

ANED country report on equality of educational and training opportunities for young disabled people

Country: Finland

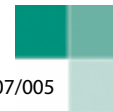
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The information contained in this report was compiled by the Academic Network of European Disability experts (ANED) in May 2010.

The [Academic Network of European Disability experts](#) (ANED) was established by the European Commission in 2008 to provide scientific support and advice for its disability policy Unit. In particular, the activities of the Network will support the future development of the EU Disability Action Plan and practical implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People.

This country report has been prepared as input for the Thematic report on the implementation of EU Equality of educational and training opportunities in European countries with reference to equality for young disabled people.

The purpose of the report ([Terms of Reference](#)) is to review national implementation on equality of educational and training opportunities for young people, and in particular the National Strategic Reports of member states from a disability equality perspective in education and training, and provide the Commission with useful evidence in supporting disability policy mainstreaming.



Section 1: Executive summary and conclusions

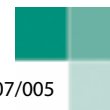
Educational opportunities and training are a part of Finnish schooling policy and they are represented in special educational efforts in practice. Nowadays special educational needs are usually realised in integrated circumstances but, at the same time, the number of special needs pupils has increased. However, it is not evident that pupils have more learning difficulties than earlier. Rather, a kind of risk awareness is more sensitive today, leading to an increase in administrative labelling of pupils. More special education services also mean more resources to schools. Alongside this trend teachers need more support and consultation, because they face the requirement to teach pupils with special needs more regularly. New kinds of co-operational models to develop inclusive everyday practices in schools are very common today. (see e.g. Kivirauma 1991)

Special educational supportive actions are particularly focused on learning difficulties, socio-emotional problems and other reasons such as social problems. A new Act on special education is expected next year. Provisional information includes the idea of not labelling special needs learners via a special education decision or making this decision the last possibility (HE 109/2009)¹

There has been a trend in special needs education arrangements to the extent that decisions to send pupils to special schools are now rarely taken. The total number of special schools has steadily declined, partly as a result of cuts or consolidation in municipalities. This has also happened because of the diminished economic resources of special schools and a de-centralisation of responsibility to the municipalities. However, the segregation between ordinary pupils and special needs pupils has not necessarily been broken down in schooling practices, for example in the use of separated school classes (see Jahnukainen & Korhonen 2003).

Universities may make special arrangements for entrance examinations, campus accessibility and learning support, but they are not obliged to provide any special educational support. There are, however, examples of such support in some institutions. Financial aid is available to all students in financial difficulty and rehabilitation allowances are payable to young disabled people in education but there is no specific, separate system of financial support for disabled students.

¹http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Koulutus/artikkelit/erityisopetuksen_kehittaminen/erityisopetus_liitteet/HE_erityisopetus.pdf



Section 2: Legal and policy context

According to Basic Education Act (628/98)², § 30 enrolled pupils have the right to receive education in the core national curriculum and teaching groups should be provided to achieve the curriculum objectives (parents exercise some choice in the selection of subjects). In addition, § 31 gives the right to disabled children and children with special educational needs to receive assistance, free of charge, to participate (e.g. free interpretation and assistant services, additional teaching and pupil welfare services, special equipment). In Finland, the legislation emphasises integration as a priority. The Basic Education Act assumes that the teaching should be organised primarily in the context of ordinary schooling, even when the pupil is admitted or transferred to special education.

Pupils with ‘moderate learning or adjustment difficulties’, are entitled to special education provision in a ordinary teaching class with other pupils. However, according to the Basic Education Act § 17 a pupil can be admitted, or transferred to the special education if he/she cannot be taught in the mainstream on grounds of disability, illness, delayed development or emotional disturbance, or similar reasons. The decision is made by the local authority, in consultation with the parents based on an assessment of the child’s learning capacity that involves professional opinion (e.g. from a psychologist, doctor or social welfare professional).

