



COUNTRY STUDY

FINLAND

Country Monitoring Report

Finland is among the better performing EU countries when it comes to education and training. The country has taken ambitious measures to tackle youth and long-term unemployment over the last years. However, several challenges have emerged and the Finnish government needs to find a way to tackle the problem of early school-leaving and to improve basic skills, especially concerning migrants.

Recommendations

- Strengthen efforts to tackle early school-dropouts and improve basic skills
- Pay special attention to migrants regarding basic skills education
- Increase the number of apprenticeships





Finland is among the better performing EU countries when it comes to education and training. The country has taken ambitious measures to tackle youth and long-term unemployment over the last years. However, several challenges have emerged and the Finnish government needs to find a way to tackle the problem of early school-leaving and to improve basic skills, especially concerning migrants.

Recommendations

- Strengthen efforts to tackle early school-dropouts and improve basic skills
- Pay special attention to migrants regarding basic skills education
- Increase the number of apprenticeships

FINLAND

Country Monitoring Report

1. Promoting access and participation in LLL

Finland has a level of adult participation in lifelong learning which is the third highest in the EU (24.9 % in 2013, well above the EU average of 10.5 %). However, participation for older and low-skilled adults is significantly lower than for the overall population, although the rates are still above EU average. The estimated participation rate for those aged 55-64 was 13.5 % (EU average 5.7 %), while for the low-skilled it was just 10.7 %. Unlike in many other Member States, participation of people born outside Finland was actually higher (28 %) than of those born in the country (24.3 %).

According to the European Commission, Finland is currently working on establishing a lifelong learning system based on individual needs. The provision of lifelong learning is currently determined from the supply side, and the training provided does not therefore necessarily correspond to individual needs.

In order to develop a more demand-driven system, the Ministry of Education and Culture has proposed introducing personal training accounts for learners¹. However, our Finnish Members point out that nothing has happened so far since the proposal was published a few years ago. The common lack of knowledge about the project proves that the proposal is still in a premature phase and needs to be further developed.

2. Vocational Education and Training

Whereas participation of upper secondary students in vocational education and training has traditionally been very high in Finland, the number of apprenticeships has been customarily relatively low in Finland. However, Finland augmented the provision of VET and apprenticeships and has already increased the number of available places on vocational-study courses in areas where demand is highest, and has created around 1 700 new apprenticeship placements. Apprenticeship places have been increased particularly in geographical areas where there were previously low numbers of placements available relative to the population of the relevant age group. This is a positive, albeit fairly limited development, as the number of apprenticeships available remains far from sufficient.

One of the means to raise the provision of VET and apprenticeships was certainly Finland's major initiative called 'The social guarantee for young people: education, work and tailored services', which has been in existence since 2006, to be finally expanded in January 2013. Eventually, this Finnish initiative has served as example for the EU's recommendation of a youth guarantee for all EU Member States.

Moreover, the transition between vocational education and the labour market appears to be quite successful, as the employment rate of recent upper secondary

¹ European Commission (2014). *Education and Training Monitoring Report – Finland*.



graduates stood at 75.9 % in 2013, which is above the EU average.

3. Validation of NFIL

Validation of non-formal and informal learning (NFIL) has relatively long and established roots in Finland. However, Finland has no single law regarding validation of non-formal and informal learning, but laws and regulations for each field of education define validation separately. These fields include general upper secondary education, vocational education and training (including adult VET), and higher education. Validation of NFIL is a subjective right of the individual and the competences of an individual should be validated regardless of when and where they have been acquired. In Finland validation procedures are embedded in formal qualification structures in VET and in HE². Currently there are more than 300 non-formal and informal education institutes (folk high schools, worker's institutes, adult education centres, summer universities, sport training centres and study centres). Furthermore, additional studies for adults exists which are provided by universities (Open University and Open University of applied science) as well as vocational schools.

Furthermore, our Finnish members refer to information provided by the Central Confederation of Trade Unions saying that 2/3 of the population from an age range of 25-64 years attended organised training during the last 12 months, which was mostly work-related.

Another 2/3 of the population is willing to attend work-related training in near future. The main group of attendants is mostly composed of young, well-educated female employees in southern Finland. In Finland, various forms of organized support and guidance in awareness building of lifelong learning exist. As our members point out, there has for

² European Commission; Cedefop; ICF International (2014). *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2014: country report Finland*.

example been a training program for Union Learning Representatives, whose task is to help workers to find accurate programs to validate their skills and competences. These persons can be co-workers and/or a steward as a Competence Pilot (ULR) and/or shop stewards at the workplace. The aim is to understand the worker/employee as a lifelong learner, to recognize the outcomes in lifelong learning and to empower workers by education, informal, non-formal learning. Moreover, they receive tools and methods for helping workers with learning disabilities and they also network with vocational training organisations and NVQ (National Vocational Qualifications) in order to support workers. The study program for Union Learning Representative is developed together with the Central Confederation of Trade Unions and the Worker's Education Association in Finland (Työväen Sivistysliitto), which is a member organisation of our Finnish members.

4. Early-school Leaving

Finland is performing better than the EU average in tackling early school leaving (ESL) (with a rate of 9.3 % of early school leavers compared to an EU average of 12.0 % in 2013). However, its rate has remained fairly stable over the last decade, whereas the EU average has improved. Moreover, the level of basic skills of 15 year olds deteriorated, especially the level of young migrants. As a matter of fact, migrants, in particular boys, present a significantly higher rate in ESL, with 14.9% in 2012. Nonetheless, Finland maintained its position as one of the EU's top performers in education, in particular in science, and is still among the top five countries worldwide.

