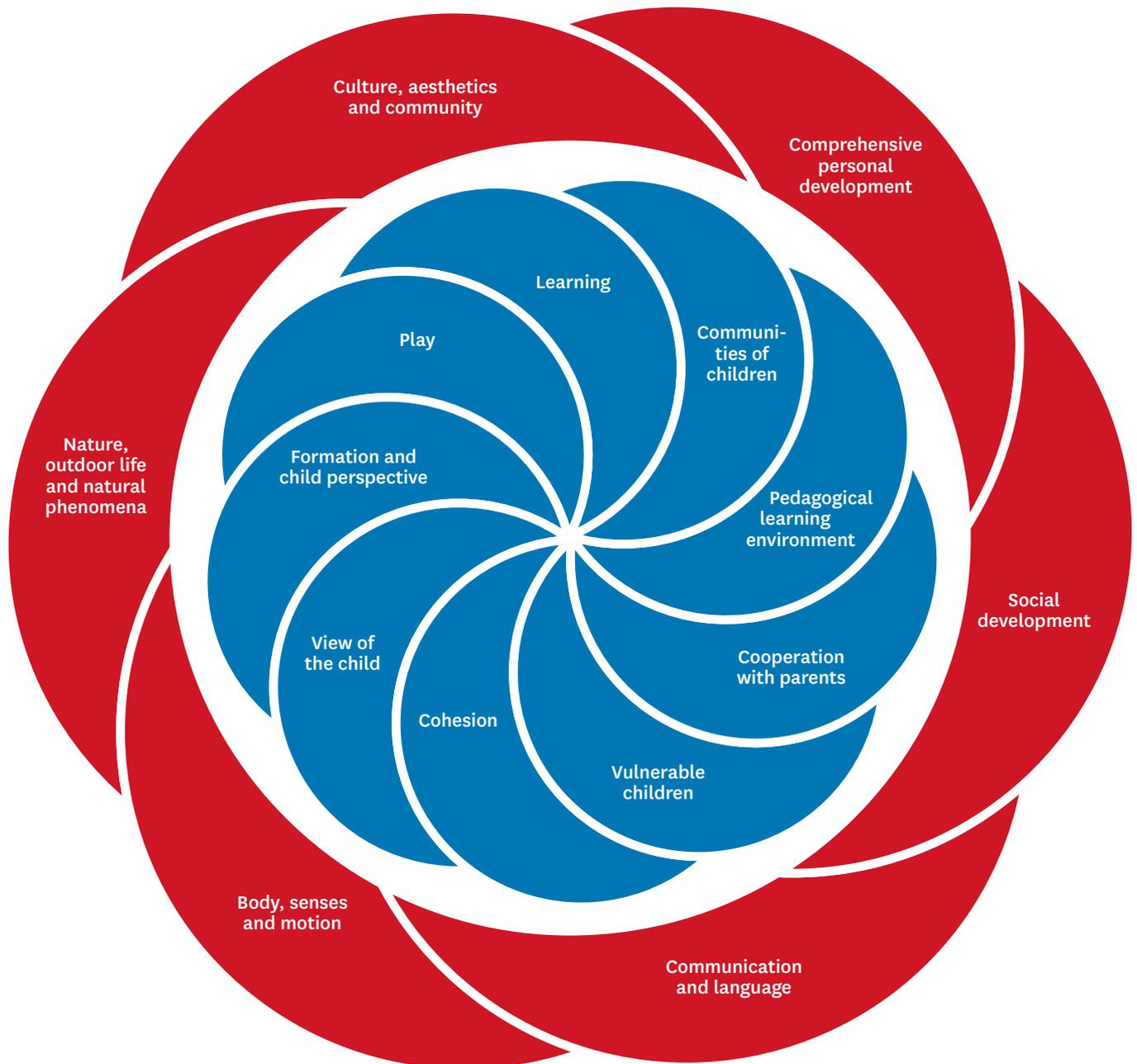
(Preliminary work on section 8(8) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care)

# Content of the pedagogical curriculum



# The strengthened pedagogical curriculum

## The common pedagogical foundation and the six curriculum themes



### Three central parts form the basis for preparation of the pedagogical curriculum

- The common pedagogical foundation
- The six curriculum themes
- Broad pedagogical objectives for the relationship between the learning environment and children's learning.

# The common pedagogical foundation



**T**he pedagogical curriculum should be prepared on the basis of the common pedagogical foundation. The pedagogical foundation consists of a series of key elements which should characterise the understanding and approach to working with children's wellbeing, learning, development and formation in Danish ECEC.

Some elements, e.g. view of the child, should always be present in the pedagogical learning environment, whereas others, such as cooperation with parents and ensuring a good transition to preschool class, can be more present in some contexts than in others.



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## WHAT DOES THE ACT SAY?

- The pedagogical curriculum should be prepared on the basis of a common pedagogical foundation  
**Section 8(2) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care**

### Elements in the common pedagogical foundation:

- **View of the child.** Being a child is valuable in itself.
- **Formation and child perspective.** Children aged 2 and 4 years, for example, should be heard and be taken seriously as part of the beginning of an formation process and democratic understanding.
- **Play.** Play is valuable in itself and should be a continuous part of an ECEC setting.
- **Learning.** Learning should be understood in a broad sense, and learning takes place e.g. through play, relationships, planned activities and exploration of nature, and by being challenged.
- **Communities of children.** Play, formation and learning take place in communities of children for which the ECEC staff set the framework.
- **Pedagogical learning environment.** A safe and stimulating pedagogical learning environment forms the basis for work on children's learning.
- **Cooperation with parents.** Good cooperation with parents focuses on strengthening the child's wellbeing and the child's learning.
- **Vulnerable children.** All children should be challenged and experience mastery in play and activities.
- **Continuity with preschool class.** Continuity is, among other things, supporting children's social skills, confidence in own ability, curiosity, etc.

**Preliminary work on section 8(2) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care**

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## What does the requirement entail?

The Act stipulates that all elements in the pedagogical foundation should serve as a basis for work on the pedagogical curriculum and thereby pedagogical work on children's learning in ECEC.

In addition, the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care requires the pedagogical curriculum to state:

- how the pedagogical learning environment takes into account vulnerable children to promote their wellbeing, learning, development and formation (page 26).
- how the ECEC setting cooperates with parents on children's learning (page 24).
- how the ECEC setting involves the local community in establishing a pedagogical learning environment for children (page 29).
- how a pedagogical learning environment is planned in the children's last years in ECEC to create continuity to preschool class (page 27).

## What is new?

The pedagogical foundation builds on the Danish ECEC tradition and therefore reflects the pedagogical practice in many Danish ECECs. This means that many places have already implemented several of the elements of the pedagogical foundation.

The elaborate description of elements such as play, the general concept of learning, the view of the child, etc. are new in the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care. This means that all Danish ECEC settings should consider whether the overall pedagogical foundation is reflected in their pedagogical practice.



# The common pedagogical foundation

## View of the child



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### WHAT DOES THE ACT SAY?

- Being a child is valuable in itself. Children should not only be prepared for adult life, they should also be supported and appreciated in the first years of their lives.

**Preliminary work on section 8(2) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care**

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#### **Inspiration for pedagogical work on the view of the child<sup>1</sup>**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child focuses on the right of the child to engage in play and to participate in decision making, which are central elements in Danish ECEC. This means that ECECs are obligated to give children a voice and create learning environments based on the children's own perspectives, and in which child-initiated play is encouraged by the ECEC staff who safeguard children's initiatives, imagination and drive.

The view of the child in Danish ECEC is based on the assumption that being a child is valuable in itself. Danish ECEC therefore safeguards children's right to be a child, to be different and to develop at a different pace. Danish ECEC focuses on caring for children, whilst stimulating and challenging children to support their wellbeing, learning, development and formation.

Danish ECEC should help support a happy childhood, i.e. a life with space and time to be a child, and where attentive and confidence-building ECEC staff provide support, care and security for the child to learn and develop. Children are perceived as competent and independent individuals, at the same time requiring care, challenges, positive expectations and trust from the ECEC staff.

The ECEC staff and the management should establish an organisational framework and a learning environment that enable children to experience intimacy, wellbeing, learning, development and appreciative relationships. Children are seen as active co-creators of their own learning and development in a framework that the ECEC staff are responsible for establishing. Children's contributions are significant and important elements in the pedagogical practice in terms of planned activities, spontaneous situations, play and routine situations. Therefore, it is important that the child feels seen and understood and has a democratic voice. Play and playful, curious approaches are the starting point for the inclusive processes for the child, framed and established by the ECEC staff. The pedagogical curriculum should help maintain this focus in the pedagogical practice.

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<sup>1</sup> Extract from *Master plan for a strengthened pedagogical curriculum*, 2016.

The common pedagogical foundation

## Formation and child perspective



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### WHAT DOES THE ACT SAY?

- Children aged 2 and 4 years, for example, should be heard and be taken seriously as part of the beginning of an formation process and democratic understanding. Formation, equality and democracy should be integrated into in daily pedagogical practice, so that children feel they have a say in everyday life and activities, regardless of background, gender, age and culture. ECEC staff should encourage children to be active participants, encouraging children to contribute to their own learning and specific participation in democratic contexts created by the staff.

**Preliminary work on section 8(2) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care**

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### What does the requirement entail?

ECECs should promote children's formation, where formation refers to a deeper form of learning, where children as active participants cement values and knowledge in their own personality as guidance to navigate and act in a global world as a considerate, critical and democratic human being.

Formation refers to pedagogical objectives as well as pedagogical content and form. Formation, equality and democracy should be integrated into the daily pedagogical practice, so that children feel involved and have a say in everyday life and activities, regardless of background, gender, age and culture. The formational content should be meaningful, challenge the child and be the outset for how children understand and act in a digital and global world. ECEC

staff should encourage children to be active participants, encouraging children to contribute to their own learning and specific participation in democratic contexts created by the staff.

ECECs should promote children's wellbeing, learning, development and formation through safe pedagogical learning environments, where play should be essential and where child perspectives should be the point of departure. Childhood has a value in itself, and the pedagogical learning environment should be seen from a child perspective, whether it be everyday situations, child-initiated activities or adult-planned programmes.

(Preliminary work on section 7(1) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care)

# The common pedagogical foundation

## Play



### WHAT DOES THE ACT SAY?

- Play is valuable in itself and should be a continuous part of an ECEC setting. Play is also fundamental for children's social and personal learning and development, and play promotes imagination, drive, language, curiosity, social skills, self-esteem, identity, etc. Sometimes play needs to be supported, guided and framed to include all children and for the play to develop positively for all children.