A special education decision may be made when the pupil does not have a disability, illness, delayed development or emotional disturbance, but has other comparable reasons to need alternative teaching (Basic Education Act § 17). The starting point is the fact that special education pupils will be helped and supported with all available means (e.g. differentiation, remedial teaching, part-time special education). If a pupil’s progress in his learning can not be adequate to support through the means mentioned, a special education decision-making process will be started. The decision needs a medical or psychological or social statement of pupil’s learning conditions. Education providers must address adequate support for a special education pupil to an appropriate education to implement. A special education decision is not a decision on a study place, although it is officially-speaking a special education admission or transfer. A special education decision is a decision that a pupil needs additional support at the school (in this way it may be comparable with a ‘statement’ of special educational needs as defined in some other countries). For any pupil who has a special education decision an Individual Education Plan (IEP) must be drawn up (Basic Education Act § 17).

The most appropriate place to study, for the support and teaching methods, must be defined subjectively. A special education pupil can be taught full-time or partially in an ordinary primary education group (integrated) or in a special class. A pupil’s special education in an integrated subject requires proper implementation of support in the context of teaching. It is possible to arrange teaching in an alternative way, when pupil’s health reasons require it.

² <http://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/1998/en19980628.pdf>

Basic Education Act § 17 gives an opportunity to teach special education pupils without official division into hours. Usually a personal educational plan is the basis of teaching objectives and content. The Basic Education Decree (852/1998)³ § 2 specifies a normal maximum group size of 10 for special needs classes, 6 for groups of pupils with ‘profound developmental disabilities’ or 20 if taught in a general class.

The Finnish Constitution⁴ (731/99) § 6 states that ‘no one shall, without acceptable reason, be differently treated, for example on the ground of...health, disability or other reason that concerns his or her person’. This constitutional obligation applies to pupils in basic education and upper secondary education pupils and students. In addition, the article affirms the right of children to be treated equally and to be involved in decisions that affect them (in accordance with United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child).

Special education issues are not addressed specifically in high school legislation (although they are mentioned in the The Upper Secondary Schools Act (629/1998). However, the national curriculum does promote the concept of equal opportunity in access to completion of upper secondary studies.

A useful summary of the historical and present context for relevant legislation is provided in the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education country report⁵ (see also Järvinen’s 2007 summary for UNESCO⁶). This report also draws attention a range of other legislation that makes some reference to the provision of special needs education or disability (e.g. in relation to financing, child care, etc).

The provision of vocational training is established in the Vocational Education Act (Laki ammatillisesta koulutuksesta 630/1998, 7) and the Decree on Vocational Education (Asetus ammatillisesta koulutuksesta 811/1998, 8). In Finland, vocational education begins in upper secondary schooling, where pupils choose between more academic (*lukio*) or more vocational (*ammattikorkeakoulutus*) routes. After this, students may progress to higher education in universities or higher vocational institutions (*ammattikorkeakoulu*), respectively. Students with disabilities may apply to enter mainstream vocational training institutions (via a national application scheme, with special advisors) or there is provision for special institutions targeting rehabilitation and guidance for those with severe impairments (including the provision of ‘on-the-job’ training or apprenticeships). However, the general approach is one of mainstreaming but with an IEP.

³http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Koulutus/yleissivistavae_koulutus/Liitetiedostoja/basicedu_decree.pdf

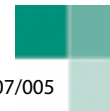
⁴<http://www.finlex.fi/pdf/saadkaan/E9990731.PDF>

⁵<http://www.european-agency.org/country-information/finland/national-overview/legal-system>

⁶http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Inclusive_Education/Reports/sinaia_07/finland_inclusion_07.pdf

⁷<http://www.finlex.fi/linkit/sd/19980630>

⁸<http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/smur/1998/19980811>



Vocational training in adulthood is governed by the the Vocational Adult Education Act (Laki ammatillisesta aikuiskoulutuksesta 631/19989) and the Decree on Vocational Adult Education (Asetus ammatillisesta aikuiskoulutuksesta 812/199810). The educational provider is responsible for arranging special educational provision.

Universities may make special arrangements for entrance examinations, campus accessibility and learning support¹¹, but they are not obliged to provide any special educational support.

According to the current Government Programme of Finland¹², the major policy aims are reducing group sizes, strengthening supportive and special education, guidance counselling and pupils' welfare and the contribution of school club activities. In 2006, the Government established a Special Needs Education Development Unit, focused on pre-school and primary level education in accordance with the Special Education strategy. A Government Bill to Parliament for amending the law on primary education (HE 109/2009¹³) is proposed, to be supplemented by special training and other support given to pupils. The aim is to prepare pupils through early intervention planning and preventive support for their learning and growth.

