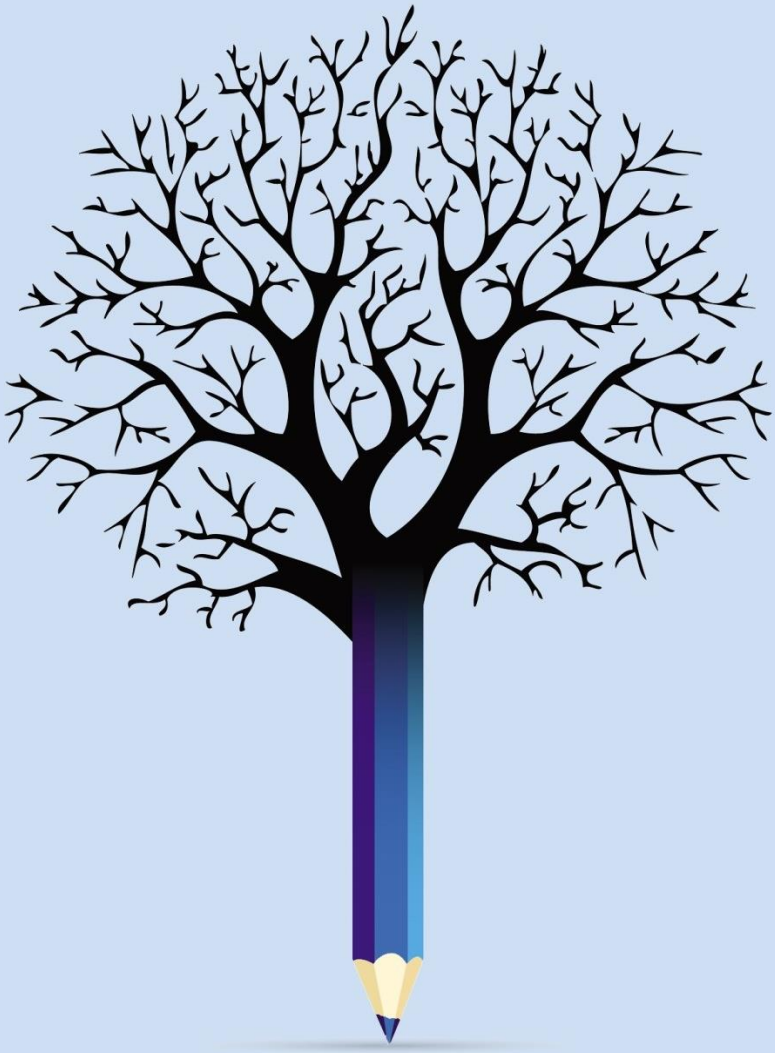
OECD Education Policy Perspectives
No. 14

EDUCATION POLICY OUTLOOK IN
FINLAND



June 2020

EDUCATION POLICY OUTLOOK

This **policy profile on education** in Finland is part of the *Education Policy Outlook* series, which presents comparative analysis of education policies and reforms across OECD countries. Building on the OECD's substantial comparative and sectoral policy knowledge base, the series offers a comparative outlook on education policy. This country policy profile is an update of the first policy profile of Finland (2013) and provides: analysis of the educational context, strengths, challenges and policies; analysis of international trends; and insight into policies and reforms on selected topics. It is an opportunity to take stock of progress and where the education system stands today from the perspective of the OECD through synthetic, evidence-based and comparable analysis.

In addition to country-specific profiles, the series also includes a recurring publication. The first volume, *Education Policy Outlook 2015: Making Reforms Happen*, was released in 2015. The second volume, *Education Policy Outlook 2018: Putting Student Learning at the Centre* was released in 2018. Its complement, *Education Policy Outlook 2019: Working Together to Help Students Achieve their Potential* was released in autumn 2019. Designed **for policy makers, analysts and practitioners** who seek information and analysis of education policy taking into account the importance of national context, the country policy profiles offer constructive analysis of education policy in a comparative format. Each profile reviews the current context and situation of a country's education system and examines its challenges and policy responses, according to six policy levers that support improvement:

- Students: How to raise outcomes for all in terms of 1) equity and quality and 2) preparing students for the future;
- Institutions: How to raise quality through 3) school improvement and 4) evaluation and assessment;
- System: How the system is organised to deliver education policy in terms of 5) governance and 6) funding.

Some country policy profiles contain spotlight boxes on selected policy issues. They are meant to draw attention to specific policies that are promising or showing positive results and may be relevant for other countries.

Special thanks to the Government of Finland and, in particular, the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, for its active input during consultations and constructive feedback on this report. We also thank the European Commission for its valuable analytical and financial support for the update of this country policy profile.

Authors: This country policy profile was prepared by Christa Rawkins and Diana Toledo Figueroa in the Policy Advice and Implementation Division, led by Paulo Santiago. Editorial support was provided by Stephen Flynn and Rachel Linden. This profile builds on the knowledge and expertise of many project teams across the OECD's Directorate for Education and Skills, to whom we are grateful. Antonio García-Gómez contributed on behalf of the European Commission Directorate-General for Education and Culture.

Sources: Subject to country participation, this country policy profile draws on OECD indicators from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) and the annual publication Education at a Glance, and refers to country and thematic studies such as OECD work on early childhood education and care, teachers, school leadership, evaluation and assessment for improving school outcomes, equity and quality in education, governing complex education systems, school resources, vocational education and training, and tertiary education. This profile also draws on information in the OECD Education Policy Outlook National Survey for Comparative Policy Analysis completed in 2016 by the Government of Finland, as well as information provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture between 2018 and 2020 as part of the Education Policy Outlook's activities with countries.

Most of the figures quoted in the different sections refer to Annex B, which presents a table of the main indicators for the sources used throughout the country policy profile. Hyperlinks to the reference publications are included throughout the text for ease of reading, and also in the References and further reading section, which lists both OECD and non-OECD sources.

More information is available from the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills (www.oecd.org/edu) and its web pages on the Education Policy Outlook (www.oecd.org/edu/policyoutlook.htm).

In the context of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, some information is provided about initial responses.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Highlights 3

Equity and quality
High outcomes, but boys and students from immigrant backgrounds underperform 8

Preparing students for the future
Almost universal educational attainment at upper secondary level and high skills among adults 11

School improvement
A need to maximise the impact of professional development for teachers and school leaders 14

Evaluation and assessment
A strong emphasis on improvement 16

Governance
A decentralised system which empowers local actors 18

Funding
Growing financial pressure on the higher education sector 21

Annex A: Structure of finland's education system 23
Annex B: Statistics 24
References and further reading 27
Notes 33

Figures

Figure 1. Trends and comparative performance of 15-year-olds in reading, PISA 5
Figure 2. Evolution of secondary and tertiary attainment among 25-34 year-olds, 2000-18 5
Figure 3. Selected equity and quality indicators for Finland, PISA 2018 10
Figure 4. Percentage of 18-24 year-olds in education and not in education, by employment status, 2018 12
Figure 5. The learning environment according to students, PISA 2018 15
Figure 6. Percentage of students in schools where the principal reported assessments of students, PISA 2015 17
Figure 7. Percentage of decisions taken at each level of government for public lower secondary schools, 2017 19
Figure 8. Annual expenditure per student (2016) and recent trends, by level of education 22

Spotlights

Spotlight 1. The Finnish education system's initial response to the COVID-19 pandemic 4
Spotlight 2. Key policies, challenges and previous OECD recommendations for Finland 6
Spotlight 3. The European Union perspective 8
Spotlight 4. Shifting to a competence-based, customer-oriented VET system for young people and adults 13
Spotlight 5. Finland's top-down bottom-up approach to curriculum reform 20

HIGHLIGHTS

Note: Most of the content in this profile was written before the COVID-19 outbreak. As such, this document offers insight into pre-existing conditions that may influence the system's responsiveness in the context of the crisis and help inform longer-term efforts to strengthen resilience. Spotlight 1 summarises Finland's initial responses to the crisis. Its structure is based on work by the Education Policy Outlook in 2020 to support countries in these efforts.

Finland's educational context

Students: Finland has a strong tradition of high educational outcomes. As in previous cycles, in PISA 2018[1], Finland's performance was well above average in reading, mathematics and science while socio-economic status had a lower than average impact on student performance. Among adults too, Finland's skill levels as tested in the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), in 2012, were the second-highest among participants in both literacy and numeracy. Enrolment in early childhood education and care (ECEC) has been increasing, with an extension to universal full-time provision scheduled for 2020.

Institutions: Both students and teachers in Finland view schools as supportive environments. According to comparative data, Finnish teachers feel valued in society and enjoy positive working conditions, such as competitive salaries in relation to other tertiary-educated adults, particularly in the early years of their career, and a lower teaching load than on average across the OECD. In addition, a strong improvement-focused evaluation culture is in place in Finland, which helps foster an accountability system based on local needs, professionalism and trust. At the same time, OECD evidence suggests that school leaders may benefit from greater support as the demands placed on them continue to grow.

***System*:** The Finnish system shows a clear commitment to the public provision of a quality education which is responsive to local needs. The system is highly decentralised and most education-related decisions are taken at municipal or institutional level, with strong stakeholder participation. The decisions are steered from the centre by regularly updated strategies, including the national core curriculum. To further support coherence, the governance of all educational sectors and levels is integrated under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Culture (OKM). Finland spends more on education as a share of national wealth than on average across the OECD (5.5% compared to 5.0%) and a high proportion of these funds at every education level are publicly sourced. At tertiary level, tuition remains free for most students and core funding allocations to institutions are heavily performance-based.

Key policy issues

As the environment in which it operates grows more complex, the Finnish education system is under pressure to maintain its high outcomes. Mean student performance in all three PISA disciplines has been decreasing across cycles. Concurrently, there are growing equity concerns as performance differences according to student characteristics, such as socio-economic status, immigrant background and gender, are widening. To optimise teaching, learning and school leadership, there is space for more systematised approaches to induction, mentoring, professional development and appraisal for teachers and school leaders. Beyond schooling, despite high skill levels, employment rates among younger adults have declined since 2008 and the share of young people classified as NEETs (not in employment, education or training) has risen, although national data indicates more recent improvements in both. This situation may be exacerbated by a highly selective tertiary admissions system and long study periods that delay labour market entry. Indeed, the higher education system faces a particular challenge, as government targets aim to increase participation but public funding is already under considerable pressure. Furthermore, to develop a more internationally competitive tertiary system and labour market, there is a need to review governance and funding structures for the research and development sector.

Strengthening adaptability and resilience in the context of COVID-19 (see Spotlight 1)

Pre-existing resources in the education system have facilitated areas of Finland's response. Strong stakeholder relationships enabled the government to engage teachers, parents, students and experts in valuable discussions about emergency measures and their experiences, in order to inform future responses and strengthen the trust required for system actors to collaborate effectively. As Finland works to balance short-term responsiveness with ongoing strategic aims, priorities evolve. In particular, ensuring that emergency solutions to tertiary selection mechanisms do not exacerbate pre-existing delays in labour market entry or inhibit efforts to raise attainment rates will be critical. In the longer term, experience of these solutions may usefully inform future discussions around the highly-selective admissions process currently in place.

Spotlight 1. The Finnish education system's initial response to the COVID-19 pandemic

On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation declared the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak a global pandemic. Education systems across the world have felt the force of the crisis as confinement measures triggered widespread closures of education institutions. On 16 March, Finland announced the closure of primary, secondary and tertiary level institutions from 18 March; ECEC and pre-primary settings remained open, as did basic education for certain students. Finland resumed contact teaching in ECEC, primary and lower secondary education from 14 May, and recommended that upper secondary, vocational, tertiary and other educational institutions remain closed for the semester. In light of work of the ***Education Policy Outlook*** in 2020 in the context of this pandemic, this spotlight offers an insight into system readiness and immediate responses across five key areas of analysis:

1. **Ensuring continued access to learning and smooth educational pathways:** Education providers were encouraged to employ local solutions to meet each student's needs; the central administration offered support and guidance. The Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) collated resources to support online education, and developed an online information hub to guide teachers to adapt normal good practice. The Device for All campaign (2015), encouraging private sector companies to donate laptops to students, was expanded; EDUFI and the Association of Finnish Municipalities identified recipients. Complementing online learning, in collaboration and consultation with a community of teachers, the Finnish National Broadcasting Company launched a special service to disseminate educational resources and introduced some dedicated programming. In vocational education and training (VET), the modular qualification structure and flexible entry and exit points (see Spotlight 4) enabled the vast majority of students to continue learning and certification requirements to be arranged flexibly. To maintain transitions to tertiary education, national matriculation examinations in some subjects were brought forward, condensing the examination period to one week, immediately prior to school closures. Finnish universities agreed that traditional entrance examinations could not take place; institutions introduced replacement procedures. The joint examination for the universities of applied sciences was cancelled; students will be admitted based on previous grades and/or online selection mechanisms. Similar measures will be employed where relevant in upper secondary institutions.
2. **Strengthening the internal world of the student:** Finland continued to provide early childhood care and pre-primary education for all, requesting parents to keep children at home whenever possible. According to a municipal survey, participation became around 25% of the normal rate. Student welfare services were maintained, and in-person support remained in schools for those unable to access remote provision.
3. **Providing targeted support and interventions for vulnerable children and families:** Schools were authorised to provide contact teaching for students with special educational needs or fragile home environments, if required. From April, Finland also allowed contact teaching for students of an immigrant background enrolled in preparatory education. School meals continued for those engaged in contact teaching. Many municipalities provided meals for other students considered in need, through delivery or distribution, in co-operation with local authorities and student welfare services.
4. **Harnessing wider support and engagement at local and central level:** An online national parents' evening gave parents an opportunity to discuss learning, well-being and collaboration between the school and home. OKM, with the participation of Finland's Prime Minister, held a virtual question and answer session for children. OKM also commissioned a multi-disciplinary research team to explore the effects of the crisis on young people; the synthesis report includes recommendations which inform Finland's ongoing response. OKM has maintained ongoing dialogue with social partners prior to and during school closures.
5. **Collecting, disseminating and improving the use of information about students:** Teachers were expected to monitor students' daily participation in learning and record performance data as normal. EDUFI provided guidelines for assessment, focusing on regular formative assessment. FINEEC launched an evaluation across the system with recommendations informing measures employed during reopening. Student associations in the VET sector conducted a survey on the impact on VET students.

