

Finland's National Implementation Plan (NIP) 30 May 2022, updated 1.2.2024

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1. Brief information on the national context and baseline

Strategic framework

In Finland, the most important instrument for implementing the Council of the European Union Recommendation¹ and the Osnabrück Declaration² in vocational education and training policy is the **Education Policy Report**³ of the Finnish Government. The strategic report, which steers the development of entire education system in the long term, describes the target state of education and research into the 2030s and towards the 2040s. The report also presents the resources needed to achieve the target state and the need for changes in structures and guidance. The report examines vocational education and training (VET) and its development as part of the entire education system and its development.

The target state of VET is as follows.

- Finland will be a nation with a strong educational foundation built on effective and high-quality education, which lay the foundation for equality, wellbeing, human development and a good life as well as society's renewal and ability to anticipate and respond to sudden changes.
- Education and the competence it brings about will reform Finnish society and the world of work. New solutions and practices will be created by combining multidisciplinary and multisectoral competence.
- Everyone has the right to learn and to receive the support and guidance they need. The path of increasing educational inequalities will have been reversed. Progress on the study path and learning outcomes will not depend on the learner's gender, restrictions to physical functional capacity, place of residence, or family or cultural background.
- The entire cohort of young people will complete an upper secondary qualification that opens the doors to further studies and the world of work. At minimum 50% of young adults will complete a higher education degree.

¹ Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience , 2020/C 417/01

² Osnabrück Declaration on vocational education and training as an enabler of recovery and just transitions to digital and green economies, endorsed on 30 November 2020

³ Education Policy Report of the Finnish Government: <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-383-927-4>

- Everyone will have opportunities to develop and update their competence at different stages of their careers, regardless of their background, workplace, place of residence, life situation or disability.
- Educational organisations will create new practices, renew competence, and rejuvenate national and regional economic structures in close cooperation with the world of work.
- Legislation, financing systems and the structures and practices of the education system will have been updated to promote both international and national cooperation, respond to societal changes and secure sufficient resources.
- Provision of high-quality education and good learning outcomes will be ensured throughout the country.
- Education and qualifications will form a seamless system, and low boundaries within this system will enable flexible personal choices. There will be no closed doors in the education system, and students at every level can apply for a place in further studies.
- New technologies will be used extensively and innovatively to support learning. The digital learning environment will be advanced, and the information reserves of learning will be available to both people and society for promoting learning and pedagogical development. The offer of digital education and digital learning platforms and solutions will enable studying regardless of time and place.
- Education and culture will be manifested as internationalisation, understanding of diversity, wellbeing and promotion of sustainable development. The education system enables migrants and international experts to find their place in Finnish society and the world of work.
- Finnish education draws talented people from all over the world to Finland. In global contexts, Finland will work to promote the free flow of information, build trust in scientific knowledge and forge cooperation. Finns will be active in international education and research networks and take on leading roles in them.

In Finland, the parties with governmental responsibility define the Government's objectives and key measures in the **Government Programme**. The Government Programme is a target programme that also steers the development of VET during the government term.

The Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's Government has been implemented in Finland as of 16 June 2023⁴, and the National Implementation Plan (NIP) was updated on **1.2.2024** to correspond to the development measures under the new Government Programme. The key development measures are related to strengthening the impact and overall efficiency of VET activities. The first version of the National Implementation Plan of 30 May 2022 was based on the Programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government⁵. Its main VET measures included the raising of the minimum school leaving age to 18 years and extension of compulsory education to upper secondary education, the parliamentary reform of continuous learning and the Right to Learn development programme.

Finland has a long tradition of developing VET in cooperation with stakeholders, especially the world of work. Cooperation with the world of work is an integral part of the development of VET at national, regional and education provider level in, for example, the preparation of legislation and regulations, anticipation or the provision of education and training. Key stakeholders also include education providers, teachers, students and various authorities involved in VET. In the future, more development work will be done together with general upper secondary schools and higher education institutions. Cooperation creates commitment to the implementation of the reforms.

In Finland, there is confidence that education providers⁶ will be able to create solutions to the needs of students and the world of work. Education providers have extensive opportunities to influence their own way of providing education. This has been believed to contribute to the development of productivity and effectiveness and to create a development-friendly atmosphere.

In Finland, VET teachers complete pedagogical studies and have an academic degree and work experience in the field they teach. Teachers have extensive opportunities to decide on pedagogical solutions and on the teaching materials and tools to be used. The high level of education and competence of teachers contributes to the implementation of educational policy reforms and their establishment in the everyday life of educational institutions.

⁴ Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's Government: <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/165044/Programme-of-Prime-Minister-Petteri-Orpos-Government-20062023.pdf?sequence=4>

⁵ Programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government : <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-287-811-3>

⁶ The Finnish network of VET providers is described briefly in Section 2 of the form.

Finland has good starting points for utilising digitalisation. Companies and the public sector already have quite a lot of expertise in digital solutions. The digital skills of citizens are also fairly good in Finland. In addition, the pedagogical skills of highly educated teachers can be utilised when digitalisation is increased to support learning.

Legal framework

In Finland, the Ministry of Education and Culture is part of the government formed by the ministries and their ministers. The ministry is responsible for the planning, guidelines and implementation of education policy together with the respective government. The ministry prepares the acts, decrees and decisions on VET as well as matters related to the use of budget funds. In addition, the ministry directs the activities of its administrative branch and represents Finland in EU institutions and international cooperation. Agencies under the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Finnish National Agency for Education (Edufi) and the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) support the ministry in the implementation, guidance, evaluation and development of education policy.

VET is regulated by approximately ten acts, fifteen Government decrees and sixteen Ministry of Education and Culture decrees⁷. In addition to legislation guiding the activities of VET, the statutes also guide, for example, funding, administration, qualifications of teaching staff and social benefits for students.

In addition to the acts and decrees, VET is steered by national qualification requirements and other regulations of the Finnish National Agency for Education. The Finnish National Agency for Education defines the national qualification requirements of initial vocational qualifications, further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications⁸ (160 regulations on qualification requirements).

Ongoing policy initiatives and reforms

In the last couple of years, two reforms in the field of VET included in the Government Programme have been under way in Finland, aiming to increase educational equality and educational opportunities for citizens at all levels of education and to raise the level of competence. In addition, there have been two separate ongoing development programmes, that implemented objectives of the Government Programme: the Right to Learn development programme and the Programme for the sustainable development of VET

⁷ The statutes related to VET are listed on the website of the Ministry of Education and Culture: <https://okm.fi/ammattillisen-koulutuksen-lainsaadanto>

⁸ National qualification requirements for vocational qualifications in electronic format: <https://eperusteet.opintopolku.fi/#/en/selaus/ammattillinen>

and the green transition. The development of VET is also guided by the National Roadmap for Research, Development and Innovation adopted by the Government in 2020.

a. Extension of compulsory education⁹

In Finland, the duration of compulsory education was extended so that compulsory education continues until the young person completes an upper secondary qualification or turns 18. With the extension of compulsory education, studies in upper secondary education became free of charge for students subject to compulsory education. In addition, guidance for studies and student welfare services were enhanced. A new educational package for transitional phases, preparatory education for programmes leading to an upper secondary qualification, was introduced in autumn 2022.

The Act on Compulsory Education entered into force one age group at a time. The act and the obligation to apply for upper secondary education contained therein were applied to young people completing basic education for the first time in spring 2021. The implementation of the extension of compulsory education is being monitored according to a separate monitoring plan¹⁰ from 2021 to 2024.

b. Reform of continuous learning¹¹

The parliamentary reform of continuous learning is linked to the Sustainable Growth Programme for Finland. The objectives of the reform are that

- everyone develops their skills and competence in the world of work,
- everyone has the knowledge, competence and skills required for employment and a meaningful life, and
- competence reforms the world of work and related competence.