The Education and Research Development Plan 2007-2012¹⁴ stressed the goal of equality as well as quality of education. The 2007 Special Education Strategy¹⁵ recognised progress towards integration but also acknowledged considerable differences in provision between different municipalities, and a lack of evidence-based research. It emphasised early-intervention (at pre-school level) and also sought an expansion of specialist training for teachers. Enhanced and specific support for development activities are part of the Special Education Strategy implementation. Development activities have been supported by targeted state subsidies to 233 municipalities, since the spring of 2008. (see also Itkonen & Jahnukainen 2007).

⁹ <http://www.finlex.fi/linkit/sd/19980631>

¹⁰ <http://www.finlex.fi/linkit/sd/19980812>

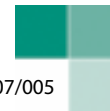
¹¹ E.g. <http://www.utu.fi/en/studying/studies/regulations/disabilities.html>

¹² Government Programme of Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen's second Cabinet
<http://www.valtioneuvosto.fi/hallitus/hallitusohjelma/pdf/en.pdf>

¹³ <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/esitykset/he/2009/20090109>

¹⁴ <http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Julkaisut/2008/liitteet/opm09.pdf>

¹⁵ http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Julkaisut/2007/Erityisopetuksen_strategia.html



Section 3: Evidence of outcomes and progress towards inclusion

The following summary points on development towards educational inclusion in Finland are addressed in the European Agency country report¹⁶:

- Separate curricula of special education have been abolished and all pupils follow the same core national curriculum, tailored to an individual education plan. In the curriculum the concept 'Need for special support' is used when referring to special education.
- The pupil welfare services are included in the curriculum and municipalities and schools are obliged to include the services they offer in the curriculum.
- Development of inclusion and production of models regarding municipality, school and pupil-level planning, organisation and implementation of inclusive special needs education are conducted in co-operation with various interest groups.
- The statistics on provision, resources and costs of special needs education will be elaborated in order to obtain a complete view on the state of special needs education nationwide, as well as to acquire comparative data on the effects of regional and municipal differences.
- Several projects are developing virtual schools for the provision of special education according to the national strategy. The actors involved in these projects represent private and public sector, state, municipalities, universities and research centres, both in the humanities and technical areas.
- There are several projects for preventing exclusion of pupils by developing productive learning models and models to teach and support pupils with mental illnesses

The total number of special schools has steadily declined, either as a result of cuts or consolidation in municipalities. This is happened because of the diminished economic resources of special schools and a de-centralisation of responsibility to the municipalities. (e.g. Asgeir et al. 2002). The second major reason has been that education and care have been related to changes in ideology away from segregation since the 1980s (see Salo 1996). There has been a trend in special needs education arrangements to the extent that decisions to send pupils to special schools are now rarely taken. Often those decisions are replaced by part-time special education provision. In primary school classes part-time special education in particular is focused on pupils who have reading and writing difficulties and difficulties in learning mathematics. In upper primary school age (7-9 classes) the main difficulties appear as behavioural problems. Separate special schools, are not deemed necessarily appropriate for children with such difficulties. A small number of special schools do still exist but these focus mainly on providing for children with physical and sensory impairments (blind or deaf children). These include, for example, the Jyväskylä school and a Swedish language school (visual impairment), Lohipato (physical impairment), and Mikael and Merikartano (hearing impairment).

¹⁶ <http://www.european-agency.org/country-information/finland/national-overview/development-of-inclusion>

They are not in their current form promoting inclusion / integration efforts in the light of the development trends. Nowadays special school pupils tend to be those with more severe disabilities. Special schools themselves have recognized the need for change and have sought to expand their activities as knowledge and resource centres (Teittinen 2003).

However, evidence from the national statistical agency (Statistics Finland¹⁷) suggests a long-term trend towards the transfer of pupils into full-time special educational arrangements. For example, figures for 2006 showed an increasing number of pupils placed in full-time special education and a decreasing number in part-time special education¹⁸. In total, 44,700 (8%) pupils from comprehensive school pupils were transferred to full-time special education (an increase of 4%). In 2007, the proportion in full-time special education remained around 8% (although numbers increased by 1,400)¹⁹. In 2008, there was again a small increase to 47,300 pupils. Figures for 2009 will be released in June 2010 and are shown in table 1. Basically the same trend continues (8.5 % of all pupils and N 47168 pupils).

