

Laadunhallinta varhaiskasvatuksessa 2026

Summary

The aim of this evaluation was to produce a national overview of the current state of quality management in early childhood education and care (ECEC). The evaluation examined the strengths and areas for development in the quality management practices of municipal ECEC organisers and private service providers, as well as how quality management is implemented in relation to the objectives set for ECEC in the legislation and the governance system. In addition, the evaluation explored how the national Valssi quality evaluation system is used as part of ECEC quality management and data-informed leadership.

The evaluation was conducted by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) between 2025 and 2026. The data were collected from a sample of 97 municipalities and 971 early education centres. Data collection was carried out through the Valssi system using surveys directed at management, experts and early education centre heads (n = 850), as well as ECEC staff (n = 6,731). The response rate was 82.5% at the municipal level and 77.5% at the centre level. The dataset covers different geographical regions, organisation types and staff groups.

According to the evaluation, quality management in ECEC has developed in recent years towards a more systematic and structured approach and now covers pedagogical activities more comprehensively than before. Most organisations use several complementary quality management methods, and 89% have adopted a systematic quality management approach. The local ECEC curriculum is a key planning tool, and most organisations intend to continue maintaining and updating it even after the statutory obligation to prepare it has been removed. The Valssi system has become well established, particularly in municipal ECEC, and its use has increased the process nature of evaluation.

The main strengths of quality management are the establishment of shared goals, the systematic planning of activities and the integration of evaluation into everyday practice. However, variations in quality management remain, and development needs were identified in the systematic use of evaluation data, the implementation of participation and inclusion, the assessment of the effectiveness of the division of responsibilities, and the availability of resources and staff. The results also indicate some differences between large and small providers and between municipal and private ECEC services.

Based on the evaluation findings, FINEEC issues the following recommendations for development:

1. ECEC providers and private service providers should ensure that quality management and evaluation are implemented systematically.
2. Tasks and responsibilities related to quality management should be clarified, and the effectiveness of the division of responsibilities should be reviewed regularly.
3. ECEC providers and private service providers should ensure that the evaluation data collected are relevant and useful for quality improvement work.

4. The quality culture of ECEC organisations should be strengthened, and staff evaluation competence should be further developed.
5. National support for quality management should be developed so that it better responds to the needs of different types and sizes of providers.