

Reform of support for learning

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

REGULATION/LEGISLATION

 FINLAND

Timeline

2023 Design

2024 Legislative process

2025 Implementation

ID number 46841

Background

In VET, a student may receive special needs support if, due to learning difficulties, disability, illness or other reasons, they need long-term or regular special needs support for learning and studying. In the case of severe learning difficulties or a severe disability or illness, they have the right to receive individual, comprehensive, and diverse intensive special needs support. Intensive special needs support is provided by vocational special education institutions.

Special needs support and intensive special needs support are offered to ensure that the students are able to achieve the vocational competence requirements or learning objectives in accordance with the national qualification requirements.

According to the 2021 assessment of the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre, special needs support in VET should be more suitable for different forms of qualifications, qualification units and learning environments. In 2023, around 5% of new VET students needed special needs support. Not all students in need of the special needs support always receive it.

The government programme that came into effect in 2023 aims to make the support for learning clearer and unify the chain of support from early childhood education and care to upper secondary education. The aim is also to support completion of qualifications and to decrease the number of early leavers in VET. Different forms and levels of support is to be developed in cooperation with VET providers, vocational special education institutions, the Finnish National Agency for Education and the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Objectives

The reform of the support for learning aims to:

- (a) clarify and unify the chain of support for learning from early childhood education and care to upper secondary education;
- (b) clarify the relationship between special needs support and other forms of support for learning;
- (c) strengthen the cooperation between special education teachers, vocational teachers and other guidance staff, and increase the competence in special needs support;
- (d) make the identification of special needs support faster and more effective.

Description

The reform of the support for learning is based on the government programme that came into effect in 2023. The reform covers all levels of education from early childhood education and care to upper secondary education. The reform requires legislative changes, and the implementation is supported by the Finnish National Agency for Education. The implementation is also supported by government grants to help VET providers to develop special needs support in their own organisations and in collaboration with other VET providers.

The legislative changes in support for learning in VET are planned to come into effect in 2026.

2023 Design

In September 2023, the Ministry of Education and Culture appointed a working group to prepare the reform of support for learning in general upper secondary and VET. The working group was represented by the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, and the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI). The group collaborated with the Association of Finnish Cities and Municipalities.

The working group created guidelines for the reform by consulting different experts and stakeholders.

In December, EDUFI issued EUR 10 million in government grants to 63 projects that aim to develop the support for learning from different viewpoints. The development projects represent VET providers from all around Finland. The project outcomes can be applied nationally.

2024 Legislative process

In 2024, the working group prepared drafts of the needed legislative changes. The drafts were circulated for comments during the summer, and the government proposal for new law sections was prepared taking into consideration the comments from stakeholders. In October, the proposal was submitted to the Parliament. In December 2024, the Finnish Parliament approved the legislative changes related to the reform of the support for learning. The law will enter into force in August 2026.

The development projects that received funding in 2023 were launched in spring 2024. The government also supported additional 18 projects (approximately EUR 3 million) to develop support for learning. During the year EDUFI organised webinars and meetings to support the project implementation.

The projects supported expanding and targeting the currently limited intensive special needs support in vocational special education institutions. The initial findings from the projects showed that some VET providers have already achieved this objective.

2025 Implementation

In 2025, the implementation of the reform of the support for learning was promoted through webinars targeted at VET providers, and the update of the guide concerning special support in VET was initiated at EDUFI. The aim was to revise the guide to reflect the legislative changes.

The development projects, launched in 2024 and funded by EDUFI, operated independently during the year. By the end of 2015, a closing seminar was held for the projects, providing an opportunity for VET providers to share their results and good practices.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education and Culture
- Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Young people (15-29 years old)
Learners with disabilities

Education professionals

Teachers
Trainers

Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET promoting equality of opportunities

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Special needs support as a resource - Evaluation of the provision of special needs support in vocational education and training](#)

“ ... ” Cite as

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<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/46841>