⁹ More information on the reform of the extension of compulsory education is available on the website of the Ministry of Education and Culture: <https://okm.fi/en/extension-of-compulsory-education>

¹⁰ Implementation of extended compulsory education: monitoring plan for 2021–2024: <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-263-766-6>

¹¹ More information on reforming continuous learning is available on the website of the Ministry of Education and Culture: <https://okm.fi/en/continuous-learning-reform>

The reform focuses in particular on competence services for people of working age. They will be improved by developing foresight and by targeting education and guidance, in particular for the sectors of structural change and for under-represented groups in education. For guidance and competence mapping, models will be created to prevent unemployment and inactivity and to improve the effectiveness of education and training investments. In addition, e-services, digitalisation of higher education and opportunities for flexible learning will be developed. The reform of continuous learning will consider the provision of study opportunities and funding of education as well as income during studies, for example.

The outline of the reform was finalised at the end of 2020, and the reform is currently being implemented.

c. Right to Learn programme¹²

The Right to Learn development programme aimed to ensure the quality of VET and to support its continuous improvement in accordance with the effectiveness objectives and policies of the Quality Strategy for Vocational Education and Training. In addition, the programme aimed to reduce and prevent disparities in learning and learning outcomes due to gender, socio-economic background, place of residence or need for support, thus promoting equality and parity in VET. The development programme was part of the implementation of the Programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government. The development programme was implemented from 2020 to 2022.

The development programme comprised four broad sets of measures:

1. improvement of learning conditions and learning outcomes;
2. strengthening of wellbeing, sense of community and inclusion;
3. support for reorganising procedures and practices and support for managing the reorganisation; and
4. ability to respond to changes in the operating environment.

d. Programme for the sustainable development of vocational education and training and the green transition (2021–2023)¹³

¹² Website of the Right to Learn programme: [Right to Learn programme – Ministry of Education and Culture](#)

¹³ Website of the Programme for the sustainable development of vocational education and training and the green transition: <https://www.oph.fi/fi/koulutus-ja-tutkinnot/kestava-kehitys-ja-vihrea-siirtyma>

The Programme for the sustainable development of vocational education and training and the green transition supported the achievement of the global Agenda 2030 objectives in VET and addressed the challenges posed by climate change and biodiversity loss in the functioning of VET institutions. Development work focused on actions to strengthen a sustainable future in the following themes:

- development of a roadmap for the sustainability of VET and of education providers' sustainable development programmes; and
- strengthening, innovation and piloting an active culture of experimentation that will strengthen a sustainable future.

At the end of 2023, the Ministry of Education and Culture tasked the Finnish National Agency for Education with implementing the VET sustainability roadmap and supporting the sustainability work of education providers 2024–2027.

e. National Roadmap for Research, Development and Innovation (RDI)¹⁴

The national RDI Roadmap forms a set of measures for developing the RDI environment and provides guidelines for sustainable growth and wellbeing and for raising the level of RDI activity and ambition. The roadmap identifies three interrelated strategic development targets: competence, a partnership model and an innovative public sector. VET is part of the RDI package. The Ministry of Education and Culture, in cooperation with actors and companies in its own administrative branch as well others, is developing operating methods for joint RDI services provided by VET, higher education institutions and research institutes to enterprises and public sector organisations. Working methods will be built on existing cooperation and VET know-how, especially in practice-oriented innovations.

In addition to education policies, the policies and development measures concerning employment and industrial policy also affect VET, its development and the employment of those with a vocational qualification. From the perspective of VET, the most important are the WORK2030 programme and the reform of the employment and economic development services.

f. WORK2030 programme¹⁵

¹⁴ More information on the website of the National Roadmap for Research, Development and Innovation: <https://okm.fi/en/rdi-roadmap>

¹⁵ More information on the website of the WORK2030 programme: <https://hyvatyo.ttl.fi/tyo2030/work2030>

The WORK2030 programme develops new ways of working together with workplaces, industries and experts, and encourages experimentation. The reform of operating methods can have an impact on employment, the economy, competitiveness and Finland's working life brand around the world. The WORK2030 programme, which started in 2020, was part of the Programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government, and it is intended to continue beyond the government term, as in previous national programmes for the development of the world of work. WORK2030 also provides information for overcoming the COVID-19 crisis. The programme cooperates with the parliamentary reform of continuous learning.

g. TE services reform 2024¹⁶

In the TE Services 2024 reform, employment and economic development (TE) services will be transferred to the municipalities from the beginning of 2025. In connection with the transfer, a financing model will be created for municipalities, which encourages them to develop their activities in order to improve employment. The transfer is related to the Government Programme's employment target and the increase in municipalities' responsibility in employment services. The transfer of TE services to municipalities will bring services closer to customers. The aim is to create a service structure that promotes the rapid employment of employees in the best possible way and increases the productivity, availability, effectiveness and versatility of employment and economic services.

h. Modernisation of job search support for unemployed jobseekers¹⁷

In addition to the transfer of TE services, the Government is also reforming the support for job search for unemployed jobseekers. In the new customer service model, jobseekers seek employment independently and receive individual support for their job search at an earlier stage and more closely. In order to maintain the right to unemployment benefit, jobseekers must apply for a certain number of job opportunities. Studies show that intensive individual assistance supports rapid employment.

i. Development of lifelong guidance

¹⁶ More information on the TE Services reform 2024 website: <https://tem.fi/en/te-services-reform-2024>

¹⁷ More information on the modernisation of job search support for unemployed jobseekers: <https://tem.fi/en/-/individual-services-to-support-job-search-in-the-nordic-labour-market-service-model>

Finland's Recovery and Resilience Plan includes a package on continuous learning, which is used to finance the development of lifelong guidance between 2022 and 2024. The lifelong learning development package coordinates the development of information, counselling and guidance services in different sectors nationwide. In addition, information on guidance services, projects, practices and tools will be collected and analysed, and collected information and tools will be offered to all guidance actors in support of operations and the implementation of national strategic objectives for lifelong guidance. The development of guidance training will begin with an overall assessment of guidance training, examining the competence requirements of guidance professional in different contexts, different training paths and structures, as well as content. The package resulted in the definition of national competence requirements of guidance and a proposal for a national reference framework for career planning skills.

j. Digital service package for continuous learning

The aim is to develop a digital service package for continuous learning, which would consist of interconnected smart e-services and related information reserves. Every individual (including employed persons) would have easy access to career planning online: to identify their own interests, constraints and skills, to define a future target state and to identify opportunities from the perspective of competence development and employment.

Alongside the transfer of TE services and the preparation of the labour market service model, the Finnish Government is preparing a number of other reforms that will improve the services for jobseekers and promote employment, such as the reform of digital TE services. The positive employment impact will be generated by the combined effect of these reforms.

Achievement of quantified objectives

The Council of the European Union recommends (Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience, 2020/C 417/01) that Member States pursue certain EU-level objectives by 2025.

- The share of employed graduates from VET should be at least 82%.
- Sixty per cent of recent graduates from VET benefit from exposure to work-based learning during their VET. This objective refers to all forms of work-based learning at a workplace, and will also thereby contribute to increased apprenticeship opportunities which can be supported with the Youth Guarantee.

- Eight per cent of learners in VET benefit from learning mobility abroad.

VET in Finland is attractive. Nearly one-half of those who complete primary and lower secondary education apply for VET in the joint application procedure in spring. In addition, people can apply for VET through the rolling application procedure.

VET in Finland includes not only initial VET but also further and continuing VET. More than one-half of students in VET are over the age of 25. In Finland, the adult population actively retrains throughout their working lives. Based on a survey conducted in 2016, 54.1% of adults aged 25–64 had participated in training during the previous 12 months.

In Finland, 72.4% of VET graduates were employed in 2021.

The international mobility of VET in Finland in 2019 relative to those who completed a vocational qualification (= initial vocational qualification, further vocational qualification or specialist vocational qualification) in the same year was 6.2%. The corresponding figure in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic was 0.4%. Looking at those with only an initial vocational qualification, mobility was 9.3% in 2019 but only 0.6% in 2021.

