

Reinforcing the 2018 VET reform

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 FINLAND

Timeline

2019 Implementation 2020 Implementation 2021 Implementation
2022 Implementation 2023 Completed

ID number 36324

Background

The implementation of the reform needs to be reinforced to support its original objective – to increase the quality of VET.

Objectives

The Government Programme 2019-23 states: ‘We will reinforce the implementation of the reform of vocational education and training, particularly supporting the provision of [...] workplace learning and the development of apprenticeships. Together with the education providers, the Ministry [of Education and Culture] must draw up a model to implement full school days, which may also be delivered by making use of workplace learning and by promoting innovative local solutions. We will increase the number of teachers. In particular, we will take into account the appropriate level of resources for contact teaching and guidance in relation to the changed requirements.’

The objective is also to compensate for the financial cuts made in recent years and to employ more teachers.

Description

A new Act on VET was adopted in June 2017 and entered into force in January 2018. The focus of the implementation of this latest reform is on the following elements:

- (a) a single Act on VET, i.e. VET for young people and adults within the same framework;
- (b) a single licence to provide education and to award qualifications;
- (c) flexible application and admission systems;
- (d) a clearer range of qualifications that better meets the needs of working life;
- (e) a single competence-based approach to completing qualifications;
- (f) competence-based and individual study paths for all;
- (g) more versatile learning environments and more study at workplaces based on training agreements and apprenticeship training;
- (h) labour policy education to become part of the VET system and targeted at the unemployed or those at risk of unemployment;

- (i) one coherent funding system for vocational upper secondary education and training, vocational further education and training, apprenticeship training and labour policy education leading to qualifications that encourage effectiveness of outcomes.

At the end of 2019, the Ministry of Education and Culture granted an additional EUR 20 million for employing VET teachers. Together with the Finnish National Agency for Education, VET providers and representatives of working life, the ministry also decided to collect additional feedback from the world of work (from workplace instructors and employers) to support VET providers' quality assurance and financing.

2019 Implementation

The ministry postponed the feedback collection to be used for quality assurance and financing until July 2021.

2020 Implementation

The draft questionnaires were prepared by the education ministry, EDUFI, VET providers and representatives of the world of work and were sent to VET providers for comments in June 2020 – one for workplace instructors and one for employers. The themes of the questions included customer-oriented approaches, the agreement process (the questionnaire to employers also included a question on how 'satisfied [they are] with the way the institution takes care of the practical matters related to drawing up apprenticeship agreements and training agreements'), guidance and support, effectiveness and quality.

The Ministry of Education and Culture appointed, until the end of 2020, an expert group to further develop apprenticeship training. In its final report, the group emphasised the significance of information and guidance and counselling for increasing the popularity of apprenticeship. According to the report, the transition from training agreement to apprenticeship training should be flexibly utilised and a transition to apprenticeship training in particular, should be favoured at the final stage of studies. The recommendations of the group are to help policy makers but in 2020, no concrete measures were implemented. The follow-up to the proposals is to be made through existing data collection systems, such as feedback from students and employers.

Note: The Act on VET has been temporarily amended with regard to the demonstration of skills and competence. If, for reasons attributable to the coronavirus epidemic, a demonstration of the professional skills and competence required to pass a qualification module cannot be conducted in authentic work situations and processes, a student may demonstrate his or her professional skills and competence by performing other practical tasks that are as similar to authentic work situations and processes as possible. In addition, the demonstration of skills and competence can be supplemented with other types of competence assessment more flexibly than at present. The temporary law change was valid from 1 July 2020 to 31 July 2021.

2021 Implementation

Learner path to working life and the competences that meet the needs of businesses play a key role in ensuring the long-term sustainability of central government finances. The VET reform brought about a major change in the operating culture, while financing was weakened. The job profile of vocational teachers was changed radically by the reform. The day-to-day tasks of teaching decreased and teachers instead focused on training individual students in various challenges, keeping in touch with learning places in working life and performing student administrative tasks. The National Audit Office of Finland recommended using the Income Register as a source of information when monitoring the effectiveness of VET (by verifying the employment of VET graduates).

