

Enhancing Quality in Family Day Care

Enhancing Quality in Family Day Care

A peer learning project

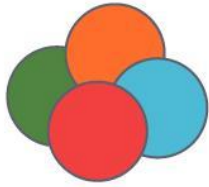
Country Report – Denmark



Funded by
the European Union



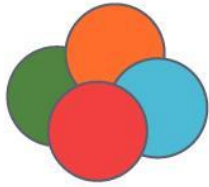
Funded by
the European Union



Enhancing Quality in Family Day Care

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Overview of Denmark	4
3. ECEC in Denmark	4
3.1. Split / integrated system	5
3.2. Governance	5
3.3. Accessibility	5
3.4. Specific curricula / framework	7
3.5. Quality assurance	8
3.6. Workforce	9
3.7. Childcare services vs family day care	10
3.8. New tendencies in Danish ECEC	11
3.9. Strengths and challenges	12
4. Family day care in Denmark	12
4.1. Numbers of home care	13
4.2. Organization of family day care	13
4.3. Workforce	13
4.4. New tendencies in family day care	13
4.5. Specific challenges in home care	14
5. Professionalization & support systems of family day care in Denmark	14
6. The partners of QualFDC in Denmark	15
7. Glossary	16



Enhancing Quality in Family Day Care

1. Introduction

Nearly all children between the age of three and the age of starting primary school attend ECEC (97.7% in 2019), above the EU-level target of 96%. Participation in formal Child Care by children aged under three is also high at around 93% (2019), almost double the EU average and the highest participation rate of all EU countries. Denmark also leads the EU in terms of children attending more than 30 hours of ECEC a week¹. There is practically no difference between the attendance rates of disadvantaged and advantaged children (OECD, 2019). The municipalities must offer a child a space in Child Care when the child turns one year.

Danish child and family policy is based on the overall principle that the family is the foundation a child's upbringing and that the living conditions of children are mainly the responsibility of their parents, but – as Danish children spend most of their day in Child Care – this responsibility is shared with Child Care. This is defined as 'double socialization' – meaning that family and child care share the responsibility for the children. At the policy level the politicians have an overall responsibility for providing a good social framework and for providing the best possible conditions for families with children. In addition, public authorities must protect children and young people against abuse and neglect, and they must offer advice and guidance to parents so that the parents will be able to meet their parental obligations and responsibilities.

General issues relating to child and family policy are handled centrally by the Ministry of Children and Education, which lays down an overall framework and general conditions, while the actual establishment and organisation of facilities and service offered to citizens is carried out at the local level in the 98 municipalities and in the municipalities of Copenhagen and Frederiksberg.

Low income families get support partly in the form of financial support (depending on income) and partly in the form of various services which are granted on the basis of the principle that everybody with a need must have equal access to the services offered. Public facilities and services for parents and children are basically offered to give children and young people optimum conditions for a good childhood and adequate development.

One result of social developments over the past twenty years is that the active



Enhancing Quality in Family Day Care

participation of women - particularly mothers of young children - in the labour market has now reached almost the same level as that applying to men.

2. Overview of Denmark

Denmark is a Scandinavian country in Northern Europe bordering the Baltic and the North Sea. The country consists of a large peninsula and many islands referred to as the Danish Archipelago. Neighbouring countries include Germany, Norway, and Sweden. Denmark has a strategic location controlling the Danish Straits that link the Baltic and North Seas. The government system is a constitutional monarchy. Denmark boasts a modern market economy in which the prices of goods and services are determined in a free price system. Denmark is a member of the European Union (EU).

Administratively the country is divided into 5 regions and 98 municipalities (*kommuner*). Local authorities have considerable autonomy. Local and regional authorities are responsible for approximately 70 % of governmental activities, despite the fact that they only receive about 30 % of taxes and excises. The difference is made up by central government grants. Most of these grants are provided as block grants which the local and regional authorities then allocate for various purposes. If the local authorities wish to increase spending in one area, they must cut costs equivalently in another area or raise local taxation.

Education in Denmark is open to all and free of charge. Compulsory education (*Folkeskole*, between the age of 6 and 16) consists of ten years of education, including one pre-school year (grade 0) and nine school years (grade 1-9).