The digitalisation of education and students' digital skills are one of the priorities for developing education in Finland. According to international comparisons, citizens' digital skills in Finland are at a good level. Finns do well, for example in the EU's Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI), according to which 76% of Finns (aged 16–74) have basic digital skills. This is a high percentage by European comparison. However, the need for digital skills is wider than the age groups being monitored.

2. Challenges and general objectives of the plan

In 2021, the Finnish Government published the Education Policy Report, which sets out the target state of education and research towards the 2040s and the necessary changes in resources, structures and steering to respond to and influence the factors of change in the operating environment and to create the conditions for meaningful life for all. The target state and the measures needed to achieve it are based on an analysis of the current state of education, training and research and the key changes in the operating environment. The challenges of VET based on the Education Policy Report are described in more detail below.

Demographic change is rapid and its effects vary from region to region.

In Finland, the award of vocational qualifications and provision of VET requires an authorisation issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Within the framework of their authorisation, VET providers are responsible for providing VET in accordance with the competence and training needs of their area of activity. VET providers also decide on the units they maintain. At the beginning of 2023, there were 136 VET providers in Finland, including 8 municipalities, 33 joint municipal authorities and 94 associations, foundations or limited companies. In addition, the state maintains the Sámi Education Institute, which is subject to special legislation. The majority of the VET providers are small in terms of student-year volume and narrow in terms of education and training provision. There are only seven VET providers of more than 6,000 student years, 11 VET providers of 4,000–6,000 student years, 23 of 2,000–4,000 student years and 21 of 1,000–2,000 student years. The remaining 77 VET providers remain below 1,000 student years in terms of volume. Fifty of the VET providers of less than 1,000 student years accrue fewer than 100 student years. Approximately 80% of students in VET study in educational institutions maintained by municipalities, joint municipal authorities or limited companies owned by municipalities. There are six Swedish-speaking VET providers (Swedish as the language of instruction) and two bilingual VET providers (Finnish and Swedish as the languages of instruction). The languages of instruction of the Sámi Education Institute are Finnish and Saami. The remaining 127 VET providers are Finnish-speaking (Finnish as the language of instruction).

Demographic change will challenge education provision at the upper secondary level, including in VET. Over the next 20 years, the age groups of students aged 16 to 18 in compulsory education will decrease significantly. In many regions, the age groups will be only 60% to 70% of the current level in 2040. The age groups of young people will not grow in any region. Only Uusimaa will have almost the same number of young people as at present. The situation is particularly challenging because, in several regions, the age groups of persons within the scope of compulsory education will increase in the current decade and then decline very rapidly. In addition, there is increasing divergence within the regions, in that the demographic development of the sub-regional centres often differs from other parts of the region. All demographic factors explain the divergence: internal migration is concentrated in cities, immigration is concentrated both quantitatively and proportionally more in large cities, and the higher proportion of young people in large cities and urban areas is reflected in a stronger natural increase in the population. In VET, a significant proportion of students are of working age. Based on the population projection, the number of working-age people will also decrease in all regions except Uusimaa, Southwest Finland and Pirkanmaa.

The educational structure of the population is regionally divergent in Finland. When examined by region, the differences between regions are clearly visible. Uusimaa and other large regions have a lower share of persons with an upper secondary qualification (highest qualification earned) than others. This is explained both by the relatively high share of those without a qualification and by the

fact that the share of tertiary graduates is generally higher in growth centres. In Uusimaa, for example, 18% of persons aged 30 to 34 lack at least an upper secondary qualification, compared to approximately 9% in Kainuu. It is also noteworthy that, in all regions, more persons aged 50 to 54 have a higher education degree than in the 30 to 34 age group.

The problems brought about by demographic change are so extensive and rapid that, in addition to functional reform, they require the development of the structure of the actors providing upper secondary education. The structures for provision of upper secondary education should be reformed to ensure access to education in all parts of the country. Better conditions should be created for education providers for implementing operational and organisational solutions based on regional or sectoral needs, also taking into account the principles of sustainable development. Increased cooperation between upper secondary education, primary and lower secondary education and higher education, a sufficiently strong economy for providing high-quality education and the investments required for functional reforms, as well as sufficient student numbers to organise operations in a cost-effective manner, will be key to the development of the structure of actors. In addition, regional specificities must be taken into account when evaluating operational capacity and financing solutions.

In Finland, upper secondary education is responsible for the achievement of the educational and professional competence objectives of the age group completing the primary and lower secondary level, and also for the development of the skills of the adult population. Adapting the provider structure to demographic change will help to ensure that VET will continue to be accessible to all citizens in different parts of the country.

Changes in the world of work and the shortage of skilled labour will increase the demand for educational services and the need to develop education and training and its contents.

The skills needed in the world of work are changing rapidly, for example due to digitalisation. Employees are required to have digital competence and mastery of new technology. With climate change, green transition and sustainable development will be part of every employee's daily life. At the same time, the content of work is changing in that the importance of so-called basic skills is increasing alongside traditional professional skills. For example, language skills, problem-solving skills and learning to learn are an increasingly important part of professional skills. The boundaries between professional knowledge and ability and general knowledge and ability are becoming blurred. The VET qualification structure needs to be further developed in order to better meet future skills needs.

The availability of skilled labour in Finland is currently at the forefront of OECD countries. The ageing of the population and the decline of the younger age groups highlight new skills needs and emphasise the importance of continuous learning in ensuring the availability of labour. In order to ensure the availability of labour, it is necessary to develop the education system in closer cooperation with the world of work as a channel for employment and upgrading of skills.

The transformation of the world of work requires employees to have strong basic skills and the ability to upskill throughout their career. Competence strengthens the competitiveness of companies and enables the reform of production and service processes. Education and training are required to offer customisable and flexible opportunities for updating and upgrading skills, regardless of age. In Finland, around one-half of those applying for VET are at least 25 years old at start of studies.

The internationalisation of companies and international markets also require new kinds of expertise. The new competence needs in society and the world of work will often emerge on the interfaces between different fields. In addition, they may require combining knowledge from several different forms or levels of education into an entity serving the student or the world of work. Currently, education and training provision is partly too dependent on the qualification structure specific to the form or level of education.

Educational equality is not always a reality, and divergence has increased.

In Finland, learning and training during working careers are not fully realised. Regional, socio-economic and gender disparities and the intergenerational effects of parental education have all become more noticeable in learning and educational achievement. Finland has significant gender segregation in education and work. Immigrants and persons from an immigrant background, with disabilities or functional limitations as well as other vulnerable groups also lag behind other population groups in terms of education and skills.

In the future, more than half of the jobs that become available and up to 80% of newly created jobs will require tertiary level skills. However, transition to further studies is selective in Finland. Around one-quarter of students admitted to tertiary education immediately after completing an upper secondary qualification have an initial vocational qualification as their educational background, as opposed to less than one per cent of those admitted to universities. The selection for tertiary education begins, in practice, at the primary and lower secondary level when the pupil makes a decision on whether to study for the matriculation examination or a vocational qualification at the upper secondary level. The socio-economic background of the young person has a major impact on the choice. There are significant regional differences in the choices made regarding further education, and there are also differences within

municipalities. The choices are influenced by the perceptions of VET and general upper secondary education, the stereotypes of different sectors and occupations, and the education and training provision and actual opportunities for progress after upper secondary education.

Increasing educational equality was a key objective in the Programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government. An extensive Right to Learn programme was launched to improve the quality and parity of VET. In addition, the reform continuous learning that transcends government terms promotes the participation of under-represented groups in education and training and removes barriers to participation in education and training.

Secondary education is also being developed to facilitate a more flexible combination of vocational preparatory content and general educational content during the course of upper secondary education. For example, strengthening the general educational content in VET contributes to the creation of effective capacities for further education. Transitions from upper secondary to tertiary education can also be rebalanced. This requires that the student admission to higher education institutions takes into account the different roles of VET and general upper secondary education.

Not all young people are yet completing at least an upper secondary qualification.

Slightly over 99% of those who completed primary and lower secondary education received a right to study in a general upper secondary school, VET or transitional phase education in 2021. Although almost the entire age group is admitted to upper secondary education, about 15% of each age group enter the labour market without an upper secondary qualification. The most common reasons for dropping out of studies are the student's lack of study abilities, challenging life situation, lack of attachment to the educational institution's community and inadequate instruction, guidance and support.

