
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

FINLAND

SYSTEM DESCRIPTION



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CHAPTER 1.

Summary of main elements and distinctive features of VET

Summary of main elements

The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for strategic and normative steering of vocational education and training (VET) and leads national development. National VET objectives and core subjects are determined by the government.

Authorisations to provide VET are granted by the ministry. They cover VET fields, number of learners, language of instruction, locations, special education tasks and other issues. VET providers may also be assigned tasks to organise training in compliance with the labour market policy.

A VET provider may be a local authority, municipal training consortium, foundation, other registered association or State-owned company. These organise training in their areas of competence, matching provision with local labour market needs. They decide independently on how the training is carried out, the use of learning environments and pedagogical solutions.

Around 40% of learners who completed basic education enrol in initial VET (IVET) immediately after; they obtain their VET qualifications at vocational institutions or through apprenticeships. Since 2021, it is compulsory for all to study at least until the age of 18 (previously 16), including VET. Vocational qualifications are available for both young learners and adults.

There are 42 initial vocational qualifications (EQF 4), 64 further (EQF 4) and 54 specialist vocational qualifications (EQF 5). Admission to IVET programmes is based on a basic education certificate; for continuing VET (CVET: further and specialist) it is on a case-by-case basis, taking work experience into consideration.

IVET suits adults without a formal qualification or those who want to change profession. CVET programmes are mainly for adults with previous work experience. Adults may benefit from study leave. Leave that is 2 months or longer qualifies for the adult education allowance for up to 15 months, depending on the applicant's work history. The allowance is equal to the amount of the earnings-related unemployment allowance.

An initial vocational qualification requires 180 competence points (cp) comprising vocational units (compulsory and optional) and common units (communication, maths, science, citizenship and skills for working life) included in all IVET programmes. The nominal duration is 3 years, depending on the individual personal competence development plan. Further vocational qualifications usually require 150 cp and specialist vocational qualifications 180 cp, consisting mainly of vocational units. All include work-based learning.

The legislation does not stipulate a maximum or minimum amount on work-based learning (WBL). It is planned as part of the learner's personal competence development plan and implemented through an apprenticeship agreement (written fixed-term employment contract) or a training agreement. The latter does not establish an employment relationship with the training company; learners do not receive salary and employers do not receive training compensation.

WBL forms may alter within a programme: a learner may transfer from training to apprenticeship agreement when the prerequisites for concluding such an agreement are met.

All VET programmes ensure eligibility for higher education studies.

National qualifications requirements ensure standardised vocational competence and are the basis for evaluating learning outcomes. The Finnish National Agency for Education develops them in tripartite cooperation between teachers, learners and education providers, employers and employees.

Representatives from enterprises contribute to developing national qualification requirements through sectoral working-life committees; they also organise and plan workplace training and competence tests, as well as assessing the tests.

Distinctive features

Finnish VET is competence-based and learner-oriented. A personal competence development plan is drawn up for each learner. It charts and recognises the skills previously acquired by the learner and outlines any further competences the learner needs and how they can be acquired in different learning environments.

There are no final exams in VET. Once learners successfully complete their personal competence development plan,

they acquire a qualification.

VET supports lifelong learning and learners' development as human beings and members of society. It provides learners with the knowledge and skills necessary in further studies and promotes employment.

VET is also an attractive choice because of its flexibility and good job and study prospects: graduates may enrol in higher education or enter the labour market. The fact that VET is developed and delivered in close cooperation with the labour market guarantees its quality and attractiveness. Guided and goal-oriented learning at the workplace takes place in versatile learning environments, both at home and abroad, and is based on practical work tasks.

VET teachers and trainers are respected professionals. A career as a VET teacher is generally considered attractive. This is reflected in the high number of learners applying for VET training programmes, which invariably exceeds intake. Around one third of eligible applicants are admitted to training.

CHAPTER 2.

Main challenges and policy responses

Finnish VET has recently undergone the most extensive reform in almost 20 years, aiming at more efficient and flexible, competence-based and customer-oriented VET that better matches qualifications to labour market needs.

The need to increase the share of WBL is one of the challenges it addresses. Further developing pedagogical thinking and practices, improving learning environments, and cooperation between workplaces and VET providers is required to achieve this objective. A sufficient number of workplaces and competent trainers, support and guidance and [quality assurance](#) are also key.

The COVID-19 pandemic has complicated the organisation of WBL, especially in the service branch where it has become difficult to find workplaces for learners. VET provider own facilities, such as school restaurants, can be utilised in this exceptional situation. In 2021, the situation normalised as vaccinations affect the picture.

Teachers' jobs include more guidance: individual study paths increase the importance of the guidance and support provided for learners. EUR 80 million has been allocated through the government programme for recruiting vocational teachers and instructors in 2020.

The reform also changes how VET is financed. Since 2018, a single funding system with uniform criteria has covered all VET programmes, including [CVET](#) and apprenticeships. The financing model has gradually started to move towards performance and efficiency funding; this will increase to 20% and 10% respectively by 2022, reducing the core funding to 70% from the current 95%. Performance funding is based on the number of completed qualifications and qualification units; effectiveness funding is based on learners' access to employment, pursuit of further education and feedback from both learners and the labour market.

