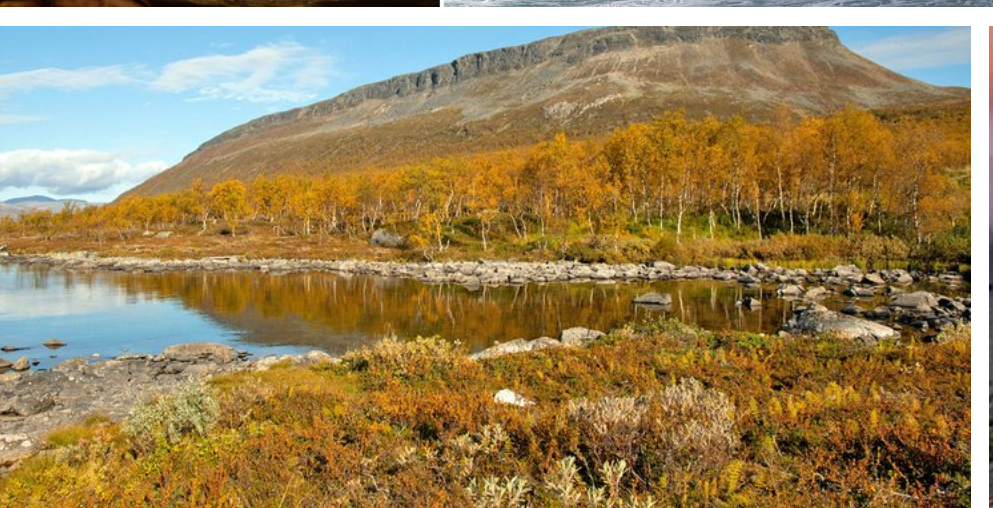


An aerial photograph of a coastal university campus. In the foreground, a large, modern building with a curved glass facade and a flat roof sits on a green hillside. To its left is a sandy beach and a small inlet of water. Further back, there are more green fields, trees with autumn foliage, and a few smaller buildings. In the background, a large lake or fjord stretches across the landscape, with hills and islands visible in the distance.

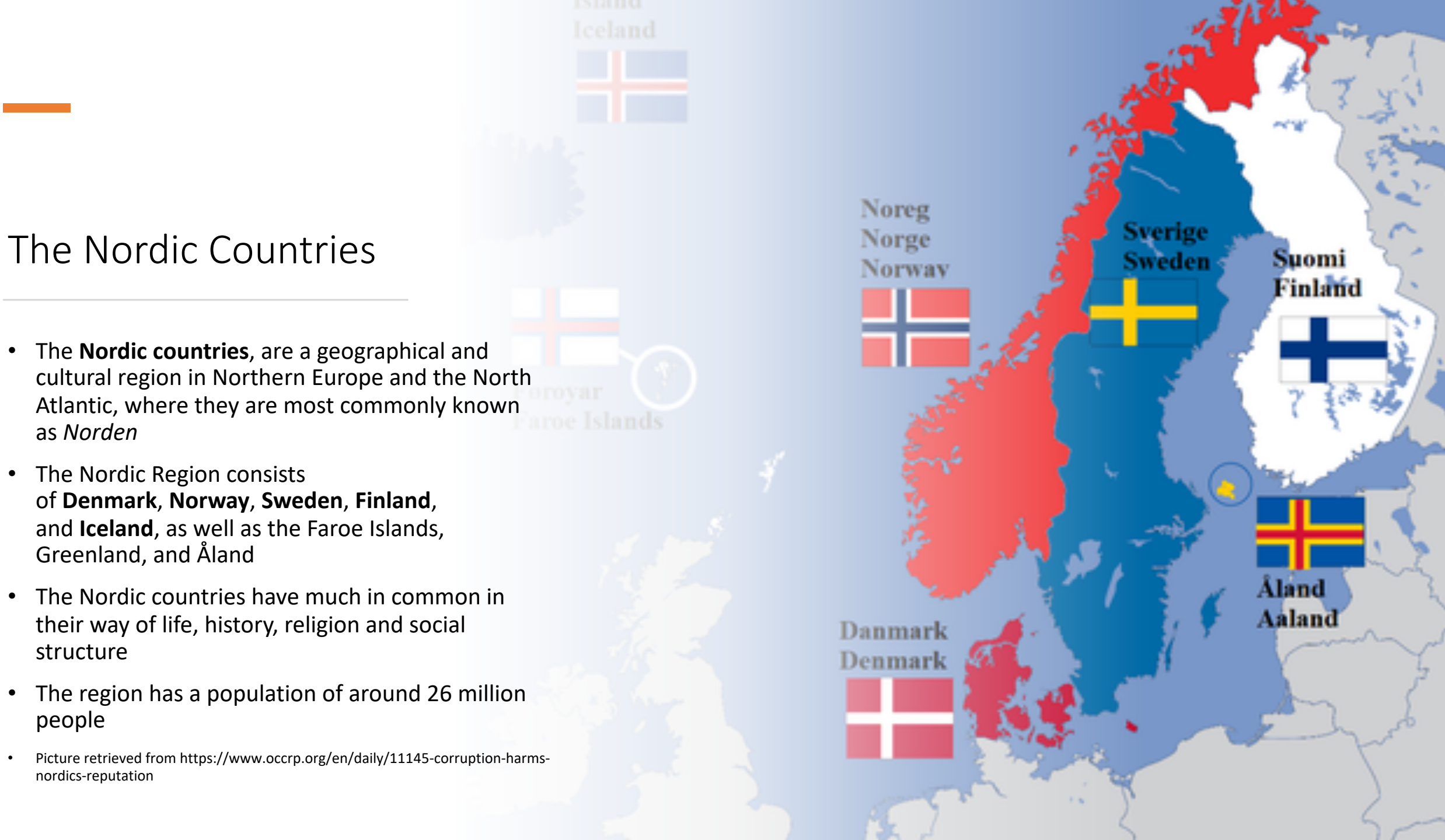
# Early childhood Education and Language Learning in the Nordic countries