Adequate instruction, guidance and support based on the student's own needs are prerequisites for achieving the educational goals of the age group. Increasing the personalisation of studies has been aimed at ensuring that studies are based on the student's own starting points and goals. However, not all education providers have managed to carry out personalisation and students' studies in a well-balanced and supported way. For example, self-directed learning has created problems for some students, and some need more community support and learning together.

Efforts have been made to increase student support and reduce dropouts. The Right to Learn development programme developed the quality of student guidance, strengthened wellbeing and participation, and improved the personalisation of studies. The extension of compulsory education to upper secondary education implemented in 2021 has also improved students' access and attachment to upper secondary education. The expansion of compulsory education is expected to improve the completion rates of education.

In addition, instruction and guidance have introduced, for example, teaching tools enabled by new technologies, and their appropriate pedagogical use has reformed the ways of learning and guidance.

The information on which decision-making is based is partly lacking.

Improving the quality of education services, achieving equality, informed decision-making and anticipation require a broad and reliable knowledge base. There are still gaps in the development of the knowledge base as well as the monitoring systems and systematic data collection required by it in Finland. Monitoring systems and data collection need to be developed, in particular to ensure and further improve the effectiveness of education and training.

The potential of digitalisation is being insufficiently exploited.

Digitalisation changes, for example, the content, operating methods and skills needs of work. Participation in society and the world of work requires more background knowledge and competence in the digital world than just the ability to use the tools. Although it is widely believed in Finland that utilising technology and digitalisation increases productivity and growth, only some work communities are satisfied with how the digital transformation has taken place in their own organisation. While digital platforms promoting learning have already reformed the delivery of upper secondary education, their potential for improving the quality and accessibility of education are still underused. By making more extensive and pedagogically appropriate use of digitalisation, asynchronous teaching and studying can be made possible, and more personalised support for learning can be provided. Rather than replacing them, digital learning environments and solutions are to support and complement the current ways of learning and studying.

Among other things, digital development has been slowed down by the lack of sufficient expertise (management and staff) and resources for the promotion of digitalisation in organisations. In the case of digitalisation, more research is also needed to develop and

select more effective solutions, for example in the field of pedagogy. Solutions for the digitalisation of teaching and learning environments should be based on both researched knowledge and best practices generated through practical experience and experimentation.

In addition to the challenges highlighted in the Education Policy Report, it is important to take into account crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine in the development of education. As a result of these crises, the world has become more unpredictable, underlining the ability of education providers, the education system and society as a whole to adapt and manage crises.

The development measures described in the original version of the National Implementation Plan (30 May 2022) were based on the Programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government. One of its key measures was an upper secondary education development project¹⁸. The project to enhance cooperation in upper secondary education and the provider structure was implemented from 22 November 2021 to 26 June 2022. The project focused on the following measures:

- a more flexible combination of education and training content in order to meet the skills needed by the world of work and society and to develop the learner's skills appropriately and achieve objectives (see Section 3.1);
- increase of operational cooperation between VET, general upper secondary education and higher education institutions, and providing general upper secondary education and VET such as to facilitate the completion of cross-institutional studies (see Section 3.1);
- reform of the working practices and processes of VET and general upper secondary education, with an emphasis on the quality of education and training (see Section 3.2);
- development of operating methods for education provision in such a way that they support the relevance of education for the world of work, transition to further studies, quality and accessibility, and promote parity, equality and the wellbeing of students (see Sections 3.2 and 3.3); and
- guidelines for the development of the education provider structure to meet the challenges of demographic change and the potential of digitalisation (see Sections 3.2 and 3.4).

¹⁸ Website of the project to enhance cooperation in upper secondary education (in Finnish): <https://okm.fi/toisenasteenkoulutus>

Main objectives

Updated **1.2.2024** to reflect key measures from 16 June 2023.

The key objective is to improve the impact and overall efficiency of VET. In practice, the objective is pursued by ensuring that each student's professional and educational capabilities as well as world-of-work skills are such that, after completing their studies, they can enter the world of work or further studies. The aim is to reduce drop-outs from education and to ensure that every student has the skills, motivation and experience to find their own field of study. At the same time, the aim is to increase cooperation between VET and businesses. Vocational education and training needs to correspond better with the skills needed in the world of work.

The objectives indicated in the National Implementation Plan of 30 May 2022 were abandoned on 15 June 2023. At the time, the main objective of the upper secondary education development project was to ensure the accessibility and quality of upper secondary education in different parts of Finland and to meet the needs of compulsory education and continuous learning as well as the skills needed by the world of work and society.

Project funding and timeline

The measures of the upper secondary education development project are mainly financed by national funding. EU funding (Structural Funds, RRF) may also be used for some individual measures or pilot projects.

3. Detailed description of main measures and/or their packages
3.1 Detailed description of main measures and/or their packages
Title
Developing VET content (title updated 1.2.2024) previous title: Developing upper secondary education content
Rationale/background, challenges addressed
<p>In Finland, efforts have been made in VET to increase the personalisation of education and opportunities for individual choices. Legislation on VET and national qualification requirements already make it possible to combine learning acquired in different qualifications and forms or levels of education. However, education providers are not obliged to provide all qualification units that have been specified as optional. In addition, education providers find it laborious to offer their students studies from other education providers. Cooperation with other education providers requires agreements, invoicing, coordination of different term systems and curricula, as well as continuous cooperation in study guidance and monitoring of the progress of studies. Within a qualification, options are sometimes narrowed down, for example, by the fact that ensuring basic professional skills for one reason or another requires a lot of competencies that are defined as compulsory.</p> <p>Several objectives have been set for vocational qualifications. In addition to ensuring the necessary skills for the world of work, qualifications must also contribute to the development of the common skills required in all fields and the capacity for further education. The aim is that by 2030 at least half of young adults will complete a higher education degree, and more often than at present, those with a vocational qualification will also continue their studies at tertiary level. In order to achieve this objective, it is necessary to improve the opportunities of persons with a vocational qualification to apply for and study in higher education institutions, for example by enhancing their general educational studies (basic skills, critical thinking and learning to learn), especially in initial vocational qualifications.</p> <p>The challenge of VET is seen in particular in the boundaries that need to be lowered between the different types, levels and fields of education.</p> <p>In Finland, a vocational qualification already grants eligibility for further studies in universities and universities of applied sciences. However, the capacity of VET students for further studies should be improved in order to enhance their ability to succeed in higher education and also to be able to continue their studies in universities more often than at present. - In addition, the aim is to improve</p>

the opportunities for students to complete the matriculation examination and an initial vocational qualification in parallel (parallel studies to complete two or more qualifications). Achieving this objective requires, among other things, the development of the funding system. General upper secondary education and VET will be developed as their own forms of education, which have their own functions.

The world of work and individuals need skills beyond the levels and fields of education, as new skills needs are often created at the interfaces of different fields. It is important to be able to incorporate more qualification units into vocational qualifications, including units of other vocational qualifications or higher education studies. The possibility for students to incorporate higher education studies into their vocational qualification increases the capacity for further studies of those with a vocational qualification and offers the opportunity to build flexible paths from VET to higher education. In addition, it improves the professional skills of the student.

Employment or remaining in the labour market does not always require the completion of a full qualification, and even a fairly small competence module may be sufficient to meet the perceived competence need. Vocational qualifications consist of extensive qualification units based on work packages. It is already possible to complete individual qualification units. However, it has been observed that the education system and qualification structure need competence modules that are smaller than the current qualification units. By completing competence modules that are smaller than a qualification unit, individuals can gradually accumulate competencies according to their personal resources and abilities, as well as according to their current life situation and need.