CHAPTER 3.

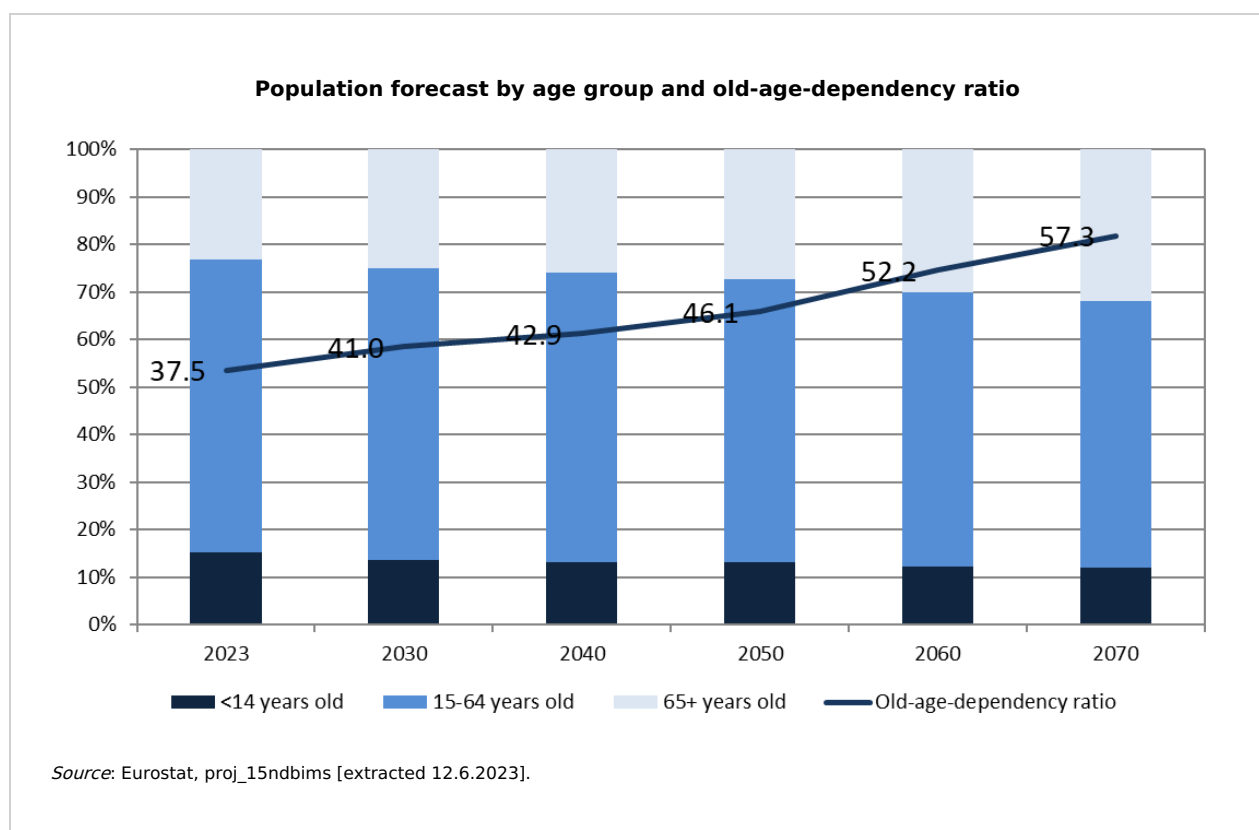
External factors influencing VET

3.1 Demographics

Population in 2022: 5 548 241. It has increased by 0.8% since 2017 mainly due to immigration (1).

As in many other EU countries, the population is ageing, but the share of young people remains slightly above the EU-27 average. Since 2000, immigration to the country has increased, including the increased number of asylum seekers.

The old-age-dependency ratio is expected to increase from 37.5 in 2021 to 57.3 in 2070. This is forcing the [retirement age](#) to increase, reaching 62.8 years (expected retirement age for 25-year-olds in 2023).



According to population forecasts, the share of those aged over 65 is increasing faster than the EU average. This is mostly due to the 'baby-boomer' generations, born after World War II, reaching pensionable age.

Demographic challenges have an impact on the availability of the labour force, growth of the economy and, thus, provision of welfare services. The changing population structure will require improving attainment, preventing early leaving from education and training, facilitating young people's transition to further education and making flexible learning paths for completing qualifications.

The country has two official languages, Finnish and Swedish.

Education and training institutions teach in Finnish and Swedish, but bilingual providers also exist, offering education in some foreign languages, mostly in English. In the Sámi language regions VET is also provided in a Sámi language.

The language of instruction for initial and continuing VET is decided in the licence for VET provision, granted by the education ministry.

3.2 Economics

Most companies are small- and medium-sized.

The highest share of the labour force is in human health and social work, manufacturing and in professional, scientific and technical activities.