The individual municipalities own and operate the public schools, including ECEC services. The municipalities have the overall responsibility for running public schools within the framework provided by the Act on the Folkeskole. Among others, this includes deciding on the content of the school policy and securing that all children in the municipality receive the education they are entitled to cost-free. The headmaster is responsible for the administrative and pedagogical management of the school.

3. ECEC in Denmark

Early Childhood Education and Care generally comprises facilities for children below compulsory school age, i.e., children aged 0-6 years. The vast majority of children in



Funded by
the European Union



Enhancing Quality in Family Day Care

Denmark (approximately nine out of ten) between one and six years attend a publicly supported ECEC facility. ECEC facilities can be set up in various ways as either home care, private home care, centre-based care, and private centre-based care. More precisely, the ECEC facilities for children in this age group are childcare facilities (*dagtilbud*) for children offered under the *Dagtilbudsloven Lov om dagtilbud*) as well as the mandatory pre-school class (*børnehaveklasse*) and school-based leisure-time facilities (*skolefritidsordninger (SFO)*).

3.1. Split / integrated system

The Danish ECEC system consists of day care centres that can be both established as age-integrated institutions for children up to age six or split into two different settings (nurseries and kindergartens), respectively for children under and over the age of three. In addition to this, there is a system of regulated day care for children aged 0-3 years in private homes.

3.2. Governance

At a national level, access to ECEC facilities for children below the school age is regulated by the Act on Day Care Facilities. The Danish government is also responsible for issuing the national curriculum for ECEC.

However, most of decisions related to ECEC services are taken at the local municipality level. The municipalities establish and run Child Care facilities. Local authorities are as well responsible for taxation, primary and secondary education, voluntary adult education, libraries, cultural and sporting facilities, home help and care of the elderly. ECEC responsibilities include special Child care facilities for children with disabilities.

3.3. Accessibility

Generally, the public ECEC provision is facilitated by the municipalities. To guarantee ECEC availability the local council must offer places in an age-appropriate ECEC facility to all children older than 26 weeks and until they reach school age. In addition to this, the municipalities also provide a grant covering between 65 and 75%



Funded by
the European Union



Enhancing Quality in Family Day Care

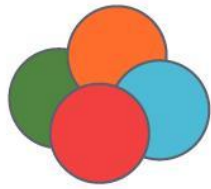
of the expenses for the place so that families can pay up to 35 % of the costs.. Families receive a sibling discount. Additionally, the municipal council must grant financially aided place subsidies based on the parents' financial situation. ECEC provision is free of charge if the household income does not exceed 2.076 EUR/month (15.475 DKK/month).

If a municipality is not able to provide the guaranteed ECEC provision, it has to either cover the parents' expenses for private day care, cover the expenses for an ECEC setting in another municipality or provide parents with a subsidy so that they can take care of the child themselves, and parents get paid if they choose to stay at home with the child. The Day Care Act also states that ECEC is compulsory for children from the age of one living in residential areas identified as marginalised. Overall, the enrolment rate in ECEC services is among the highest in the EU although it is not compulsory to participate. In 2019, the number of children who attended ECEC in municipal self-governing institutions and home-based provision was distributed as follows (Statistics Denmark, 2021):

- Child care in private homes: 31,002 (12 %)
- Child care (0-2 years): 70,817 (27.4 %)
- Child care (3-5 years): 156,643 (60.6 %)

The priority admission rules are set by the municipalities. The following criteria are usually by the municipalities: siblings, children with special needs and geographical location of the ECEC setting. In principle the parents can choose the facility they want for their child, they may have to wait quite a long time to get the popular ones. There can be quite big differences in educational quality between centres – and there is a tendency that the children with parents with higher education get a place in centres with high quality.

There are no specific legislative demands regarding the opening hours of the ECEC settings. The ECEC settings are open Monday to Friday all year round except for public holidays and other closing days. The opening hours must cover the local needs for flexible childcare. ECEC settings normally open around 6.30 - 7.00 and close at 17.00. On Fridays, most of the settings close at 16.00. Some special ECEC settings are open all day and night. These types of settings are for children whose parents have shifting working hours. In 2017, on average children under the age of three



Enhancing Quality in Family Day Care

spent approximately 35 hours in day care a week, while the average child over the age of three spent approximately 33 hours a week in day care.