Specific objectives of the measure/package and their relation to the general objectives of the plan

Updated **1.2.2024**. Since 16 June 2023, the development of VET content aims at the following:

- the VET provision corresponds better with the needs of the world of work and businesses;
- it is ensured that students have a personal plan for competence development as required by law;
- more English-language teaching content is added
- sufficient studies in the national languages (Finnish/Swedish) are ensured so that immigrant students also meet the
- the teaching of financial skills and entrepreneurship education is increased; and
- physical education and health education are returned to qualification requirements as subjects.

The objectives of the in the National Implementation Plan of 30 May 2022 lapsed on 15 June 2023. The previously stated objectives were as follows:

- enable more flexible and comprehensive cross-institutional studies in VET, general upper secondary education and higher education;
- improve the capacity for further education in VET as well as in general upper secondary education;
- meet the changed skills needs of the world of work;
- increase the legal protection and equality of students in parallel studies and in completing two qualifications (initial vocational qualification and matriculation examination) in parallel;
- provide a clearer legal framework for the existing form of training; and
- enhance the efficiency of the education system by reducing inappropriate overlapping or sequential training.

Description of main actions and activities comprising the measure/package, including implementation milestones and indicative timeline

Main actions

Updated **1.2.2024** to reflect key measures from 16 June 2023.

The **Ministry of Education and Culture** is developing language training in VET so that immigrants are obliged to continue their language training until the language proficiency requirements of the qualification being completed are met.

The **Finnish National Agency for Education** is responsible for the preparation of the regulations on qualification requirements and supports the implementation of the regulations with information guidance. Regarding the basic process of vocational qualifications, the Finnish National Agency for Education handles the following:

- adoption, as part of its quality management, a method of monitoring that the national qualification requirements are up to date, analysing and utilising the collected information when deciding on the reform of the requirements; increasing cooperation with the

world of work by monitoring that the national qualification requirements for VET are up to date, preparing the requirements and implementing them; promotion of foresight work carried out in cooperation with the world of work to identify future skills needs;

- development of operating methods that improve the response speed to meet the changing skills needs of the world of work;
- development of ways to increase flexibility and choice in VET qualification requirements to complete qualifications or just qualification modules;
- investigation of the adequacy and timeliness of business and entrepreneurship competence and the competence required for the digital and green transitions in different sectors; preparation of an action plan for updating these competencies, implements the planned measures and initiates implementation support; and
- promotion of mobility and physical activity skills in VET in different fields of education and training.

As a development agency, the Finnish National Agency for Education also handles the following:

- development, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Culture, of training paths for ICT and VET experts, as well as the development of training leading to a qualification in the ICT sector to better meet the labour needs of the sector;
- support of the increase in the provision of English-language educational content in VET, while supporting opportunities to study the languages of Finland; promotion of ways to better integrate language teaching into the labour market and into preparatory training for further studies; and
- provision of information guidance to VET providers on the personalisation process, as well as promotion of, through information guidance, the utilisation of the flexibility of qualifications, highlighting the possibilities of completing qualification modules instead of full qualifications, the identification of previously acquired learning and increasing the support for learning, in particular.

Updated **1.2.2024**. The objectives indicated in the National Implementation Plan of 30 May 2022 expired on 15 June 2023. They were as follows.

- **The expansion of initial vocational qualifications to more than 180 competence points will be enabled** when they include more general upper secondary education studies, higher education studies and/or vocational qualification units than at present.
- **Provisions on combining the studies of an initial vocational qualification and general upper secondary education will be clarified**, for example, from the perspective of applying for education, right to study, recognition of prior learning and funding.

- **Further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications will be developed in a separate broad-based working group in accordance with the Education Policy Report.** The working group will submit its proposals on how to increase the opportunities for the individual to complete small competence modules and gradually accumulate competence. In addition, the working group will propose ways of developing the content of qualifications in such a way as to increase skills related to the digital and green transitions.

Timeline

Updated **1.2.2024**.

The Finnish National Agency for Education’s process of defining regulations on qualification requirements and development of the qualification requirements will be implemented between 2024 and 2027, along with information guidance measures. Any legislative changes related to the achievement of the language requirements will be prepared in 2024.

The timetable presented in the implementation plan of 30 May 2022 was not fully implemented. The planned legislative proposals did not progress in Parliament in the autumn of 2022, and they lapsed with the change of government.

The working group appointed to prepare further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications was launched in autumn 2022 and submitted its development proposals at the end of its term of office on 30 September 2023. The implementation of the development proposals takes place within the framework of the Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo’s Government.

EU policy priorities addressed

Council Recommendation on VET	Osnabrück Declaration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A. VET is agile in adapting to labour market challenges. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> B. Flexibility and progression opportunities are at the core of VET. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C. VET is a driver for innovation and growth and prepares for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> D. VET is an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training/skills. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> E. VET promotes equality of opportunities. <input type="checkbox"/> F. VET is underpinned by a culture of quality assurance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1. Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2. Establishing a new lifelong learning culture – relevance of CVET and digitalisation. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3. Sustainability – a green link in VET. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4. European Education and Training Area and international VET.

VET subsystem (IVET, CVET, or both)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> initial VET (IVET) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> continuing VET (CVET)	
Scope (national, regional, local)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> national <input type="checkbox"/> regional <input type="checkbox"/> local	
Beneficiaries/target groups	
<input type="checkbox"/> (List to be provided) students and the world of work	
Responsible ministries/bodies	
Ministry of Education and Culture	
Source of funding (National, EU funds, sectoral)	
National funding	
List all sources of funding and estimated amounts, if available.	

3.2 Detailed description of main measures and/or their packages
Title
Utilisation of digitalisation and development of operating methods
Rationale/background, challenges addressed

As digitalisation changes society and the world of work, the demands on education and its providers are also changing. Digitalisation requires the development and changing of operating methods and the appropriate use of new technologies. It also involves the development of new innovations. The ongoing change is being reflected in different sectors and occupations at varying rates and to varying degrees.

Education providers are required to have the ability to anticipate and develop the education they provide in terms of teaching facilities, methods, equipment and content. Change challenges us to think in new ways.

The key to developing education is how well we seize the opportunities of digitalisation and respond to the challenges it brings. In the future, for example, education providers can offer joint learning environments, learning solutions, or even teaching and guidance.

Utilisation of digitalisation and the development of operating methods in VET is also linked to the **digitalisation programme for continuous learning**¹⁹ included in Finland's Recovery and Resilience Plan. The digitalisation programme for continuous learning consists of two mutually supportive components: 1) a digital service package for continuous learning covering the entire education system and transcending administrative boundaries, and 2) a programme to strengthen digitalisation and flexible learning in higher education. The aim of item 1) is to build a national digital service for continuous learning that is used throughout the life of individuals in Finland to support smooth transitions between education and the world of work. Most of the new services and operating methods are intended to be in use by the end of 2025.

Specific objectives of the measure/package and their relation to the general objectives of the plan

Updated 1.2.2024

Aims of the use of digitalisation and development of operating methods:

- development of the digital environment for education, improve the interoperability of systems and support joint procurement and more efficient ways of developing and maintaining digital solutions;

¹⁹ Website of the continuous learning digitalisation programme (in Finnish): <https://okm.fi/digipalvelut-ja-ohjelma>

- development of the digital capability of education providers, improve the capability and competence of educational institutes' management to manage digitalisation and share knowledge and capability more effectively between different actors;
- creation of more efficient and innovative service/educational paths for customers;
- creation of new pedagogical approaches and innovations to support the use of digital solutions; and
- creation of new kinds of learning materials and models for their maintenance.

Description of main actions and activities comprising the measure/package, including implementation milestones and indicative timeline

Measures

1. **The competence of education providers in managing digitalisation and developing digital capability will be supported, and interoperability will be promoted, for example with strategic funding. New cooperation and operating models will be developed between different operators.**
2. **Education providers will be supported in developing new kinds of services, teaching materials and pedagogical approaches.**
3. **The competence of educational staff will be supported in adopting digital solutions and new pedagogical approaches. The use of the Library of Open Educational Resources (OER) is encouraged, for example in the sharing and adoption of teaching materials and pedagogical approaches.**
4. **Developing the digital service package for continuous learning (JOD) creates new types of application services for different customers.**

Timeline

The development policies will be prepared in spring and early summer 2022. The development work is already under way and it will continue and be specified in accordance with the development policies for the next government term.