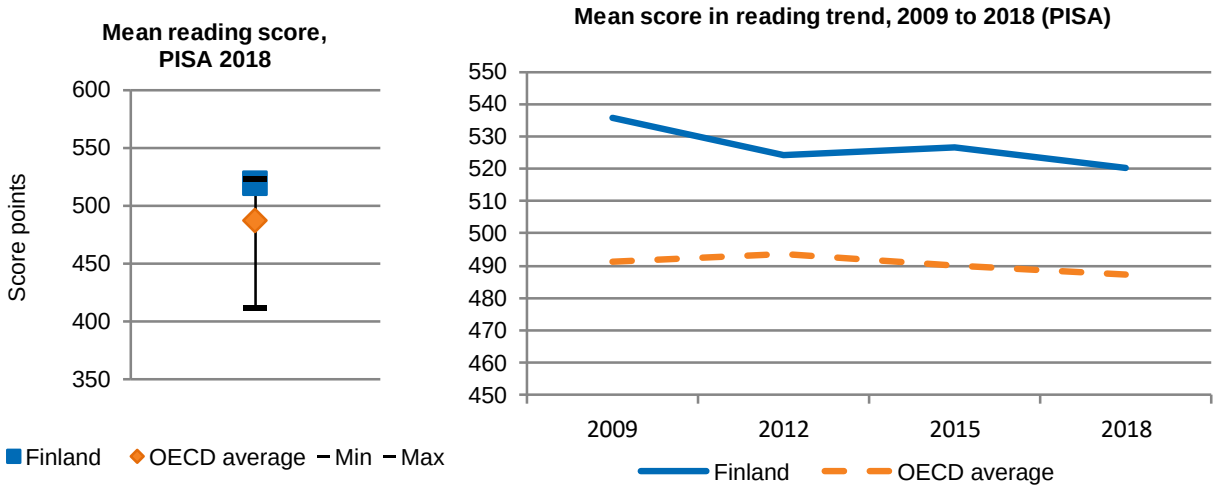
	Selected indicators of system readiness (OECD)	Finland	Average	Min	Max
Students' readiness (according to students' self-reports in PISA 2018)					
1	Index of self-efficacy	-0.03	0.01	-0.61	0.36
2	Percentage of students in disadvantaged schools with access to a computer at home that they can use for school work	91.8%	81.5%	23.5%	96.5%
Teachers' readiness (according to lower secondary teachers' self-reports in TALIS 2018)					
3	Percentage of teachers with a high level of need for professional development related to ICT skills for teaching	19.0%	17.7%	5.3%	39.0%
4	Percentage of teachers agreeing that most teachers in the school provide practical support to each other when applying new ideas	74.9%	77.9%	64.7%	86.5%

Note: The information presented in this spotlight covers key measures announced or introduced **before 14 May 2020.**

KEY TRENDS IN PERFORMANCE AND ATTAINMENT

As in previous cycles, in PISA 2018, students in Finland performed above the OECD average in reading, with a mean score of 520 points, compared to 487 points. Nevertheless, Finland's long-term trends in reading performance are negative; on average since 2000, students' mean performance has decreased by 4.9 points every three-year cycle, the highest rate of decline among OECD countries. In the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) 2012, Finnish adults' literacy skills were some of the best in the OECD, with a mean score of 288 points compared to 268 points on average.

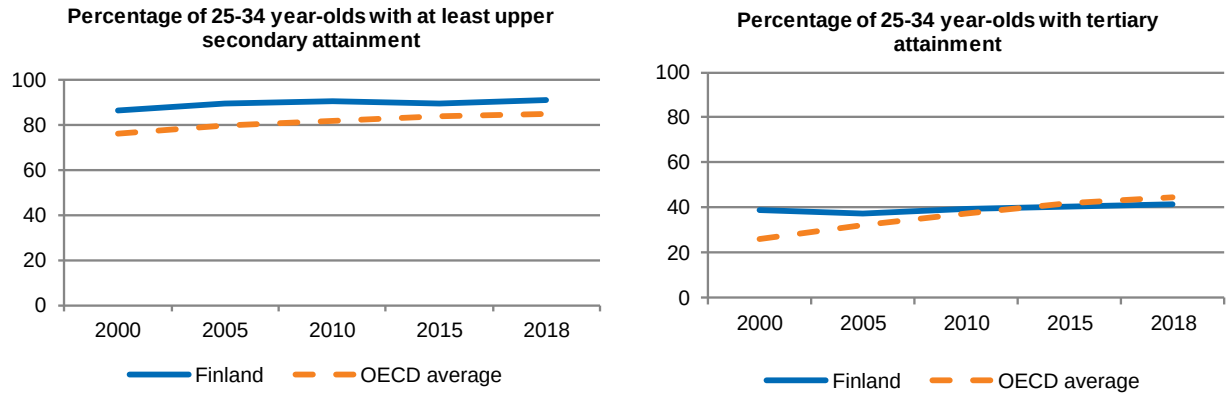
Figure 1. Trends and comparative performance of 15-year-olds in reading, PISA



Note: "Min"/"Max" refer to OECD countries with the lowest/highest values.
***Source*:** OECD (2019), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume I): What Students Know and Can Do*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/5f07c754-en.

Some 91% of Finnish 25-34 year-olds have at least upper secondary education, compared to an average share of 85%. However, this gap is narrowing: between 2008 and 2018, the OECD average share grew at ten times the rate of Finnish growth. Furthermore, tertiary attainment among young adults in Finland is below the OECD average: in 2018, 41% of Finnish 25-34 year-olds were tertiary-qualified, compared to 44% on average. Between 2008 and 2018, Finland recorded only one-third of the OECD average growth in tertiary attainment.

Figure 2. Evolution of secondary and tertiary attainment among 25-34 year-olds, 2000-18



Source: OECD (2019), *Education at a Glance 2019: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en.

Spotlight 2. Key policies, challenges and previous OECD recommendations for Finland

STUDENTS

Main policies from Finland included in this country policy profile

- Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (2018)
- National Core Curriculum for Preparatory Instruction in Basic Education (2015); in general upper secondary education (2016); in VET (2016); Student Welfare Act (2013)
- Government Action Plan for Gender Equality (2016-19)
- The Right to Learn: an equal start on the learning path - comprehensive school education programme for quality and equality (2020-22)
- Joint admission system for all higher education institutions (2014)
- Developing student admissions (2018-20)
- Lightening of higher education institutions' content-based examinations for admissions (2018)
- Youth Guarantee (2013)
- National rollout of One-Stop Guidance Centres (Ohjaamo, 2015)
- Increased support for NEETs (2017)
- National Forum for Skills Anticipation (2017)
- Vocational Training Act (2017) integrating adult and youth training provision
- Action programme to develop the professional competences of VET teachers and trainers (2017-19)

Key challenges identified and recommendations previously provided by the OECD to Finland

Key challenges identified [2012, 2016, 2019]: The OECD previously highlighted differences in Finland's reading performance between immigrant and non-immigrant students and the challenge among young migrants to sufficiently master language to facilitate integration and more equitable outcomes. According to the OECD, there is a general need to enhance employment rates across skills levels, genders and age groups. The OECD also identified, for example, a relatively high youth unemployment rate that is mainly driven by low educational attainment. Additionally, the OECD reported that, among VET graduates, narrow qualifications and a lack of foundation skills reduce adaptability in the face of changing skills demands. The OECD also identified Finland's slow rate of transition from upper secondary to tertiary education and long graduation rates which delay labour market entry; this is exacerbated by highly-selective tertiary admissions.

Summary of previous related OECD recommendations: To better support the integration of migrants, the OECD previously recommended improving teachers' skills in other languages and respect for cultures, ensuring access to quality preparatory education for all new arrivals and supporting career advisors to avoid young migrants being systematically directed to VET pathways. The OECD also suggested that Finland better develop foundation skills within VET programmes and facilitate pathways from VET to employment by improving collaboration with employers and expanding the post-secondary vocational offer. The OECD proposed streamlining tertiary admissions procedures, incentivising students to graduate more quickly, easing pathways from upper secondary to tertiary and expanding capacity in tertiary education.

INSTITUTIONS

Main policies from Finland included in this country policy profile

- Finnish National Teacher Education Forum (2016)
- Teacher Education Development Programme (2016)
- Forum for Developing the Training of ECEC Staff (2019)
- Action Plan for the New Comprehensive School (2016)
- Comprehensive School Forum (2016)
- Tutor-Teachers Network (2016)
- Guidelines and recommendations for evaluating the quality of early childhood education and care (2019)
- Varda, a digital warehouse for ECEC (2019)
- Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (2014)
- Digitalisation of the matriculation examination (2013-19)
- Matriculation Examination Act (2019)
- Act on Upper Secondary General Education (2018)

Key challenges identified and recommendations previously provided by the OECD to Finland

Key challenges identified [2012, 2016, 2018b]: Regarding ECEC, the OECD previously identified an ageing workforce among whom qualifications and leadership skills could be improved. The OECD also reported a lack of shared perspective for quality in ECEC and low staff capacity for monitoring. Similarly, the OECD has found that due to the decentralisation of institutional monitoring to municipalities, differences exist in terms of the areas and aspects of quality that are monitored, as well as processes. In preparatory education for immigrants, the OECD identified that high levels of institutional autonomy and a lack of data linking participation with education pathways make determining the drivers of poor outcomes challenging.

Summary of previous related OECD recommendations: To develop a quality workforce in ECEC, the OECD recommended

	covering training costs and introducing induction. The OECD also proposed that Finland design targeted training opportunities for high-need areas of professional development. The OECD reported that initial teacher preparation for ECEC could be improved by revising curricula, identifying key competences and setting graduation standards. The OECD suggested improving ECEC quality through defining explicit quality goals and tasking preschool leaders with systematic quality monitoring. For preparatory education, the OECD recommended monitoring integration tools and their outcomes to identify gaps and expand effective interventions.
SYSTEM	
▪ Vision 2030 for higher education and research (2017) ▪ Better together for a better world: policies on promoting internationalism in higher education and research (2017-25) ▪ Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland (2015-19) ▪ Universities Act (2009); Universities of Applied Sciences Act (2014) ▪ National Framework for Qualifications and other Competence Modules (2017) ▪ National Core Curricula for Pre-Primary and Basic Education (2014); for Early Childhood Education and Care (2016; revised 2018); for Upper Secondary Schools (2019) ▪ Reforms to the Student Support Act (2016-18) ▪ New funding models for higher education institutions (2019) ▪ New funding model for VET (2018)	**Key challenges identified [2014, 2016, 2017]:** The OECD previously reported that Finland's education system faces a dual challenge of declining student outcomes and budget cuts. Additionally, although investment in research and development (R&D) is high at tertiary level, output is less impressive and quality does not match school quality. Specifically, the OECD found that imbalanced funding devalues applied research, and the university system requires more coherence, internationalisation and links with industry. **Summary of previous related OECD recommendations:** The OECD's system-level recommendations have been focused on the tertiary sector, recommending that Finland complete the modernisation of higher education and research and develop a new national vision. Specifically, the OECD recommended reducing fragmentation and improving governance in key areas, including research and innovation and links to industry. The OECD emphasised that specialisation and scale are crucial in improving performance in this sector. The OECD also recommended reinforcing co-operation between companies and universities through carefully designed funding criteria for institutions or R&D vouchers. For the education system as a whole, the OECD suggested Finland increase efficiency gains.

Note: The information on key challenges and recommendations contained in this spotlight draws from a desk-based compilation from previous OECD publications (subject to country participation). The spotlight is intended for exploratory purposes to promote policy dialogue and should not be considered an evaluation of the country's progress on these recommendations. Causality should not be inferred either: while some actions taken by a country could correspond to previous OECD recommendations, the OECD acknowledges the value of internal and other external dynamics to promote change in education systems.

Main sources: 2019: Investing in Youth: Finland 2019; 2018a, 2016, 2014: the Economic Surveys of Finland; 2018b: Working Together: Skills and Labour Market Integration of Immigrants and their Children in Finland; 2017: OECD Reviews of Innovation Policy: Finland 2017; 2012: Quality Matters in ECEC, Finland.

Spotlight 3. The European Union perspective:

Finland's education and training system and the Europe 2020 Strategy

In the European Union's growth and employment strategy, *Europe 2020*, education and training is recognised as a key policy area in contributing to Europe's economic growth and social inclusion. The European Union set a twofold target in education by 2020: reducing the rates of early school leaving below 10%, and reaching at least 40% of 30-34 year-olds completing tertiary or equivalent education. Countries set their own related national targets. The Europe 2020 goals are monitored through the European Union's yearly assessment of the main economic and growth issues.

The *European Semester Country Report 2020* identified a number of key issues for Finland in education and training:

- Education in Finland remains among the best in the EU, although there are signs that performance and equity in the Finnish education system are deteriorating.
- The levels of basic skills as measured by the PISA 2018 survey remain comparatively high, but have worsened since the PISA 2015 survey. A significant decline of performance occurred in science, the proportion of underachievers increased and gaps in reading performance between immigrant and non-immigrant students is the largest in the EU.
- Participation in early childhood education and care remains low by international comparison despite a recent increase. Finland remains among the EU countries with the lowest participation rate of children aged between four and the starting age of compulsory education, with large regional disparities.
- Education funding is expected to increase over the coming years, progressively offsetting significant budget cuts in 2016-2019.
- As of 2021, new funding models for higher education institutions will be applied to foster transitions from education to work. The new funding mechanism aims to improve incentives to provide continuous learning courses and should contribute to tackling imminent skills shortages in the labour market.
- The education system fares relatively well in terms of inclusiveness, although challenges remain for some groups. The early school leavers' gap between students with disabilities and other students is higher than the EU average, and in 2018, the early school leaving rate of non-EU born students stood at 5.3 percentage points higher than that of native-born students.
- Finland plans to raise the mandatory school age to 18 years and provide upper secondary education free of charge.
- There are shortages of teachers in special education and care. The lack of special needs teachers is also increasing in vocational education and training.
- Reaching the new tertiary education attainment target (50% of young adults with a tertiary education degree) will require taking into account the availability of study places. It is particularly difficult to enter university in some regions because of the restricted number of places. This delays tertiary education for several years for many students.
- VET remains an attractive study path in Finland. The proportion of students enrolled in upper secondary VET out of the total number of upper secondary students is markedly higher than the EU average.
- The recent VET reform pushes for more responsiveness to labour market needs. A new funding system is planned that has the potential to speed up transitions from education to work or education to education by linking part of the funding to success rates in these fields.
- According to the report, focusing investment-related economic policy on human capital, among other areas, would strengthen the country's long-term growth potential. Investing further in people's skills and education and training is needed to offset workforce losses from population ageing, reduce inactivity and long-term unemployment, and potentially increase productivity.

In May 2020, the Council of the European Union proposed the following country-specific recommendation to Finland, with regard to education and training: "strengthen measures to support employment and bolster active labour market policies". Subject to its endorsement, this recommendation will be formally adopted in July 2020.

EQUITY AND QUALITY: HIGH OUTCOMES, BUT BOYS AND STUDENTS FROM IMMIGRANT BACKGROUNDS UNDERPERFORM

Overall, Finland combines high student performance with favourable **PISA equity indicators**. In PISA 2018, students' mean performance was well above average in reading, mathematics and science. In reading, Finland had some of the smallest shares of low performers (achieving below Level 2) in the OECD, at 13.5%, compared to 22.6%. Conversely, 14.2% of students were high performers (Level 5 or above), compared to 8.7% on average. Finnish performance followed a similar pattern in science, while in mathematics, its share of high performers was in line with the OECD average. However, across PISA cycles, Finland's performance in reading and science has declined steadily, with a growing decline in mathematics in recent years. Socio-economic status in Finland had a smaller impact on reading outcomes in PISA 2018 than on average across the OECD, explaining 9.2% of the variance, compared to an average of 12.9%. The impact appears to be growing: in 2009, advantaged students in Finland outperformed their disadvantaged peers in reading by an average of 61 points; by 2018, this performance gap had grown by 18 points, one of the highest increases in the OECD. In total, the performance gap now corresponds to around two academic years of studies.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) policies can increase the equity of education systems. In Finland, all children have legal access to 20 hours of ECEC from the end of parental leave (aged 9 months) until entry to pre-primary (aged 6). Both the number of hours (reaching full-time provision of 10 hours a day) and cost are determined according to family circumstances, with an extension to universal full-time provision planned in 2020. ECEC is provided in ECEC centres or family day care centres run by qualified teachers and guided by formal curricula. At 6 years old, children in Finland attend a mandatory one-year free pre-primary programme in ECEC centres or schools. In 2017, 31% of children under 3 attended ECEC services, compared to an OECD average of 36%. In the same year, the difference was larger among 5-year-olds, with 85% enrolled in Finland, compared to 94% on average. But enrolment in ECEC is growing in Finland, with an increase of 6 percentage points for 3-5 year-olds between 2010 and 2017, compared to an average of 5. For pre-primary education at age 6, enrolment (99%) surpassed the OECD average in 2017.