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# The Nordic Countries

- The **Nordic countries**, are a geographical and cultural region in Northern Europe and the North Atlantic, where they are most commonly known as *Norden*
- The Nordic Region consists of **Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland,** and **Iceland**, as well as the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland
- The Nordic countries have much in common in their way of life, history, religion and social structure
- The region has a population of around 26 million people
- Picture retrieved from <https://www.occrp.org/en/daily/11145-corruption-harms-nordics-reputation>



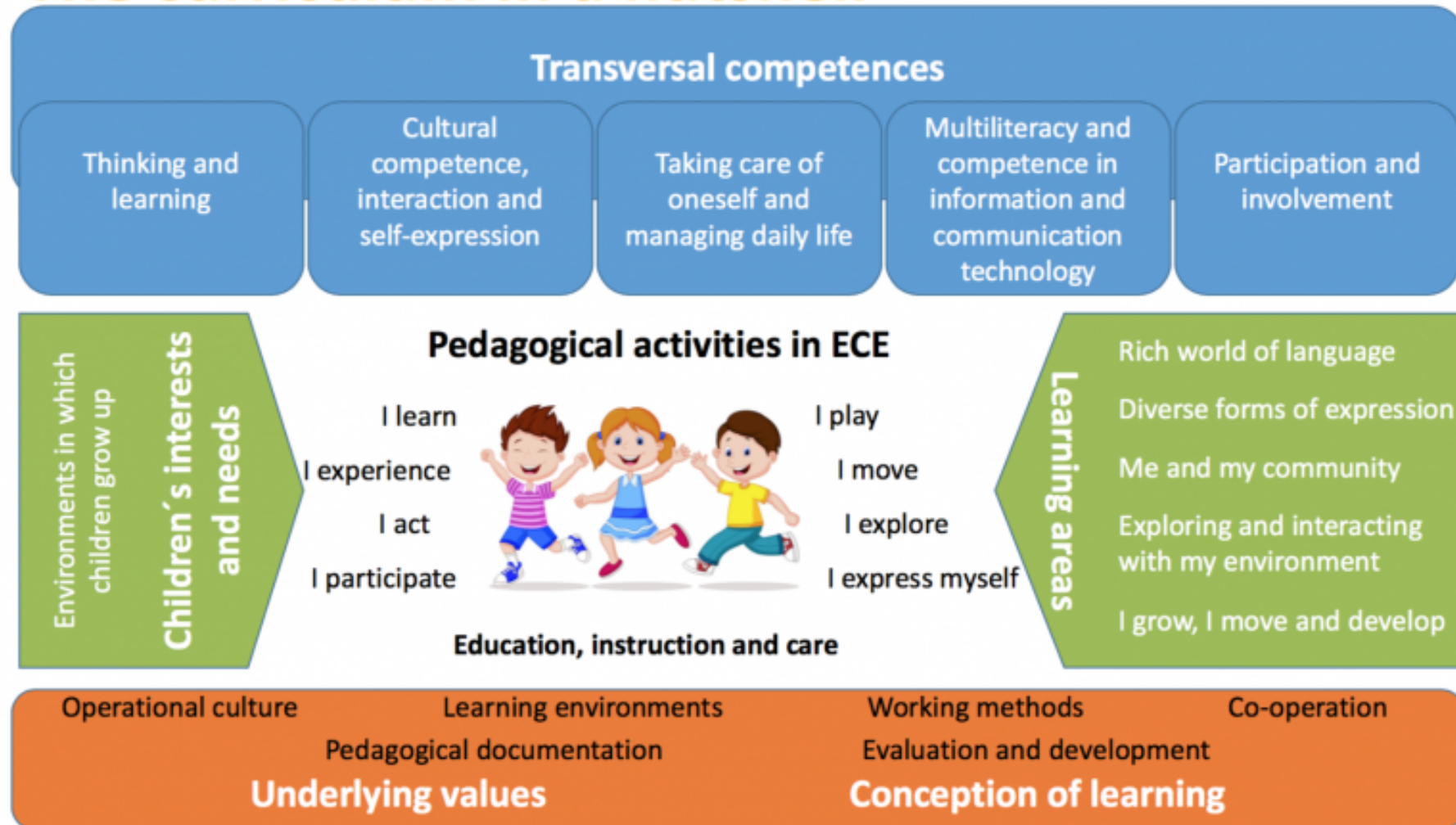
# Early Childhood Education in Finland



# Early Childhood Education in Finland

- Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is part of the Finnish education system and an important stage on the child's path of growing and learning.
- ECEC lays a foundation for lifelong learning. The Finnish ECEC is based on an integrated approach to care, education and teaching, the so-called "educare" model, with particular emphasis on pedagogy.
- The mission of ECEC is to promote children's holistic growth, development and learning in collaboration with their guardians.