EU policy priorities addressed

Council Recommendation on VET	Osnabrück Declaration
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A. VET is agile in adapting to labour market challenges. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> B. Flexibility and progression opportunities are at the core of VET. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C. VET is a driver for innovation and growth and prepares for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> D. VET is an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training/skills. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> E. VET promotes equality of opportunities. <input type="checkbox"/> F. VET is underpinned by a culture of quality assurance.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1. Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2. Establishing a new lifelong learning culture – relevance of CVET and digitalisation. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3. Sustainability – a green link in VET. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4. European Education and Training Area and international VET.
VET subsystem (IVET, CVET, or both)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> initial VET (IVET) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> continuing VET (CVET)	
Scope (national, regional, local)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> national <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> regional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> local	
Beneficiaries/target groups	
<input type="checkbox"/> (List to be provided) students, education providers at different levels of education, world of work	
Responsible ministries/bodies	
Ministry of Education and Culture	
Source of funding (National, EU funds, sectoral)	
National funding, EU funding	
List all sources of funding and estimated amounts, if available.	

3.3 Detailed description of main measures and/or their packages

Title

Developing guidance of education

Rationale/background, challenges addressed

Operational guidance

The operational guidance of upper secondary education activities does not currently form a whole, and instead activities are guided by different procedures in general upper secondary education as opposed to vocational education and training. The operational guidance of VET is more detailed than that of general upper secondary education, but still quite permissive, and it allows quite extensive freedom of action for the education providers. Due to the level of detail in the guidance, authorisations to provide education often need to be renewed. However, the authorisation procedure is not sufficiently responsive to changes in labour needs.

One of the objectives of the VET legislation in force is to enable decision-making on education and training to take place where the need arises. The competence needs of a region's population and the training needs of employers are best known locally. However, the authorisation procedure and other steering procedures have not fully supported this objective. The authorisation renewal process and the various opinions take up so much time that it limits the education providers' ability to respond quickly to changing needs.

Reforming operational guidance to make it more strategic and to give more decision-making power to education providers would enable faster local responses and streamline processes. Age group development, access to education, expansion of compulsory education and other changes in the operating environment challenge previous operating models

Financial guidance

In Finland, VET funding is budget-based. The budgetary appropriation for VET is allocated to education providers on the basis of the relative share of performance, and education providers decide on the direction of their education provision to different sectors and target groups. For example, the Government or Parliament cannot decide or estimate the amount of funding to allocate to compulsory education or continuous learning.

The allocation of funding is based on complex weighting factors, which have been chosen to take account of the diverse range of customers of VET. The ministry allocates core funding to education providers on the basis of their applications. Performance and effectiveness-based funding is based directly on realised performance. More than 90% of the funding is allocated to education providers through an actual performance decision each year. In addition, several decisions on additional performance and a strategic funding decision are usually made during the year. The funding process is labour-intensive and the steering effect achieved is uncertain. The funding system should be simplified and made more predictable for education providers.

The need for continuous learning will only increase in VET. The current funding system does not take sufficient account of continuous learning. From the perspective of continuous learning, the funding system should react more quickly to changes, take into account modules smaller than qualification units and the need for short-term training, and emphasise overall efficiency.

In addition, funding should encourage the education and training of under-represented groups and enable support measures to be taken during training.

Added 1.2.2024.

Education providers must have greater incentives to provide high-quality education and training that leads to better employment than at present. Related to this are incentives to ensure adequate instruction and guidance for people of compulsory school age, to provide education shorter than a qualification for adults, and to reorient education provision to better meet the needs of the world of work, including the needs of industry and the health and social services sector.

Upper secondary education is developed based on a dual education system. General upper secondary education and VET have different roles. Although educational boundaries are to be dismantled in some respects, the special features of each will not be given up.

Collaboration is carried out in ways deemed appropriate. In addition, the specificities of Swedish-language VET are taken into account. The position of upper secondary sports schools will also be improved.

Specific objectives of the measure/package and their relation to the general objectives of the plan

Updated 1.2.2024

On the basis of the Programme of Petteri Orpo's Government, the Ministry of Education and Culture is reforming the steering and funding model of VET activities. This is due to the need to further develop cooperation between VET and businesses, as well as the ability of VET to better respond to the needs of the world of work. The aim of the development of operational guidance is to improve the quality and effectiveness of education and training so that studying leads to better employment than at present.

Description of main actions and activities comprising the measure/package, including implementation milestones and indicative timeline

Measures

Updated 1.2.2024

Regulatory changes are a key measure for the development of operational guidance and the financing model. The legislative amendments will create incentives for VET providers to improve the quality and effectiveness of education and training as follows:

- better targeting of training provision according to the needs of the world of work;
- qualifications completed by adults are targeted towards education and training that improves their educational attainment or position on the labour market, as well as towards completing competence modules smaller than qualifications;
- better integration of language teaching into employment-oriented training or into preparatory training for further studies, including by laying down in law an obligation to continue providing language training if the language requirement for education is not met in the training programme;
- improvement of the accessibility of education by examining the education and training provision; and

- enabling the implementation of more extensive commissioned education

The regulatory changes will achieve

- stronger strategic aspect of guidance,
- consideration of the needs of different customer groups, and
- reduction in the unnecessary administrative workload for education providers and educational administration.

The measures originally announced in the National Implementation Plan of 30 May 2022 were based on the Programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government. They were as follows.

The necessary information reserves will be defined. Existing information reserves will be utilised, supplementing them where necessary, for example with data available through indicators. Functional interfaces and data transfers will be ensured. Training providers must also develop their own monitoring and reporting systems and reporting processes. Any need for legislative changes will be examined.

Common indicators for upper secondary education will be defined. The definition of target and monitoring indicators will be carried out under the leadership of the ministry in cooperation with the providers of general upper secondary education and VET in order to ensure equal, accessible and diverse choices, to meet the needs of the world of work and businesses, etc. Indicators will be produced to be used in the guidance and quality assurance of operations. The ministry will hold periodic discussions with the region's upper secondary education providers. Procedures will be defined for situations where the quality and effectiveness of the education do not meet the objectives set. Regional target and monitoring indicators may also be set on the basis of common indicators. The indicators can be used to assess the performance, quality and effectiveness of the activities of individual providers if they differ substantially from those of other providers.

More use will be made of existing bodies' reports, studies and evaluations, for example in connection with the quality of education.

The role of the working life committees and FINEEC in operational guidance process will be assessed and defined.

Development of the authorisation procedure. The provision of upper secondary education under the authority of the Finnish National Agency for Education will continue to require a separate authorisation to provide vocational education training or general upper secondary education. A provider may have both authorisations, and administrator neutrality will be maintained. The regulation of the provision of VET through authorisations to provide VET will be simplified and developed in a more strategic way, so that actions to achieve the set objectives will be guided more by indicators. Regulatory simplification will provide more flexibility and opportunities to respond more quickly to changing needs, including at local level.

Development projects will be started and models that support operational guidance tested. Appropriate models to support operational guidance will be sought and mapped out with the education providers of the regions for testing in a development project. The models to be tested in the development project will be further formulated under the ministry's leadership. Operational guidance models will test the practicality of indicators, develop them further and produce new indicators for model development. Models may also require changes in legislation and authorisations to provide education. The models supporting operational guidance will be supported by separate funding in the development project.

The creation of funding criteria that support the objectives of extended compulsory education for persons within the scope of compulsory education (those entitled to free education) in VET, so that they are sufficiently similar to general upper secondary education and support the education of the entire age group; The conditions for successful education and training of those with lower learning abilities will be ensured. At the same time, the criteria for funding will be simplified. The quantitative regulation of persons within the scope of compulsory education in authorisations to provide VET will be abolished, so that funding is granted to the education provider on the basis of the actual number of students in compulsory education, independently of the number of student years in the authorisation to provide VET. Performance elements will be maintained in funding. Performance-based funding will use several years of performance.