**Preliminary work on section 8(2) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care**

### Inspiration to support play<sup>2</sup>

Children's spontaneous and self-organised play should be acknowledged and respected and it should be allowed plenty of space in everyday activities in ECEC. At the same time, the ECEC staff is responsible for paying attention to how play communities among children develop. The ECEC staff can continuously assess whether it is necessary to frame play so that all the children enjoy play, try new roles and social combinations and have a (positive) experience of being involved.

Framed play activities could be based on children and adults together reflecting on how the activity can be designed and developed. Pedagogical play activities also allow for the possibility to involve the children who may not be part of the activity.



<sup>2</sup> Extract from *Master plan for a strengthened pedagogical curriculum*, 2016.

# The common pedagogical foundation

## Learning



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### WHAT DOES THE ACT SAY?

- Learning should be understood in a broad sense, and learning takes place e.g. through play, relationships, planned activities and exploration of nature, and by being challenged. The pedagogical learning environment is about promoting children's bodily, emotional, social and cognitive development and understanding.

**Preliminary work on section 8(2) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care**

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#### **Inspiration for pedagogical work on children's learning<sup>3</sup>**

Children learn by exploring their surroundings with their body and senses, by wondering and asking questions, by being met with questions and challenges and by experimenting with materials, for example, and making discoveries. Children learn through communication, exchange and social interactions. They learn by experiencing new things and by experiencing that they can help change rules and find innovative and creative solutions to challenges in contexts that they form together with other children and adults. Children's learning is promoted by having the courage to make mistakes, falter and unleash their imagination. This means that the ECEC staff should create a comprehensive, inclusive and safe learning environment that promotes experimental skills and the desire to learn and experience more – also outside ECEC hours.

Learning in ECEC is much more than acquiring cultural values, knowledge, skills and response patterns, for example. Learning in ECEC takes place in the alternation between child-initiated play, adult-planned activities and routine situations such as lunch. The ECEC staff create a learning environment that takes the children further in their social, emotional and cognitive development.

The ECEC setting is only one of many arenas for children's learning and development, the home being the most central arena with the greatest impact on children's wellbeing, learning, development and formation.

Children should therefore have the opportunity in the ECEC setting to process and experiment with their experiences from home and from other arenas. Furthermore, it is important that children are exposed to different experiences from nature, the local environment, culture and society, and focus should be on promoting both non-cognitive and cognitive skills.

The ECEC staff should use the children's play content as indicators for what interests the children, what can be challenging for their learning and development, and what therefore would be obvious to continue working on together in the planned learning activities. For example, a child may need a common base of experience to play. Or children may play the same game all the time without developing the game, or they do not succeed in creating immersive fantasy play, and only try to play a joint game. Or a child's lack of verbal language may be a barrier to expressing feelings or needs. To support a common base of experience, ECEC staff can support children in their approach to an ever-broader world of experience, and more directly by sometimes participating in the children's play.

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<sup>3</sup> Extract from *Master plan for a strengthened pedagogical curriculum*, 2016.

In this way, the ECEC staff inspire children to take their play to other places. At the same time, the ECEC staff should systematically focus on the children who do not join the play activities themselves or always have the same role in play. The ECEC staff is responsible for ensuring that children are exposed to diverse and rich experiences with play and other activities.

When ECEC staff take a targeted approach to children's learning within e.g. sustainability, digitalisation, natural phenomena, culture or similar, the approach should be playful and experimenting, so that the content and form of learning make sense to the children.



# The common pedagogical foundation

## Communities of children



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### WHAT DOES THE ACT SAY?

- All play, formation and learning should take place in communities of children for which the ECEC staff set the framework. Relationships and friendships are crucial, and all children should experience being part of the community and respected and heard. Everyday ECEC activities should have space for the individual child to show initiative and be an active participant, while at the same time the community should create space for everyone, new relationships and to try different roles, etc. The ECEC staff and the management should be responsible for creating a balance between the individual and the community at the ECEC.

**Preliminary work on section 8(2) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care**

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#### **Inspiration for pedagogical work on communities of children<sup>4</sup>**

In ECECs, children are part of a social community with other children and adults. The children and the ECEC staff present at the ECEC create the social room together through which the individual children learn and develop. Together with the ECEC staff, the other children influence the experiences of the individual child when at the ECEC.

All play, formation and learning take place in social interaction with the other children and the ECEC staff at the ECEC. Everyday ECEC activities should have space for the individual child to show initiative and be an active participant, while at the same time the community should create space for everyone, new relationships and to try different roles, etc. The ECEC staff and the management should be responsible for creating a balance between the individual and the community at the ECEC.

Parents have a co-responsibility, which means that parents are involved in creating a well-functioning community of children that recognises all families, regardless of background. The pedagogical work on the pedagogical curriculum includes links between the children's perspectives, possibilities and limitations in the social room and the pedagogical objectives. The communities of children at the ECEC should also create room for children to establish friendships across age, gender and culture, and prevent bullying.

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<sup>4</sup> Extract from *Master plan for a strengthened pedagogical curriculum*, 2016.

The common pedagogical foundation

## Pedagogical learning environment



The pedagogical learning environment is the framework for children's wellbeing and learning and is key in work on the pedagogical curriculum.



### WHAT DOES THE ACT SAY?

- It should be evident from the pedagogical curriculum how the individual ECEC setting throughout the day establishes a pedagogical learning environment, in which play, adult-initiated activities, spontaneous activities, child-initiated activities as well as everyday routines enable the children to thrive, learn, develop and be educated.
- The pedagogical learning environment should be organised such that it takes into account children's perspectives and participation, the community of children, the composition of the child group and the children's different backgrounds.

**Section 8(3) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care**

### What does the requirement entail?

Pedagogical learning environment means an environment that, based on key elements of the pedagogical foundation, consciously and purposefully works with children's wellbeing, learning, development and formation. The pedagogical learning environment at the ECEC should be based on interaction between structural parameters, such as staff education and competences, size of group of children, physical environment, child-adult ratio, digital tools, the aesthetic design, etc., and a number of process elements such as empathic interactions with other children and the ECEC staff, challenging dialogues and situations, cooperation with parents and everyday rhythm, etc. The pedagogical curriculum should support and clarify the interaction between these parameters.

Establishment of a pedagogical learning environment in ECEC requires the ECEC staff and the management to continuously focus on how practice can be framed, organised and planned, so that children experience the best possible conditions to learn and develop.

For example, an environment in which children are supported in opting in or opting out and entering into known and new contexts with other children, will be of great

importance to children's social development. So will a rich language environment where staff is aware of the importance of entering into long dialogues with the children, asking open-ended questions and continuously expressing in words the things that happen during the day in connection with planned activities, spontaneous activities and daily routines with the children such as lunch, cleaning up, etc.

When the ECEC staff are to establish pedagogical learning environments, the staff also need to take pedagogical-didactical considerations of a pedagogical learning environment that supports bodily, social, emotional and cognitive learning and development of the child group.

### The pedagogical learning environment is present throughout the day

The pedagogical learning environment in ECEC must be present throughout the day.

This means that in connection with children's play, planned adult-initiated activities, spontaneous activities and daily routines, such as nappy change, lunch, cleaning up, when the children get dressed and undressed in the cloakroom, etc., the pedagogical learning environment should enable the children to thrive, learn, develop and be educated.

Children's learning is not limited to 90 minutes of pedagogical activities in the morning, but takes place throughout the day.

Establishing a pedagogical learning environment in daily routines will include talking to the child during nappy change to stimulate the child's emotional attachment and language development, supporting the child's self-help skills by letting the child put on his/her own jacket in the cloakroom, and teaching the child to show consideration for others during lunch as part of work on the child's comprehensive personal development and social development, etc.

The pedagogical learning environment should always be organised such that it takes into account children's perspectives and participation, the community of children, the composition of the child group and the children's different backgrounds.

(Preliminary work on section 8(3) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care)



The common pedagogical foundation

## Cooperation with parents on children's learning



As part of the work on the pedagogical curriculum, it should be evident how the ECEC setting cooperates with parents on children's learning.



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### WHAT DOES THE ACT SAY?

- It should be evident from the pedagogical curriculum how the ECEC setting cooperates with parents on children's learning.

**Section 8(6) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care**

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### What does the requirement entail?

As part of work on the pedagogical curriculum, the ECEC setting should focus on how the ECEC setting cooperates with parents on the learning and wellbeing of the child and the child group across the ECEC setting and the home.

This cooperation on children's learning should be through the cooperation with parents that already exists in the ECEC setting, such as parents' meetings, parent-teacher consultations, pick-up/drop-off situations, summer parties, Christmas parties, communal eating, etc. The individual ECEC should use some of these different fora where parents are already at the ECEC to put children's learning on the agenda.

This could be an item on the agenda at parents' meetings, telling about what the ECEC is working on, and how parents can support the child's learning at home. In day-to-day cooperation with parents when they drop off and pick up their child, the staff will also occasionally be able to tell the

parents about the child's social life and learning in the ECEC setting and talk to the parent about how together they can promote the child's wellbeing, learning, development and formation.

The ECEC should still be the framework for events where the purpose is to strengthen social cohesion and relationships between children and parents, but cooperation with parents should also focus on children's learning.

All parents are different, and the individual ECEC is responsible for facilitating and framing cooperation with parents, so that the cooperation is differentiated and based on local traditions, desires and needs of the individual families. Together with the parents, the ECEC should match mutual expectations for the individual parent cooperation and the more general parent cooperation at the ECEC. Day-to-day cooperation with parents should be based on trustful and constructive cooperation on the children's wellbeing and learning.

The ECEC's cooperation with parents on supporting their children's learning in the family may entail that the ECEC guides the parents on how to contribute positively to their children's learning and development. For instance, parents can read aloud to their children, sing with their children and otherwise involve their children and talk with them about all the things the parents and children do in and outside the family, so the children develop their language and broaden their world by asking questions, wondering and gaining experiences.

The very essence of cooperation with parents on children's learning is cooperation, where both the ECEC and the parents have a responsibility. Parents are therefore also responsible for cooperating with the ECEC and otherwise keeping themselves up-to-date and supporting the work of the ECEC with regard to children's wellbeing and learning.

(Preliminary work on section 8(6) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care)



## The common pedagogical foundation

# Vulnerable children



As part of work on the pedagogical curriculum, the ECEC should reflect on how the pedagogical learning environment is to be organised and planned to cater for and support the learning of vulnerable children.