- Understanding the importance and pedagogical possibilities of play for the child in the promotion of wellbeing and learning is essential for ECEC.
- All children under school-age have a subjective right to early childhood education and care (ECEC).
- The parents of the child decide whether or not their child participates in ECEC

# The curriculum in a nutshell



*The picture above shows all the aspects of the Finnish curriculum in short.*

# Perspectives on language learning varies across the Nordic countries

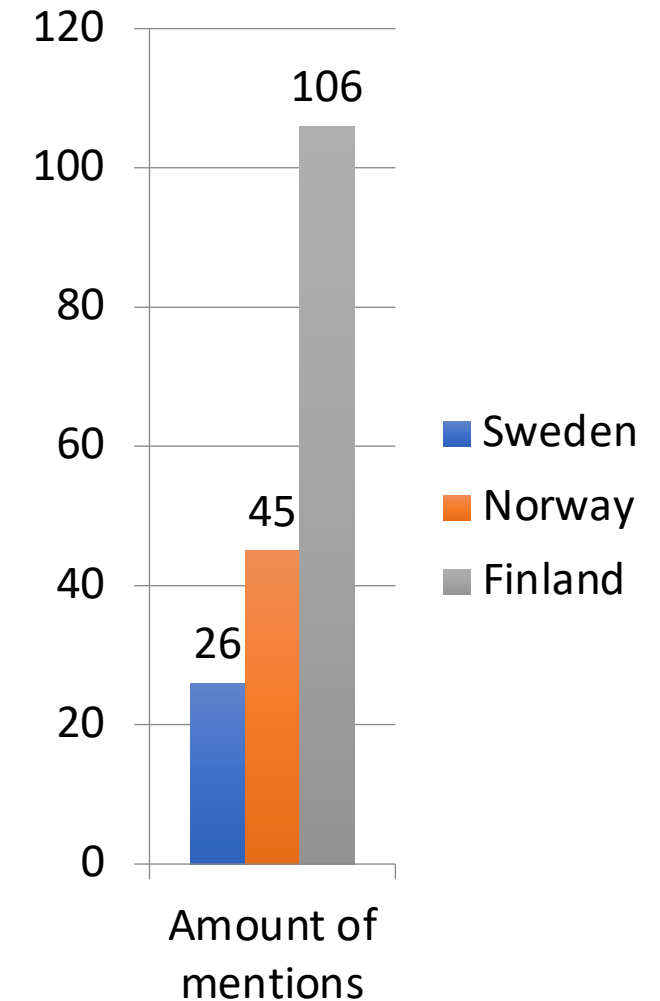
- In all of the Nordic countries we have seen a rapid increase in the number of different languages spoken in education contexts. A widely agreed notion today is that bilingualism and multilingualism are important capital in the globalised world.
- There is variance in how different Nordic countries support early language learning, which may even reflect ideological differences toward languages and language teaching (García, 2009; Harju-Luukkainen, Flynn & Garvis, 2018)
- On the basis of national steering documents Harju-Luukkainen, Flynn and Garvis (2018) argue that Finland can be seen as a country with a language ideology that gives larger possibilities for early language learning compared to Sweden, for instance.