The funding of students in compulsory education and continuous learning will be appropriately differentiated in VET, either in the state budget as its own items or as separate funding entities within the model.

Appropriate funding criteria will be created for the objectives of continuous learning, taking into account the funding of entities that are smaller than a qualification unit, as well as the motivation and related costs of groups that are under-represented in education and training.

The funding of continuous learning will be simplified. The possibilities for quantitative deregulation, including in the area of continuous learning, and the possibilities for increasing the number of students under the current financial framework will be assessed.

Timeline

Updated **1.2.2024**

The regulatory changes required for the reform of the operational guidance and the financing model will be prepared in 2024.

The actions described in the National Implementation Plan of 30 May 2022 were partially completed by 15 June 2023. The completed measures are related to the objectives aimed at increasing operational cooperation between VET, general upper secondary education and higher education institutes, as well as the organisation of general upper secondary education and VET such as to facilitate the completion of cross-institutional studies. Development was considered necessary at the time, as the steering of the activities of upper secondary education was not considered to form a coherent whole. The operational guidance of VET is more detailed than that of general upper secondary education, but still quite permissive, and it allows quite extensive freedom of action for the education providers. Due to the level of detail in the guidance, authorisations to provide education often need to be renewed. However, the authorisation procedure is not sufficiently responsive to changes in labour needs. The differentiation of the funding model into separate funding models for compulsory education and continuous learning did not progress as planned in the NIP of 30 May 2022; the government proposal lapsed in autumn 2022.

EU policy priorities addressed

Council Recommendation on VET	Osnabrück Declaration
<input type="checkbox"/> A. VET is agile in adapting to labour market challenges. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> B. Flexibility and progression opportunities are at the core of VET.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1. Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET.

<input type="checkbox"/> C. VET is a driver for innovation and growth and prepares for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand. <input type="checkbox"/> D. VET is an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training/skills. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> E. VET promotes equality of opportunities. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> F. VET is underpinned by a culture of quality assurance.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2. Establishing a new lifelong learning culture – relevance of CVET and digitalisation. <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Sustainability – a green link in VET. <input type="checkbox"/> 4. European Education and Training Area and international VET.
VET subsystem (IVET, CVET, or both)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> initial VET (IVET) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> continuing VET (CVET)	
Scope (national, regional, local)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> national <input type="checkbox"/> regional <input type="checkbox"/> local	
Beneficiaries/target groups	
<input type="checkbox"/> (List to be provided) Ministry of Education and Culture, Finnish National Agency for Education, education providers, students, world of work	
Responsible ministries/bodies	
Ministry of Education and Culture	
Source of funding (National, EU funds, sectoral)	
National funding	

3.4 Detailed description of main measures and/or their packages
Title
Development of education provision methods, operating models and cooperation in education (measures completed in spring 2023)
Rationale/background, challenges addressed
There will be major demographic changes in Finland, and the world of work will change at a rapid pace, as described in more detail in Section 2 of this form. The changes will present challenges to the reform of education provision methods, operating models and cooperation in upper secondary education so that the education providers remain viable and are able to provide high-quality education services in a changing operating environment. The current policies and structures are no longer able to meet future challenges. The operator structure in upper secondary education must be reformed in accordance with the regions' own needs and objectives. At the same time, operating models for education provision must be developed and cooperation between different levels and types of education must be intensified. Currently, there are recognised obstacles to cooperation between education providers and to the merging of education providers due to, for example, funding, different term systems or different collective agreements of staff.
Specific objectives of the measure/package and their relation to the general objectives of the plan
The aim of developing education provision methods, operating models and cooperation in education is as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure an adequately level playing field for education provision in the whole of Finland; • ensure the accessibility and quality of upper secondary education nationwide in both national languages; • meet the needs of compulsory education and continuous learning, and • meet the changing skills needs of the world of work and society.
Description of main actions and activities comprising the measure/package, including implementation milestones and indicative timeline
Measures A comprehensive and long-term programme for the reform of education provision, operating models and cooperation in upper secondary education will be launched. While the programme will have national objectives, special regional features will be addressed in its implementation. The decisions to be implemented will be made locally and taking into account local conditions. Decisions may vary from region to region and may be implemented at different speeds. In connection with the reform, the ways in which the

challenging cost structure in regions with a declining population should be taken into account in the criteria for determining central government transfers to local government for basic public services will be assessed.

Uniform national guidelines will be prepared for the development of education provision methods, operating models and cooperation in upper secondary education. The guidelines will define the key actions needed to achieve the objectives as well as their timelines and resources. At minimum, account must be taken of the divergence and pace of demographic change, the level of education of the population in the region, the national languages and the economic structure of the region. The development of operating models will focus on increasing the relevance of education to the world of work, promoting the transition to further studies and improving student equality, parity and wellbeing.

Timeline

The measures were completed in the spring of 2023.

EU policy priorities addressed

Council Recommendation on VET

- A. VET is agile in adapting to labour market challenges.
- B. Flexibility and progression opportunities are at the core of VET.
- C. VET is a driver for innovation and growth and prepares for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand.
- D. VET is an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training/skills.
- E. VET promotes equality of opportunities.
- F. VET is underpinned by a culture of quality assurance.

Osnabrück Declaration

- 1. Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET.
- 2. Establishing a new lifelong learning culture – relevance of CVET and digitalisation.
- 3. Sustainability – a green link in VET.
- 4. European Education and Training Area and international VET.

VET subsystem (IVET, CVET, or both)

- initial VET (IVET)
- continuing VET (CVET)

Scope (national, regional, local)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> national <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> regional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> local
Beneficiaries/target groups
<input type="checkbox"/> (List to be provided) education providers, students and the world of work
Responsible ministries/bodies
Ministry of Education and Culture
Source of funding (National, EU funds, sectoral)
National funding

3.5 Detailed description of main measures and/or their packages
Title
Development of support for learning (measures launched in autumn 2023)
Rationale/background, challenges addressed
<p>In VET, a students may receive special-needs support if, due to learning difficulties, disability, illness or other reasons, they or if she or he needs long-term or regular special-needs support for learning and studying in order to achieve the vocational competence requirements or learning objectives in accordance with the national qualification requirements. The sStudents has he has the right to receive intensive special-needs support if she or he has severe learning difficulties or a severe disability or illness, due to which she or he needs individual, comprehensive and diverse special-needs support. In VET, about 11% of all students and about 15% of students completing vocational upper secondary qualifications receive special-needs support. Of the students who received special-needs support, 87% attended general vocational schools and 11% specialised vocational schools.</p>

FINEEC assesses the implementation of special-needs support in VET²⁰. According to FINEEC's assessment, the support is implemented well on average. However, FINEEC made the following recommendations related to the development of the system of special-needs support:

- The forms of support and the implementation of support must be developed to be more suitable for different forms of qualifications, parts of qualifications and learning environments.
- The relationship between special-needs support and other forms of support of learning and guidance should be clarified.
- The roles of those working in different positions should therefore be clarified and the cooperation between special education teachers, teachers of different qualification modules and other guidance staff should be intensified.
- The competences of staff in special-needs support must be improved.

Approximately 13.3% of VET students completing initial vocational qualifications dropped out in 2020. According to the Finnish National Agency for Education, students subject to compulsory education have become slightly more attached to school since the compulsory education reform, with fewer dropouts.

Specific objectives of the measure/package and their relation to the general objectives of the plan

The Ministry of Education and Culture has appointed a working group to prepare reforms in accordance with the Government Programme. The working group is to submit proposals on how to achieve the following in upper secondary education (general upper secondary education and VET):

- consolidation of support for learning to take into account the development of student guidance;
- faster detection of support needs and better organisation of different forms of support;
- securing the necessary support and guidance for learning, as well as multi-professional support for students; and
- ensuring comprehensive pedagogical support measures, guidance and the comprehensive wellbeing of students.