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### WHAT DOES THE ACT SAY?

- It should be evident from the pedagogical curriculum how the pedagogical learning environment takes into account vulnerable children to promote their wellbeing, learning, development and formation.

**Section 8(5) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care**

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### What does the requirement entail?

Vulnerable children means a complex group of children, e.g. children with low socioeconomic backgrounds, children with physical or mental disabilities, children at risk of being excluded from the community, etc. As with other children, vulnerable children learn and develop in a professional and competent pedagogical learning environment, and in the meeting with solid pedagogical expertise.

The quality of the interaction between the child and the adult is particularly important for vulnerable children. Together with other relevant professionals, the ECEC staff are responsible for supporting children with different challenges, and for ensuring that all children participate in the community. The pedagogical curriculum, including the six curriculum themes and the pedagogical objectives, should be relevant for all children, regardless of their background, language, culture and traditions. Establishing a pedagogical learning environment for vulnerable children is not about taking out a single child from the general community of children for specially planned activity with the child. It is about challenging vulnerable children so they experience mastery in connection with child-initiated and adult-initiated play and activities, for example.

All children in ECEC are entitled to be stimulated and be met with positive expectations. In line with expectations of the other children in the ECEC setting, it is essential that the ECEC staff have positive expectations of a vulnerable child. Vulnerable children should be an important part of the community of children, and their parents are equally important in the community of parents.

Sometimes it can be advantageous to give a vulnerable child space to be part of a smaller group context, where the adult can work more purposefully with the child's specific challenges; i.e. social, motoric or language challenges or something else. This requires the ECEC staff and ECEC management to pay attention to all children's wellbeing, learning, development and formation through planning safe pedagogical learning environments.

(Preliminary work on section 8(5) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care)

The common pedagogical foundation

# Pedagogical learning environment and continuity to preschool class



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## WHAT DOES THE ACT SAY?

- It should be evident from the pedagogical curriculum how a pedagogical learning environment is planned in the children's last years in ECEC to create continuity to preschool class.

Section 8(6) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care

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### What does the requirement entail?

It should be evident from the pedagogical curriculum how a pedagogical learning environment is planned in the children's last years in ECEC to create continuity to preschool class and thereby best prepare future school children to start school.

Work on planning a pedagogical learning environment for the oldest children in kindergarten that creates continuity to preschool class should be based on the strengthened pedagogical curriculum.

For instance, if a municipality has scheduled school start for 1 May and the children start at a school-based leisure-time facility or after-school centre from that date, the ECEC is obligated to establish a school-supporting pedagogical learning environment that creates continuity to preschool class one year before that date.

The six pedagogical curriculum themes are closely connected to the content elements used in preschool class. The themes in the preschool curriculum are therefore an element in the ECECs' work on creating continuity between the content of the ECEC and preschool class.

Continuity does not mean that the content of ECEC and school has to be the same. Creating continuity to preschool class may include children's wellbeing, work on communities of children and supporting children's desire to learn and their zest for new experiences, because these are central elements across ECEC and school.

Establishing a pedagogical learning environment with continuity to preschool class is, among other things, about ensuring children in ECEC positive experiences with participating in ECEC communities and through this instil in them positive expectations to social communities at school. This means that the pedagogical learning environment for the oldest children should focus on supporting the children in having the courage to meet new challenges, immerse themselves in projects, be persistent, be able to enter into a community of children and to form relationships.

Moreover, the pedagogical learning environment for the oldest children should also introduce, and allow the children to develop their curiosity towards, letters, numbers, patterns, shapes, etc.

Work on planning a pedagogical learning environment for the oldest children in kindergarten to create continuity to preschool class should be based on the pedagogical curriculum.

(Preliminary work on section 8(6) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care)



# Other requirements for content of the pedagogical curriculum

## Involving the local community



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### WHAT DOES THE ACT SAY?

- It should be evident from the pedagogical curriculum how the ECEC setting involves the local community in establishing pedagogical learning environments for children.

**Section 8(6) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care**

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### What does the requirement entail?

The pedagogical curriculum should state how the ECEC setting involves the local community in establishing the pedagogical learning environment for children.

As part of work on the pedagogical curriculum, the ECEC should consider how the local community can be involved e.g. through libraries, museums, sports activities and facilities, nursing homes, business community, etc. to strengthen the pedagogical learning environment of the ECEC.

Moreover, the ECEC should consider whether cooperation e.g. with older citizens, school children from intermediate level (4th to 7th year of school) and from the final years of compulsory school or other volunteers in the local community who want to contribute special knowledge or interest e.g. in nature, sports, music, health or design, can help strengthen work on pedagogical learning environments.

Within the limits and guidelines of the law and the municipal council, the ECEC leader and the ECEC staff will set the pedagogical framework for the programmes, where cooperation with any volunteers should always incorporate the children's wellbeing, learning, development and formation.

Volunteers who are regular visitors to the ECEC should not be part of the staff-child ratio, and volunteers cannot be held responsible for the pedagogical core task.

If the ECEC decides to enter into an agreement with one or more volunteers, the ECEC should be aware of the regulations regarding the obligation to obtain a child protection certificate.

(Preliminary work on section 8(6) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care)

Other requirements for content of the pedagogical curriculum

## Work on the physical, psychological and aesthetic children's environment

Work on the physical, psychological and aesthetic children's environment in the ECEC should be integrated in the work on the pedagogical curriculum.



### WHAT DOES THE ACT SAY?

- Work on the physical, psychological and aesthetic children's environment in the ECEC should be integrated in pedagogical work on establishing pedagogical learning environments.
- The children's environment should be assessed in a child perspective, and children's perceptions of the children's environment should be involved taking into account the age and maturity of the children.

**Section 8(7) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care**

### What does the requirement entail?

The concept of children's environment is a unifying concept of the physical, psychological and aesthetic children's environment in ECEC, where the physical, psychological and aesthetic children's environment should be understood in a broad sense.

The physical children's environment may concern noise level, indoor climate, space for physical activity and quiet activities, hygiene, lighting, cloakroom, playground and outdoor areas, layout and size of the rooms, etc.

The psychological children's environment may concern the interaction between children and adults, including whether this interaction is recognised as mutual respect and tolerance, children's mutual interaction, including whether the children in their language and actions respect each other, whether there is room for and acceptance of diversity among children and staff, whether bullying takes place among the children, etc.

The aesthetic children's environment may concern whether the layout and decoration of the rooms have a stimulating and inspiring effect on the children, and whether the indoor and outdoor surroundings are designed to encourage children's desire to move and unfold and immerse themselves, play quietly, etc.

The examples above are not exhaustive or a list of conditions to which the ECEC must relate. The individual ECEC

decides what conditions it considers relevant to include in the pedagogical curriculum in relation to pedagogical work on children's learning.

In the pedagogical curriculum, the ECEC can state how the pedagogical learning environment can promote a better children's environment, e.g. by splitting the group of children into smaller groups, or actively using the playground, corridor or similar in everyday activities to create a better children's environment (reduced noise level), thereby improving wellbeing and learning for the children. ECECs can also have a conscious pedagogical approach e.g. to hand-wash or use of slippers to improve the level of hygiene and reduce the incidence of disease, thereby creating a better setting for wellbeing and learning for the children.

The children's environment at the ECEC should be assessed from a child perspective. This means that the children's environment should be assessed from the eyes of the children. Moreover, the children's perceptions of the children's environment should be included in the assessment of the children's environment, depending on the age and maturity of the children. Emphasis is on involving children in matters affecting themselves, see Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on the child's right to form his or her own views and that these views are respected.

(Preliminary work on section 8(7) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care)



# The six curriculum themes

It should be evident from the pedagogical curriculum how the pedagogical learning environment supports children's general learning within and across six curriculum themes. The six curriculum themes are listed in the box below.



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## WHAT DOES THE ACT SAY?

- The pedagogical curriculum should be prepared on the basis of six curriculum themes as well as goals for the relationship between the pedagogical learning environment and children's learning.
- It should be evident from the pedagogical curriculum how the pedagogical learning environment supports children's general learning, including curiosity, drive, self-esteem and movement within and across the following six curriculum themes:
  1. Comprehensive personal development
  2. Social development
  3. Communication and language
  4. Body, senses and motion
  5. Nature, outdoor life and natural phenomena
  6. Culture, aesthetics and community.

**Section 8(2) and (4) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care**

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### What does the requirement entail?

The six curriculum themes should be seen in conjunction and interaction with each other to ensure that the pedagogical practice, seen from a child perspective, does not appear as six fragmented themes.

The six curriculum themes aim to ensure a broad understanding of learning and focus on different central elements of children's learning and development.

Each of the six curriculum themes has a content description that includes the overall elements of the individual curriculum theme. Furthermore, each curriculum theme has two pedagogical objectives. The pedagogical curriculum should be prepared within the framework of the content descriptions and the pedagogical objectives.

(Preliminary work on section 8(2) and (4) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care)

## What is new?

### The six curriculum themes

The six themes concern children's bodily, emotional, social and cognitive learning. These six themes reflect the broad understanding of learning.

### Concept descriptions of the six curriculum themes

The content of the six curriculum themes is provided in six content descriptions. In addition, the titles of five of the six curriculum themes have been revised to better reflect the content descriptions. The title of curriculum theme no. 1, *comprehensive personal development*, has been kept, whereas the remaining five titles have been revised.

Furthermore, it is emphasised that the pedagogical work on the pedagogical learning environment and children's learning should take place within and across the six curriculum themes, as it is crucial that the individual curriculum themes are not viewed and understood separately, but together with the other curriculum themes.

### Pedagogical objectives for the six curriculum themes

A new element is that each curriculum theme has two pedagogical objectives.

The pedagogical objectives express the relationship between, on the one hand, the pedagogical learning

environment, and on the other hand, children's learning. Moreover, they set a direction for the pedagogical work in ECEC, in which the pedagogical objectives should also give way to and support local professional reflection.

As a result, the individual ECEC setting no longer has to set local goals for children's learning for each of the six curriculum themes, and the ECECs no longer have to describe the relevant pedagogical methods and activities launched to achieve the goals.

Instead, the ECECs should establish a pedagogical learning environment for children throughout the day, and this learning environment should be organised within the framework of the content descriptions and the pedagogical objectives.

The individual ECEC setting should establish a pedagogical learning environment that reflects and takes into account that the needs and backgrounds of 0-2-year-olds and 3-5-year-olds are essentially different, and that the pedagogical learning environment therefore needs to be adjusted to reflect this. For example, this entails that family daycare and day nurseries, which are typically for 0-2-year-olds, should operationalise the pedagogical objectives set for 0-5-year-olds, so that the pedagogical learning environment reflects the needs and backgrounds of the youngest children.