Distribution of people aged 25–64 by knowledge of foreign languages, 2007, 2011 and 2016  
(%)

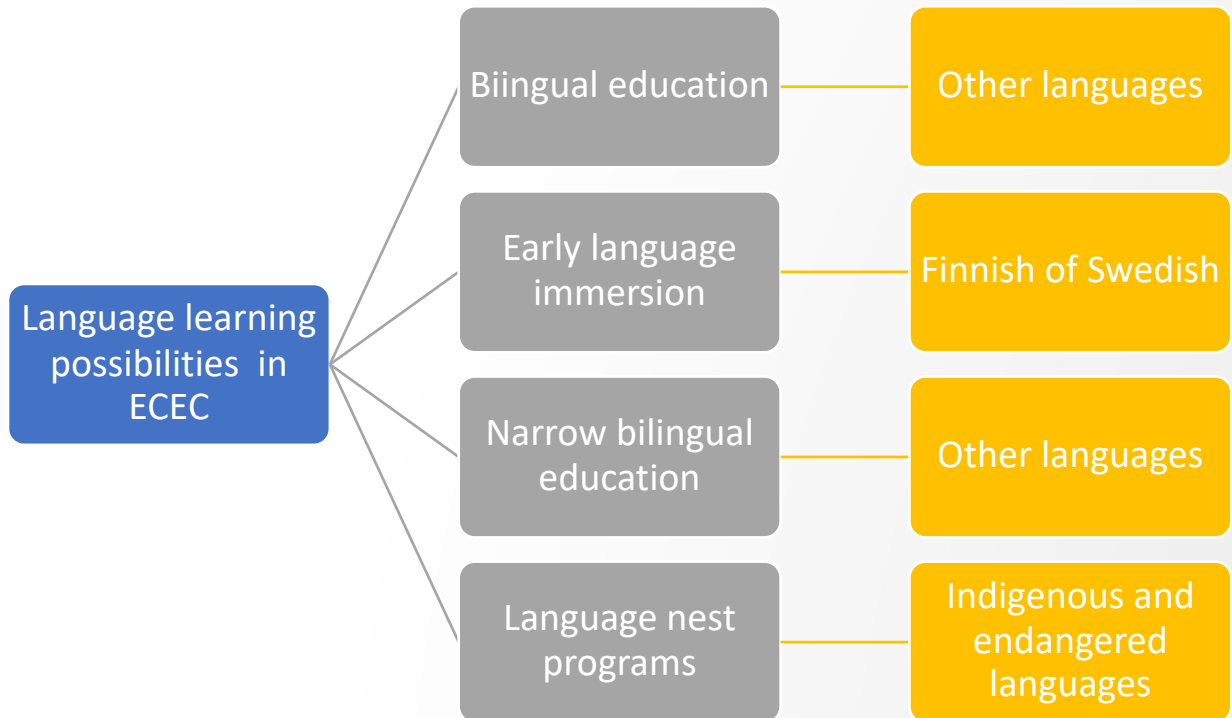
	No foreign language			One foreign language			Two foreign languages			Three or more foreign		
	2007	2011	2016	2007	2011	2016	2007	2011	2016	2007	2011	2016
EU	37.0	34.3	35.4	38.4	35.4	35.2	17.7	21.3	21.0	7.0	9.1	8.4
Belgium (*)	32.1	42.1	21.5	16.3	13.8	18.2	26.1	23.5	33.5	25.4	20.6	26.9
Bulgaria (*)	44.1	61.1	50.5	30.0	24.4	32.5	21.2	11.7	13.7	4.7	2.8	3.3
Czechia	31.9	30.9	21.0	34.6	39.6	44.7	24.7	22.4	26.9	8.8	7.1	7.4
Denmark	12.0	5.9	4.2	35.8	26.3	29.9	38.5	43.1	41.2	13.6	24.7	24.6
Germany	28.6	21.5	21.3	41.3	41.9	41.7	21.5	26.3	26.6	8.7	10.3	10.4
Estonia	13.6	14.5	8.8	30.4	24.1	26.4	35.3	35.1	39.1	20.6	26.3	25.7
Ireland (*)	:	72.7	49.2	:	20.8	29.9	:	5.2	15.4	:	1.3	5.6
Greece	43.4	41.9	33.5	44.8	43.0	48.5	9.9	12.2	15.3	2.0	3.0	2.7
Spain	46.6	48.9	45.8	35.4	34.0	34.8	13.6	12.6	14.3	4.3	4.5	5.2
France (*)	41.2	41.2	39.9	35.9	34.9	35.4	18.4	19.2	20.1	4.5	4.6	4.6
Croatia	31.4	:	26.8	39.7	:	45.2	21.3	:	21.8	7.6	:	6.2
Italy	38.6	40.1	34.0	33.8	39.6	41.6	20.9	16.6	20.1	6.7	3.7	4.4
Cyprus	14.6	16.1	10.5	59.3	56.7	62.2	17.9	19.2	20.3	8.1	8.0	7.0
Latvia	5.1	5.1	4.2	40.0	35.7	33.7	42.9	46.1	49.3	12.0	13.1	12.7