²⁰ More information on the assessment of special-needs support carried out by FINEEC <https://www.karvi.fi/en/evaluations/vocational-education/thematic-and-system-evaluations/provision-special-support-vocational-education-and-training>

Description of main actions and activities comprising the measure/package, including implementation milestones and indicative timeline	
<p>Main actions</p> <p>A government proposal on support for learning will be prepared, which will secure the necessary support for each student during general upper secondary education and VET. Forms of support for learning that justify a student’s need for support will be laid down in law.</p> <p>Timeline</p> <p>The legislative amendments required for support for learning will be prepared in 2024.</p>	
EU policy priorities addressed	
Council Recommendation on VET	Osnabrück Declaration
<input type="checkbox"/> A. VET is agile in adapting to labour market challenges. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> B. Flexibility and progression opportunities are at the core of VET. <input type="checkbox"/> C. VET is a driver for innovation and growth and prepares for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand. <input type="checkbox"/> D. VET is an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training/skills. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> E. VET promotes equality of opportunities. <input type="checkbox"/> F. VET is underpinned by a culture of quality assurance.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1. Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET. <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Establishing a new lifelong learning culture – relevance of CVET and digitalisation. <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Sustainability – a green link in VET. <input type="checkbox"/> 4. European Education and Training Area and international VET.

VET subsystem (IVET, CVET, or both)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> initial VET (IVET) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> continuing VET (CVET)
Scope (national, regional, local)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> national <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> regional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> local
Beneficiaries/target groups
<input type="checkbox"/> (List to be provided) students, teaching staff
Responsible ministries/bodies
Ministry of Education and Culture
Source of funding (National, EU funds, sectoral)
National

4. Governance of the implementation of the plan
Governance
Updated 1.2.2024

In the framework of the Government Programme, the Ministry of Education and Culture has launched two working groups focusing on the following:

1. Preparation of the implementation of the Government Programme entries on VET²¹

- reform of the VET funding system (see Section 3.3);
- reform of the operational guidance of education providers (see Section 3.3);
- better targeting of the provision of study opportunities for the needs of the world of work (see Sections 3.1 and 3.3);
- enabling more extensive commissioned education; the direction of adults' qualifications towards education and training that improves their educational attainment or position on the labour market, as well as towards completing competence modules smaller than qualifications (see Sections 3.1 and 3.3); and
- the obligation to continue the language training of immigrants in order to achieve the necessary language skills requirement (see Sections 3.1 and 3.3).

2. Preparation of the implementation of the policies of the Government Programme on support for learning in general upper secondary education and VET²²

- harmonisation of support for learning in general upper secondary education and VET, taking into account the development of guidance for students (see Section 3.5);
- support for early identification of needs and the organisation of different forms of support (see Section 3.5);
- securing the necessary support and guidance for learning as well as multi-professional support for students in upper secondary education (see Section 3.5); and
- comprehensive support of pedagogical support measures, guidance and student wellbeing (see Section 3.5).

The preparation takes into account the links between VET and other forms and levels of education.

²¹ More information on the working group for the preparation of the implementation of the Government Programme entries on VET (in Finnish) <https://okm.fi/hanke?tunnus=OKM033:00/2023>

²² More information on the working group for the preparation of the implementation of the policies of the Government Programme on support for learning in general upper secondary education and VET (in Finnish) <https://okm.fi/hanke?tunnus=OKM032:00/2023>

Under the Ministry of Education and Culture, the expert agency is the **Finnish National Agency for Education**, which plays a key role nationally in the implementation of education policy and the development of education. The Ministry of Education and Culture uses a **performance agreement** with the Finnish National Agency for Education as a tool for the state's performance management. The performance agreement of the Finnish National Agency for Education for 2024–2027 includes several measures related to the development of VET, which contribute to the implementation of the objectives of the Government Programme. The Finnish National Agency for Education takes measures to ensure for example the following.

- Learning outcomes and the level of education and training will rise in Finland (see Section 3.1).
- Culture and education will underpin economic growth (see Section 3.1).
- Education and training will become better at responding to the needs of the world of work and reduce labour market mismatches (see Sections 3.1 and 3.3).
- The number of young people who are not in employment, education or training will decrease (see Section 3.5).
- Finnish people of all ages will engage in more physical activity (see Section 3.1).

The development of upper secondary education was prepared in the upper secondary education development project set up by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The term of the project was from 22 November 2021 to 23 June 2022. The project had a project group consisting of officials from the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish National Agency for Education, a steering group (including the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Finance, the Finnish National Agency for Education and the Association of Finnish Municipalities) and a broad-based monitoring group. The monitoring group²³ included representatives of VET providers, teachers, students, employers and employees. In addition to the Ministry of Education and Culture, the authorities involved were the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Finance and the Finnish National Agency for Education. Tertiary education providers were also represented in the monitoring group.

On 10 June 2022, the Ministry of Education and Culture organised a discussion session on Finland's National Implementation Plan (NIP) for key VET stakeholders. The NIP has been modified based on the comments presented in the discussion session.

The NIP was updated on **1.2.2024** to correspond to the Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's Government of 16 June 2023.

²³ Documents of the upper secondary education development project: <https://okm.fi/hanke?tunnus=OKM070:00/2021>

Reporting

The Ministry of Education and Culture, in cooperation with the Finnish National Agency for Education, will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the development project both qualitatively and quantitatively. As a result of this monitoring, the necessary clarifications will be made to the statutes and regulations and to the financing.

The Finnish National Agency for Education acts as the national unit of the Cedefop ReferNet network. The Finnish National Agency for Education will report on the implementation of the Finnish national implementation plan (NIP) on the basis of the Recommendation on vocational education and training, the Osnabrück Declaration and the common EU objectives defined in the recommendation. The reporting will draw on information available at national and European Union level. The reporting will be carried out in the context of Cedefop's annual monitoring.

5. Expected effects of the plan

Effects

Updated 1.2.2024

The measures in the Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's Government respond to the competence needs of the world of work and businesses, improve the impact and overall efficiency of education and reduce dropping out of education by improving students' learning skills, motivation and experiences of finding their own field.

The comprehensive project to develop the operating methods and structures of upper secondary education based on the Programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government met the future general educational and vocational skills needs of society and the world of work as well as the needs of continuous learning. In addition, it improved educational equality and parity, as well as the wellbeing and communality of students. The development project builds on the extension of compulsory education up to the age of 18, implemented in 2021, and the ongoing reform of continuous learning.

Technology will be used extensively to support the development of learning and competence, which also helps to ensure the accessibility of education and makes it possible to meet the needs of different learners. The development project will ensure high-quality and attainable upper secondary education for all, despite the expected demographic changes and other significant changes in the operating environment. Education providers will work in closer cooperation with other education providers and the world of work, thus ensuring access to education in all parts of the country, especially in areas of depopulation. Education providers will have better conditions for implementing operational and organisational solutions based on regional or sectoral needs, also taking into account the needs of green transition and sustainable development.

Risks

There is a risk that funding for VET will decrease in the second half of the 2020s. This could be due to a deterioration in public finances, for example due to unforeseen crises or an increase in age-related expenditure while the age groups in education and training decrease. In this case, the funding of education providers would have to be cut, leaving them unable to implement the planned reforms.

Another risk is that VET providers and/or their partners (especially the world of work) may fail to commit to the development measures. Although the national implementation plan includes legislative changes, most of the proposed measures require education providers and their partners to independently change their operations. The education provider's own decision-making authority includes, for example, how it develops cooperation with other education providers, increases the opportunities for students to choose or utilises digitalisation in education. Efforts have been made to reduce the risk by consulting education providers and their partners during the preparation of the development projects, and by involving the representatives of the education providers and other VET stakeholders in the projects' monitoring group. In this way, education providers have had the opportunity to influence the proposals of the projects. The aim is to commit the education providers to the implementation of the development projects now and in the future through information and financial guidance.

As the development measures are scheduled over a long period of time, there is a risk that future governments will focus on other development needs in VET and the development activities described in this plan will not progress. Efforts have been made to reduce this risk by drawing up the Education Policy Report, which is the basis of the upper secondary education development project, in broad cooperation with various stakeholders and by discussing it in Parliament.