According to OECD evidence, some **system-level policies** can favour equity, such as a longer period of compulsory education, delayed tracking, limited ability grouping and low grade repetition. Compulsory education in Finland begins at age 7 and ends at 16, when students are first tracked into different pathways. This is in line with the most common age of first tracking in the OECD. Students are allocated to schools by residence but may apply to others, in accordance with municipal-level regulations. These local rules generally respect Finland's strong commitment to comprehensive schooling and school populations remain diverse. PISA 2018 evidence suggests that disadvantaged students in Finland were more likely to be in the same school as high-achieving students than anywhere else in the OECD, giving them a greater chance of benefitting from positive peer effects on performance. Within schools, evidence from PISA 2015 shows that while school-wide ability grouping is rare in Finland, ability grouping for certain subjects is common: 53% of students report being grouped by ability for at least one subject, compared to the OECD average of 46%. In Finland, only 3% of 15-year-olds in PISA 2015 reported repeating a grade during their education, compared to 11% on average.

Finland faces equity concerns regarding **gender and immigrant status**. In PISA 2018, boys performed significantly below girls in all three disciplines. In reading, boys scored, on average, 52 points less than girls and were more than twice as likely not to reach baseline proficiency. Between 2009 and 2018, these performance differences did not narrow, as boys' and girls' performance declined at similar rates. Furthermore, in reading and science, these gaps were most acute in the bottom quarter of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status, indicating specific challenges for disadvantaged boys. Performance differences between students from immigrant and non-immigrant backgrounds in Finland, after accounting for students' and schools' socio-economic status, are also among the highest in the OECD. Students with an immigrant background scored, on average, 74 points lower than non-immigrant peers in reading in PISA 2018, more than tripling the average gap. This gap widened between 2009 and 2018 while Finland's share of immigrant students also grew by 3.2 percentage points. Finland gave immigrant students, along with other vulnerable children, priority access to face-to-face schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic (see Spotlight 1); such targeted support measures will need to continue as schools reopen and the full impact on students' learning becomes clearer.

Key strengths and challenges in equity and quality (pre-crisis analysis)

Key strengths

- Student learning outcomes in science, mathematics and reading are among the highest in the OECD.
- Enrolments in ECEC are growing.
- Many system-level policies support greater equity.

Key challenges

- Mean student performance across all three main PISA disciplines is in decline.
- Boys perform below girls in all three disciplines.
- Students of an immigrant background have much lower outcomes than their non-immigrant peers.

Recent policies and practices

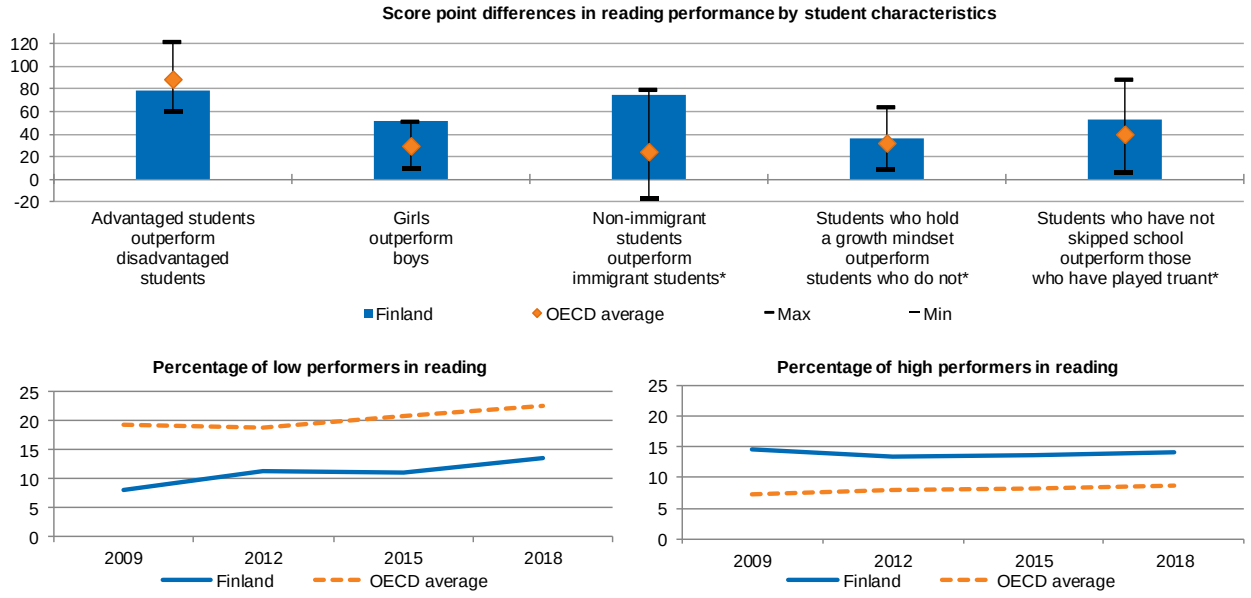
In 2018, the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) introduced new regulations for providers. Currently, one in three staff in ECEC centres must hold a tertiary qualification; this ratio must double by 2030. From 2020, the staff-child ratio will decrease from 1:8 to 1:7 for children aged 3-6 years and providers must now ensure that staff receive sufficient in-service training. An EC report (2019) has highlighted the considerable additional investment this requires at municipality level. In 2019, a summary evaluation praised the high qualifications of staff but found quality to be affected by staff numbers, turnover and a lack of professional development, particularly in rural areas.

To strengthen the integration of immigrants, a revised National Core Curriculum for Preparatory Instruction in Basic Education (2015), emphasising Finnish or Swedish as a second language and mother-tongue instruction for other subjects, was introduced. Students receive up to 1 000 hours' instruction (900 hours maximum for 6-10 year-olds); transition to mainstream education occurs flexibly. Preparatory studies also exist for general upper secondary, VET, and adult basic education. According to an OKM report (2016), by late 2015, around one-third of young migrants arriving in 2014/15 attended such programmes. An evaluation (2018) found the programme inclusive and integrative, but quality varied by teachers' skills or attitudes. The OECD (2018) also called for greater consistency across municipalities.

Finland's Student Welfare Act (2013) guarantees students access to services including psychologists, social workers and healthcare. Taking a preventative approach, it promotes well-being at schools and individualised support built on collaboration between professionals, students and families. A 2018 evaluation concluded that a more systematic, multi-disciplinary approach has been implemented, but with inconsistencies across providers. The OECD (2019) reported that the share of students in compulsory education receiving support doubled to 17.5% between 2013 and 2017. Finland maintained these services during school closures for the COVID-19 pandemic (see Spotlight 1).

The Government Action Plan for Gender Equality, 2016-19 aimed to reduce gender differences in student outcomes by supporting schools with gender equality planning, embedding gender equality in the curriculum and strengthening student orientation to overcome gender bias. An evaluation (2019) praised ECEC level work and teacher training, but reported inconsistencies across government in the integration of gender equality in key projects, the use of data by gender and approaches to gender mainstreaming. The current government's Right to Learn programme (2020-22) promises to introduce financial and legislative changes and promote practices that strengthen equality.

Figure 3. Selected equity and quality indicators for Finland, PISA 2018



Notes: "Min"/"Max" refer to OECD countries with the lowest/highest values; [*] Score point difference after accounting for students' socio-economic status and language spoken at home.

Sources: OECD (2019), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume I): What Students Know and Can Do*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/5f07c754-en; OECD (2019), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume II): Where All Students Can Succeed*, PISA, OECD publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/b5fd1b8f-en; OECD (2020), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume III): What School Life Means for Students' Lives*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/acd78851-en.

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE FUTURE: ALMOST UNIVERSAL EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AT UPPER SECONDARY LEVEL AND HIGH SKILLS AMONG ADULTS

The capacity of a country to effectively develop **skills and labour market perspectives** can play an important role in the educational decisions of the population. Finland's performance in the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC, 2012) was among the highest for both literacy (288 points compared to 268) and numeracy (282 points compared to 263). Younger adults outperformed their elders in both disciplines by a larger difference than on average among participating countries. In 2018, Finland's employment rate for 25-64 year-olds was above average for tertiary graduates, but slightly below for those with upper secondary attainment only. Employment levels have not yet fully recovered since the economic crisis: among 25-34 year-olds, rates fell between 2008 and 2018 for all attainment levels. Similarly, although NEET rates in Finland among 18-24 year-olds, at 13.1% in 2018, were below the OECD average of 14.3%, among the wider age group (15-29 year-olds) the rate grew by 2 percentage points between 2008 and 2018, compared to an average decline of 0.2. Nevertheless, shorter-term trends are more positive and national data shows that both unemployment rates and NEET rates have been shrinking in recent years.

Participation in **upper secondary education** in Finland is nearly universal among 16-18 year-olds and is scheduled to become compulsory from 2021. In 2018, the share of 25-64 year-olds with at least this level of education was 5 percentage points higher in Finland than on average across the OECD. Among the younger cohort (25-34 year-olds), while only 8% of women had not attained an upper secondary level qualification, the equivalent share among men was 11%; the OECD (2018) has previously reported that drop-out rates from secondary education are relatively high among boys.

Vocational education and training (VET) can ease entry into the labour market, yet across the OECD, many VET programmes make insufficient use of workplace training. In Finland, students choose between a general or vocational three-year programme for upper secondary. Prior to this, an optional tenth year of basic education supports students to improve learning outcomes, prepare for upper secondary or decide on an occupation. Around 3% of students participate. Both upper secondary tracks prepare students for tertiary education and a modular approach allows for a combination of the two pathways. Partly as a result of this flexibility, in 2016, more than half (55%) of first-time graduates at upper secondary level in Finland obtained a vocational qualification, compared to an OECD average of 42%. Stimulated in part by recent reforms (see Spotlight 4), participation among young adults over the typical upper secondary age is also high and in 2017, the average age of graduation from a vocational upper secondary programme was 24, compared to 19 in general education and 21 on average across the OECD. Nevertheless, only a small share of students transition from vocational upper secondary programmes to universities; the majority of those that enter tertiary programmes choose universities of applied sciences, suggesting that longer-term fluidity between tracks is not fully achieved. In Finland, all forms of institutional VET include work-based learning, the amount of which is determined according to students' needs.

Finnish **higher education** has two complementary sectors: universities, for general education, and universities of applied sciences, for professionally oriented programmes. According to PISA 2018, 64% of 15-year-olds in Finland expect to go on to complete tertiary education, compared to 69% on average. University admission is selective for all fields based on a *numerus clausus* system. Criteria vary by field and sector and, up until 2020, have predominantly been a combination of national matriculation examination results (*ylioppilastutkinto*), vocational education outcomes and institutional entrance exams. From 2020, an agreement between the government and HEIs ensures that just over half of study places will be filled through certificate-based admissions for first-time entrants. Around two-thirds of applicants are rejected annually. This contributes, in part, to an elevated average age of first-time entry of 24 years old in Finland, compared to the OECD average of 22. Due to these low acceptance rates and delayed entry, the share of tertiary students transitioning directly from upper secondary education, at 19%, is less than half the share seen among most countries with available data. Finland's growth in tertiary attainment among 25-34 year-olds between 2008 and 2018 was just one-third of the OECD average (see Figure 2); this is considered insufficient to meet the government's target of having half of this cohort tertiary-qualified by 2030. Additionally, the average duration of tertiary education is 6.5 years, compared to 5 years across the OECD, constituting a considerable delay in labour market entry.

Key strengths and challenges (pre-crisis analysis)

Key strengths

- Finland has almost universal educational attainment at upper secondary level and high skills levels among adults.
- Finland's share of students holding a VET qualification is one of the largest in the OECD.

Key challenges

- Unemployment rates among younger adults and NEET rates continue to exceed pre-crisis levels despite more recent improvements.
- A highly-selective tertiary admissions system contributes to delays in labour market entry.

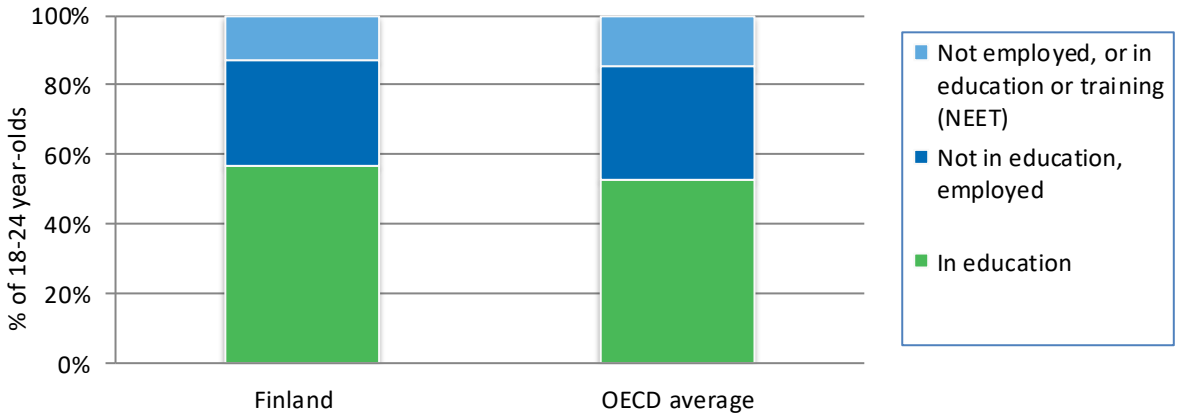
Recent policies and practices

A joint admission system (2014) for universities and universities of applied sciences (UAS) aimed to increase efficiency, but institutional entrance exams and long entry delays persisted. In response, the OKM reached an agreement (2017) with all higher education institutions (HEIs) to remove content-based institutional entrance exams from 2018 onwards, although aptitude testing may continue. In 2019, the UAS launched a single joint entrance test. All HEIs have committed to making certificate-based admissions, emphasising the role of upper secondary qualifications as the main entry route by 2020 in order to develop more uniform processes, prioritising first-time entrants and facilitating transitions between programmes. Finland's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in this area was an occasion for different actors to find more flexible ways of conducting the transition to tertiary education (see Spotlight 1) and could therefore act as a step forward towards realising such aims. The overall intention is to reduce the lag time between upper secondary and higher education and accelerate labour market entry. To this end, the 2017-20 performance agreements for higher education (see "Governance") state that HEIs must strengthen co-operation with upper secondary providers. In 2019, the OECD reported that further improvements may include strengthening flexible pathways for students and recognising prior learning to encourage non-traditional learners.

In Finland, a key feature of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee (YG, 2013), which aims to ensure that all those under 25 are offered either employment, continued education, or training within three months of leaving school, has been the national rollout of One-Stop Guidance Centres (*Ohjaamo,* 2015). These are a collaborative venture between three Ministries, bringing together several providers, including non-governmental, thus helping young people navigate a fragmented system of services and benefits. An evaluation (2018) praised Finland's focus on personalised guidance and partnerships but called for more action to address growing NEET rates. In 2019, the OECD reported that *Ohjaamo* are the main strength of YG strategies and thus suggested that resources be expanded to ensure they are available to all young people across Finland. Following an interim review of the government's strategic programme (2015-19), a renewed focus on supporting NEETs (2017) emphasised the need to better co-ordinate services, incentives and support measures and improve co-operation. The government committed to 19 new measures; preventive measures cover all education and training from ECEC to higher education, while remedial actions target the most vulnerable children and their families. EUR 45 million in funding was allocated to these measures for 2018-19. In 2019, an OKM report (2019) identified a reduction in NEET rates among men and the older cohort (25-29 year-olds). It also emphasised the mutually reinforcing relationship between initiatives to reduce NEET rates and those to strengthen psychosocial support services.