## The six curriculum themes

# Content descriptions and pedagogical objectives



Each curriculum theme is provided in a content description.

The six content descriptions describe the different elements of each curriculum theme, which children should encounter as part of their pedagogical learning environment in their ECEC setting.

The pedagogical work on the individual curriculum themes should be based on the elements stated in the content descriptions. How the overarching elements are to be interpreted organisationally and pedagogically on an every-

day basis in the ECEC setting should be decided at local level.

Furthermore, each curriculum theme has two pedagogical objectives. The pedagogical objectives express the relationship between the pedagogical learning environment and children's wellbeing, learning, development and formation. The pedagogical objectives are described below.

Content descriptions and pedagogical objectives are set out in the Executive Order on pedagogical objectives and content in six curriculum themes.



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### WHAT DOES THE EXECUTIVE ORDER SAY?

- The pedagogical learning environment should be organised within and across six pedagogical curriculum themes. Each theme has been described in more detail in an annex.
- The six curriculum themes contain a number of overarching elements, cf. annexes, which children in ECEC settings should encounter as part of their pedagogical learning environment in their ECEC setting. How the overarching elements are to be interpreted organisationally and pedagogically on an everyday basis in the ECEC setting should be decided at local level.
- For each pedagogical curriculum theme, the pedagogical learning environment should moreover be organised within two pedagogical objectives that describe the relationship between the learning environment and children's learning.
- The pedagogical learning environment should take into account the children's age and different backgrounds, as well as the composition of the child group.

**Section 1 of the Executive Order on pedagogical objectives and content in six curriculum themes**

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The content descriptions of the six curriculum themes and the two pedagogical objectives for each of the curriculum themes appear on the following pages.



## The six curriculum themes

# Comprehensive personal development



**C**omprehensive personal development is about the continuous broadening of the child's world of experience and opportunities for participation. This participation requires children to be committed, skilful, enthusiastic and competent.

### Commitment

The learning environment should support children's commitment e.g. by promoting intensity in the way in which children participate in interactions and activities. The learning environment should promote children's commitment and participation through which children experience immersion, self-respect, self-confidence and self-esteem. Children develop commitment when they form relationships in which they feel respected, looked after and appreciated by close, trusting adults.

### Life skills

Through play and other meaningful activities, the learning environment should help children gain significant experiences with different social roles, giving them a fundamental set of democratic values that develop and support children's formation and life skills.

The learning environment should support children in engaging in play and other activities that encourage them to develop their potential and explore and experience themselves and each other in many and new ways. Children's self-perception and response patterns should also be challenged through play and activities in which the children's or the ECEC staff's actions or perceptions restrict the child's own development or the development of others.

The ECEC staff should encourage children to express themselves respectfully and they should acknowledge the children's perspectives and experiences of daily life in the ECEC setting. This gives children a sense of co-influence, of being important and of co-creating their own living conditions. At the same time, the children learn about the importance of being attentive to other people's experiences, perspectives and views of the world. By participating in communities with others, the children gain basic experience of belonging to and navigating in such communities, as well as an understanding of democracy and democratic processes. In particular, it is important that ECEC settings help vulnerable children gain experience of and take active part in these mutually binding communities.

### Drive and enthusiasm

The learning environment should support children in expressing their emotions and coping with conflicts appropriately without losing their drive and enthusiasm. The ability to cope with difficulties and challenges and to be persistent is essential for children to be able to influence their daily lives in an ECEC setting, but it is also a key competence that will affect future stages of their lives, at school as well as in other contexts.

In cooperation with parents, ECEC staff should ensure that the challenges do not exceed children's competences or go beyond their limits. In addition to this, the learning environment should introduce children to different ways of coping with conflict situations and emotions, and allow them to experiment with such situations and emotions. This takes courage. ECEC staff should support children in venturing into unfamiliar territory, for example by selecting specific activities, or deselecting activities or relationships when these do not match children's needs for wellbeing, learning and development. It is also important to take into account the fact that children should also have a high degree of participation in the overall community of children in the ECEC.

### Participation competence

The learning environment should support and broaden the child's world of experience to give children the ability and the courage to participate and to take initiative to create the opportunities for self-realisation they want in the communities they are part of. Children practise their participation competence by balancing between observing positions and more active positions where they take the initiative in the different activities and relationships in which they engage.

The learning environment should allow children to pursue, engage in and immerse themselves in the activities that they find interesting, so that they learn to select from many different options. The learning environment should make children wonder, arouse their curiosity, acknowledge them for their discoveries, support their persistence and support their innovative capacity. Immersion supports children's power of concentration and abstraction, and this is crucial for their development and learning; at home, in ECEC settings, at school and later in life.

(Annex 1 of the Executive Order on pedagogical objectives and content in six curriculum themes)

## Pedagogical objectives for the pedagogical curriculum theme: *Comprehensive personal development*

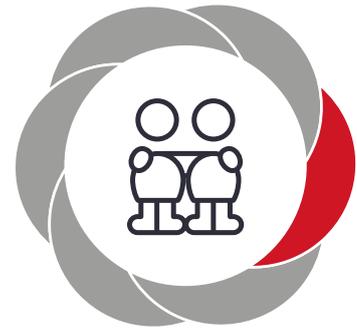
1. The pedagogical learning environment should support children in developing their potential and in exploring and experiencing themselves and each other in familiar as well as new ways, and in having confidence in their own potentials. This must be done across age and gender, as well as social and cultural backgrounds.
2. The pedagogical learning environment should support interactions and connections between children and ECEC staff and between children themselves. The learning environment should be characterised by care, curiosity and a sense of security, allowing all children to develop commitment, life skills, drive and competence when participating in communities. This also applies in situations that call for immersion, persistence and prioritisation.

Section 3 of the Executive Order on pedagogical objectives and content in six curriculum themes



## The six curriculum themes

# Social development



**S**ocial development means developing options for social action and participation. It takes place in social communities in which children can feel that they belong and can gain experience in practicing influence and appreciating differences.

Children develop empathy and social relationships when they interact with others, and therefore the learning environment should support children in building relationships with other children, with ECEC staff, with the local environment, with activities, objects, toys, etc.

### Participation and co-influence

Children in ECEC settings should participate in social communities to which they feel they belong and to which they can make valuable and relevant contributions to common play activities and social interaction. All children, not least children who are in a vulnerable situation for a longer period of time, depend on the pedagogical learning environment perceiving diversity as a resource and supporting opportunities for participation and co-influence. This will benefit the community and strengthen commitment.

### Empathy

Relationships are crucial for children to learn empathy. Empathy is defined as being aware of one's own feelings, understanding other people's feelings and world of experiences and being able to act in ways that also support interaction with others.

Mutual relationships and friendships between children are very important for their social learning, and they support development of social skills, as is often seen when children play.

A key factor for children's development of empathy is that ECEC staff are interested in the child's perspectives, expressed both verbally and physically. When relationships between ECEC staff and children build on equality, understanding and empathy, this not only helps children become independent and allows them to have a say, but it also gives them a better understanding of other people and of the importance of acting in the interest of the community and each other.

All children need to be met with positive expectations because it promotes their drive and enthusiasm and their positive expectations of the outside world. The learning environment should support children's general wellbeing

and social interaction, but it should also help children gain experience of coping in the world outside. In particular, it is important for their continued school life that children have a positive experience of taking initiative to engage in relationships and solve conflicts.

Cooperation with parents plays a crucial role for the child's social learning and development. Dialogue between parents and ECEC staff can help build a mutual understanding of the child's perspective and social life in the ECEC setting and thereby support the child's learning and the children's mutual relationships and community. Cooperation and dialogue can also help prevent bullying.

### The importance of play for social learning

Children's social learning and development is promoted through play.

The pedagogical learning environment should support play as a fundamental activity through which children learn to negotiate, make compromises and solve conflicts. A characteristic of play is that it develops progressively, and that children therefore have to attune to each other all the time.

Children's social learning and development also takes place when they observe other children playing. For example, they learn to decode the formal and informal rules of play and to come up with constructive suggestions that can give them access to the play activity and make sure it continues. In other words, children can learn different social conventions for how to behave in everyday ECEC activities and in life in general, including at school.

The learning environment should support children's desire to play, explore and experiment.

Some children may find it difficult to access play communities, even though they would like to participate. Therefore, to support children's participation in play communities, ECEC staff should regularly alternate between leading the way, walking alongside, and following behind the children. All children are different and they need to be challenged in different ways. The differences can be in terms of age, gender, cultural and social background and individual interests. When organising learning environments and frameworks for play activities, the physical environment, layout, toys and atmosphere are also crucial factors.

(Annex 2 of the Executive Order on pedagogical objectives and content in six curriculum themes)



## Pedagogical objectives for the pedagogical curriculum theme: *Social development*

Pedagogical work on the *social development* curriculum theme should be based on the description of the theme and two pedagogical objectives aimed at children in the 0-5 years age group. The two pedagogical objectives are as follows:

1. The pedagogical learning environment should support the wellbeing of all children as well as their participation in social communities and development of empathy and relationships.
2. The pedagogical learning environment should support communities in which differences are seen as a resource that helps to provide democratic formation.

Section 5 of the Executive Order on pedagogical objectives and content in six curriculum themes



## The six curriculum themes

# Communication and language



**C**hildren acquire and develop communication and language through close relationships with their parents, in communities with other children, and together with ECEC staff. A learning environment that supports children's communicative interactions and language interactions with ECEC staff is key to children's language acquisition. Other central aspects are that ECEC staff are consciously aware that they are language role models, and that children are guided to engage in communities with other children.

### Interactions

Language is learned as a natural continuation of exchanges taking place as looking, babbling and gestures, and it requires intimacy, eye contact and shared attention. Therefore, ECEC staff should be empathetic and curious and willing to engage in communication and conversation focusing on what the children are interested in. How ECEC staff contact children, speak to them, communicate messages and talk about daily routines and activities as they occur, is crucial for children's communication and language development. The quality of conversations between ECEC staff and children is important overall, and it is particularly important for vulnerable children.

### Language role models

Children develop their language through dialogue with language role models by listening, talking, asking questions about their surroundings and playing with language. When children experiment with communication and language, they gain experience of decoding, recreating and developing appropriate communication in different situations and communities. Among other things, this means that ECEC staff should help all children engage in dialogue in which they learn to take turns speaking and listening.