By comparison, the same data series shows that there were 128,000 pupils in part-time special education (around 22% of all pupils). Approximately half were taught in special groups but with much regional variation. This figure also increased slightly in 2007. However, it declined in 2008 to 126,300 pupils in comprehensive schools. Slightly more than half of pupils transferred to special education are now taught in general education classes.

A more detailed breakdown of these statistics is provided in Table 1 below. It is important to emphasise, however, that it is not possible to distinguish 'disabled' children here from the more general category of special educational needs. This is perhaps explained by the increase in special needs pupils at the same time as there has been a decrease in all comprehensive school pupils since 2004.

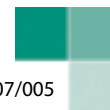
Table 1. Pupils transferred to special education in comprehensive school 1995-2009 (updated June 11, 2010)

Year	Special school		Other comprehensive school		Total		All comprehensive school pupils
	N	Part of the comprehensive school pupils %	N	Part of the comprehensive school pupils %	N	Part of the comprehensive school pupils %	
1995	10 871	1.8	6 142	1.0	17 013	2.9	588 162
1996	11 270	1.9	6 608	1.1	17 878	3.0	589 128
1997	11 901	2.0	8 099	1.4	20 000	3.4	592 375
1998	12 002	2.0	9 824	1.7	21 826	3.7	591 679

¹⁷ http://stat.fi/til/erop/index_en.html

¹⁸ http://stat.fi/til/erop/2006/erop_2006_2007-06-15_tie_001_en.html

¹⁹ http://stat.fi/til/erop/2007/erop_2007_2008-06-10_tie_001_en.html



1999	11 884	2.0	12 481	2.1	24 365	4.1	591 272
2000	15 204	2.6	11 770	2.0	26 974	4.6	593 451
2001	10 986	1.9	19 846	3.3	30 832	5.2	595 727
2002	10 849	1.8	23 168	3.9	34 017	5.7	597 356
2003	10 461	1.8	26 378	4.4	36 839	6.2	597 414
2004	10 043	1.7	29 755	5.0	39 798	6.7	593 148
2005	9 663	1.6	33 115	5.6	42 778	7.3	586 381
2006	8 657	1.5	36 042	6.2	44 699	7.7	578 918
2007	8 169	1.4	37 916	6.6	46 085	8.1	570 689
2008	7 807	1.4	39 450	7.0	47 257	8.4	561 061
2009	7089	1,3	40 079	7.2	47 168	8.5	553 329

source: Statistics Finland ²⁰

In vocational training, there were 13,900 (6% of all young people in vocational training) students receiving special education in 2005/6 (e.g. in courses focused on technology, transport, tourism or catering). This increased to 14,900 in 2006/7 and 15,500 in 2007/8 (12% of all young people in vocational training). This large increase is a consequence of increasing numbers of special needs pupils in comprehensive schooling. (Hakala, Mietola & Teittinen 2010).

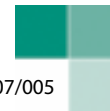
Special support (Criteria of Basic Education 2004) is required in learning when pupils growth, development and learning conditions are assessed as being diminished. This includes pupils whose learning and schooling conditions are difficult because of their emotional and social problems and who need targeted support. The organisation of support is central to the early identification of learning difficulties and support needs. This support requires convenience to the place of schooling, mode and time of planning and allocation of adequate resources for support. Most special needs pupils are taught in the nearest school and in a normal size school class, in which she/he can get special education and support.

Part-time special education is intended for pupils with mild learning or adjustment difficulties and who need special support teaching. Part-time special education models are used for individual, small group and in a normal school class. This implementation is based on the fact that pupils remain in their own school class and peer group, all the time, or most of the time. Part-time special education does not require a formal administrative decision of special education. On the other hand, pupils with special education decision may also obtain part-time special education. Part-time special education is a particularly flexible form of aid, because its focus group is wide and its means of implementation are diverse.

A special needs pupil's objectives are determined corresponding to his/her skills. If a pupil does not, despite the support efforts, achieve the general curriculum objectives, a curriculum can be individualised. An individual syllabus can relate to basic education throughout the curriculum, or just in certain subjects.