In 2017, the National Forum for Skills Anticipation replaced the National Education and Training Committees, of which there were 30 different bodies. It consists of nine sector-oriented foresight groups bringing together representatives of employers, employees, VET providers, HEIs, teachers, researchers and administrators. Currently mandated to run until the end of 2020, discussions are underway regarding the Forum's longer-term. Work includes conducting qualitative and quantitative data collection to identify new competence and skill needs for working life, assessing the implications for education, improving collaboration and making recommendations on development needs to the national administration. The Forum's first report (2019), identifying changes in the desired competences and essential skills for 2035, was released in 2019.

Figure 4. Percentage of 18-24 year-olds in education and not in education, by employment status, 2018



Source: OECD (2019), *Education at a Glance 2019: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en.

Spotlight 4. Shifting to a competence-based, customer-oriented VET system for young people and adults

Reforming the VET system was a key project in the Finnish government's strategic programme 2015-19. As the most extensive VET reform in almost 20 years, it is an effort to shift from a supply-oriented to a demand-oriented approach, which is competence-based and customer-focused. The key aims of the reform, as outlined in the government's strategic programme (2015), include: 1) raising the status of VET pathways; 2) enhancing collaboration between educational institutions and working life; 3) reducing overlaps in educational offers; 4) removing barriers between VET provision for young people and that for adults; 5) increasing workplace learning and apprenticeships; and 6) bringing governance and funding under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Culture (OKM).

To become more customer-oriented, prospective students may now apply to VET programmes at any time and can start their studies flexibly throughout the year. A personal competence-development plan for each student is compiled collaboratively by a teacher or guidance counsellor, the student and, when applicable, a representative of working life. This records prior learning and identifies competence-development needs, as well as how those competences will be acquired and the different learning environments involved. This can include a flexible combination of learning within educational institutions, workplaces, workshops and virtual learning environments. This flexibility proved helpful in Finland's response to the COVID-19 pandemic; students' ability to conclude their VET studies at any point in the year meant less pressure to reopen VET schools for examination and certification purposes (see Spotlight 1).

Governance structures have been reformed to increase efficiency and coherence: the Vocational Training Act (2017), joint legislation covering VET provision for all ages, was approved in 2017, introducing a new integrated license for both adult and student VET provision, granted by OKM. The license determines the educational task of the provider and entitles them to provide education, organise assessment and grant qualifications; it also affords providers more autonomy. Funding has also been integrated and streamlined (see "Funding"). The number of available vocational qualifications has been reduced from 351 to 164 (43 vocational, 65 further vocational and 56 specialist vocational) becoming more broadly-based to facilitate flexible and individualised pathways and the incorporation of future competences. In 2016, OKM appointed an expert group to prepare a proposal for a new training agreement model. Recommendations were integrated into the new VET legislation, simplifying work-based learning models, removing prescriptive time periods and alleviating some of the administrative and financial burden placed on employers.

In 2017, the Ministry of Education and Culture launched an action programme to develop the professional competences of VET teachers and trainers (2017-19) to build capacity to support the effective implementation of reforms. A steering group of teachers, students, vocational teacher universities, education providers and working life representatives oversees the program, which consists of three parts: a networking project to develop professional competences, a project to develop digital literacy and specific training for the implementation of the reform.

In 2019, a working group dedicated to strengthening co-operation between VET providers and higher education institutions (HEIs) was established. Tasked with reviewing the current situation and defining goals for collaboration, the group also proposed new approaches to developing co-operation at local, regional and national levels. The final report of the working group for the development of cooperation between VET providers and HEIs (2019) proposes a strategic model based on six areas of collaboration: teaching, student orientation, working life, R&D, networking and organisation. As practical measures, the group recommended conducting a national peer review and sharing good practices, as well as establishing mechanisms for systematic dialogue across various levels. The implementation of these recommendations is predominantly the responsibility of HEIs.

The government's evaluation of competence-based, customer-oriented and efficient VET (2018) found that the reforms simplified the qualifications system, increased flexibility and individualisation, and enhanced co-operation between the worlds of work and education. Furthermore, the report found that less regulation in the qualification system and a more coherent steering system empowers providers. However, it also recognised challenges including: aligning broader-based qualifications with longer-term demand; supporting teachers and trainers to navigate the impact of changes on their work and job descriptions; securing the sustainable supply of competent workplace instructors; and, ensuring effective quality assurance in the context of increased autonomy for educational providers and greater emphasis on workplace training.

The OECD (2019) praised the progress that had been made and suggested areas for future consideration. Firstly, the OECD warned that the renewed focus on workplace training must not be at the expense of general skills, as this may exacerbate the challenges facing vocational students who wish to enter higher education and inhibit their longer-term success in the labour market. On this second point, the report also found that Finland could consider strengthening the system for higher-level vocational qualifications to which graduates of initial vocational programmes can progress. As the report explained further, this may also help reduce waiting lists for tertiary education.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: A NEED TO MAXIMISE THE IMPACT OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOL LEADERS

Developing **positive learning environments** for students that enable school leaders and teachers to succeed is essential for raising achievement in schools. Evidence from PISA and TALIS paints a mixed picture of Finnish learning environments. Teacher-student relations appear positive: according to students' self-reports in PISA 2018, Finnish teachers are more supportive than on average across the OECD with an index of teacher support of 0.21, compared to 0.01. Teachers also find schools supportive: in TALIS 2018, nearly all participating teachers in Finland felt that their school provided extra assistance to students as necessary and 90% felt that teachers could rely on each other, both above the respective averages. Also, the level of student truancy, measured by the share of students who skipped a day of school in the two weeks prior to PISA 2018, was lower in Finland than on average (13%, compared to 21%). However, students in PISA 2018 reported school disciplinary climates to be less positive than elsewhere in the OECD, with an index value of -0.11 compared to 0.04, suggesting that some students feel learning is disrupted.

Attracting, retaining and developing good-quality **school leaders** is critical for improving the quality of learning environments and promoting effective school leadership. Prospective school leaders in Finland require a teaching qualification, as well as knowledge of educational administration, generally evidenced through university credits. Participation in school administration training prior to appointment is commonplace: three-quarters of Finnish principals in TALIS 2018 reported participation, compared to an OECD average of less than one-third. However, in Finland, only one-quarter received instructional leadership training and, according to principals' reports in PISA 2015, this aspect of leadership is underdeveloped in Finland with an index of -0.23, among the lowest in the OECD. During the 12 months prior to TALIS 2018, nearly all Finnish principals engaged in professional development, yet many perceived it to conflict with work schedules or to lack relevance; between 2013 and 2018, reports of both these barriers increased considerably. This may be indicative of the competing pressures facing Finnish school leaders, as reported in an overview of research into the school leader role (2016). These include the fact that institutional autonomy, decentralised governance and small municipal structures increase administrative load, while, at the same time, an improvement-focused evaluation culture and national commitment to high-quality, forward-thinking learning call for strong pedagogical leadership.

A strong supply of highly qualified and engaged **teachers** is vital in every education system. Teachers in Finland receive strong theoretical and practical initial teacher preparation (ITP) accessed via a highly-competitive examination. All teachers in basic and general upper secondary education have a Master's degree and, according to principals' reports in PISA 2018, 93% are fully certified, compared to an OECD average of 86%. Furthermore, in TALIS 2018, 87% of Finnish teachers had completed formal ITP covering content, pedagogy and classroom practice in some or all subjects taught, compared to an OECD average of 79%. However, for nearly all the components of ITP teachers were asked about, Finnish teachers felt less well-prepared than their OECD counterparts. Following this, less than one-fifth of Finnish teachers in TALIS 2018 reported participating in a formal induction and around three-quarters had no access to mentoring, in comparison to OECD averages of just over one-third for both. In Finland, teachers must engage in, and are entitled to, three days of professional development per year. According to TALIS 2018, some 93% of teachers had taken part in professional development in the 12 months prior to the survey, but only 79% felt it had a positive impact.

Teachers' working conditions in Finland are comparatively favourable. In 2018, Finnish teachers[2] annually taught for 677 hours at primary level and 592 hours at lower secondary, compared to OECD averages of 783 and 709 hours. Furthermore, in 2017, class sizes were smaller than average, by 1 student in primary and 4 students in lower secondary. In 2016 in Finland, lower secondary teachers' actual earnings were 98% of the average salary of a full-time, full-year worker with tertiary education, compared to 88% on average. Furthermore, in 2018, statutory starting salaries were above average for every education level, except pre-primary. Nevertheless, the salary scale is relatively compressed, and in 2018, statutory salaries for teachers with 10 years' experience were below average. However, Finnish teachers appear more satisfied with their job: in 2018, 58% felt the profession was valued in society and 79% reported they would still become a teacher if given the choice again, compared to the respective averages of 29% and 76%.

Key strengths and challenges in school improvement (pre-crisis analysis)

Key strengths

- Students and teachers in Finland perceive schools to have supportive learning environments.
- Finland's teachers are highly qualified and receive relatively comprehensive initial teacher preparation.
- Finnish teachers report a comparatively high level of satisfaction with their profession.

Key challenges

- Achieving a balance of strong instructional and administrative capacity-building in the role of the school leader.
- Formal professional development for educators is not always perceived to be effective or relevant.

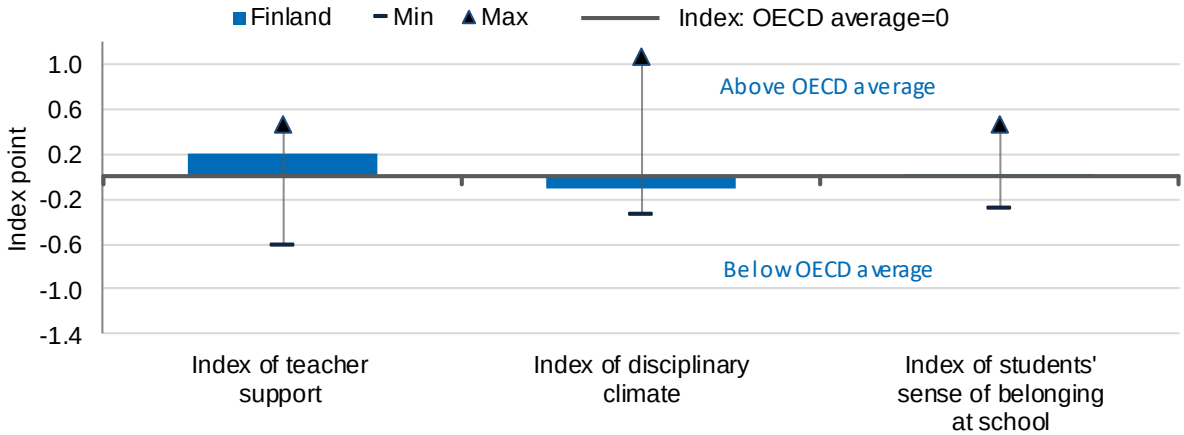
Recent policies and practices

The Finnish National Teacher Education Forum (NTEF, 2016) aims to improve the full continuum of teacher education. In phase one, the NTEF brought together 100 representatives (including teachers, teacher educators, municipalities and academics) for consultation on the future direction of teacher development in Finland, and launched an online brainstorming process among 2 000 stakeholders. This informed Finland's Teacher Education Development Programme (TEDP, 2016) which has six strategic aims: 1) adopt a holistic approach to teacher development; 2) motivate the best students to become teachers; 3) support teachers to be creative professionals; 4) establish a collaborative culture; 5) foster supportive leadership; and 6) promote research-based training. Educational institutions at all levels prepare competence-development plans in collaboration with staff, underpinned by the strategic plans and competence evaluations of training providers. The TEDP is implemented through institution-led projects currently covering 41% of Finnish municipalities. Grants totalling nearly EUR 28 million have been awarded to 45 collaborative projects on a range of topics from mentoring and leadership development to research-based expertise and equality planning. HEIs co-ordinate these teacher education networks. An evaluation of the NTEF (2018) reported that, by the end of 2018, implementation was underway for all six strategic aims of the TEDP and praised the community-building focus. Recommendations included improving monitoring and updating the strategic objectives and establishing a more permanent structure, including a national-level legislative group. In 2018, a similar Forum for the Development of Early Childhood Education was established to promote co-operation between ECEC staff, institutions and training providers.

The Action Plan for the New Comprehensive School (2016) aimed to renew comprehensive education, learning environments and teachers' competences by focusing on three areas: new pedagogies, new learning environments and digital learning. As part of this, a Comprehensive School Forum (2016), comprised of a broad group of experts and stakeholders, developed a national vision for the future of Finnish education: "Finnish Basic Education: Excellence through Equity for All". The current government has built on this through Right to Learn: an equal start on the learning path (2020-22), which is a reform programme for comprehensive school education focused on quality and equality.

In the same programme, OKM committed to developing a network of tutor-teachers for basic education. The role is carried out by a teacher who embraces new pedagogies and promotes the digitalisation of teaching. Actions may include organising training on digital pedagogy, conducting competence surveys, providing technical guidance or networking with peers. The initial plan committed to having 2 500 tutor-teachers in schools, providing EUR 23 million to train and support them between 2016 and 2018. A survey of tutor-teachers (2017) concluded that the project had a highly positive impact. A total of 2 289 tutor-teachers were operating across 90% of municipalities by 2018, over 80% of whom had been trained via the government's discretionary transfers. Ongoing challenges include demand for a more regional focus to the tutor network, guidance from OKM as to the competences tutor-teachers should work on and securing a long-term funding strategy. The model has expanded to upper secondary schools, with a focus on supporting the implementation of reforms, including curricular reform. An EC report (2019) found considerable improvements in teachers' digital competencies but ongoing disparities in the integration of digital tools in the classroom. As Finland moved to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (see Spotlight 1), this policy may have proved beneficial in both having raised digital competencies among teachers and providing an established support network within and between schools.

Figure 5. The learning environment according to students, PISA 2018



***Note**: "*Min"/ "Max" refer to OECD countries with the lowest/highest values.
***Source**:* OECD (2020), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume III): What School Life Means for Students' Lives*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/acd78851-en.

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT: A STRONG EMPHASIS ON IMPROVEMENT

Defining strategies for evaluation and assessment is an important step towards improving student outcomes and developing a better and more equitable school system. **System evaluation** can provide evidence to help decision makers craft informed policies and increase the transparency of education system outcomes. In Finland, evaluation of education at every level is integrated under the authority of the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) (see "Recent policies and practices"). Objectives and priorities are determined through four-year Education Evaluation Plans, developed by the Evaluation Council of FINEEC, in consultation with stakeholders, and approved by OKM. Student results are never made public and, in compulsory education, the only national assessments are sample-based and conducted according to focus areas selected in the plan, covering a broad range of subjects. Results are sent to education providers for development purposes; they are not used to rank schools. Finland's Education Evaluation Plan 2016-19 expressed a commitment to enhancement-led evaluation; this is enforced through legislation. This commitment appears to have been maintained during the COVID-19 pandemic, when Finland implemented several initiatives to monitor responses, needs and impact across the system (see Spotlight 1).

External **school evaluation** does not occur systematically in Finland, although schools can request a quality inspection and some providers implement external evaluation as part of local quality assurance. FINEEC oversees the quality of all institutions from ECEC to tertiary level. In PISA 2015, 57% of principals in lower secondary schools in Finland reported receiving external evaluations of their school, compared to 75% on average. To balance this, education providers (generally municipalities), have a statutory duty to conduct self-evaluation. At school level, 95% of school leaders participating in PISA 2015 reported having done so, compared to the OECD average of 93%. FINEEC works with municipalities to develop national guidelines and quality criteria for each educational level to support ECEC centres, schools and municipalities in their self-evaluation processes. As at the system level, the focus is on guiding processes that lead to enhanced quality outcomes. An evaluation of quality management and self-evaluation practices in basic and general upper secondary education (2016) identified that most education providers (59%) judged themselves to be at the *emerging* level for self-evaluation and quality management, on a four-point scale from *absent*, *emerging*, *developing* and *advanced*; the most urgent needs identified were for greater training and networking, as well as national steering.