Lithuania	2.5	2.7	4.5	31.5	40.7	42.9	45.8	44.7	39.0	20.3	11.9	13.7
Luxembourg (*)	:	1.1	5.5	:	5.0	16.2	:	22.0	27.1	:	72.0	51.2
Hungary (*)	74.8	63.2	57.6	17.6	25.9	28.6	6.3	9.2	11.1	1.3	1.7	2.7
Malta	8.3	10.9	8.2	26.0	24.7	32.4	42.8	45.7	43.2	22.8	18.6	16.2
Netherlands	:	13.9	13.7	:	25.2	28.7	:	37.1	37.1	:	23.7	20.6
Austria	20.3	21.9	13.8	50.4	50.5	49.6	20.2	18.9	23.3	9.1	8.8	13.4
Poland	37.3	38.1	32.9	39.0	38.7	45.0	19.6	19.2	19.2	4.1	4.0	2.8
Portugal	51.3	41.5	31.0	22.3	26.6	28.9	17.5	20.5	24.8	8.9	11.5	15.3
Romania	69.6	:	64.2	19.2	:	24.7	9.9	:	10.2	1.3	:	0.9
Slovenia	7.7	7.6	15.9	20.5	15.0	20.7	37.2	32.6	25.7	34.6	44.9	37.7
Slovakia	11.8	11.1	11.8	21.1	30.2	21.8	38.1	38.8	38.1	32.8	21.8	28.8
Finland	16.1	8.2	8.0	16.0	13.1	15.6	29.9	29.5	31.6	38.0	49.2	44.9
Sweden (*)	5.0	8.2	3.4	44.6	31.6	45.9	31.0	29.7	31.7	19.4	30.5	19.0
United Kingdom	33.1	33.1	33.1	33.1	33.1	33.1	33.1	33.1	33.1	33.1	33.1	33.1
Norway	2.9	4.4	7.9	22.4	24.7	26.9	28.6	23.9	21.5	46.1	46.9	43.7
Switzerland	:	12.1	6.3	:	20.9	19.7	:	34.2	35.5	:	32.9	36.5
North Macedonia	:	:	31.7	:	:	38.6	:	:	20.0	:	:	9.7
Albania	:	:	59.9	:	:	25.9	:	:	10.9	:	:	3.2
Serbia	:	37.4	20.7	:	47.4	37.2	:	12.3	21.6	:	2.9	20.5
Turkey	75.5	81.8	-	21.6	15.0	-	2.6	2.2	-	0.2	-	-