### Communities

Communication and language are key to building relationships, engaging in communities and maintaining friendships. Learning from other children across age groups is essential to the language development process. Playing is an important practice field for children's non-verbal and verbal communication, vocabulary and sentence formation. Therefore, the child's acquisition process is crucially dependent on the child being supported in participating in

play activities. In some cases, this implies that ECEC staff participate and set the framework for the activity. Moreover, ECEC staff can use the children's play content as an indicator for possible conversation topics, but also as an indicator for potential challenges to language development of the individual child.

The ECEC staff is responsible for ensuring that children are exposed to many and diverse experiences with language through self-organised and spontaneous play activities and other meaningful activities. In this connection, it is important to have an eye for children who do not engage in conversation, play and other activities at their own initiative, in order to make sure they, too, are included in communities that support their communication and language development.

The learning environment should provide a broad range of language learning opportunities and activities to support language comprehension, vocabulary development, pronunciation and sentence formation in contexts that are meaningful for children. Through conversations, questions, story-making and play, ECEC staff can verbalise the children's different experiences. Language learning opportunities should be incorporated into all routines and planned and spontaneous activities in which children are introduced to new concepts and forms of expression, such as written, symbolic and figurative language.

ECEC learning environments should give children access to books, writing utensils, paper and other written language products to introduce children to the universe of books and arouse their curiosity about written language. This includes the opportunity to look in books, ask questions about letters, have someone read aloud and talk to ECEC staff about the content of books.

The learning environment should ensure that through reflections about organisation and pedagogical and didactic considerations, the ECEC staff generate high quality conversations in all contexts between ECEC staff and children and between the children themselves. Furthermore, the ECEC staff should cooperate with parents about children's language, both in relation to the individual child and in relation to the community of children in the ECEC setting.

(Annex 3 of the Executive Order on pedagogical objectives and content in six curriculum themes)



## Pedagogical objectives for the pedagogical curriculum theme: Communication and language

Pedagogical work on the *communication and language* curriculum theme should be based on the description of the theme and two pedagogical objectives aimed at children in the 0-5 years age group. The two pedagogical objectives are as follows:

1. The pedagogical learning environment should support all children in developing a language that enables them to understand themselves, each other and their surroundings.
2. The pedagogical learning environment should support all children in gaining experience with communicating and expressing thoughts, needs and ideas that children can use in social communities.

Section 7 of the Executive Order on pedagogical objectives and content in six curriculum themes



## The six curriculum themes

# Body, senses and motion



**C**hildren exist in the world through their bodies, and the basis of physical and mental wellbeing is formed when they are encouraged to use, challenge, experiment, feel and take care of their body through calmness and motion. The body is a large and complex sensory system that makes up the foundation for experience, knowledge and emotional and social processes, and all communication and development of relationships emanate from the body.

The ECEC learning environment should allow all children, including children with limited experience of their body, senses and motion, to participate in communities, activities and play, and the ECEC staff should encourage children to move by showing them the joy of movement and physical activity.

Children should be encouraged to gain many different types of bodily experience in learning environments in which the joy of movement, creativity and play are key concepts, and in which ECEC staff support the individual child and provide flexible, inclusive learning environments. The ECEC staff should be curious, and consciously monitor children's own initiatives with regard to movement. In this way, children feel that self-determination and co-influence are natural parts of their formation process.

The ECEC staff should involve parents through dialogue and as partners to provide good conditions for movement, e.g. by sharing their pedagogical considerations about the value of risk-oriented play activities and of challenging and observing children's interests in movement.

### Body

Children participate in different communities in society through their body, and the body has a physical as well as an existential dimension.

The physical dimension includes an understanding of the body as a biological system with all its different parts, the functions of these parts, their interactions and reactions.

The pedagogical learning environment should allow children to experience the world with their body and through their body. The body is a source of awareness of other things and other people, and of one's own body in the world, including in aesthetic, social, emotional and motion processes. Through bodily experience, children explore questions such as "who am I?" and "what can you do –

I wonder if I can do the same?", and in this way, they develop their bodily identity through bodily experience in social interaction.

The body is the source of mental health (e.g. wellbeing) as well as physical health (e.g. nutrition, hygiene, mobility).

### Senses

The senses are children's window to the world and the foundation of perceiving and understanding the world. The pedagogical learning environment should support stimulation of the three basic motor senses (the tactile sense (touch), the vestibular sense (movement and balance) and the proprioceptive sense (muscles and joints) in combination with the other four senses (smell, sight, taste and hearing). This is crucial for the child's motor development and automation of movement (gross as well as fine motor functions).

The physical senses cannot stand alone. Sensory learning environments should take account of the aesthetic dimension with focus on children's playful exploration and creative movement experiments. The environments should create a space for children's experiences with bodily sensations and emotions, including relaxed contact with their bodies, and the individual child should gain knowledge and feel comfortable about their body's reactions and signals and feel at ease with themselves: There should be room for the "being" and "doing" of the body.

### Motion

In movement communities, children develop skills to cope with bodily/sensory impressions and expressions, and they enhance their ability to decode and understand other children's and adults' gestures and facial and bodily expressions. Motion is about children's active exploration of the world and the potentials of their bodies, alone and together with other children and active ECEC staff, in an inclusive community of children, and in interaction with the physical surroundings outside and inside.

(Annex 4 of the Executive Order on pedagogical objectives and content in six curriculum themes)



## Pedagogical objectives for the pedagogical curriculum theme: *Body, senses and motion*

Pedagogical work on the *body, senses and motion* curriculum theme should be based on the description of the theme and two pedagogical objectives aimed at children in the 0-5 years age group. The two pedagogical objectives are as follows:

1. The pedagogical learning environment should support all children in exploring and experimenting with many different ways of using their body.
2. The pedagogical learning environment should support all children in experiencing the joy of movement and joy of their body, both in quiet and active situations, so that the children feel comfortable about their bodies, including bodily sensations, body functions, senses and various forms of movement.

Section 9 of the Executive Order on pedagogical objectives and content in six curriculum themes



## The six curriculum themes

# Nature, outdoor life and natural phenomena



**N**ature experiences during childhood have an emotional, a bodily, a social and a cognitive dimension.

Nature is a space in which children can experiment with natural science phenomena and gain their first experiences of how to think about these phenomena and analyse them. But nature is also the foundation of working on sustainability and the interplay between people, society and nature.

The learning environment should use the learning potential as a starting point, and involve children as active co-creators of their own learning through open, curious questions about their understanding of relationships in nature and in their surroundings.

The ECEC staff should listen when children wonder about nature, when they ask questions and when they start to form hypotheses and make categorisations of natural phenomena. Children should be encouraged to make their own studies, and they should be given support and guidance to encourage them to venture into repeated experiment. Thereby, they will build up basic confidence in their own ideas and abilities, despite difficulties. There should be special focus on supporting vulnerable children and their families in experiencing and learning about nature.

In cooperation with parents, ECECs should provide children with fundamental natural science education.

### Nature

Involvement, immediate joy, sensation and the here-and-now perspective are important for children's experiences and play activities in nature. Being in nature can also give rise to existential experiences and reflection in children. Therefore, the learning environment should make sure that all children, regardless of their background and where they grow up, are exposed to a broad experience of nature, both in the city and in the countryside. Children should be exposed to natural habitats such as forests, beaches, bogs and watercourses as well as living organisms such as animals, micro-organisms and plants. Children should also experience the course of the year and learn about food chains and various phenomena such as the weather and the solar system. In nature, children can experience relationships in nature, and develop their own understanding of these.

Concepts of nature should be integrated into the learning environment and the conversations about experiences and understandings of nature between children and ECEC staff.

Knowledge about nature also concerns human impact on and interaction with nature, e.g. environmental issues and issues related to sustainability and exploiting nature's resources. Consequently, the learning environment should offer an opportunity for children to consider their own interaction with nature and its resources. Sustainability is also about building, reusing and repairing by means of various tools, techniques and materials; either natural or man-made.

### Outdoor life

Using outdoor spaces as a learning environment provides immediate sensory experiences in an authentic setting. There are different types of outdoor spaces: There is the open and social space, such as a lawn or a meadow, ideal for ball games and kite-flying. There is the safe and demarcated 'room', such as the playground and the garden with swings, slides and a playhouse. And there is the wild and spacious 'room', such as the forest, the sea and the beach, with scope for immersion and fascination. The outdoor space allows for sensation, movement, imagination and creativity, and the ground is well suited for somersaulting and wild, adventurous and dangerous games and activities. Play activities stimulate children's creativity, e.g. by using natural materials, and that allow for imagination and interpretation, as when a tree trunk is transformed into a motor cycle.

Outdoor life is about giving children the opportunity to play and have experiences in and with nature, thereby allowing them to get to know themselves and nature better. Nature provides a special space for strengthening active listening and curiosity, and a space in which children can increase their scope for engaging in communities across age groups, gender, culture and interests.

### Natural phenomena

The science approach emphasises an investigative approach, which opens up for active involvement of nature and natural phenomena such as light, air, magnetism and weather. The science approach focuses on children's emerging awareness of the laws of nature and their innate numeracy, intuitive sense of size and early mathematical awareness. The point of departure is a learning view which actively incorporates children's existing knowledge and experience, their wonder and their questioning, but which also disrupts and challenges the children's current understanding. A process that goes from the very specific to the abstract – from earthworm to aviation. The ECEC staff

should build a mental bridge between the specific learning acquired through everyday activities and the understandings and concepts of science.

Furthermore, children can find out about different technological tools such as GPS, digital scales, webcams, etc., allowing them to develop a creative, productive and critical approach to the use of such technologies.

Through the science approach, the learning environment enables children to build up their own experience with

cause, effect and correlations, and the science approach supports children in categorising and organising their surroundings by means of opposites such as many/few, large/small, heavy/light, over/under, etc. Moreover, ECEC staff should organise the learning environment so that it allows children to experiment with quantity, space and shape as an early gateway to mathematical language.

(Annex 5 of the Executive Order on pedagogical objectives and content in six curriculum themes)



## Pedagogical objectives for the pedagogical curriculum theme: *Nature, outdoor life and natural phenomena*

Pedagogical work on the *nature, outdoor life and natural phenomena* curriculum theme should be based on the description of the theme and two pedagogical objectives aimed at children in the 0-5 years age group. The two pedagogical objectives are as follows:

1. The pedagogical learning environment should support all children in gaining specific experience with nature that will arouse their curiosity and their desire to explore nature, enable them to experience human connectedness with nature and provide them with an early-stage understanding of the importance of sustainable development.
2. The pedagogical learning environment should support all children in actively observing and exploring natural phenomena in their surroundings, so that the children learn to recognise and talk about cause, effect and correlations, thereby developing an early mathematical awareness.