According to OECD research, **teacher appraisal** can strengthen professionalism and performance, provided it includes an improvement component, emphasising developmental evaluation, and a career progression component. There is no formal requirement for teacher appraisal in Finland and national guidelines do not exist. Rather, municipalities are responsible for creating a local framework of teacher appraisal, often doing so in collaboration with teacher unions, through the collective bargaining system involving the Teacher Union and the Local Government Employer Union. Most schools have a system run by the school leader, which includes annual discussions around individual performance objectives and development needs. As elsewhere in the evaluation and assessment framework, strategic improvement is prioritised over summative judgement. Similarly, there is no central policy framework for school leader appraisal; evaluation requirements and processes are decided by local education authorities. While this can foster greater buy-in among the various actors, a high level of local ownership may also lead to inconsistencies. In TALIS 2018, only 35% of Finnish teachers had principals who reported formally appraising their teachers at least once a year, compared to 63% on average, and the share reporting that teachers are never formally appraised increased by 15 percentage points between TALIS 2013 and 2018.

The extent and ways in which a system uses **student assessment** can vary depending on need. In Finnish basic education, student assessment is the responsibility of teachers, who have pedagogical autonomy in the matter, although principles of student assessment and assessment targets are defined in the national core curriculum. Students are encouraged to design and assess their own learning as they reach higher levels of education. Standardised testing thus plays a smaller role in Finnish education than elsewhere in the OECD (see Figure 6). According to students' reports in PISA 2018, teacher feedback on student learning occurs less in Finland than on average in the OECD, with an index value of -0.16, compared to an average of 0.01. Nevertheless, the role of student assessment practices in the Finnish classroom appears to be growing; across all four areas of assessment practice that teachers are asked about in TALIS, Finnish teachers reported greater frequency of use in 2018 than in 2013. The increase was larger for teachers administering their own assessment of student progress and allowing students to self-assess progress, which are both more common in Finland than elsewhere. Also, Finnish teachers more often attended professional development activities related to student assessment than on average across the OECD (76% compared to 65%), which was one of the highest increases between TALIS cycles (10 percentage points).

Key strengths and challenges in evaluation and assessment (pre-crisis analysis)

Key strengths

- A well-established culture of improvement-focused evaluation and assessment at the system level sets the tone for educational institutions and educators.
- Self-evaluation is common for educational institutions, and students are encouraged to assess their own progress.

Key challenges

- Teacher and school-leader appraisal could benefit from central guidance or frameworks to balance local diversity with national consistency.
- Teachers appear to perceive a need for greater support in their growing role in designing student assessment practices.

Recent policies and practices

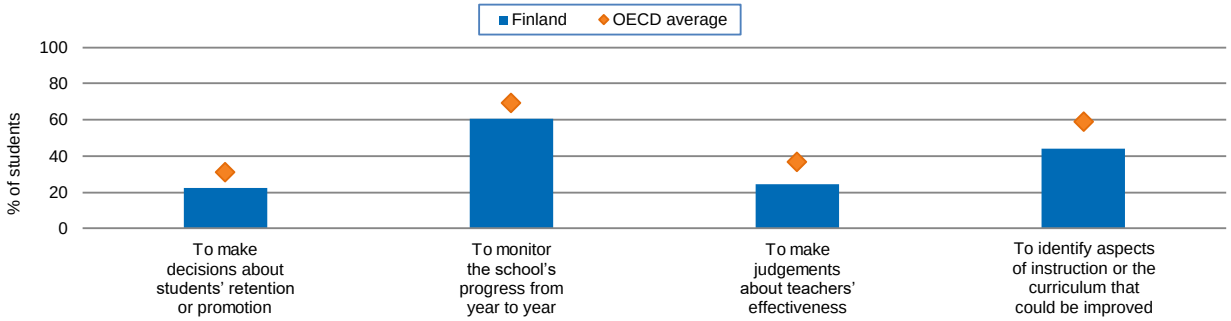
The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC, 2014) brings together the evaluative work of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council, the Finnish Education Evaluation Council and the Finnish National Agency for Education, establishing a coherent approach to system evaluation. From 2016-19, FINEEC scheduled 29 audits of quality systems in HEIs, 10 assessments of learning outcomes in VET and 5 assessments of learning outcomes in basic education. Evaluations were also planned for initial teacher education for teachers of certain subjects and the self-evaluation and quality management procedures for basic and general upper secondary education. The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education's review of FINEEC (2017) commended the agency's efforts to involve stakeholders and the commitment to conducting work in Finnish, Swedish and English, thus promoting internationalisation. Recommendations included extending the scope of stakeholder work to include actors beyond institutions, within both administration and the world of work.

In 2019, FINEEC published the first Guidelines and recommendations for evaluating the quality of early childhood education and care (ECEC). Derived from the Act on ECEC (2018), the National Core Curriculum for ECEC, and national and international research, including the European CARE project, the guidelines are intended to support ECEC organisers and private providers in carrying out systematic and goal-oriented self-evaluation. The guidelines outline three levels of evaluation: system level, under the authority of FINEEC, which conducts external evaluation for system improvement; local level, which is the responsibility of providers who should conduct annual self-evaluations; and pedagogical-activity level, through teachers and in close co-operation with both parents and children. The document aims to improve coherence between evaluation in ECEC and at all other levels of education; it provides a framework for actors who are encouraged to develop the detail in accordance with their own context.

In accordance with the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (2018) (see "Equity and Quality"), in 2019, the Finnish National Agency for Education launched Varda, a data warehouse for ECEC. Municipalities assume responsibility for inputting data related to enrolments, providers, services and staff. This will then be used by municipal, regional and central authorities, as well as academic researchers, to support the development of high-quality ECEC and improve planning and monitoring for the sector. It is also intended to improve efficiency by deterring different authorities from keeping duplicate registers.

Since 2013, the Finnish matriculation examination for upper secondary graduates has been progressively digitalised; as of 2019, the examination was fully electronic and traditional paper tests were no longer available. This allows the tests to incorporate enhanced digital and visual tools, requiring students to complete computation, editing or graphic presentation tasks, for example. Students are supported in becoming familiar with such tools through *Abitti*, an electronic examination system available to upper secondary schools. In 2019, the Matriculation Examination Act stated that all candidates must take at least five subjects, instead of four. The act aims to better reflect the competencies and cross-curricular themes covered in upper secondary education, as well as being more flexible. The new system will be implemented from 2020.

Figure 6. Percentage of students in schools where the principal reported assessments of students in national modal grade for 15-year-olds, PISA 2015



Source: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume II): Policies and Practices for Successful Schools*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264267510-en.

GOVERNANCE: A DECENTRALISED SYSTEM WHICH EMPOWERS LOCAL ACTORS

Finland has a decentralised education system and local authorities and institutions have significant autonomy in determining educational provision. At national level, the strategic government programme outlines key goals and outcomes across a four-year period, including in relation to education. Parliament decides on educational legislation and the Ministry of Education and Culture (OKM) has responsibility for preparing and implementing education policy across all sectors and levels, from ECEC to adult learning. Other bodies that help shape education policy include:

- The Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) is responsible for implementing policy from ECEC to upper secondary education, including VET. EDUFI develops core curricula and qualifications requirements in VET, monitors expenditure, supports and develops teachers, and promotes internationalisation.
- The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) conducts external evaluations of institutions and providers across the system and monitors learning outcomes for basic and upper secondary education.
- The six Regional State Administrative Agencies (AVIs) oversee regional equality in key public services, including universal access to quality education. They work in close collaboration with local authorities in an executive, steering and supervisory role. They are particularly important for the ECEC sector.
- The 15 regional Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment plan, monitor and develop adult learning including enhancing staff competencies and improving services.
- The Academy of Finland supports and funds scientific research and innovation at universities and handles the administration of international research programmes.

Stakeholder engagement is a headline characteristic of Finnish education. Key **stakeholders** include the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities (*Kuntaliitto*), representing municipalities and regions, the Confederation of Finnish Industries and the Confederation of Unions for Professional and Managerial Staff (*Akava*), which facilitate labour market relevance, and various student and parent associations. Several organisations exist to represent the interest of teachers and other education professionals, including the Trade Union of Education (OAJ), the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions and the Finnish Confederation of Professionals. Many other stakeholders, not listed here, are also involved in educational decision-making. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these strong relationships enabled OKM to build consensus for critical decisions such as institutional closure and reopening, and student examinations, supporting smoother implementation (see Spotlight 1).

Finland has a well-established approach of preparing national-level strategies and curricula in collaborative, cyclical processes which are then adapted and enacted at local level (see Spotlight 5). Therefore, although central administration plays an important steering role, **schooling decisions** are mostly the responsibility of local education authorities (generally municipalities) and schools**.** Consequently, there is a sense of shared authority. All educational decisions related to lower secondary schools were reported as being made across multiple levels in 2017; no other country reported more than half of such decisions being shared across levels. Municipalities or joint municipal authorities are responsible for providing ECEC and basic education, often through a single administrative branch, to support coherence and facilitate transition. Municipalities allocate funds and recruit staff and, in collaboration with schools, develop detailed local curricula. Nevertheless, municipalities can delegate much of their decision-making power to schools, particularly in urban districts.

The Finnish **higher education** system is comprised of 38 higher education institutions (HEIs), 35 of which are under the OKM's administrative branch (13 universities and 22 UAS). Finnish HEIs, though, are independent legal entities with extensive autonomy over administrative, educational and research-related decisions. To facilitate coherence with national goals, every four years, negotiations take place between OKM and the HEIs under its administrative branch to reach institutional performance agreements (four-year development plans with objectives and outcomes for the period). Finland has no higher education accreditation system, but HEIs are responsible for conducting self-evaluation, with support from FINEEC. Neither quality assurance nor the performance agreements are linked to performance-based funding (see "Funding"). Both universities and UAS contribute to public R&D activities. The OECD (2017) has previously reported that the governance of higher education's contribution to R&D activities is fragmented; despite some mergers since 2009, Finland has around twice as many HEIs per student as elsewhere in the OECD, deterring specialisation. Furthermore, OKM's steering power in this area is relatively soft, inhibiting coherence between actors, sectors and disciplines and restricting innovation and diffusion.

Key strengths and challenges in governance (pre-crisis analysis)

Key strengths	Key challenges
▪ Educational governance across all levels and sectors is integrated within a single ministry. ▪ Regularly updated national strategies and goals help to steer the highly-decentralised system.	▪ Strengthening national-level steering in higher education to, for example, foster a more systemic approach to R&D.

Recent policies and practices

Vision 2030 for higher education and research is a co-created document establishing national goals for tertiary education, to be realised by 2030. These include ensuring over 50% of all young people complete a higher education degree, allocating 4% of gross domestic product (GDP) to research and development, and developing opportunities for continuous and lifelong learning. The key lines of action include boosting lifelong learning; leveraging digitalisation, including through modular approaches to learning; embracing co-operation and transparency in research and innovation governance; making HEIs more attractive, developmental workplaces; and fostering a higher education community capable of delivering the best learning outcomes and environments in the world. The Vision was informed by an OECD Review of Innovation Policy, which identified, among others, a lack of vision, a lack of university "excellence" in education or research and a fragmented, under-internationalised university system with decreasing industry links.

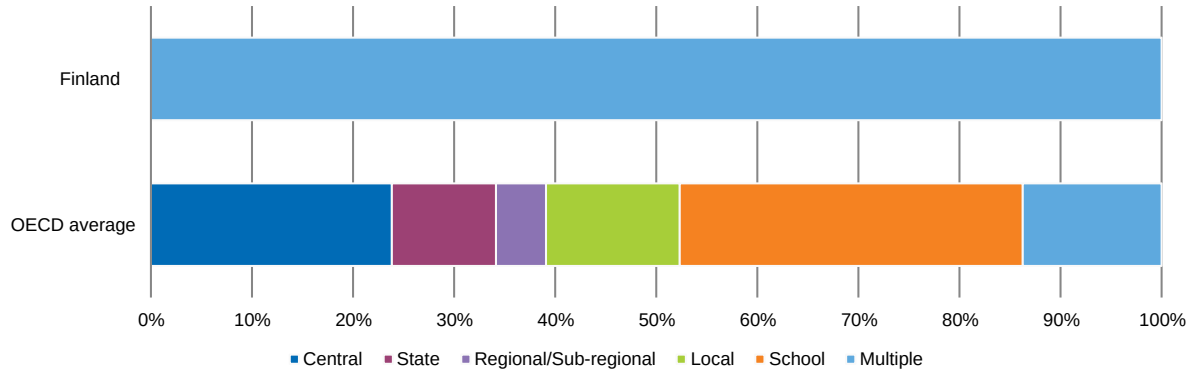
Better together for a better world: policies on promoting internationalisation in higher education and research (2017-25) aims to strengthen the quality, visibility and attractiveness of Finnish higher education and research internationally by building on the former Strategy for the Internationalisation of HEIs in Finland 2009-15. Seven lines of action signal a more comprehensive approach to internationalisation, including, most notably, strengthening the quality and pioneer spirit of Finnish higher education, enhancing visibility abroad through a common marketing strategy, and easing the acceptance of international students committing to English as a working language. By 2016, the former strategy's target of a 7% overall share of international students in higher education degree programmes had been achieved, but this remains 2 percentage points below the OECD average. The Forum for International Affairs of Higher Education and Research is monitoring progress; the Forum's first report was published in 2020, with 17 recommendations for future work in this strategic area.

Finland granted further administrative and financial autonomy to HEIs through the Universities Act (2009) and Universities of Applied Sciences Act (2014), establishing both as independent legal entities. In 2018, the OKM published an impact evaluation of these higher education reforms. According to the evaluation, the reforms have considerably changed the leadership and operating culture within HEIs. They have afforded HEIs the authority to make decisions on finances while also showing evidence of strengthening their administration. However, there is evidence that some staff and communities within HEIs feel less included in decision-making.

In 2013, the administration and steering of ECEC services was transferred from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health to the Ministry of Education and Culture. As part of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (2015) (see "Equity and Quality"), the Finnish National Agency for Education became the national expert agency for ECEC; this finalised the integration of ECEC services with educational services at all other levels.

The National Framework for Qualifications and Other Competence Modules (FiNQF, 2017) aims to improve the effectiveness and transparency of the Finnish qualifications system. Based on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), FiNQF divides the qualifications, syllabi and competences offered across all education levels and sectors into eight reference levels based on learning outcomes. FiNQF was designed as an organic tool to be reviewed and updated; in 2018, the OKM established a working group to prepare the expansion of FiNQF to encompass new types of learning, including specialist and preparatory training for certain careers and professional competencies. Following the group's final report (2018), changes to the Government Decree were introduced in early 2020.

Figure 7. Percentage of decisions taken at each level of government for public lower secondary schools, 2017



Note: This figure considers four domains of decision-making: 1) Organisation of instruction; 2) Personnel management; 3) Planning and structures, and; 4) Resources.
Source: OECD (2018), *Education at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/eag-2018-en.

Spotlight 5. Finland's top-down, bottom-up approach to curriculum reform

In 2012, Finland launched a comprehensive reform of national curricula from pre-primary to upper secondary level to provide greater coherence across the system. The Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI), the central administrative body with responsibility for curricular matters, approved the new National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (NCCBE) and for Pre-Primary Education at the end of 2014. Local curricula were then developed and implemented in classrooms for grades one to six from the start of the school year 2016/17 and then on a year-by-year basis for grades seven to nine until 2019. The Reform of the National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Schools was approved in 2019, to come into effect from 2021/22. The new National Core Curriculum for ECEC came into effect at the start of 2017/18.