²⁰, http://stat.fi/til/erop/2009/erop_2009_2010-06-11_tau_001.fi.html

An individual syllabus means simply that personal objectives are drawn up for pupils to produce a personalised curriculum. Individualised curriculum objectives do not follow the general curriculum. However, this kind of individual syllabus requires a special education decision. A special education decision does not, however, mention the quantities of personalised learning, but they are decided in the individual education plan (IEP). Personalised school curriculum as well as goals and contents are defined in IEP. This process needs a careful assessment of several people co-operation. If a pupil has completed special education decision, an estimate is sufficient to justify the pedagogical individualisation. However, it is recommended that a physician or psychologist takes part in this process.



Section 4a: Financial support

Disabled students, including some foreign students, are offered many forms of support. Basically, all these forms are based on a rehabilitation allowance and its supportive forms are classified below.

Rehabilitation allowance includes supportive forms as follows:

- When the study is a part of vocational rehabilitation, aimed at the person's access to employment or remaining in it.

A Rehabilitation Allowance²¹ is payable to people aged 16-67 (or paid to the employer if the person is being paid during training). This is based on the Sickness Allowance of €22.04 per day or more, depending on earnings). Claimants must have a formal rehabilitation decision or, if under 20 years old, an individual training plan.

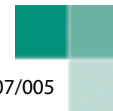
Vocational rehabilitation is supported and organised by several different parties:

- Institutions for occupational rehabilitation when the person has worked for at least five years and is at risk of retirement because of disability.
- Accident or transport insurance companies, if the rehabilitation is necessary due to occupational accidents, occupational disease or accident. Rehabilitation plans and carries out general insurance for Rehabilitation Association on behalf of those companies.
- The Social Insurance Institution KELA organises vocational rehabilitation to those who are not entitled to occupational rehabilitation or accident insurance and rehabilitation.
- Ministry of Employment and Economic Development Agencies are responsible for the unemployed and persons threatened by unemployment rehabilitation.

Financial aid is available to all students in financial difficulty²² (e.g. grants or study, housing benefits and state guarantees for student loans). These are also available to foreign students living permanently in Finland. Residence in Finland is estimated on the basis of the Aliens Act, depending on nationality. There is also a subsidy for adult education. Nordic country citizens (Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland) receive financial aid, if they stay in Finland for no other reason than studying, and have registered residence in Finland, according to a Nordic countries agreement. They may receive student financial aid if a family member is a citizen of Finland and a residence in Finland is registered, or a foreigner has a residence card. Citizens of EU countries, Switzerland or Liechtenstein may receive student financial aid, if resident in Finland other than for the purpose of studying (the registration must be done before getting a study place in Finland), and the right of residence in Finland has been registered.

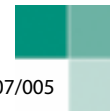
²¹ <http://www.kela.fi/in/internet/english.nsf/NET/081101141321EH?OpenDocument>

²² <http://www.kela.fi/in/internet/english.nsf/Docs/081001131300IL?OpenDocument>



Student can get, if the right of residence registration law is working or profession in Finland and a foreigner is either a certificate from their employer service relationship, a certificate of employment or proof of profession. If a foreigner is a family member of an EU country, Switzerland or Liechtenstein citizen and right of residence is registered as a family member, or a foreigner has a residence card, he/she can receive student financial aid. Citizens of other countries can receive financial aid, if granted a permanent or continuous residence permit in Finland or an EC residence permit in Finland.

The above paragraph considers the issue at a general level, because there are no extra financial supports specifically for educational purposes for disabled students. Their financial support for higher education is included in a rehabilitation allowance, in its various forms mentioned earlier.



Section 4(b): Personal assistance, equipment and adaptations

Practical assistance in school is provided by Special Needs Assistants whose purpose is to support people of different ages and cultural backgrounds, different kinds of learners for optimal performance in different contexts during the school day²³. SNAs are employed by the school and provide the following tasks:

- Helping the student dress / undress
- During lessons, the use of instruments to help
- Taking care of pupil's personal hygiene
- Practical work like helping to take notes
- Help in eating situations, together with the teacher
- Monitoring school transport

At Universities assistance services vary greatly²⁴. The following quotation describes the practice at the University of Helsinki, for example²⁵

“Disabled Student Adviser and Planning Officer

The Student Services unit of the University offers centralised services for **disabled students and other students with special needs**. Students may need help in arrangements in participating in lessons or examinations: accessing lecture rooms with a wheel chair, needing more time in taking an exam, etc.