2022 Implementation

In 2022, the national feedback system was completed. The collection of feedback from workplaces was supplemented with a survey for employers. This survey was used to monitor the satisfaction of employers with the activity of a particular vocational institution to organise education in cooperation with the working life.

In 2022, it was five years since the reform of vocational education started and evaluation of its implementation was published. The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) carried out two evaluations.

The first one produced information on the functionality of the practices related to personalisation, guidance, as well as identification and recognition of prior learning, and on the implementation of opportunities for choice for students. The second evaluation focused on processes and practices related to cooperation with workplaces. It provided information about the implementation of workplace education and training, the ways in which it has been implemented and its functionality and effectiveness. This evaluation also produced information on the structures and forms of cooperation between VET providers and employers, their effectiveness and related development needs.

FINEEC also started an overall evaluation of the qualifications structure of VET (to be completed in 2023).

2023 Completed

The follow-up of the VET reform was conducted in 2023 by the National Audit Office of Finland. Based on the audit, the reform's objectives were achieved.

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) conducted an evaluation of the development processes and effectiveness of the VET qualification system (*The qualification system and changing competence needs*). The evaluation examined how effective the processes for developing the qualification system are in responding to the vocational skills needs of working life and society. In addition, the evaluation reviewed the functionality of the current qualification system in terms of developing the skills of those already in the workforce.

The main finding of the report was that while the qualification system for vocational education in Finland largely meets the needs of working life, there is a need for more flexibility. This includes offering more modular education opportunities, enabling the combination of different qualification parts, and increasing stakeholder involvement, particularly from employers and students. The report also highlighted that better use of predictive data and clearer communication between various actors is required to improve the system's responsiveness to rapidly changing skill demands in the workforce.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education and Culture
- Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI)
- Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC)
- National Audit Office of Finland

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Young people (15-29 years old)
Young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)
Learners with migrant background, including refugees
Learners at risk of early leaving or/and early leavers
Learners with disabilities

Low-skilled/qualified persons

Learners from other groups at risk of exclusion (minorities, people with fewer opportunities due to geographical location or social-economic disadvantaged position)

Education professionals

Teachers

Trainers

School leaders

Adult educators

Guidance practitioners

Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Coordinating VET and other policies

Optimising VET funding

Further developing national quality assurance systems

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Using learning-outcome-based approaches and modularisation

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Teachers, trainers and school leaders competences

Attractiveness of the teaching and training profession/career

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Permeability between IVET and CVET and general and vocational pathways, academic and professional higher education

Lifelong guidance

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[EUR 20 million for the recruitment of VET teachers, Ministry of Education and Culture news](#)

[Working life feedback to VET, EDUFI news](#)

[Updated recommendations for early childhood education and care, schools, education institutions and higher education institutions to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, Ministry of Education and Culture press release](#)

[EUR 15 million strategy funding for the development of vocational education and training, Ministry of Education and Culture press release \(in Finnish\)](#)

[More information, guidance for flexible transitions - proposals from the working group to increase the popularity of apprenticeships, Ministry of Education and Culture press release \(in Finnish\)](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

Developing upper secondary education content

The development comprises several actions.

 FINLAND

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2022 Completed

Programme for quality and equality in VET

The programme to develop quality and equality in VET is mainly implemented through comprehensive development projects funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish National Agency for Education. The projects are mainly wide-ranging network projects with one coordinator.

 FINLAND

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2021 Completed

Roadmap for skills and learning until 2040

The targets presented in the roadmap and the measures needed to achieve it are based on the state of play in education and research as well as on key factors for changing the education and research environment.

 FINLAND

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” **Cite as**

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Reinforcing the 2018 VET reform: Finland. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/36324>