3.4. Specific curricula / framework

Since 2004, all Danish ECEC settings have had to work on children's learning based on a pedagogical curriculum. As part of efforts to strengthen ECEC quality, in 2017 the government issued recommendations ("Strong ECEC settings – everyone must form part of the community") on defining a new pedagogical curriculum in ECEC. A new curriculum has been adopted by the Danish Parliament in May 2018. It includes:

- A common pedagogical foundation with key elements (e.g. play, communities of children and a broad concept of learning) to work on children's wellbeing, learning, development and formation in ECEC;
- Descriptions of six curriculum themes as well as broad pedagogical objectives for the relationship between the learning environment and children's learning for each theme;
- A pedagogical learning environment throughout the day, including routine situations, planned activities and child-initiated play;
- Attention to vulnerable children, cooperation with parents on children's learning, continuity to preschool class as well as cooperation with the surrounding community;
- The principles for establishing an evaluation culture in ECEC settings.

As a result, all ECEC facilities have to prepare a written curriculum for the children based on the pedagogical foundation and six curriculum themes:

- Versatile personal development
- Social development
- Communication and language
- Body, senses and movement
- Nature, outdoor life and science
- Culture, aesthetics and community

The curriculum must describe how the education environment supports children's



Enhancing Quality in Family Day Care

broader learning, including their curiosity, drive, self-esteem and movement both within and across the six themes.

3.5. Quality assurance

Internal quality assurance performed by the ECEC services is based on the pedagogical curriculum, with a focus on the six pedagogical themes. The head of the ECEC facility is responsible for composing the writing curriculum and evaluating the curriculum at least every second year. The curriculum and the evaluation should be made publicly available.

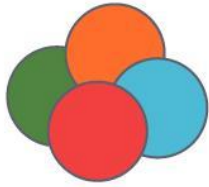
In addition, the Day Care Act requires municipalities to describe developments in the municipal ECEC system. The municipal councils are responsible for delivering external evaluation by:

- Setting the frequency of the quality assurance;
- Carrying out the quality assurance directly (or delegating it to an external organization);
- Establishing the foci and guidelines of the evaluation, following the objectives for ECEC facilities set by the council and the law;
- Making objectives and guidelines for evaluation must be accessible through the municipality's website.

There are no statutory requirements as regards to the assessment of children's development and how it is carried out. However, standardised guidelines are available to support child assessments conducted in ECEC settings.

Some but not all ECEC settings carry out regular assessments of the children – mostly for meetings with the children's parents. Assessments of a child's general development is based on the child's development, competences and well-being. The assessment method and criteria varies between ECEC settings. The assessments are also used to evaluate the learning environment, and if necessary, modify the learning environment to support the children's development in the best possible way.

Furthermore, the Day Care Act states that if any linguistic, behavioural or other



Enhancing Quality in Family Day Care

conditions cause the ECEC staff to believe that the child could benefit from language stimulation, a language assessment must be conducted. The language assessment takes place when the child is between two and three years old. For children who do not attend an ECEC setting, the language assessment is compulsory.

3.6. Workforce

The Day Care Act do not state any minimum qualification level for core practitioners or assistants. In 2021, 51% of all ECEC staff in municipal day care centres had a professional bachelor's degree in pedagogy (Statistics Denmark 2021) and 7% had a Teachers Assistants degree from a University College or Social- og Sundhedsskole (DST). In some centres less than 50 % of the staff have a bachelor's degree in other centres all the staff have the degree. Two recent political agreements investing DKK 2 billion (EUR 268 million) provide for more pedagogical staff in areas with children from vulnerable background and for up-skilling of pedagogical staff (pedagogues, teachers assistants, assistants, leaders, and childminders).