Section 11 of the Executive Order on pedagogical objectives and content in six curriculum themes



## The six curriculum themes

# Culture, aesthetics and community



**C**ulture is an artistic, creative force that activates children's senses and emotions, and it denotes a set of cultural values acquired by children through their everyday life. Through learning environments focusing on culture, children may encounter new sides of themselves, get a chance to express themselves in many different ways and understand their surroundings.

Therefore, the ECEC staff should create a learning environment that communicates the joy of aesthetic experiences and creative practice. The ECEC staff should actively communicate culture and offer support to all children, regardless of their background, competences and prior experience with culture. The learning environment should support children to experiment, practice and test themselves within a wide range of art forms and expressions.

The learning environment should ensure that all children gain experience that can cement values and serve as a guide for the children to act considerately, democratically and respectfully. This supports binding communities and creates a link to schools, the local community and the globalised world.

### Cultural impression and expression

The pedagogical learning environment should support creative activities and aesthetics, including both impression and expression. The impression dimension consists of the children's own aesthetic experiences through direct encounters with different art forms such as the performing arts, film, painting, music, singing and literature. Aesthetic experiences enable children to share, see themselves in and interpret their own life experience, thoughts and dreams, as well as those of others. At the same time, these experiences have a bodily dimension in which the impressions leave pre-linguistic marks in the form of bodily sensations and experiences. For example, children may feel a tension in their body when they listen to a captivating story, or they may feel joy or sadness when they look at the colours of a painting.

The expression dimension comprises the children's own creative and experimental practice. This dimension is carried by children's passion, creativity, improvisation and active participation. Curiosity, sensation, play and imagination are part of the aesthetic learning process and stimulate new perspectives and views that may be anchored as new knowledge and new learning.

Therefore, ECEC staff should be attentive and support children in forming their own cultural expressions in a learning

environment that involves children in the process, that values immersion and construction, and that appreciates the children's own experimental expression.

The learning environment is crucial for the children's cognitive, aesthetic, personal and social experience-based learning, and therefore it includes not only the ECEC setting, but also local cultural events and artistic performances. The physical learning environment inside or outside the ECEC setting should also allow children to seek inspiration and experience in different literature and picture books, music, photographs, etc.

### Culture and community

Children should be allowed to create their own meaning and content through everyday activities. Their way of managing time and space, play, friendships and conflicts should be met with curiosity and respect. Moreover, the learning environment should be a democratic community to which all children have access and in which they feel they can actively influence decision-making processes based on their capacity and level of experience. All children should be able to realise their full potential, irrespective of their social background, gender, age, etc.

This means that children should be met with a differentiated pedagogical approach to allow everyone, including vulnerable children, to gain experience with realising their potential and navigating in society. As part of this, children could be allowed to use IT in an experimental community. Children should be supported in developing skills that make them creative and productive, and enable them to navigate in society in ethically responsible ways in relation to themselves and others.

Participating in communities involves an understanding of one's own cultural background and traditions and those of others. The learning environment should help develop children's understanding of their own values and their respect for other people's values. Parents' competences and important knowledge, for example about religious holidays and family structures, or about the games, books and films that interest their children, should be visible in the ECEC setting. Through equal dialogue and interaction, all parents should be given the opportunity to participate in mutually binding collaboration and be part of the daily ECEC activities and community.

(Annex 6 of the Executive Order on pedagogical objectives and content in six curriculum themes)



## Pedagogical objectives for the pedagogical curriculum theme: *Culture, aesthetics and community*

Pedagogical work on the *culture, aesthetics and community* curriculum theme should be based on the description of the theme and two pedagogical objectives aimed at children in the 0-5 years age group. The two pedagogical objectives are as follows:

1. The pedagogical learning environment should support all children in engaging in equal communities of different types in which they experience their own cultural background, norms, traditions and values, and those of others.
2. The pedagogical learning environment should ensure that all children have many different cultural experiences, as observers as well as active participants, stimulating the children's involvement, imagination, creativity and curiosity, and the learning environment should support the children in gaining experience of using different materials, tools and media.

Section 13 of the Executive Order on pedagogical objectives and content in six curriculum themes



# Responsibilities of the ECEC leader



# Responsibility for preparing the pedagogical curriculum

It is the responsibility of the ECEC leader to ensure that the pedagogical curriculum is prepared and that the pedagogical practice in relation to children's learning reflects, and is implemented in accordance with, the direction and the pedagogical reflections set out in the curriculum.



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## WHAT DOES THE ACT SAY?

- The ECEC leader is responsible for ensuring that the pedagogical curriculum is prepared, and that the pedagogical practice at the ECEC setting is organised and takes place within the framework of the pedagogical curriculum.
- The ECEC leader is also responsible for making the pedagogical curriculum publicly available.

[Section 9\(1\) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care](#)

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## What does the requirement entail?

The ECEC leader has pedagogical as well as administrative responsibility for the ECEC setting and is accountable to the municipal council.

The ECEC leader is responsible for ensuring that the pedagogical curriculum is prepared. The leader is moreover responsible for ensuring that the pedagogical practice at the ECEC setting is organised and takes place within the framework of the pedagogical curriculum.

Thus, the ECEC leader is responsible for ensuring that the curriculum does not merely become a document stowed away in a drawer, but that the pedagogical work on pedagogical learning environments and children's learning throughout the day reflects, and is implemented in accordance with, the direction and the pedagogical reflections set

out in the curriculum. The pedagogical curriculum of the individual ECEC setting should serve as a guide for ECEC staff in their daily pedagogical practice.

In connection with preparation of the pedagogical curriculum, the leader should ensure that the parents' council is included in the process when preparing, evaluating and following up on the pedagogical curriculum.

The ECEC leader is responsible for making the pedagogical curriculum publicly available. For example, the pedagogical curriculum can be made publicly available on the website of the ECEC setting or in another location that is known to and easy to access for parents.

(Preliminary work on section 9(1) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care)

# Establishing an evaluation culture in ECEC settings

The ECEC leader is responsible for establishing an evaluation culture in the ECEC setting. This means that the ECEC management and ECEC staff continue to reflect on how the pedagogical learning environment provides support for children's wellbeing, learning, development and formation.



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## WHAT DOES THE ACT SAY?

- The ECEC leader is responsible for establishing an evaluation culture in the ECEC setting to develop and qualify the pedagogical learning environment.
- The ECEC leader is responsible for ensuring that the work on the pedagogical curriculum is evaluated at least once every two years to ensure continuous development of this work. The evaluation must be based on pedagogical objectives, including an assessment of the relationship between the pedagogical learning environment in the ECEC setting and children's wellbeing, learning, development and formation.
- The evaluation should be made publicly available.
- The ECEC leader is responsible for ensuring regular documentation of the relationship between the pedagogical learning environment and children's wellbeing, learning, development and formation. The pedagogical documentation must be included in the evaluation.

**Section 9(2) and (3) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care**

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## What does the requirement entail?

Ensuring an evaluation culture in the ECEC setting requires that ECEC management and ECEC staff continue to reflect on how pedagogical learning environments support children's wellbeing, learning, development and formation.

Such practice can be maintained through e.g. pedagogical documentation, which is used as the basis for analyses of, and systematic reflections on, the relationship between the learning environment and children's learning, wellbeing and development. The analyses and reflections may then give rise to adjustments in the pedagogical learning environment to ensure it best supports children's wellbeing, learning, development and formation.

The requirement for establishing an evaluation culture in ECEC settings should lead to the staff develop a reflective approach to organising and evaluating the pedagogical practice. This approach is promoted in order to help staff become aware of their own practice, help them to think about their practice and see possibilities for changing their

practice where needed, which will ultimately develop and qualify the pedagogical practice.

ECEC leaders answer to the municipal council with regard to their own work. Within the framework and guidelines set out by the municipal council, the individual ECEC leader may decide on the specifics of the evaluation, including how it is implemented.

A systematic and developing evaluation culture is pivotal for the ongoing development of the pedagogical practice, and the goal is better learning environments through a systematic evaluation culture, and through meaningful and inspirational feedback to ECEC staff.

The individual child should not be evaluated; the focus area for evaluation is the relationship between the pedagogical learning environment and children's wellbeing, learning, development and formation, including whether the learning environment leads to the desired wellbeing, learning, development and formation.

## Focus on the group of children and, where relevant, the individual child

Different elements in the pedagogical learning environment may be highlighted to evaluate the relationship between the pedagogical learning environment in the ECEC setting and the wellbeing, learning, development and formation of the group of children. For example, on the one hand, this could be how the view of the child, the child perspective and work on formation are reflected in the daily pedagogical practice, and on the other hand, it could be:

- the wellbeing and learning of the child group;
- the wellbeing and learning of vulnerable children;
- the wellbeing and learning of bilingual children; and
- the wellbeing, learning, development and formation of the individual child.

Spotlighting individual elements can help to qualify the evaluation of the relationship between the pedagogical learning environment and children's wellbeing, learning, development and formation.

The evaluation culture must reflect a balance between resources spent on documenting and evaluating on the one hand, and the outcome for ECEC staff on the other hand. If staff finds that they are producing meaningless documentation and futile evaluations, it will impact negatively on future implementation of documentation and evaluation activities.

## Pedagogical documentation

The ECEC leader is also responsible for ensuring regular documentation of the relationship between the pedagogical learning environment and children's wellbeing, learning, development and formation. This pedagogical documentation is to be included in the evaluation. The ECEC leader is therefore responsible for describing on a regular basis the wellbeing, learning, development and formation of the children, as well as the pedagogical learning environment underpinning these areas.

Within the responsibilities and guidelines set out by the municipal council, the individual ECEC leader may decide which type of pedagogical documentation to apply and how. The pedagogical documentation can take many different forms and can include a range of different ways of describing children's wellbeing, learning, development and formation. For example, this could be storytelling, photos, observations, video footage, screenings, relationship matrices, interviews with children and drawings. The pedagogical documentation should be used to support and qualify the subsequent professional reflection on which the evaluation is based.

When choosing documentation, it is important to be clear about the purpose and the target group of the documentation. For example, observations of communities of children can be used to identify relationship patterns, while observations and dialogue with specific children can help identify processes and whether these processes are constructive.

(Preliminary work on section 9(2) and (3) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care)



## What is new?

With the legislative amendment, in future, ECEC settings are required to work with the relationship between learning environment and children's learning.