The reforms are part of Finland's efforts to define and develop the skills, attitudes and values students need for success in the 21st century. The NCCBE, for example, has three strategic aims with supportive measures:

- **Rethinking the concept of learning** by emphasising the importance of students' own experiences, feelings and agency, and of collaboration among all actors within the system. Key measures include a compulsory annual multi-disciplinary, project-based module for all students in basic education and a focus on assessment *for* and *as* learning, as opposed to assessment *of* learning.
- **Renewing the learning environment** by reimaging the school as a learning community with six key characteristics: 1) equity and equality; 2) safety in daily life and well-being; 3) dialogue and varied working approaches; 4) celebrating diverse cultures and awareness of languages; 5) participation and democracy, and; 6) responsibility for the environment and future orientation.
- **Rethinking the roles, goals and content of school subjects** by embedding seven transversal competences: 1) thinking and learning to learn; 2) cultural competence, interaction and expression; 3) taking care of oneself, managing daily activities and safety; 4) multi-literacy; 5) ICT competence; 6) competence for work and entrepreneurship; and 7) participation, influence and building a sustainable future.

Large-scale curriculum reform is a complex, multi-layered process which occurs across three levels in Finland: state, municipal and school. For the NCCBE, EDUFI established 34 national working committees and steering groups made up of various stakeholders (representatives from relevant ministries, municipal workers, teachers' unions, industry groups, parents' associations, textbook publishers, ethnic groups etc.), each with a specific focus. Their work was informed by a national survey administered digitally to students aged 13-16 years which garnered 60 000 responses. The committees fed into the drafting of a 500-page national curriculum that was put to public consultation through three online commenting cycles receiving over 4 000 comments. EDUFI disseminated further targeted surveys among local education authorities and main stakeholders to capture their feedback.

Although local approaches varied, in general, municipalities also established working groups responsible for taking the national guidelines and interpreting them within local contexts. They were directed to nearly 180 issues with concrete instructions and obligations on how to connect local educational goals with the national ones. Some municipalities, but not all, had the financial capacity to hire a curriculum coordinator to oversee the process. Schools then established the practical details for classroom teaching and prepared annual teaching plans.

FINEEC developed a detailed plan to monitor and evaluate the new curriculum between 2016 and 2020. Specifically, its objective is to assess the functionality and effectiveness of the core curriculum as an education-steering system and identify the factors promoting and preventing the fulfilment of objectives. An initial evaluation (2019), focusing on pre-primary and basic education, noted the positive impact of the national and local approaches to steering in ensuring a cohesive but locally responsive system. However, the report also identified the need for more targeted and practice-oriented training of educators to help realise the transversal aims and change school cultures. The Future of Learning Barometer 2030, a digital qualitative forecasting tool launched by EDUFI in 2009 to support the curriculum reform, will also continue to monitor implementation. The Barometer allows experts and stakeholders to annually give their opinions and engage in sustained discussions about the challenges and possibilities for the future of Finnish education; it is scheduled to continue until at least 2020.

The Finnish process of curriculum reform draws international attention, often being highlighted as a positive example of policy co-creation. A research study of large-scale curriculum reform in Finland (2016) has praised the top-down, bottom-up design and implementation process as fostering collective sense-making. This has two advantages: first, it helps clarify the reform's aims, functions and possible outcomes; second, it acts as a source of feedback and extensive knowledge-sharing which helps build consensus. As collaborative processes, both strengthen coherence. At the same time, other studies, including research into the Finnish curriculum reform 2014 (2019) identify inconsistencies in the way municipalities construct local curricula; some collaborated at a regional level, some developed local curricula but neglected school action plans, and others avoided conducting their own construction process by benchmarking other municipalities' outcomes. There were also variations in implementation; some municipalities offered extensive in-service training to teachers and school leaders while others did not. Ultimately, these discrepancies appear to be more related to resource constraints than to a lack of will.

FUNDING: GROWING FINANCIAL PRESSURE ON THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

Finland's **overall expenditure on education** as a share of national wealth is high by international standards. In 2016, expenditure on primary to tertiary education as a proportion of GDP, at 5.5%, was higher than the OECD average of 5.0%. This represents a reduction of 4% since 2010, despite a 3% increase in GDP. Finland also dedicates one of the highest shares of national wealth to adult training programmes (0.5% of GDP in 2015, compared to 0.1% on average). At upper secondary level, a greater share of Finland's GDP is dedicated to vocational programmes than general programmes, whereas the reverse is generally true across the OECD. This may be explained by the high participation rates in vocational education among adults and youth in Finland (see "Preparing Students for the Future"). The current government has committed to allocating more funds to education.

The focus of Finland's per-student funding is largely oriented towards basic education, whereas the average trend across the OECD emphasises tertiary and upper secondary. Annual per-student spending in Finland in 2016 was higher than the OECD average for ECEC (by USD 4 214), primary (by USD 977) and lower secondary (by USD 5 157) but below average at upper secondary (by USD 2 053). At tertiary level, expenditure per student in Finland was also higher than average (USD 17 541, compared to USD 15 556) although a larger-than-average share was dedicated to R&D. However, spending per student at this level fell by 9% between 2010 and 2016, compared to an average OECD increase of 8%.

The proportion of expenditure on education (from primary to tertiary) coming from **private sources** (including international sources) in Finland is one of the lowest in the OECD; just 2.8% of overall spending is privately sourced, compared to 14.4% on average across the OECD. Furthermore, the relative proportion of private expenditure on primary to tertiary education has remained relatively stable in Finland, with a slight decrease of 0.3 percentage points between 2010 and 2016, compared to an overall average increase of 2.5 percentage points. At tertiary level, Finland has the second-highest proportion of public funding for education (92% compared to an OECD average of 66%). At this level, while in the majority of OECD countries household expenditure is the biggest source of private funding, in Finland, almost all private funding comes from other private entities, and is predominantly for R&D.

Funding allocations to **primary and secondary schools** in Finland are primarily the responsibility of local authorities, both through central transfers to municipalities and locally-raised funds. Transferred funds are calculated according to the number of residents aged 6-15 years although other factors, such as geographical remoteness and population density, are also considered. These funds are not earmarked; municipalities have full autonomy to decide how they are allocated. Municipal funds must also cover the cost of learning resources, health and social support services, and one meal a day for children. This system appears to address perceived needs in schools to some extent. According to lower secondary school principals participating in TALIS 2018, schools in Finland experience material and human resource shortages which hinder learning to a lesser extent than on average across the OECD; only 2% reported a shortage of qualified teachers and 4% a shortage or inadequacy of instructional materials, compared to averages of 21% and 13%, respectively. However, a government assessment of the impact of austerity decisions implemented from 2011–15 (2017) shows that as a consequence of national budget cuts, although educational rights continue to be fulfilled, gaps in provision have been widening - in lesson hours, for example - as some municipalities struggle to cover costs with their own funds.

Higher education in Finland is mainly state-funded with direct allocations from central administration to institutions. Tuition fees are not in place for domestic students nor those coming from the EU/EEC area, but were introduced for other international students from 2017/18. Despite this, in 2017/18, 57% of all students left tertiary education with an average personal debt of USD 11 719. The same year, 55% of domestic students received a government-guaranteed private student loan, which was a 33 percentage point increase over 10 years. This is set to grow further as the government reforms student financial support (see "Recent policies and practices"). After a period of growth in public funding (in real terms), tertiary funding entered a period of stagnation and cuts from 2016. However, in the area of R&D, the focus on public sources of funding is increasing. According to a Statistics Finland report (2017), between 2011 and 2015, universities' total research funding increased by 5.7%. This was largely due to a 23% increase in basic funding from the OKM; funding from the Finnish business sector fell by 24% during the same period. The OECD (2017) has previously reported that Finland has one of the most performance-based tertiary and R&D funding systems in Europe in terms of the share of funding allocated on the basis of outcomes. This can limit scope for the strategic use of resources to invest in change over the long term (see "Recent policies and practices").

Key strengths and challenges of funding education system (pre-crisis analysis)

Key strengths

- Educational funding is high and focuses on the earliest education levels where returns are greatest.
- School funding is locally responsive and appears to succeed in minimising the impact of resource shortages on schools.

Key challenges

- There is growing pressure on public funds to support high-quality tertiary education.
- Ensuring that performance-based funding for tertiary education and R&D does not limit institutional capacity for strategic development.

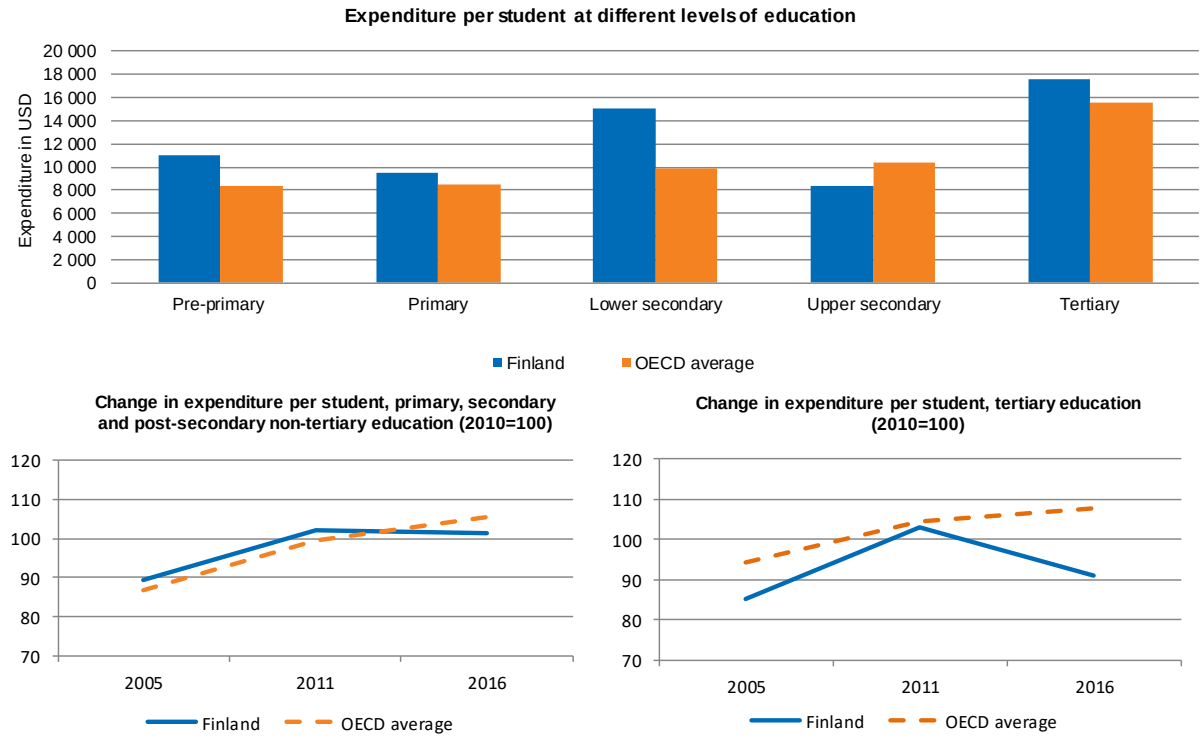
Recent policies and practices

Reforms to the Student Support Act (2016-18) aimed to increase student financial aid, harmonise grants for tertiary and upper secondary education, and improve completion rates, while also navigating planned budget cuts. The reform replaced the housing supplement with a general housing allowance for all and shifted emphasis from grants to loans. The basic maximum loan available grew from EUR 400 to EUR 650 per month for those living independently and EUR 800 for those studying abroad; the basic maximum duration was shortened from 64 to 54 months for tertiary students. Applications were centralised under the Social Insurance Institution. Following this, Finland reduced expenditure on study grants for higher education by around EUR 90 million (2016-18); the average grant for tertiary students is now EUR 246 per month, 21% less than before the reform.

In 2019, Finland agreed funding reforms for universities and funding reforms for universities of applied sciences (UAS) for 2021-24. Prepared collaboratively by OKM, HEIs, staff, students and other stakeholders, these are the latest adjustments to a model which has been developing for over 20 years. Most of the funding is allocated according to output-based indicators: for UAS, the share rises to 95% of core funding; for universities, it reaches 76%. Furthermore, the share determined by criteria related specifically to degree programmes increased from 40% to 56% for UAS, and from 19% to 30% for universities. To encourage stability, indicators are calculated via three-year averages. There is no formal evaluation of this performance-based model, but a critique of the new funding model for UAS (2018) suggested stakeholders favour the approach, and quality and efficiency gains can be observed. For example, despite funding cuts, the number of students and degrees has increased, with progress towards key policy goals such as institutional profiling and internationalisation. However, the system is complex, and may be increasingly so as administrations introduce additional elements.

Alongside the VET reforms (see Spotlight 4), Finland sought to boost efficiency and establish a system resilient to budget cuts. From 2017, VET funding decreased by EUR 190 million, including EUR 59 million for upper secondary VET and EUR 19 million for apprenticeships. As of 2018, the financing of upper secondary VET, adult learning and apprenticeships was streamlined into a single entity. VET funding is now divided into four strands: strategic planning receives up to 4% of the total budget; the remaining share is split between core (70%), performance-based (20%) and effectiveness-based (10%) funding. The latter takes student feedback into account, which began in 2018 and will inform decisions from 2020 onwards. The new system will be fully operational from 2023. The OECD (2019) reported that the performance-funding component, which hinges on the number of completed qualifications and modules, may encourage providers to grant qualifications and modules with lower criteria. An evaluation of competence-based, customer-oriented and efficient VET identified though that changes risk compromising quality and regional equity, calling for effective quality assurance.

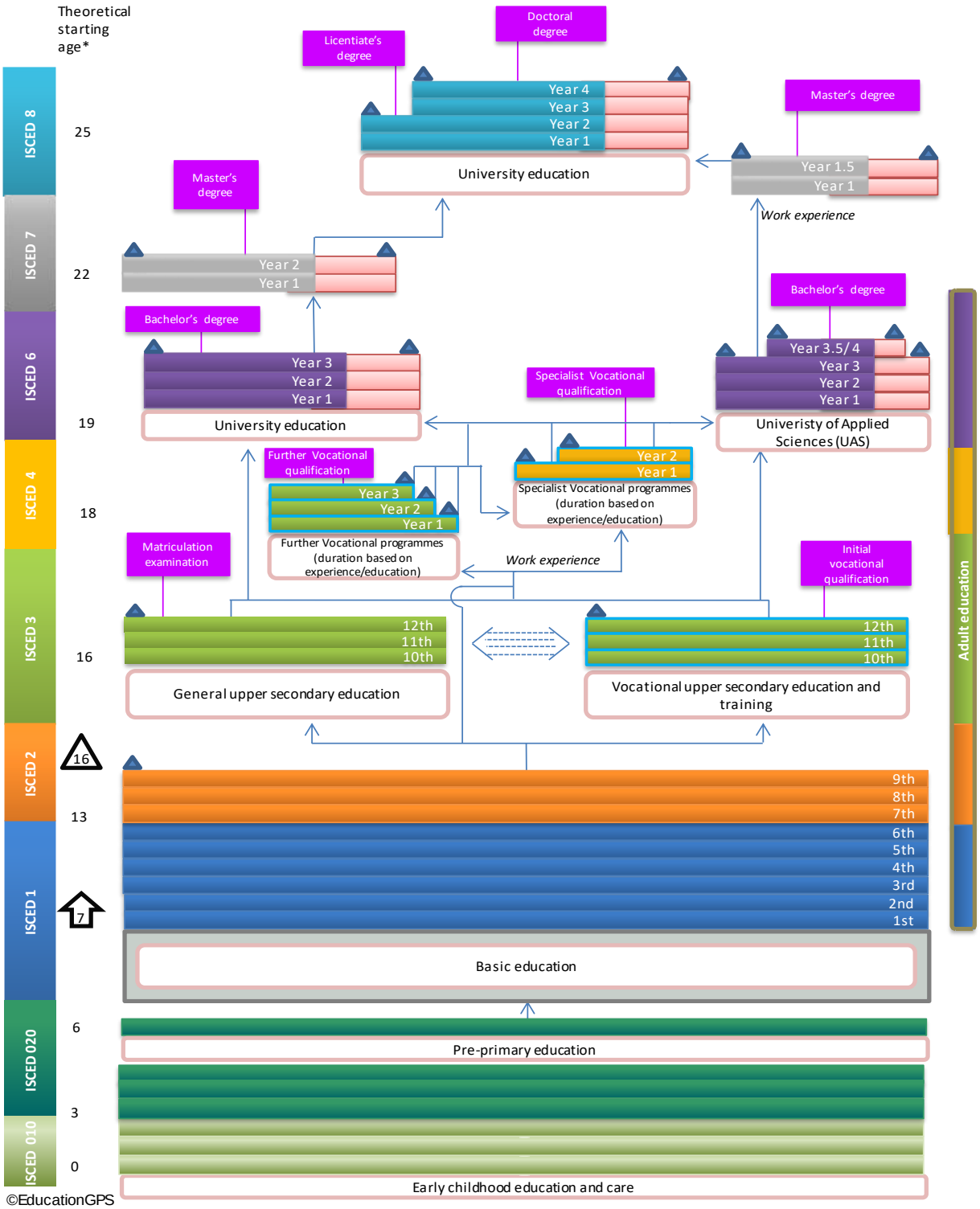
Figure 8. Annual expenditure per student (2016) and recent trends, by level of education



***Source*:** OECD (2019), *Education at a Glance 2019: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en.

ANNEX A: STRUCTURE OF FINLAND'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

Finland 2018



Note: The key for the interpretation of this table is available at the source link below.
Source: OECD (2019), Finland: Overview of the Education System", *OECD Education GPS*, http://gpseducation.oecd.org/Content/MapOfEducationSystem/FIN/FIN_2011_EN.pdf.