The Disabled Student Adviser and a special Planning Officer in the Student Services have a central role in the university administration when it comes to co-ordinating and planning the services as well as developing the university environment more accessible to all students. Local, national and international networking forms an important part of the work of the Planning Officer. The e-mail address of the adviser and the planning officer: vammaisneuvonta@helsinki.fi

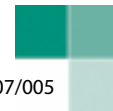
Organisation for students with learning disabilities

Within the Student Union of Helsinki (HYY) acts an organisation, *Erilaiset oppijat r.y.*, that gives support to students who are so called "different kinds of learners", i.e. students with various learning disabilities. The organisation was established in 2004. For more information, see [HYY web pages](#) for the contact information on the Student Union's Secretary of Social Affairs."

²³ See, for example, <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/117989215/articletext?DOI=10.1111%2Fj.1467-8578.2007.00453.x>

²⁴ <http://www.informaworld.com/index/TM8PAV6QC0G057UE.pdf>

²⁵ http://www.helsinki.fi/studying/disabled_student_services.shtml



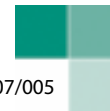
Barrier Free Buildings

There are also regulations for barrier free buildings in Finland. These regulations are under the governance of the Ministry of the Environment. Chapter F of the General building planning regulations and its sub-chapter are especially important in this sense. The most important sub-chapter of regulations on assembly facilities is as follows:

“Spectator stands, auditoria, festival halls, assembly halls and restaurants, educational halls and classrooms and any corresponding assembly facilities must also be suitable for the use of disabled and impaired people. Audio systems installed in these facilities should also have a telecommunications/induction loop or any other sound transfer system. When assembly facilities have fixed seats, there must be spaces for wheelchairs in different rows of seats in accordance with disabled entry routes.”²⁶

A study of personal experiences of disabled university students by Hanna-Sofia Poussu-Olli (1999) indicates that disability services are not good enough in Finnish universities and the students’ own flexibility and persistence are the key factors in obtaining the services and support required to succeed in studying.

²⁶ <http://www.ymparisto.fi/download.asp?contentid=26493&lan=en> This link includes the chapter F1 of building regulations.



Section 5: Evidence of good practice

Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities ran a project called *Growing Together – School and Community for All* during 2002-2004. Mainly the project was funded by Finland's Slot Machine Association.

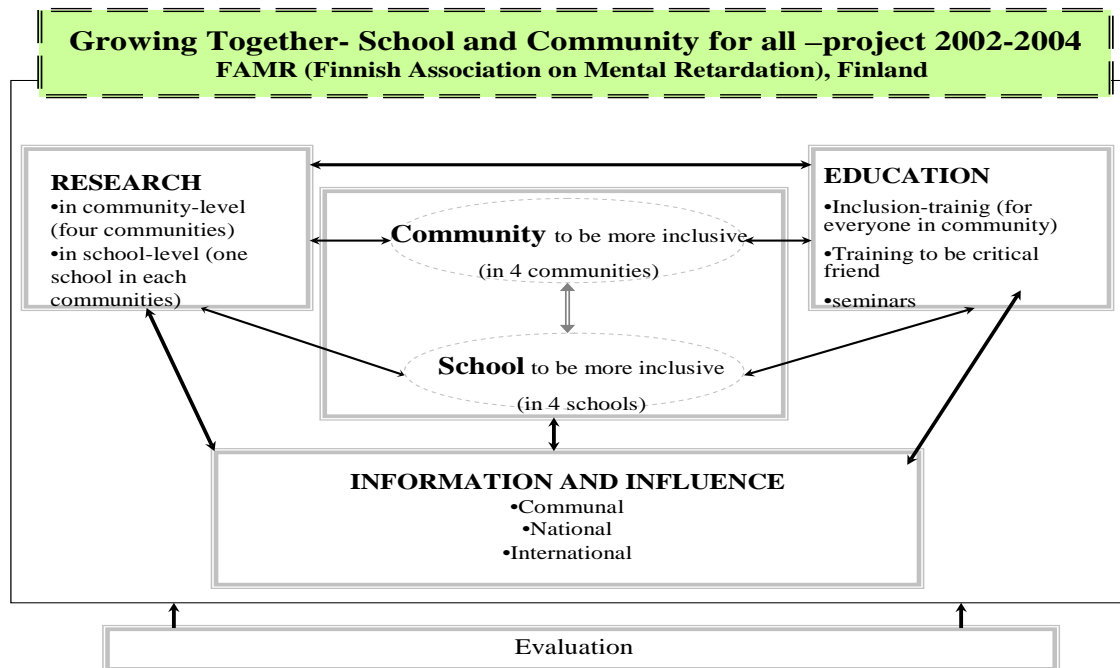
The main concept of the project was *inclusion*. It was understood as an approach and continuing process so that all the human beings are equals.