Foreign languages spoken in Europe by country by Eurostat

Country	Core curriculum for ECEC	Perspective
Sweden	LPFÖ 2018, 19 pages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The preschool shall give each child the <b>conditions to develop</b> both the Swedish language and his or her mother tongue, if the child has a mother tongue other than Swedish.</li> <li>Language, learning and identity development are closely linked.</li> </ul>
Norway	Frameworkplan for kindergartens 2017, 64 pages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kindergartens shall acknowledge and value the children's different forms of communication and language...</li> <li>All children shall receive <b>appropriate language stimulation</b> in kindergarten, and all children shall be able to participate in activities that promote communication and comprehensive language development.</li> <li>highlight <b>linguistic and cultural diversity</b> ...and promote diversity in communication, language and other forms of expression.</li> <li>include <b>all children in language stimulation</b> activities</li> </ul>
Finland	Varhaiskasvatussuunnitelman perusteet, 2016, 63 pages	?



# Bilingual education in Finland – The Finnish perspective



- Finland is a bilingual country by its constitution
- All these language programmes are voluntary
- There are no steering documents stating how the second language education should be delivered in practice. However, there are some research on best practices and also descriptions of immersion didactics or pedagogy in the Finnish context (e.g. Harju-Luukkainen, 2007, 2013).

# English Early Language Immersion in Finland



# Thank you!

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# Prof. Susanne Garvis



- **Access inequality – a critical reflection on preschool quality, access and affordability**

# Is universal access the solution?

- Early childhood education is considered a great "equaliser" to prevent the intergenerational transmission of poverty and exclusion (Morabito et al. 2013).
- Van Lancker (2017) points out that preschool use and preschool inequality are inversely related- where if there is a shortage of places, higher income families benefit the most as they are able to navigate the system to obtain a place where needed, in a desirable location and understand the importance of early education.
- International research suggests that across a wide range of countries, children from certain social backgrounds are still less likely to be enrolled in services geared towards the general child population (Gambaro et al., 2014; Oberhuemer, 2014).

# Barriers to universal access

- Cost, despite government assistance, has also been found as a potential barrier for lower qualified mothers who have less income (Wirth, 2013).
- Moreover, there are concerns of how preschools respond to the increased diverse needs of families and communities in different contexts, with migrant children least likely to attend preschool (Vandenbroeck & Lazzari, 2014).
- While earlier international research has focused on barriers within families and parental choice for not enrolling in preschools (Vandenbroeck & Lazzati, 2014), recent research has started to discuss preschool usage patterns as a result of structural barriers, rather than parental choice alone (Pavolini & van Lancker, 2018).



Does universal access contribute to lower quality?

• *Reflections...*



# What happens if home environments are sometimes better for children?

- Cognitive benefits from studies seem to show increases for children from some backgrounds but not others (socio-economic status and level of mother's education) (emerging research from Italy and Canada)
- Ratios and quality of the preschool is highly important (especially for infants and toddlers who need 1:1 ratios)
- Number of resources in preschools and home environments
- Studies now showing some children have better educational outcomes by being in the home environment (as well as linked to future success)

# Enablers

- Teacher qualifications and profiles
- Teacher stress
- Ratios for enhanced interactions
- Regulation of industry (enhanced standardisation)
- Involving parents and the community (especially from diverse backgrounds)
- Resources and materials to create positive learning environments

# Is Teacher Qualification Associated With the Quality of the Early Childhood Education and Care Environment? A Meta-Analytic Review (Review of Educational Research 2019)

- **This meta-analytic review examines evidence on the correlation between teacher qualifications and the quality of ECEC environments. Results show that higher teacher qualifications are significantly correlated with higher quality ECEC environments.**
- **Specifically, the education level of teachers or caregivers is positively correlated to overall ECEC qualities, as well as subscale ratings including program structure, language, and reasoning.**
- **Cultural sensitivity and awareness**



**Concluding thoughts...**

***We all have a responsibility to  
ensure high quality and access for  
all children***