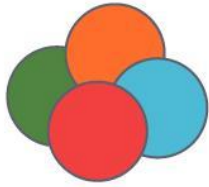
Initial training for educators ("pedagogues") is a professional Bachelor in Social Education, which takes place at six university colleges, which are independent colleges under public administration. The university colleges provide professional bachelor education programmes as well as continuing and further education in connection with these programmes.

The professional bachelor is a single programme in which students combine general education with theoretical and practical professional teaching. The education programme lasts 3.5 years amounting to 210 ECTS credits. It consists of two parts: a common part that focus on basic professional competences and a specialisation part. In both parts, the students must receive practical training at relevant Child Care facilities. It is a full-time programme, where students on average spend 37 hours a week studying. There are four periods of practical training during the programme. The total programme's practical training amounts to one year and three months.

Collective agreements between the trade unions and employers' organisations define conditions of service for teachers and educators (*pedagogues*). The Local Government Denmark (*Kommunernes Landsforening, KL*) represents the employers



Funded by
the European Union



Enhancing Quality in Family Day Care

in early childhood education and care centres and school. Involved unions are the Danish Union of Social Educators (BUPL or SL) for pedagogues and (FOA) for childminders childminder-pedagogues and leaders, teachers assistants, assistants, and municipal pedagogical consultants to Early Childcare, as well as all staff in public Early Childcare in Copenhagen and Frederiksberg. The planning policy for staffing and employment in education is decentralised and is generally up to the local authority or individual school to decide. Personnel are employed by the local school authorities/institution on a contractual basis in accordance with general employment legislation, which is different for teachers and educators.

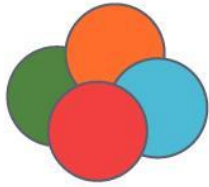
There are no top-level regulations on the maximum number of children assigned to each adult in Child Care Centres or childminder. Usually, an ECEC setting divide children age 1-3 into groups of 11-12 children and 3 pedagogues/teachers assistants/assistants are assigned to each group. Children age 4-6 are usually 22 and 3 pedagogues/teachers assistants/assistants. The grouping of children vary from setting to setting. Often municipalities have guidelines concerning child-staff ratios. The budget provided by the municipality decides the ratio.

3.7. Childcare services vs family day care

As we noted, the municipalities typically offer care in family day care, nursery or age-integrated institution for 0-2 year olds, while 3-5 year olds are offered kindergarten or age-integrated institution.

The composition of the individual municipality's range of offers can have an impact on the municipality's opportunities to, for example, adjust its ECEC offer in the event of a change in demand. Home care can be more flexible than nurseries, as the number of childminders is easier to regulate compared to a larger group of staff working in nurseries. Childminders are often more expensive to let go, because they often will have a long notice and children can't be placed there in the notice period. But the municipality doesn't have an empty building that they still haven't fully paid for. So, in the long run it is cheaper to let childminders go. Also, a smaller number of parents will react, when the municipality let a childminder go compared to a whole Child Care Centre closing down.

Age-integrated facilities, which encompass a nursery and a kindergarten, can be more flexible than nurseries and kindergartens, as they are attended by several age groups. Accordingly, places can be compensated from nursery children to



Enhancing Quality in Family Day Care

kindergarten children and vice versa.

It is important to be aware that the definition of an age-integrated institution can vary between municipalities. An age-integrated right institution can thus be one physical unit where 0-6- year old children are cared for together (not very often), or a nursery and a kindergarten that are physically separate but have joint management.

3.8. New tendencies in Danish ECEC

In 2021, the number of children 0-6 years old enrolled full-time in public and private ECEC services was 258.433, 4% of the Danish population. The enrolment percentage has been stable over the past four years.

The same year, the average children-adult ratio for municipal and independent Child Care centres in Denmark was 3.3 children per adult in homebased Child Care, 2.9 in nurseries and 5.7 in kindergartens. The ratio has been falling in recent years. In comparison with 2017, it was 3.4 in home-based Child Care, 3.1 in nurseries and 6.2 in kindergartens. The decrease has thus been greatest in the kindergartens, where there have been 0.5 fewer children per adult to be cared for per year. In home-based Child Care there has been a drop in the norm of 0.1 and in nurseries a drop of 0.2 children per adult.

