

Mutual Learning Programme Database of National Labour Market Practices

Finland - Voucher for Self-Motivated Studies in Liberal Adult

This database gathers practices in the field of employment submitted by European countries for the purposes of mutual learning. These practices have proven to be successful in the country concerned, according to its national administration. The European Commission does not have a position on the policies or measures mentioned in the database.

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| Source of national practice | Mutual Learning Programme Thematic Event on upskilling unemployed adults 2015 and European Employment Policy Observatory Review Synthesis:Upskilling unemployed adults 2015 |
| Title of the policy or measure (Original language) | Vapaan sivistystyön opintoseteliavustus |
| Title of the policy or measure (English) | Voucher for Self-Motivated Studies in Liberal Adult |
| Country | Finland |
| Name of the responsible body | Ministry of Education and Culture and the National Board of |
| Geographical scope of the responsible body | National |
| Name(s) of other organisations involved (partners/sub-contractors) | The grant is awarded to Liberal Adult Education Institutes, |
| Start year of implementation | 2007 |
| End year of implementation | Ongoing |
| EU policy relevance | The scheme contributes to meeting the policy priorities set by the Europe 2020 strategy, particularly the EU's aim to foster inclusive growth, and is in line with the EU's flagship initiative "An agenda for new skills and new jobs". |
| National labour market context | Finland has one of the highest overall education levels as well as participation rates in adult education in the world (OECD 2012). On the other hand, compared to other Nordic countries, the economic and employment situation in Finland remains challenging. In April 2008 the unemployment rate was 6.2 %; from there it continued to grow peaking at 8.9 % in October 2014 (Eurostat). Longterm unemployment and youth unemployment have been a particular concern. According to Eurostat (2012), 15 % of people aged 25–64 years in Finland have low educational attainment (ISCED of 2 or less) while the average for the EU27 was 25 %. In Finland, this largely represents older generations, who are working without formal qualifications. |
| Policy area | Education and training systems |

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| Specific policy or labour market problem being addressed | Lack of participation of disadvantaged groups in adult education. |
| Aims and objectives of the policy or measure | This scheme aims to contribute to increasing the participation rate in adult education of disadvantaged groups, such as the unemployed and immigrants. It also aims to reduce regional differences in the availability of education. The support is intended to facilitate self-motivated studies not leading to qualifications, often related to language skills or ICT skills. The scheme covers all or part of the participation fee in accordance with the education provider's assessment. Liberal adult education provides not only education for the needs of labour market but also possibilities of development for seniors and pensioners. Therefore a notable part of the vouchers are used also for the needs of this target group. |
| Main activities/actions underpinning the policy or measure | Vouchers for self-motivated studies in Liberal Education are provided by Liberal Adult Education Institutes. The government awards grants to Liberal Adult Institutes and the institutions then offer courses to prioritised groups for no cost or at a reduced cost. Participants can choose from a pre-selected voucher programme or from a range of studies. Further, institutions can also organise tailored courses for certain disadvantaged groups. |
| Geographical scope of policy or measure | National |
| Target groups | Disabled people, Minority ethnic groups, People not in education, employment or training (NEETs), Unemployed, People with learning disabilities, Seniors |
| Outputs and outcomes of the policy or measure | <p>Outputs: 80,000 participants in 2010 and 2011, of which 12% were unemployed and 8% were immigrants.</p> <p>Outcomes: No counterfactual research exists on the effectiveness of the voucher scheme. According to recent qualitative studies, the scheme has appeared effective. On a subjective level, the scheme has provided positive health effects and social and learning-related experiences. Immigrants and the unemployed mentioned, in particular, the effects that the training had on their information search and problem-solving skills. On a policy level, the scheme has evidently increased participation of disadvantaged groups to adult education, especially of immigrants and the unemployed. In addition, it also offered a linkage to further participation in education.</p> <p>The voucher scheme is claimed to have achieved its education political aims. It has contributed to educational equality and encouraged humane and pedagogic values.</p> |

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| Management and implementation arrangements | The National Board of Education grants allowances to liberal adult education providers for an application. The institutions organise education and training for the disadvantaged groups at a lower fee or free-of-charge. The institutions report to the National Board of Education. The amount of the subsidy used for study voucher allowances is established by the Ministry of Education and Culture based on the state budget. |
| Key challenges | A key challenge is how to reach the disadvantaged groups and increase their motivation to engage in education. Further, in some cases there has been a greater demand than supply of study vouchers. In this context, the challenge is to channel the support to those most in need and not just to the most active. Also, the administrative burden has been somewhat heavy on the managing education providers. |
| Key conditions for success | Partnership working: Cooperation with the interest groups and other organisations of the groups themselves plus the employment and social authorities is key to the successful delivery of the scheme, particularly in finding the potential participants and planning of the training. Extra guidance and counselling: Prioritised groups often lack knowledge of the educational system and practices, and the skills of studying. Extra guidance and counselling is provided to these groups to support them whilst they are studying. Good geographical coverage: There is good geographical coverage of the institutions through which the subsidy is allocated. |
| Method of assessment | |
| Type of assessment | Qualitative assessment |
| Duration and frequency of the assessment | |
| Further information on the assessment | |
| Links to the website, background information and assessment material | Pätäri, J. (2015). Research report on the benefits of study vouchers in Finnish liberal adult education [Selvitys vapaan sivistystyön opintosetelikurssien hyödyistä ja vaikutuksista.] Vapaa Sivistystyö ry. (English summary) Saloheimo, L. (2014). The use of study vouchers in Finnish liberal adult education. Years 2010 and 2011. [Vapaan sivistystyön opintoseteliavustuksen käyttö. Vuosina 2010 ja 2011 myönnettyt avustukset.] Reports and studies 2014: 10. Helsinki: FNBE (In Finnish) |
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| Keywords | Study voucher, Disadvantaged groups, Non-formal adult education, Educational equality, Upskilling, Unemployed, Adults, Training, Education |