ANNEX B: STATISTICS

#	List of key indicators [1,2,3]	Finland	Average or total	Min OECD	Max OECD
Background information					
Economy					
1	GDP per capita, 2016, in equivalent USD converted using PPPs (OECD Statistics)	44 016	42 441	14 276	107 775
2	GDP growth, 2016 (OECD Statistics)	2.8%	1.8%	0.6%	6.6%
Society					
3	Population density, inhab/km^2, 2017 (OECD Statistics)	18	37	3	517
4	Population aged less than 15 as a percentage of total population, 2018 (OECD Data)	16.1%	17.0%	12.2%	28.4%
5	Foreign-born population as a percentage of total population, 2018 or the most recent available year (OECD Data)	6.7%	14.4%	0.8%	47.6%
Education outcomes					
6	Mean performance in reading (PISA 2018)	520	487	412	523
7	***Average three-year trend in performance across PISA assessments, by domain (PISA 2018)*** [4,5]				
	Reading performance	**-4.9**	0.4	**-4.9**	**7.1**
	Mathematics performance	**-9.1**	-0.6	**-9.1**	**6.4**
	Science performance	**-10.7**	-1.9	**-10.7**	**6.4**
8	Enrolment rates of 3-year-olds in early childhood education and care, 2017 (EAG 2019)	73.5%	79.3%	2.4%	100%
9	Percentage of 25-64 year-olds whose highest level of attainment is lower secondary education, 2018 (EAG 2019)	9.1%	14.4%	0.8%	39.9%
10	***Educational attainment of the population aged 25-34 by type of attainment, 2018 or latest available***				
	At least upper secondary education, 2018 (EAG 2019)	90.5%	85.4%	50.1%	97.8%
	Tertiary education, 2018 (EAG 2019)	41.3%	44.3%	23.4%	69.6%
	Vocational upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education, 2018 (EAG database 2020)	39.7%	24.5%	1.8%	50.1%
11	***Unemployment rates of 25-34 year-olds by educational attainment, 2018 (EAG 2019)***				
	Below upper secondary	15.8%	13.7%	3.0%	37.3%
	Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary	8.9%	7.3%	2.5%	25.1%
	Tertiary education	4.7%	5.5%	1.7%	23.2%
Students: Raising outcomes					
Policy lever 1: Equity and quality					
12	First age of selection in the education system (PISA 2018)	16	14	10	16
13	***Students performing at the highest or lowest levels in reading (%) (PISA 2018)***				
	Students performing below Level 2	13.5%	22.6%	11.1%	49.9%
	Students performing at Level 5 or above	14.2%	8.7%	0.8%	15.0%
14	Percentage of students in schools where students are grouped by ability into different classes for all subjects, PISA 2015	2.3%	7.8%	0.0%	56.1%
15	Percentage of students whose parents reported that the schooling available in their area includes two or more other schools, PISA 2015	m	36.8%	20.4%	56.9%

#	List of key indicators [1,2,3]	Finland	Average or total	Min OECD	Max OECD
16	Percentage of students reporting that they have repeated at least a grade in primary, lower secondary or upper secondary schools (PISA 2015)	3.0%	11.3%	0.0%	42.6%
17	Percentage of variance in reading performance in PISA test explained by ESCS (PISA 2018)[4]	9.2%	12.0%	6.2%	19.1%
18	Score difference in reading performance in PISA between non-immigrant and immigrant students AFTER adjusting for socio-economic status (PISA 2018)[4]	**-74**	**-24**	**-80**	**16**
19	Score difference between girls and boys in reading (PISA 2018)[4]	**52**	**30**	**10**	**52**
Policy lever 2: Preparing students for the future					
20	Mean proficiency in literacy among adults aged 16-64 on a scale of 500 (Survey of Adult Skills, PIAAC, 2012)	287.5	267.7	220.1	296.2
21	Difference in literacy scores between younger (25-34) and older (55-65) adults AFTER accounting for age, gender, education, immigrant and language background and parents' educational attainment (Survey of Adult Skills, PIAAC, 2012).	37.6	15.6	-8.3	37.6
22	***Share of students in upper secondary education in 2017 following:***				
	General programmes (OECD Stat - INES 2020)	28.4%	58.1%	27.6%	100.0%
	Vocational programmes (OECD Stat - INES 2020)	71.6%	43.1%	9.0%	72.4%
	Combined school and work-based programmes (OECD Stat - INES 2020)	9.4%	18.3%	1.0%	58.0%
23	First-time graduation rates from tertiary education, 2017 (Below the age of 30, excluding mobile students / OECD Stat - INES 2020)	37.2%	36.6%	10.1%	49.9%
24	Percentage of 18-24 year-olds not in education, employment or training, 2018 (EAG 2019)	13.1%	14.3%	5.9%	29.8%
Institutions: Improving schools					
Policy lever 3: School improvement					
25	***The Learning Environment - PISA 2018***				
	Mean index of teacher support in language-of-instruction lessons	0.21	0.01	-0.61	0.47
	Mean index of disciplinary climate	-0.11	0.04	-0.34	1.07
	Mean index of students' sense of belonging	0.01	0.00	-0.28	0.46
26	Percentage of teachers in lower secondary education aged 50 years old or more, 2017 (EAG 2019)	32.3%	37.0%	6.3%	54.2%
27	***Number of teaching hours per year in public institutions by education level, 2018 (EAG 2019)*** [7]				
	Primary education	677	783	561	1063
	Lower secondary education, general programmes	592	709	481	1063
28	Ratio of actual teachers' salaries to earnings for full-time, full-year adult workers with tertiary education, lower secondary education, general programmes, 2016 (EAG 2019)	0.98	0.88	0.64	1.40
29	Proportion of teachers who believe the teaching profession is valued in society (TALIS 2018)	58.2%	25.8%	4.5%	67.0%
30	Proportion of teachers who would become a teacher again if they could choose (TALIS 2018)	78.9%	75.6%	54.9%	92.2%

#	List of key indicators[1,2,3]	Finland	Average or total	Min OECD	Max OECD
Policy lever 4: Evaluation and assessment to improve student outcomes					
31	***Percentage of students in schools where the following arrangements aimed at quality assurance and improvement at school are used (PISA 2015):***				
	Internal/Self-evaluation	95.1%	93.2%	74.8%	100.0%
	External evaluation	56.6%	74.6%	20.8%	97.4%
32	***Percentage of students whose school principals reported that standardised tests are used for the following purposes (PISA 2015):***				
	To make decisions about students' retention or promotion	22.5%	31.3%	3.4%	60.6%
	To monitor the school's progress from year to year	60.6%	69.4%	26.2%	97.7%
	To make judgements about teachers' effectiveness	24.6%	37.0%	4.4%	87.5%
	To identify aspects of instruction or the curriculum that could be improved	44.0%	58.9%	14.1%	92.4%
33	Percentage of lower secondary teachers whose principals report conducting formal appraisal of their teachers at least once per year (TALIS 2018)	34.6%	63.5%	16.2%	98.1%
Systems: Organising the system					
Policy lever 5: Governance					
34	***Percentage of decisions taken at each level of government in public lower secondary education, 2017 (EAG 2018)***				
	Central	0.0%	23.8%	0.0%	83.3%
	State	a	10.3%	0.0%	62.5%
	Regional/Sub-regional	0.0%	4.9%	0.0%	33.3%
	Local	0.0%	13.3%	0.0%	71.9%
	School	0.0%	34.0%	0.0%	91.7%
	Multiple levels	100.0%	13.8%	0.0%	100.0%
Policy lever 6: Funding					
35	Expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP (from primary to tertiary), 2016 (EAG 2019)	5.5%	5.0%	0.0%	6.5%
36	***Annual expenditure per student by educational institutions, for all services, in equivalent USD converted using PPPs for GDP, 2016 (EAG 2019)***				
	Pre-primary education	10 961	8 349	1 579	17 533
	Primary education	9 447	8 470	2 961	17 913
	Lower secondary education	15 041	9 884	2 561	21 739
	Upper secondary education	8 315	10 368	3 001	21 231
	Tertiary education	17 541	15 556	5 787	48 407
37	***Relative proportions of public and private expenditure on educational institutions, 2016 (EAG 2019)***				
	Public sources	97.2%	82.7%	62.7%	97.6%
	All private sources (includes international sources)	2.8%	17.4%	2.4%	37.3%
38	***Change in the share of expenditure on educational institutions, EAG 2019 (Percentage-point difference between 2010 and 2016, primary to tertiary education)***				
	Public sources	-1.0	-2.7	-9.8	6.3
	All private sources	-0.3	2.5	-6.3	7.0

Notes
1. The average, total, minimums and maximums refer to OECD countries except in the Survey of Adult Skills, where they refer to participating countries. For indicators 6, 13 and 17-19 the average value refers to the arithmetic mean across all OECD member countries (and Colombia), excluding Spain. For indicator 5, the average value refers to the arithmetic mean across all OECD member countries (except Japan, Korea and Poland) as calculated by the Education Policy Outlook.
2. "m": included when data is not available.
3. "NP": included if the country is not participating in the study.
4. Statistically significant values of the indicator are shown in bold (PISA only).
5. The average three year trend is the average change in PISA score points from a country's/economy's earliest participation in PISA to PISA 2018.
6. "a": included when the category is not applicable.
7. For FInland, this refers to minimum teaching time.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Airaksinen, T., I. Halinen. and H. Lintui (2017), "Futuribles of learning 2030 - Delphi supports the reform of the core curricula in Finland", *European Journal of Futures Research,* Vol. 5/2, https://eujournalfuturesresearch.springeropen.com/track/pdf/10.1007/s40309-016-0096-y.

Ärlestig, H., C. Day and O. Johansson (eds.) (2016), *A Decade of Research on School Principals: Cases from 24 Countries,* Studies in Educational Leadership, Vol. 21, Springer International Publishing, Basel, https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-319-23027-6.

Cedefop (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) (2019), *Vocational Education and Training in Finland: Short Description*, Cedefop, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/4176_en.pdf.

De Boer, H. et al. (2015), *Performance-Based Funding and Performance Agreements in Fourteen Higher Education Systems: Report for the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science*, Center for Higher Education Policy Studies, Enschede, https://ris.utwente.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/5139542/jongbloed+ea+performance-based-funding-and-performance-agreements-in-fourteen-higher-education-systems.pdf.

Eskola, A., S. Hundal and J. Turpeinen (2018), *New Developments in the Funding Model of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences – A Critique,* Conference Paper at the Sixth Higher Education Institutions Conference: Quality & Governance in Higher Education: Opening New Frontiers, 27 September 2018, Dubrovnik, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329451110_New_Developments_in_the_Funding_Model_of_Finnish_Universities_of_Applied_Sciences_-_A_Critique.

EC (2020), *Commission Staff Working Document: Country Report Finland 2020,* SWD(2020) 525 final, EC, Brussels, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2020-european_semester_country-report-finland_en.pdf.

EC (2020), *Council Recommendation on the 2020 National Reform Programme of Finland and delivering a Council opinion on the 2020 Stability Programme of Finland,* COM(2020) 526 final, EC, Brussels, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2020-european-semester-csr-comm-recommendation-finland_en_0.pdf.

EC (2020), *Youth Guarantee Country by Country: Finland,* Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=13637&langId=en.

EC (2019), "Finland", *Education and Training Monitor 2019: Country Analysis,* Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/et-monitor-report-2019-finland_en.pdf.

EC (2019), *Commission Staff Working Document: Country Report Finland 2019,* SWD(2019) 202 final, EC, Brussels, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/2019-european-semester-country-report-finland_en.pdf.

EC (2018), *One-Stop-Shop Guidance Centres for Young People (Ohjaamo),* Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=19409&langId=en.

EC (2018), "Finland", *Education and Training Monitor 2018: Country Analysis*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/et-monitor-report-2018-finland_en.pdf.

EC (2018), *Commission Staff Working Document: Country Report Finland 2018,* SWD(2018) 202 final, EC, Brussels, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1537359010097&uri=CELEX%3A52018SC0224.

EC (2010), *Europe 2020: A European Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth*, EC, Brussels, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52010DC2020&from=en.

EC/EACEA/Eurydice (2020), "Ongoing Reforms and Policy Developments", *Eurydice – Finland*, webpage, https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/ongoing-reforms-and-policy-developments-21_en (accessed 08 June 2020).

EDUFI (2019), *National Forum for Skills Anticipation 2035: First Results,* EDUFI Reports and Surveys 2019/30, EDUFI, Helsinki, https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/osaaminen_2035.pdf.

EDUFI (2019), *Key Figures on Vocational Education and Training in Finland: Finnish VET is Competence-Based and Customer-Oriented*, EDUFI Reports and Surveys 2019/7, EDUFI, Helsinki, https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/key_figures_on_vocational_education_and_training_in_finland.pdf.

EDUFI (2018), *Report on the Referencing of the Finnish National Qualifications Framework to the European Qualifications Framework and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area,* EDUFI, Helsinki, https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/190482_report_on_the_referencing_of_the_finnish_national_qualifications_framework.pdf.

EDUFI (2018), "Basics of Early Childhood Education Plans", *EDUFI – Early Childhood Education,* EDUFI, webpage, www.oph.fi/fi/koulutus-ja-tutkinnot/varhaiskasvatussuunnitelmien-perusteet (accessed 07 June 2020).

EDUFI (2018), *Tutor Teacher Activities in Basic Education in Finland,* Facts Express 3C/2018, EDUFI, Helsinki, https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/195451_oph_faktaa_express_3c_2018_englanti_sivut.pdf.

EDUFI (2018), *National Forum for Skills Anticipation,* 16 May 2018, EDUFI, Helsinki, https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/oef-eng-verkkoon-ja-sahk-jakeluun.pdf.