There has been a lot of public critic and discussion of the way the ratio has been calculated and a study showed that the actual ratio in everyday practices were 11 in kindergartens and 5 in nursery.

The former government has decided for minimum ratios (3 in nurseries and 6 in kindergarten) to be implemented at latest in 2024.

When parents choose care for their young children, municipal homebased childcare is chosen to a lesser extent than previously. In 2021, 27.400 children were looked after by the municipal childminder, which corresponds to a share of 28 % of the 0-2-year-olds in in Early Child Care. This proportion in 2008 was 49% of the 0–2-year-olds in Early Childcare. It has to be mentioned that private childminders increased from 4.000 children in 2008 to a stable number of 10.000 children from 2017 to 2022 (Bureau 2000 for FOA 2022). Many childminders were laid off because the number



Enhancing Quality in Family Day Care

of 0-2-year-olds in the population was decreasing from 2008 to 2016. But at the same time the capacity of age integrated Early Childcare Centres (0-6 years) was expanded with 20.000 children from 49.861 children aged 0-2 in 2008 to 70.988 in 2021.

Home based childcare provision greatly depends on the family location in the country: the further the family lives from a big city, the greater the probability the child will be looked after by a childminder. In Copenhagen it is only 3% of the 0-2-year-olds, while it is 26% in the rural municipalities.

3.9. Strengths and challenges

In the last few years, the ECEC sector has been increasingly affected by workforce shortage. An analysis by DAMVAD Analytics shows that by 2030 there will be a shortage of 13.700 pedagogues. This is due, among other things, to the raising number of 0-5 children and elder people who need educators, combined with a decrease in enrolment in the bachelor course for pedagogues.

4. Family day care in Denmark

The Day Care Act states that it is possible to set up home-based ECEC settings. Home-based ECEC settings are an alternative to the municipal centre-based child Care offers. They are not part of the ISCED classification.

The top-level authority responsible for home-based ECEC provision is the Ministry of Children and Education. The establishment of a home-based ECEC setting has to be approved by the local municipality. In 2019, 12 % of children in day care were in a home-based ECEC provision (Statistics Denmark, 2021).

Home-based settings are subsidised by the municipality. The costs for parents are the same as for centres-based care.

The Day Care Act states that home-based ECEC settings follow the same pedagogical guidelines as Child Care centres, which means that the childminders have to ensure that the children learn through a safe learning environment. Furthermore, the children have to learn how to participate in decision-



Funded by
the European Union



Enhancing Quality in Family Day Care

making and learn how to share responsibility. The primary spoken language in the setting must be Danish.

4.1. Numbers of home care

According to municipal salary database (“Kommunernes Løndata”) in July 2022 there were 7.933 family day care home care providers in Denmark.

4.2. Organization of family day care

According to top-level regulations on home-based provision, one childminder is allowed to take up to five children. Most childminders have four children in their care. If two or more persons are carrying out childminding together, the municipality may allow the childminders to receive up to ten children.

The services are mostly organized in a way that all family day care providers and pedagogues working in family day care have one leader. In most big cities, they also have area leaders. The leader of family day care units can be as well the leader of the local day care centre, either because the distances between services are big, or because the municipality prefer to integrate leadership of day care centres and family day care.

4.3. Workforce

The family day care organization is structured at the municipal level. It includes 350 family day care pedagogues, a leader of each unity (can be one for the whole municipality, or for an area in large towns) and family day care providers.

No minimum qualification level nor specific training are required for childminders in a home-based provision. In 2021 7 pct. of the childminders had a Teacher Assistant degree and 8 pct. were pedagogues.

4.4. New tendencies in family day care

The number of children enrolled in private childcare day care centres is increasing,



Funded by
the European Union



Enhancing Quality in Family Day Care

while the number of children in private home care childcare arrangements are more or less unchanged from 2020-2021.

There is a wish among family day care providers to obtain pedagogical education, which is difficult to honour for the municipalities at the moment, as it is difficult to recruit a sufficient number of family day care providers as it is.