Among other things, this means that the evaluation should focus on the significance of the pedagogical learning environment for children's wellbeing, learning, development and formation, and on whether any aspects of the learning environment should be altered.

Many ECEC settings have been doing this for many years, however for others the practice is new.

Furthermore, it is a new requirement that the ECEC leader is responsible for establishing an evaluation culture in the ECEC setting. In order to establish an evaluation culture, in their daily work, the ECEC staff and the ECEC management must reflect on how the pedagogical learning environment supports children's wellbeing, learning, development and formation.

# Involving the parent council

It is the responsibility of ECEC leaders to ensure that the parent council in ECEC centres or municipal family daycares are involved in the work on the pedagogical curriculum.



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## WHAT DOES THE ACT SAY?

- The parent council in municipal, self-governing and outsourced ECEC centres should be involved in the preparation and evaluation of, and follow-up on, the pedagogical curriculum, as well as in ECEC work to ensure a positive transition from home to ECEC, between different ECEC settings, and from ECEC to after-school care and school.
- The parent council for the municipal family daycare must be involved in the preparation and evaluation of, and follow-up on, the pedagogical curriculum, as well as in ECEC work to ensure a positive transition from home to ECEC and between different ECEC settings.

**Section 15(1) and (2) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care**

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### What does the requirement entail?

The leader is responsible for ensuring that the parent council is included in the preparation and evaluation of, and follow-up on, the pedagogical curriculum.

Work in the parent council must be organised locally and in a way that is meaningful in an everyday context for the committee as well as for ECEC staff. As part of the work, the parent council should be involved in how to use local community resources with a view to establishing safe and pedagogically appropriate learning environments for children in ECEC settings. Parents serving on the parent council typically live in the local community, and they will therefore have knowledge about various offers and opportunities in the local community. The knowledge about the local community held by the parent council can therefore be of great significance when the ECEC is to consider how local community resources can be included in the effort to establish pedagogical learning environments for children.

Similarly, the parent council is to be involved in work to ensure positive and cohesive transitions for children from the home to ECEC, between different ECEC settings, and from ECEC to after-school care and school, see page 7 about the objects provision for ECEC.

### Authority

The pedagogical curriculum is a pedagogical tool which supports the work of ECEC staff and the ECEC management to establish safe pedagogical learning environments for children.

The management and staff carry out the preparation, evaluation and follow-up on the pedagogical curriculum and involve the parent council actively in the discussion of the process in relation to work on the pedagogical curriculum, so that the parent council is given the opportunity to be heard and to provide their own input and suggestions.

(Preliminary work on section 15(1) and (2) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care)

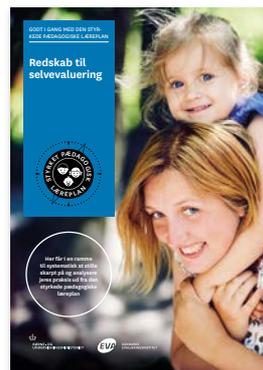
# How you can work with the strengthened pedagogical curriculum

The strengthened pedagogical curriculum comes with various basic and thematic materials that the pedagogical leader can decide to use when you get started. You can find all materials and more information (in Danish) at [www.emu.dk/omraade/dagtilbud](http://www.emu.dk/omraade/dagtilbud)

## BASIC MATERIALS



The strengthened pedagogical curriculum provides insight into what the law provides about the common pedagogical foundation and the six curriculum themes.



The tool for self-evaluation offers a framework for systematically analysing your practice within key areas in the strengthened pedagogical curriculum.

The implementation tool contains five approaches on changing and cementing a strong pedagogical learning environment.



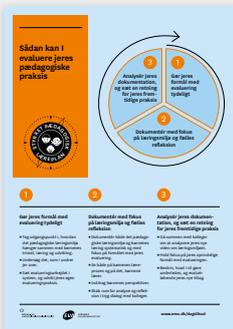
## THEMATIC MATERIALS

The thematic materials describe available knowledge on a specific theme and provide inspiration for dialogue and concrete action. You can see the first two themes below. New themes will be published regularly. You choose for yourself which materials to work with and in what order.

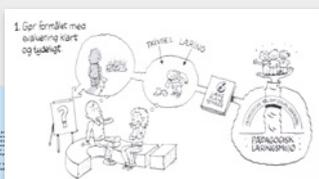
### Theme: An evaluating pedagogical practice



In brief is a basic introduction to research and knowledge about the theme.



The poster can be hung on the wall and uses to inspire dialogue.



Dialogue cards provide you with questions for reflection.

Films illustrate the theme's main points.

### Theme: Interaction and relationships in the pedagogical learning environment



In brief



Films



Dive in provides you with deeper insight into underlying research on the theme.



Dialogue cards



How to is your inspirational guide on how to work on the theme.

# Annexes

## Annex 1.

### **Extracts from the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (*dagtilbudsloven*)**

Below are relevant provisions from the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care that relate to work on children's learning in ECEC. The Act on Early Childhood Education and Care and the Executive Order on pedagogical objectives and content descriptions of six curriculum themes (*Bekendtgørelse om pædagogiske mål og indhold i seks læreplanstemaer*) can be read in their entirety in Danish at [www.retsinformation.dk](http://www.retsinformation.dk).

#### **Section 7. Objects provision for early childhood education and care (ECEC)**

7. (1) ECECs should promote children's wellbeing, learning, development and formation through safe and pedagogical learning environments, where play is essential and where child perspectives are the point of departure.

(2) In cooperation with parents, ECECs should provide children with care and support the individual child's wellbeing, learning, development and formation as well as help children to a happy and safe childhood.

(3) Children in ECECs should have a physical, psychological and aesthetic children's environment that promotes their wellbeing, health, development and learning.

(4) ECECs should provide children with co-influence, co-responsibility and an understanding and experience of democracy. As part of this, ECECs should help develop children's independence and their ability to take part in binding communities and should help children develop cohesion with, and integration into, Danish society.

(5) In cooperation with parents, ECECs should ensure children a positive transition from home to ECEC. Moreover, in cooperation with parents, ECECs should ensure children a positive cohesive transition between ECEC settings and from ECEC to after-school care and school by developing and supporting their fundamental skills and their desire to learn.

#### **Section 8. The pedagogical curriculum in ECEC**

8. (1) All ECEC settings should prepare a written pedagogical curriculum for the entire group of children aged 0-2 years and for the group of children aged 3 years up to school start. If the individual ECEC has organised children

into other age groups, the pedagogical curriculum should be prepared on the basis of this organisation. Age-integrated ECEC centres can prepare one pedagogical curriculum taking into account all age groups. ECEC centres with several should prepare the pedagogical curriculum taking into account the composition of the child groups and the children's different backgrounds in the individual units, cf. subsection (3).

(2) The pedagogical curriculum should be prepared on the basis of the pedagogical foundation, cf. subsections (3) and (4), six pedagogical curriculum themes, cf. subsections (4) and (9), as well as goals for the relationship between the pedagogical learning environment and children's learning, cf. subsection (9).

(3) It should be evident from the pedagogical curriculum how the individual ECEC setting throughout the day establishes a pedagogical learning environment, in which play, adult-initiated activities, spontaneous activities, child-initiated activities as well as everyday routines enable the children to thrive, learn, develop and be educated. The pedagogical learning environment should be organised such that it takes into account children's perspectives and participation, the community of children, the composition of the child group and the children's different backgrounds.

(4) It should be evident from the pedagogical curriculum how the pedagogical learning environment supports children's general learning, including curiosity, drive, self-esteem and movement within and across the following themes:

1. Comprehensive personal development
2. Social development
3. Communication and language
4. Body, senses and motion
5. Nature, outdoor life and natural phenomena
6. Culture, aesthetics and community.

(5) Furthermore, it should be evident from the pedagogical curriculum how the pedagogical learning environment takes into account vulnerable children to promote their wellbeing, learning, development and formation.

(6) It should also be evident from the pedagogical curriculum how the ECEC setting cooperates with parents on children's learning, how the ECEC setting involves the local community in establishing pedagogical learning environ-

ments for children, as well as how a pedagogical learning environment is planned in the children's last years in ECEC to create continuity to preschool class.

(7) Work on the physical, psychological and aesthetic children's environment in the ECEC should be integrated in pedagogical work on establishing pedagogical learning environments. The children's environment should be assessed in a child perspective, and children's perceptions of the children's environment should be involved taking into account the age and maturity of the children.

(8) The pedagogical curriculum sets out the framework for pedagogical practice. In relation to the pedagogical task, the municipal council should ensure that the pedagogical task is managed solely on the basis of the pedagogical curriculum and in accordance with the curriculum's view of the child and a broad understanding of learning, cf. subsections (3) and (4).

(9) The Minister for Children and Education lays down more detailed regulations regarding pedagogical objectives for what the pedagogical learning environment in ECEC must support with regard to children's learning, as well as for the content of the individual curriculum themes, cf. subsection (4).

## **Section 9. The tasks of the ECEC leader**

**9.** (1) The ECEC leader is responsible for ensuring that the pedagogical curriculum is prepared, and for ensuring that the pedagogical practice at the ECEC setting is organised and takes place within the framework pedagogical curriculum. The ECEC leader is moreover responsible for making the pedagogical curriculum publicly available.

(2) The ECEC leader is responsible for establishing an evaluation culture in the ECEC setting to develop and qualify the pedagogical learning environment. The ECEC leader is responsible for ensuring that the work on the pedagogical curriculum is evaluated at least once every two years to ensure continuous development of this work. The evaluation should be based on pedagogical objectives as stipulated in section 8(9), including an assessment of the relationship between the pedagogical learning environment in the ECEC setting and children's wellbeing, learning, development and formation. The evaluation should be made publicly available.

(3) The ECEC leader is responsible for ensuring regular documentation of the relationship between the pedagogical learning environment and children's wellbeing, learning,

development and formation. The pedagogical documentation should be included in the evaluation referred to in section 2, second clause.

## **Section 15. Tasks of the parent council**

**15.** (1) The parent council in an ECEC centre should lay down principles for the ECEC centre's work, for the cooperation between the ECEC centre and the home, and for how the ECEC centre will spend its budget within the framework and any prioritised efforts prescribed by the municipal council. The parent council in municipal, self-governing or outsourced ECEC centres pursuant to section 19(2)-(4) may decide to opt out of a healthy lunch meal pursuant to section 16a(1), cf. however section 16b(2), (4) and (8). The parent council in municipal, self-governing and outsourced ECEC centres pursuant to section 19(2)-(4) should be involved in the preparation and evaluation of, and follow-up on, the pedagogical curriculum, cf. sections 8 and 9, as well as in ECEC work to ensure a positive transition from home to ECEC, between different ECEC settings, and from ECEC to after-school care and school, cf. section 7(5).