EDUFI (2016), *New National Core Curriculum for Basic Education: Focus on School Culture and Integrative Approach,* EDUFI, Helsinki, https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/new-national-core-curriculum-for-basic-education.pdf.

EDUFI (2015), *National Core Curriculum for Preparatory Instruction for Basic Education*, EDUFI, Helsinki, https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/perusopetukseen_valmistavan_opetuksen_opetussuunnitelman_perusteet_2015.pdf.

FINEEC (2018), "Evaluation of Teacher Education Forum", *FINEEC – News,* FINEEC, webpage, https://karvi.fi/en/evaluation-of-teacher-education-forum/ (accessed 07 June 2020).

FINEEC (2018), *National Education: the Results of State Evaluation Activities of the Education System,* Information Materials Vol. 1/2018, FINEEC, Helsinki, https://karvi.fi/app/uploads/2018/05/KARVI_T0118.pdf.

FINEEC (2018), "Extensive evaluation: pupil and student welfare has been enhanced after the enforcement of the Pupil and Student Welfare Act, but the development work is far from over", *FINEEC – News,* FINEEC, webpage, https://karvi.fi/en/2018/03/14/extensive-evaluation-pupil-student-welfare-enhanced-enforcement-pupil-student-welfare-act-development-work-far/ (accessed 07 June 2020).

FINEEC (2017), "Evaluation result: the quality management of basic education and general upper secondary education providers is at an initial level on average", *FINEEC – News,* FINEEC, webpage, https://karvi.fi/en/2017/02/03/evaluation-result-the-quality-management-of-basic-education-and-general-upper-secondary-education-providers-is-at-an-initial-level-average/ (accessed 07 June 2020).

FINEEC (2016), *National Plan for Education Evaluation 2016-2019,* FINEEC, Helsinki, https://karvi.fi/app/uploads/2016/06/National-Plan-for-Education-Evaluations-2016-2019.pdf.

Government of Finland (2017), *Finland, a Land of Solutions: Mid-term Review - Government Action Plan, 2017–2019*, Government Publications, Vol. 7/2017, Helsinki, https://valtioneuvosto.fi/documents/10184/321857/Government+action+plan+28092017+en.pdf.

Government of Finland (2016), "Government proposal to Parliament to amend section 127d of Student Assistance and Income Tax Act"*, Board proposal OKM / 2016/64: Plenary Session of the Government on 03 November 2016*, Government of Finland, webpage, https://valtioneuvosto.fi/paatokset/paatos?decisionId=0900908f804e4b5b (accessed 07 June 2020).

Government of Finland (2015), *Finland, a Land of Solutions: Strategic Programme of Prime Minister Juha Sipilä's Government 29 May 2015*, Government Publications, 12/2015, Helsinki, https://vnk.fi/documents/10184/1427398/Ratkaisujen+Suomi_EN_YHDISTETTY_netti.pdf/8d2e1a66-e24a-4073-8303-ee3127fbfcac/Ratkaisujen+Suomi_EN_YHDISTETTY_netti.pdf.pdf.

Halinen, I. (2018), "The new educational curriculum in Finland"*,* in Matthes, M. et al. (eds.), *Improving the Quality of Childhood in Europe*: Vol. 7*,* Alliance for Childhood European Network Foundation, Brussels, http://www.allianceforchildhood.eu/improving-the-quality-of-childhood-in-europe-volume-7.

Korpi, A. et al. (2018), *The Competence-based Approach Steers Vocational Education and Training in the Right Direction*, Policy Brief 3/2018, Government's Analysis, Assessment and Research Activities, Helsinki, https://karvi.fi/app/uploads/2018/04/Policy-Brief_2018_The-competence-based-approach-steers-vocational-education-and-training-in-the-right-direction.pdf.

Lavonen, J., T. Korhonen and K. O. Villalba-Condori (2015), "Description of collaborative strategies to meet the challenges of Finnish education", Referencia Pedagógica, Vol. 1, http://rrp.cujae.edu.cu/index.php/rrp/article/view/142/166.

Loukkola, T. et al. (2017), *ENQA Agency Review: Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC)*, European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, 13 February 2017, Brussels, https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/FINEEC-Review-Report_FINAL.pdf.

OECD (2020*), TALIS 2018 Results (Volume II): Teachers and School Leaders as Valued Professionals*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/19cf08df-en.

OECD (2020), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume III): What School Life Means for Students' Lives*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/acd78851-en.

OECD (2020), *Foreign-born population (indicator)*, https://doi.org/10.1787/5a368e1b-en (accessed 20 April 2020).

OECD (2020), *Young population (indicator*), https://doi.org/10.1787/3d774f19-en (accessed 14 April 2020).

OECD (2020), *Learning Remotely when Schools Close: How well are Students and Schools Prepared? Insights from PISA*, OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19), OECD Publishing, Paris, https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=127_127063-iiwm328658&title=Learning-remotely-when-schools-close.

OECD (2019), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume II*): Where All Students Can Succeed, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/b5fd1b8f-en.

OECD (2019), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume I): What Students Know and Can Do*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/5f07c754-en.

OECD (2019*), Investing in Youth: Finland 2019*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/1251a123-en.

OECD (2019), *TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/1d0bc92a-en.

OECD (2019), *Education Policy Outlook 2019: Working Together to Help Students Achieve their Potential*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/2b8ad56e-en.

OECD (2019*), Education at a Glance 2019:* OECD Indicators, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en.

OECD (2018), *OECD Economic Surveys: Finland 2018*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/19990545.

OECD (2018), *Working Together: Skills and Labour Market Integration of Immigrants and their Children in Finland,* OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264305250-en.

OECD (2018), *Education at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/eag-2018-en.

OECD (2018), *Education Policy Outlook 2018: Putting Student Learning at the Centre*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://www.oecd.org/education/education-policy-outlook-2018-9789264301528-en.htm.

OECD (2017), *OECD Reviews of Innovation Policy: Finland 2017,* OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264276369-en.

OECD (2017), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students' Well-Being*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264273856-en.

OECD (2017), *Starting Strong 2017: Key OECD Indicators on Early Childhood Education and Care*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264276116-en.

OECD (2016), *OECD Economic Surveys: Finland 2016*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/eco_surveys-fin-2016-en.

OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en.

OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume II): Policies and Practices for Successful Schools*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264267510-en.

OECD (2016), *Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Country Note, Finland*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://www.oecd.org/education/school/ECECMN-Finland.pdf.

OECD (2015), *Education Policy Outlook 2015: Making Reforms Happen*, OECD Publishing, Paris. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264225442-en.

OECD (2014), *OECD Economic Surveys: Finland 2014*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/eco_surveys-fin-2014-en.

OECD (2013), *Synergies for Better Learning: An International Perspective on Evaluation and Assessment*, OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264190658-en.

OECD (2013), *OECD Skills Outlook 2013: First Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264204256-en.

OECD (2012), *Quality Matters in Early Childhood Education and Care: Finland 2012*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264173569-en.

OKM (2019), "EUR 6.8 billion budget proposal for Ministry of Education and Culture for 2020", Ministry of Education and Culture – Press Release, 07 October 2019, OKM, webpage, https://minedu.fi/en/article/-/asset_publisher/okm-n-talousarvioesitys-6-8-miljardia-euroa-vuodelle-2020 (accessed 07 June 2020).

OKM (2019), *Not in Education, Employment or Training: Review, Situation and Actions*, Publications of the OKM, Helsinki, https://minedu.fi/documents/1410845/4449678/Koulutuksen+ja+ty%C3%B6n+ulkopuolella+olevat+%28NEET%29+nuoret%2C+katsaus+tilanteeseen+ja+toimenpiteisiin/51231944-1fc0-ef0b-fc7a-afc6c975b010/Koulutuksen+ja+ty%C3%B6n+ulkopuolella+olevat+%28NEET%29+nuoret%2C+katsaus+tilanteeseen+ja+toimenpiteisiin.pdf.

OKM (2019), *The Right to Learn: an Equal Start on the Learning Path*, Publications of the OKM, Helsinki, http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/161950/Comphrehensive%20school%20education%20programme%20-%20Brochure.pdf.

OKM (2019), *Looking High and Wide: Perspectives on Cooperation between VET Providers and Universities*, Publications of the OKM, 2019/26, Helsinki, http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/161648/OKM_2019_26_Katse_korkealle_ja_horisontti_laajaksi.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

OKM (2019), *New Comprehensive School Project 2016-2018: Learner-Centred, Knowledgeable Teachers and Communal Cultural Activities - Final Report*, Publications of the OKM, Helsinki, https://minedu.fi/documents/1410845/4583171/Uusi%20peruskoulu%20-karkihanke%202016-2018%20loppuraportti/111c39fb-b2e9-b270-6778-fc0faa009661.

OKM (2018), Impact assessment of Higher Education Reforms, Publications of the OKM, 2018/33, Helsinki, http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/161051/okm33.pdf.

OKM (2018), Better Together for a Better World: Policies to Promote Internationalisation in Finnish Higher Education and Research 2017-25, Publications of the OKM, Helsinki, http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/79438/Better%20Together%20for%20Better%20World%20-%20Leaflet%202018.pdf?sequence=17&isAllowed=y.

OKM (2018), Early Childhood Education Data Warehouse: National Early Childhood Education Information in One Place, Publications of the OKM, Helsinki, https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/193218_mika_on_varda.pdf.

OKM (2018), "Forum for the Development of Early Childhood Education", Ministry of Education and Culture – News, 20 March 2018, OKM, webpage, https://minedu.fi/artikkeli/-/asset_publisher/varhaiskasvatuksen-koulutusten-kehittamiseen-foorumi (accessed 07 June 2020).

OKM (2017), "EUR 4.5 million for the development of vocational training teachers' skills", Ministry of Education and Culture – News, 13 February 2017, OKM, webpage, https://minedu.fi/artikkeli/-/asset_publisher/ammatillisen-koulutuksen-opettajien-osaamisen-kehittamiseen-4-5-miljoonaa-euroa (accessed 07 June 2020).

OKM (2016), New Comprehensive School Action Plan: Learner-centred Education, Competent Teachers and Collaborative School Culture, 09 September 2016, Publications of the OKM, Helsinki, https://minedu.fi/documents/1410845/4183002/New+Comprehensive+School+Action+Plan+2016.

OKM (2016), Government Key Project: Teacher Education Development Programme, Publications of the OKM, Finland, Helsinki, https://minedu.fi/documents/1410845/4183002/Teacher+Education+Development+Programme+2016.

OKM (2016), The Educational Tracks and Integration of Immigrants – Problematic Areas and Proposals for Actions, Publications of the OKM, Helsinki, http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/64986/okm6.pdf.

OKM (2009), Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland 2009–2015, Publications of the OKM 2009/23, Helsinki, https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/planipolis/files/ressources/finland_higher_education_strategy.pdf.

Pareliussen, J. et al. (2016), "Employment and skills in Finland", *OECD Economics Department Working Papers*, No. 1320, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/5jlv239kcq9r-en.

Parliament of Finland (2019), *Matriculation Examination Act*, L.502/2019, 12 April 2019, Finlex, Ministry of Justice of Finland, Helsinki, https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2019/20190502.

Parliament of Finland (2018), *Act on Early Childhood Education and Care,* L. 540/2018, 13 July 2018, Finlex, Ministry of Justice of Finland, Helsinki, https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2018/20180540.

Parliament of Finland (2017), *Act on the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Competence Modules,* L.93/2017, 10 February 2017, Finlex, Ministry of Justice of Finland, Helsinki, https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/182270_act_93-2017.pdf.

Parliament of Finland (2017), *Vocational Training Act*, L.531/2017, 11 August 2017, Finlex, Ministry of Justice of Finland, Helsinki, https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2017/20170531.

Parliament of Finland (2014), *Universities of Applied Sciences Act,* L.932/2014, Finlex, Ministry of Justice of Finland, Helsinki, https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2014/en20140932_20160563.pdf.

Parliament of Finland (2013), *Act on the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre*, L.1295/2013, Finlex, Ministry of Justice of Finland, Helsinki, https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/2013/en20131295.pdf.

Parliament of Finland (2013), *Student Welfare Act*, L.1287/2013, 30 December 2013, Finlex, Ministry of Justice of Finland, Helsinki, https://www.finlex.fi/sv/laki/alkup/2013/20131287.

Parliament of Finland (2009), *Universities Act*, L.558/2009, Finlex, Ministry of Justice of Finland, Helsinki, https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2009/en20090558.pdf.

Pietarinen, J., K. Pyhältö and T. Soini (2017), "Large-scale curriculum reform in Finland – exploring the interrelation between implementation strategy, the function of the reform, and curriculum coherence*"*, *The Curriculum Journal*, Vol. 28/1, pp. 22-40, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09585176.2016.1179205?needAccess=true.

Pitkänen, K. et al. (2017), *State Finances: Effects of Austerity on Educational and Cultural Rights*, 27/2017, FINEEC, Helsinki, https://karvi.fi/app/uploads/2017/11/KARVI_2717.pdf.

Saarinen, J. et al. (2019), *National Core Curriculum for Pre-Primary and Basic Education: 2014 Implementation Evaluation,* 1/2019, FINEEC, Helsinki, https://karvi.fi/app/uploads/2019/01/KARVI_0119.pdf.

Statistics Finland (2016), "Research and development 2015*", Science, Technology and Information Society 2016*, 27 October 2016, Helsinki, http://stat.fi/til/tkke/2015/tkke_2015_2016-10-27_en.pdf.

STM (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health) (2019), G*overnment Action Plan for Gender Equality 2016–2019: Final Report*, Publications of STM, 2019/19, Helsinki, http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/161413/19_2019_Hallituksen%20tasa-arvo-ohjelma_loppuraportti_netti.pdf.

STM (2017), *Government Action Plan for Gender Equality 2016–2019*, Publications of STM, 2017/3, Helsinki, http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/79305/03_2017_Tasa-arvo-hjelma_Enkku_kansilla.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

Taguma, M., I. Litjens and K. Makowiecki (2012), *Quality Matters in Early Childhood Education and Care: Finland 2012*, Quality Matters in Early Childhood Education and Care, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264173569-en.

Tarhan, H. et al. (2019), "Understanding teacher evaluation in Finland: a professional development framework"*, Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 44/4, https://ro.ecu.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4015&context=ajte.

Tian, M. and M. Risku (2019), "A distributed leadership perspective on the Finnish curriculum reform 2014", *Journal of Curriculum Studies,* Vol. 51/2, pp. 229-244, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00220272.2018.1499806?needAccess=true.

Tuominen, S. (2020), *Finland: Yle Etäkoulu (Yle Distance School),* Education Continuity Stories Series, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://oecdedutoday.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Finland-Yle-Distant-School.pdf.

Vlasov, J. et al. (2019), *Guidelines and Recommendations for Evaluating the Quality of Early Childhood Education and Care*, FINEEC Publications 5/2019, Helsinki, https://karvi.fi/app/uploads/2018/10/KARVI_vaka_laadun-arvioinnin-perusteet-ja-suositukset.pdf.

NOTES

[1] On 25 May 2018, the OECD Council invited Colombia to become a Member. While Colombia is included in the OECD averages reported in this publication for data from Education at a Glance, the Programme for International Student Assessment and the Teaching and Learning International Survey, at the time of preparation of these OECD datasets, Colombia was in the process of completing its domestic procedures for ratification and the deposit of Colombia's instrument of accession to the OECD Convention was pending.

[2] For Finland, this refers to minimum teaching time.

Photo credits: Cover © Shutterstock/Sasha Chebotarev

This document has also been published as:

OECD (2020), *Education Policy Outlook: Finland,* available at:
www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/country-profile-Finland-2020.pdf.

www.oecd.org/edu/policyoutlook.htm

BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

Co-funded by the European Union