The *Growing Together*-project was concerned with developing inclusion on the community and school level. The goal of the *Growing Together*-project was to support four pilot schools to find reasonable practices to teach and educate pupils with varied characteristics in their everyday life. Pilot local authorities developed different practices and models and these actions were focused on children between 6-12 years old (N=1,156 pupils at four local school) Pupils were treated as equal members of their schools and neighbourhoods (the idea of local school) and their activity and participation were supported too. Another goal was to improve services of local authority areas on this issue. The main result of the project was that the co-operation between service providers of public sectors and the third sector i.e. civil society actors so that pupils' school attendance from the very beginning (already at the pre-school) contributes their and their parents' opportunities to participate and influence over the local school and community. The survey of pupils showed that actions to improve their independence should be increased. Personal assistance is needed and pupils are stressed without help. Bullying is one of the central problems (about 25% of pupils experienced this). Girls enjoyed school more than boys. Parents were doubtful about the real co-operation between schools and themselves. (Matikka et al. 2005).

The results on inclusion implementation from the administrative perspective were as follows: Two ways of implementing a project can be distinguished. Municipalities either aimed to further develop their own inclusive models and practices with the help of the *Growing Together* project, or they began inclusive development based on it. The networks formed in the participating municipalities can be divided into weak and strong bonded networks. Networks with strong bonds could be found in the municipalities that were further developing inclusion, whereas networks characterised by weak ties could be found in the municipalities that began inclusive development. The significance of the project's network activities in the change process supports the Granovetterian interpretation of weak ties. Institutional and cultural changes can unfold more flexibly through weakly tied networks. (Teittinen 2005).

The project took place in four pilot local authority municipalities (two in Central Finland, one in Northern Finland and one in Southern Finland) different places in Finland. Progression of the project was based on the local existing co-operative models and practices, but on needs too.

A selected comprehensive school's (one school in each municipality) personnel applied with local authorities the International Inclusion Programme (i.e. Index for Inclusion²⁷) as a tool to improve inclusive conditions of their own school and community. The aim of the project was to put in practice the International Inclusion Programme (Index for Inclusion) in Finland. The spheres of actions in this project were planning and consulting, research work, study programmes of inclusive approach and information/communication. It is shown in the following figure.

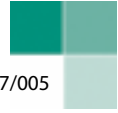


Source: Growing Together Project Material, Part of English presentation of the project, see <http://kehitysvammaliitto.fi/en/research/tutkimusteemat/aikaisemat/yhdessa-kasvamaan.html>

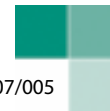
Evaluation of the project

The Finnish evaluation firm Net Effect carried out a SWOT analysis for the project. The firm found that the small number of municipalities (4) was an advantage to the project. Ideology and practices of inclusion were assimilated well. At the same time it was a disadvantage that only four municipalities were participating. It has been difficult to mainstream the project. Also, the teachers' union was opposed to the inclusive schooling policy. The whole project was evaluated as one of the first projects connecting inclusion in schools with communal administrations and with families and civil society.

²⁷ <http://www.ipdisco-prog.com/downloadable%20files/Index%20for%20inclusion%20two.pdf>



However, the project was focused mainly on schools and had restricted targets. (Mäkelä & Virtanen 2003).



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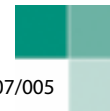
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