(2) The parent council for the municipal family daycare should lay down principles for the family daycare's work, for the cooperation between the family daycare and the home, and for how the family daycare will spend its budget within the framework and any prioritised efforts prescribed by the municipal council. The parent council for the municipal family daycare should be involved in the preparation and evaluation of, and follow-up on, the pedagogical curriculum, cf. sections 8 and 9, as well as in the family daycare's work to ensure a positive transition from home to ECEC and between different ECEC settings, cf. section 7(5).

(3) The parent council should perform its tasks within the framework and any prioritised efforts prescribed by the municipal council. In self-governing and outsourced ECEC centres the parent council should moreover perform its tasks within the purpose and philosophy set out in the articles of association, cf. section 16(2) and (3).

(4) The parent council is entitled to make nominations and to participate in the appointment of the leader in municipal, self-governing and outsourced ECEC centres and in the municipal family daycare.

(5) The parent council is entitled to make nominations in connection with hiring staff in municipal, self-governing and outsourced ECEC centres and in the municipal family daycare.

## Annex 2.

# Executive Order on pedagogical objectives and content in six curriculum themes

### Children's wellbeing, learning, development and education in ECEC

1. (1) The pedagogical curriculum, cf. section (8) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, should make up the framework for ECEC work on the wellbeing, learning, development and formation of children.

(2) The pedagogical curriculum should be prepared on the basis of a common pedagogical foundation. Amongst other things, the common pedagogical foundation should consist of elements such as the view of the child, formation, play, a broad understanding of learning, communities of children, etc., cf. section 8(2) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, and should characterise the pedagogical learning environment that the child encounters on an everyday basis in its ECEC setting.

(3) The pedagogical learning environment should be organised within and across six pedagogical curriculum themes, cf. sections 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 and 13. Each theme has been described in more detail in an annex. The six curriculum themes contain a number of overarching elements, cf. annexes, which children in ECEC settings should encounter as part of their pedagogical learning environment in their ECEC setting. How the overarching elements are to be interpreted organisationally and pedagogically on an everyday basis in the ECEC setting should be decided at local level.

(4) For each curriculum theme, the pedagogical learning environment should moreover be organised within two pedagogical objectives that describe the correlation between the learning environment and children's learning, cf. sections 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 and 13.

(5) The pedagogical learning environment should take into account the children's age and different backgrounds, as well as the composition of the child group.

### Curriculum theme no. 1: Comprehensive personal development

2. (1) Pursuant to section 8(4) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, the pedagogical learning environment in ECEC should support children's comprehensive personal development, cf. Annex 1.

3. (1) Pedagogical work on the *comprehensive personal development* curriculum theme should be based on the description of the theme, cf. Annex 1, and on the following two pedagogical objectives aimed at children in the 0-5-year age group:

- 1) The pedagogical learning environment should support children in developing their potential and in exploring and experiencing themselves and each other in familiar as well as new ways, and in having confidence in their own potentials. This goes across age, gender, social and cultural background.
- 2) The pedagogical learning environment should support interactions and connections between children and ECEC staff and between children themselves. The learning environment should be characterised by care, curiosity and a sense of security, allowing all children to develop commitment, life skills, drive and competence when participating in communities. This also applies in situations that call for immersion, persistence and prioritisation.

### Curriculum theme no. 2.: Social development

4. Pursuant to section 8(4) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, the pedagogical learning environment in ECEC should support children's social development, cf. Annex 2.

5. (1) Pedagogical work on the *social development* curriculum theme should be based on the description of the theme, cf. Annex 2, and on the following two pedagogical objectives aimed at children in the 0-5-year age group:

- 1) The pedagogical learning environment should support the wellbeing of all children as well as their participation in social communities and development of empathy and relationships.
- 2) The pedagogical learning environment should support communities in which differences are seen as a resource that helps to provide democratic formation.

### **Curriculum theme no. 3.: Communication and language**

**6.** Pursuant to section 8(4) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, the pedagogical learning environment in ECEC should support children's communication and language, cf. Annex 3.

**7.** (1) Pedagogical work on the *communication and language* curriculum theme should be based on the description of the theme, cf. Annex 3, and on the following two pedagogical objectives aimed at children in the 0-5-year age group:

- 1) The pedagogical learning environment should support all children in developing a language that enables them to understand themselves, each other and their surroundings.
- 2) The pedagogical learning environment should support all children in gaining experience with communicating and expressing thoughts, needs and ideas that children can use in social communities.

### **Curriculum theme no. 4.: Body, senses and motion**

**8.** Pursuant to section 8(4) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, the pedagogical learning environment in ECEC should support children's learning in relation to the theme of body, senses and motion, cf. Annex 4.

**9.** Pedagogical work on the *body, sense and motion* curriculum theme should be based on the description of the theme, cf. Annex 4, and on the following two pedagogical objectives aimed at children in the 0-5-year age group:

- 1) The pedagogical learning environment should support all children in exploring and experimenting with many different ways of using their body.
- 2) The pedagogical learning environment should support all children in experiencing the joy of movement and joy of their body, both in quiet and active situations, so that the children feel comfortable about their bodies, including bodily sensations, body functions, senses and various forms of movement.

### **Curriculum theme no. 5.: Nature, outdoor life and natural phenomena**

**10.** Pursuant to section 8(4) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, the pedagogical learning environment in ECEC should support children's learning within nature, outdoor life and natural phenomena, cf. Annex 5.

**11.** (1) Pedagogical work on the *nature, outdoor life and natural phenomena* curriculum theme should be based on the description of the theme, cf. Annex 5, and on the following two pedagogical objectives aimed at children in the 0-5-year age group:

- 1) The pedagogical learning environment should support all children in gaining specific experience with nature that will arouse their curiosity and their desire to explore nature, enable them to experience human connectedness with nature and provide them with an early-stage understanding of the importance of sustainable development.
- 2) The pedagogical learning environment should support all children in actively observing and exploring natural phenomena in their surroundings, so that the children learn to recognise and talk about cause, effect and correlations, thereby developing an early mathematical awareness.

### **Curriculum theme no. 6.: Culture, aesthetics and community**

**12.** Pursuant to section 8(4) of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, the pedagogical learning environment in ECEC should support children's learning within culture, aesthetics and community, cf. Annex 6.

**13.** Pedagogical work on the *culture, aesthetics and community* curriculum theme should be based on the description of the theme, cf. Annex 6, and on the following two pedagogical objectives aimed at children in the 0-5-year age group:

- 1) The pedagogical learning environment should support all children in engaging in equal communities of different types in which they can experience their own cultural backgrounds, norms, traditions and values, and those of others.
- 2) The pedagogical learning environment should ensure that all children have many different cultural experiences, as observers as well as active participants, stimulating the children's involvement, imagination, creativity and curiosity, and the learning environment should support the children in gaining experience of using different materials, tools and media.

### **Entry into force**

**14.** This Executive Order enters into force on 1 July 2018.

## Annex 3.

# Background for new legislative framework for the pedagogical curriculum in ECEC

### In brief

#### The master group for a strengthened pedagogical curriculum

The former minister for children set up a master group for a strengthened pedagogical curriculum in early 2016. The master group included representatives from Local Government Denmark, the Danish Union of Early Childhood and Youth Educators, the association of leaders under the Danish Union of Early Childhood and Youth Educators, *Børne- og Kulturchefforeningen* (association of municipal directors for culture, children and similar), FOA – Trade and Labour, *Daginstitutionernes Landsforening* (national association of ECEC centres) and *Forældrenes Landsorganisation* (association of ECEC parent councils). The master group for a strengthened pedagogical curriculum prepared its master plan for a strengthened pedagogical curriculum in the period February to May 2016. The master plan includes a description of a common pedagogical foundation which covers a number of key concepts, such as formation, play, a happy childhood, communities of children and learning environments in ECEC, all of which characterise the way pedagogical staff work to promote children's wellbeing and learning environment in ECEC in Denmark.

#### Six working groups

Based on the proposal from the master group, from June to October 2016, six working groups – one for each curriculum theme – worked to elaborate and qualify the curriculum themes and develop broad pedagogical objectives.

#### Open for input from everyone working with children in ECEC

In spring 2016, everyone with an interest in the ECEC area was invited to give their input on a new, strengthened pedagogical curriculum. The six working groups discussed the input submitted.

#### Regional dialogue meetings

In September 2016, approx. 800 practitioners from the ECEC area took part in two regional dialogue meetings. At these dialogue meetings, the master plan and the working

groups' results were presented. Furthermore, practitioners were invited to discuss and provide input on content and implementation of the pedagogical curriculum.

#### The ECEC agreement

On 9 June 2017, the Danish Government established the agreement *Stærke dagtilbud – alle skal med i fællesskabet* (strong ECEC settings – everyone must form part of the community) with the Danish People's Party, the Social Democratic Party, the Danish Social-Liberal Party and the Socialist People's Party.

#### Focus areas in the agreement include:

- Enhancing the quality of ECEC, so that children thrive and learn – through a strengthened pedagogical curriculum, less and more meaningful documentation, stronger efforts for vulnerable children and better transitions for children.
- Professionalism and clear management. ECEC staff and leaders should be supported in making the changes following from the strengthened pedagogical curriculum, through knowledge and materials and skills enhancement for childminders, leaders and ECEC pioneers/role models.

#### New legislation

The political agreement to enhance the quality of ECEC through a strengthened pedagogical curriculum called for an amendment to the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care.

Therefore, in May 2018, the Danish Parliament (the *Folketing*) adopted an amendment to the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, providing a new legislative framework for the pedagogical curriculum. The Act enters into force on 1 July 2018 and with it the strengthened pedagogical curriculum also enters into force. The new legislative framework for the pedagogical curriculum must be implemented in all ECEC settings no later than two years after entry into force of the Act.

**The strengthened pedagogical  
curriculum, Framework and content**

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### **The strengthened pedagogical curriculum, Framework and content**

This publication describes the framework for and content of the pedagogical curriculum for ECEC, as described in the relevant act and executive order, etc.

This publication forms the basis for a series of materials that underpin ECEC work to realise the strengthened pedagogical curriculum.

You can find the materials and read more on:

**[www.emu.dk/dagtilbud](http://www.emu.dk/dagtilbud)**