4.5. Specific challenges in home care

There are recurring stereotypes about the supposed lower level of pedagogical quality of family day care compared to day care centres in politics. One third of the parents actually prefers home care to day care centres, and one third prefers day care centre. The rest says it depends on the quality of the specific home care provider and childcare centre.

The current increase in the number of young children means that in ten years Denmark will need approx. 40.000 places more in childcare. Since the standardisation of services should be improved as well, at least 14.000 new full-time employees working as educational staff will be required.

It may become a problem to maintain the current number of Child Care workers in the coming years, due to the increasing average age of childcare workers. 62 % of the childcare workers were over 50 in October 2020, 18% was over 60 years old. Many municipalities seek to counteract this issue by supporting credit programs or by investing in getting more students enrolled in the education bachelor.

5. Professionalization & support systems of family day care in Denmark

The Day Care Act establishes guidelines for the municipalities' work with quality assurance and development of homebased day care, including requirements for municipal supervision of day care and work with educational curricula and children's environment.

With regard to recruitment, only 18% of the municipalities have written requirements for pedagogical competences or pedagogical experience when hiring, 28% of the municipalities have requirements which are not written down, while 54%



Enhancing Quality in Family Day Care

state that they do not make any requirements for previously acquired pedagogical skills or experience. Approximately a quarter of the homebased day care workers had pedagogical work experience before the current job and only 15% had a pedagogical education.

Virtually all municipalities offer newly employed day care workers a basic course. Most day care workers attend a basic course in day care, as 93% of municipalities offer this kind of course. 64% of day care workers attend a course within the first year, 23% within the first two years, and 11% within the first six months. However, there are wide variations in the length of the basic course, from 1 to 10 days in some municipalities to 21 to 25 days in others.

Day care workers also have the opportunity to participate in other types of courses than basic courses. However, municipalities generally allocated limited funds for further training of day care workers. It also differs from municipality to municipality as to whether there is a continuing education strategy for the municipal day care workers. 49% have a continuing education strategy, 39% do not and 12% are preparing a continuing education strategy.

6. The partners of QualFDC in Denmark

Aarhus University was founded in 1928. It has 42,500 students: about 1,900 PhD students and close to 850 postdoctoral scholars, together with 11,500 employees (2021). AU has 4 faculties that cover the research spectrum – basic research, applied research, strategic research, and research-based advice to authorities. The Danish School of Education (DPU) at AU is the hub of education and educational research in Denmark. With 150 scholars and more than 90 PhD students, it constitutes one of the largest education research environments in Europe, covering the field of educational studies from early childhood and pedagogy to comparative education policy and learning technology. Research at DPU has an international foundation and is built around strong scientific perspectives on educational theory regarding Didactics, Psychology, Sociology, Philosophy, and Anthropology. AU conducts interdisciplinary research with an education inquiry focusing on childcare and schools who play a central role.

The FOA supports Aarhus University and is a trade union representing public sector workers in Denmark.

Kommunernes Landsforening is an organization that group 98 municipal councils in



Funded by
the European Union



Enhancing Quality in Family Day Care

Denmark. It works to ensure that the municipalities have the best possible framework for prioritizing welfare and the economy and developing the municipality locally.

7. Glossary

Daginstitutionensloven: Day Care Act

Loven om læreplaner. Law on Learning Plans

Daginstitution (Day institution): Child Care Centre. Preschool

Child Care: Nursery/kindergarten/age integrated centre care/family day care

Pædagog: Pedagogue (meaning – the slave that takes the child to school): Preschool Teacher

Dagplejer (Day Nurse): Childminder

Dagplejepædagog: (family home care pedagogue): A pedagogue employed by the municipality to work with the childminders to enhance and control quality.

Vuggestue (room with cradles): Nursery

Børnehave (garden for children): Kindergarten

Fritidshjem (home in children's free time): After School Care

SFO (School – Freetime – Offer): After School Care.

Integreret institution: Age integrated Child Care Center

BUPL (Børne- og Ungdoms Pædagogernes Landsorganisation): The Union for Pedagogues)

FOA (Fag og arbejde): Union for different trades e.g., childminders, some pedagogues, teacher assistants.

LSF (Landsforeningen for Socialpædagoger): part of FOA