

VANTAA'S PLEDGE TO THE EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS

Key Principle 1: Education, training and life-long learning

Vantaa is committed to finding solutions for new ways to promote life-long learning, upskilling, and employment opportunities, as well as helping companies to evolve. The learning and education vision of Vantaa is a learning city, with competent residents, and life-long learning. Vantaa is currently running many projects concerning the development of learning and education, sharing this vision.

Vantaa is the most multicultural and the fastest growing city in Finland. For this reason, several development projects and operating models are based on the language-conscious education and working life and society skills. Also learning skills and motivation for education are important for Vantaa.

To enable upskilling and life-long learning, Vantaa is coordinating the European Union funded Urban Innovative Actions project Urban Growth - GSIP Vantaa - Growth and Social investment Pacts for Local Companies in City of Vantaa. The project focuses on developing the skills and competences of both the employed and unemployed people in Vantaa, and to support the development of the companies in Vantaa in the era of digitalisation and automation.

The challenge of the companies in Vantaa is high amount of low-skill jobs. The aim of the project is to raise the level of education of the labour force, improving the employment possibilities and developing and increasing jobs.

The project is aimed for the SMEs in Vantaa employing 10-200 people and for the current and possible employees in Vantaa. The innovations include support of growth and elements of social responsibility within e.g. education and recruiting. The development project creates new Growth Deals for the companies. They aim to both create and combine business growth, responsibility, and social aims of the society. The Growth Deals reach from recruiting and training of current employees to a growth jump of the company and implementation of digitalization.

Co-development is in the core of the project. The project is coordinated by the City of Vantaa and includes as partners Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, ETLA - The Research Institute of the Finnish Economy, Labour Institute for Economic Research, Helsinki Region Chamber of Commerce, ISS Services Ltd, Infocare Ltd., Solteq Plc., Finnair Cargo Ltd. and Vantti Ltd. The project is funded by the Urban Innovative Actions program of the European Union by 80%, and 20% of the project cost are covered by the coordinator and the partners.

Key Principle 11. Childcare and support to children

Vantaa is committed to decreasing the differences in learning and wellbeing, which can be caused by children's background.

Of more than 16 000 children in Vantaa in the age group of early childhood education, approximately 80% participate in early childhood education. Of these children, over 22% speak as their mother tongue other than Finnish or Swedish, with over 80 languages represented.

The starting point of the early childhood education and the early childhood education plan in Vantaa is the equality of children. In the early childhood education of Vantaa all children are encouraged to act according to their own mindset. Children's' playing and small groups are divided according to pedagogic principles, not according to the gender. The family culture of all children and families are taken into notice in implementing activities and in co-operation. The inclusivity of the children and their guardians is taken into notice in matters connected with equality. The prevention of bullying and its intervention is actively paid attention to. Each day-care centre draws a plan to prevent and to intervene in bullying, with concrete measures on strengthening social skills and the sense of belonging.

Vantaa employs 24 art educators in early childhood education. In addition, to be able to reduce segregation and differences in wellbeing of city districts, Vantaa has launched the Regional Program of Positive Action 2019–2021. The program targets resources to the districts where there is more than average need for support based on educational, income level and health indicators. The program also supports early childhood education, and within the program, three curators are employed to early childhood education in the specific areas.

At the moment, Vantaa is starting a project which aims to ensure equal opportunities for all the children in Vantaa. All in all 33 children's and family instructors and developmental teachers are hired for equality work. Early childhood education creates a basis for later learning and the aim is to even out the learning and wellbeing differences caused by children's background. This will be accomplished by targeting the new employees to the city areas which require positive action.

To implement the project, the Finnish state has granted Vantaa 1.6 million euros from the state's special grant for advancing education and equality in early childhood education. The aim of the project is to test and further develop work methods that advance inclusion, equality, and interaction. The project focuses on strengthening the equal learning and wellbeing of children.

The population of Vantaa is growing, especially when it comes to children with immigrant background who are in the age group of early childhood education. Through the project, the work against inequality is fortified by employing developmental teachers and children's and family instructors. Vantaa will hire 21 children's and family instructors. They will especially strengthen the services for children in early childhood



education and their families, and the guidance to further services. 12 developmental teachers will also be hired. The teachers will support the directors of the day-care centers in their pedagogical leadership and the early childhood education teams in developing pedagogy.

The COVID-19 pandemic of spring 2020 further emphasized the central importance of early childhood education in supporting families with children. The pandemic and its consequences have also challenged early childhood education to learn new ways of working and the project offers an excellent framework to test all the new lessons learned. The aim is to continue to offer high-quality early childhood education services of families with children in Vantaa through agile and flexible services.

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Ritva Viljanen
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