In order to fight against these challenges (reduce ESL and improve basic skills), the Finnish authorities decided in 2013 to introduce a mandatory pre-school year that children would start at age six. It remains though to be seen whether this measures will help in tackling early school leaving. Additionally, the Finnish government introduced a preparatory education



programme for general upper-secondary education that is particularly aiming migrants. Finland's Youth Guarantee could also help to lower the early school leaving rate in the future, as it encourages people who have left education early to return to education or training through re-entry into education. Overall, Finland still succeeds in combining high levels of performance with equity in education.

Early detection and intervention mechanisms allow educators to identify students who are struggling and to offer them the necessary support early on³⁴.

5. NEETs

The rate of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) increased slightly over the last years and was 9.3 % in 2013, compared to 7.8% in 2008.

As already mentioned above, Finland has also been implementing 'The social guarantee for young people: education, work and tailored services', a major initiative to inter alia increase the provision of vocational education and training and apprenticeships. The Guarantee is currently in its full implementation phase and its impact was evaluated for the first time in March 2014 by the Ministry for Employment and the Economy. Implementation of the educational guarantee part is considered to have been more successful than that of other services and measures. However, Finland needs to make efforts to meet the requirements of the programme also in terms of social, health and rehabilitation services. This could be achieved by taking better account of young NEETs and targeting specific subgroups combined with stronger attention to vocational education and training apprenticeships.

Overall, the Youth Guarantee has successfully allowed to improve the long-term labour market

³ European Commission; Cedefop; ICF International (2014). *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2014: country report Finland*.

⁴ European Commission (2014). *Education and Training Monitoring Report – Croatia*.

prospects of the young unemployed or inactive. 67.8 % of guarantee beneficiaries started a job, a traineeship, apprenticeship or further education within four months of registering with the Finnish public employment service (after six months this even increased to 89.6 % of guarantee beneficiaries)⁵⁶.

6. Citizenship education

Citizenship education is part of the compulsory curriculum and is taught as a separate subject at lower secondary and upper secondary education in Finland. However, citizenship education is also embedded in primary education where it is integrated in other subjects (Environmental and natural sciences, history, biology and geography), thus it is based on a cross-curricular approach at primary level. It is worth noticing that Finland carries out national tests for monitoring purposes focused, not on particular subjects, but on competences in particular fields. Social and civic competences are included on a periodic basis. In 2011, 15-year old students' knowledge, skills and attitudes relating to civic and citizenship education and active participation were tested⁷.

With regards to adults, the non-formal and informal sector offers quite a lot of opportunities. As reported by our Finnish members, the essential feature of non-formal education, such as liberal adult education, is the diversity of curricula, voluntary nature of participation and use of learner-based methods. The institutes set up objectives independently and have independent responsibility over the use of the state subsidy. As already mentioned above, currently there are more than 300 non-formal and informal education institutes (folk high schools, worker's institutes, adult education centres, summer universities, sport training centres and study centres). Furthermore, additional studies for

⁵ European Commission; Cedefop; ICF International (2014). *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2014: country report Finland*.

⁶ European Commission (2014). *Education and Training Monitoring Report – Finland*.

⁷ European Commission; Eurydice; Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (2012). *Citizenship Education in Europe*.



adults exists which are provided by universities (Open University and Open University of applied science) as well as vocational schools.

7. Council recommendations

The Council recommendations from 2014 and 2015 confirm that Finland has taken relevant and ambitious measures to tackle youth and long-term unemployment. They both recommended the Finnish government to pursue efforts to improve the employability of young people and the long-term unemployed, focusing particularly on developing job-relevant skills⁸.

⁸ European Council (2014). *Council Recommendation of 8 July 2014 on the 2014 National Reform Programme of Finland and delivering a Council opinion on the 2014 Convergence Programme of Finland*. European Council (2015). *Council Recommendation of 14 July 2015 on the 2015 National Reform Programme of Finland and delivering a Council opinion on the 2015 Convergence Programme of Finland*.







Rue du Commerce | Handelsstraat 22
1000 Brussels
Belgium
T +32 2 500 10 20
F +32 2 500 10 30

Twitter: @SOLIDAR_EU
Facebook: SOLIDAR
www.solidar.org
solidar@solidar.org



Authors in alphabetical order: Inari
Juntumaa – TSL (Työväen sivistysliitto), Julie
Roden – SOLIDAR Foundation Osijek; Julie
Roden – SOLIDAR Foundation

SOLIDAR, together with our national members and partners, has developed 15 case studies in 2014, presenting innovative, effective, sustainable and tailor made models to promote social inclusion, the social economy and quality job creation by adapting a social investment approach. In their daily work, SOLIDAR members and partners anticipate new or unmet needs of socio-economically vulnerable people and empower them to actively participate in society and to access the labour market.

These case studies gather strong evidence of the social impact of the activities undertaken by our members and partners to help Member States making progress towards the achievement of the social and employment objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the implementation of the Social Investment Package.

SOLIDAR Foundation in cooperation with national members and partners has gathered an examples of national programmes and initiatives that present the innovative and successful approaches that contribute to the process of building inclusive learning societies. The case studies are centred on themes of lifelong learning, civic and citizenship education, the validation of learning outcomes of non-formal and informal learning, and NEETs (young people Not in Employment, Education or Training).