Employees (age 15 to 74) by economic sector in 2022

	(thousand)	%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing; mining and quarrying	102	3.9
Manufacturing; electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning and water supply; sewerage and wa	366	14.0
Construction	184	7.0
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	290	11.1
Transportation and storage	136	5.2
Accommodation and food service activities	100	3.8
Information and communication	134	5.1
Financial, insurance and real estate activities	77	2.9
Professional, scientific and technical activities; administrative and support service activities	333	12.7
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	122	4.7
Education	184	7.0
Human health and social work activities	415	15.8
Arts, entertainment and recreation; other service activities	157	6.0
Industry unknown	19	0.7
Total	2 619	100.0

Source: Statistics Finland. <https://www.tilastokeskus.fi/aihe/tyo-palkat-ja-toimeentulo>

The main **export sectors** are:

- chemical industry products (19%)
- forest industry products (18%)
- metal and metal products (15%)
- machinery and equipment (15%)

3.3 Labour market

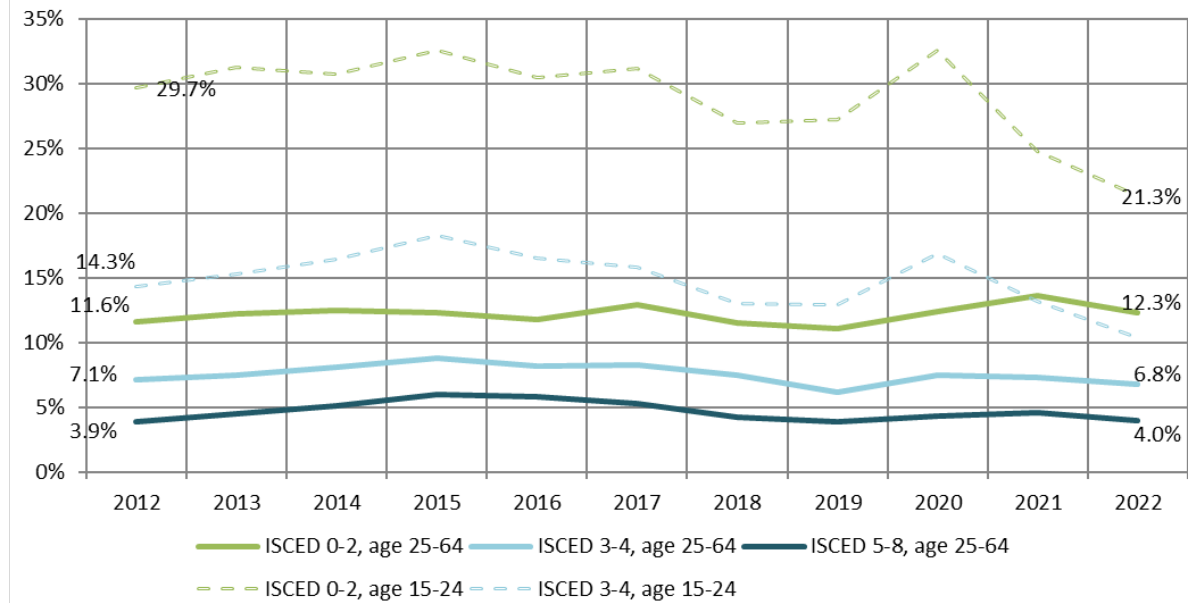
Relatively few professions require a specific type of education. Education requirements mainly exist in health care, teaching, rescue and security jobs. Also, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church requires its employees to have education in the field. Such professions usually require a higher education degree.

A few regulated professions require a vocational qualification. Examples are nurses, prison and security guards, construction divers and chimney sweeps.

The labour market is, therefore, considered flexible.

Total unemployment in 2022: 5.8% (5.4 % in EU-27); it decreased by 0.3 percentage points since 2018 (2).

Unemployment rate (aged 15-24 and 25-64) by education attainment level in 2012-22



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series; low reliability for ISCED 5-8, age 15-24.
 ISCED 0-2 = less than primary, primary and lower secondary education.
 ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.
 ISCED 5-8 = tertiary education.
 Source: Eurostat, ifsa_urgaed [extracted 12.10.2023].

Unemployment is distributed unevenly between those with low- and high-level qualifications. In Finland, the financial crisis had less impact on unemployment than in other European countries.

During the crisis there was only a slight increase in unemployment, and the difference between the unemployment rates of the three categories above remained quite stable. During the COVID-19 pandemic unemployment, especially in tourism, catering and domestic services, increased considerably.

Young people (15-24) with low qualifications (ISCED 0-2) are much more exposed to unemployment than older people who have more working experience. Higher level qualifications also mean less unemployment for young people.

The employment rate of VET graduates (age 20-34, all ISCED levels) in Finland increased from 76.9% in 2018 to 78% in 2022. At the same period, for 20-34-year-old people with ISCED levels 3 and 4 qualifications, the employment rate was slightly higher.

Employment rate of VET graduates (20 to 34 years old, ISCED levels 3 and 4)



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series.
 ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.
 Source: Eurostat, edat_lfse_24 [extracted 12.6.2023].

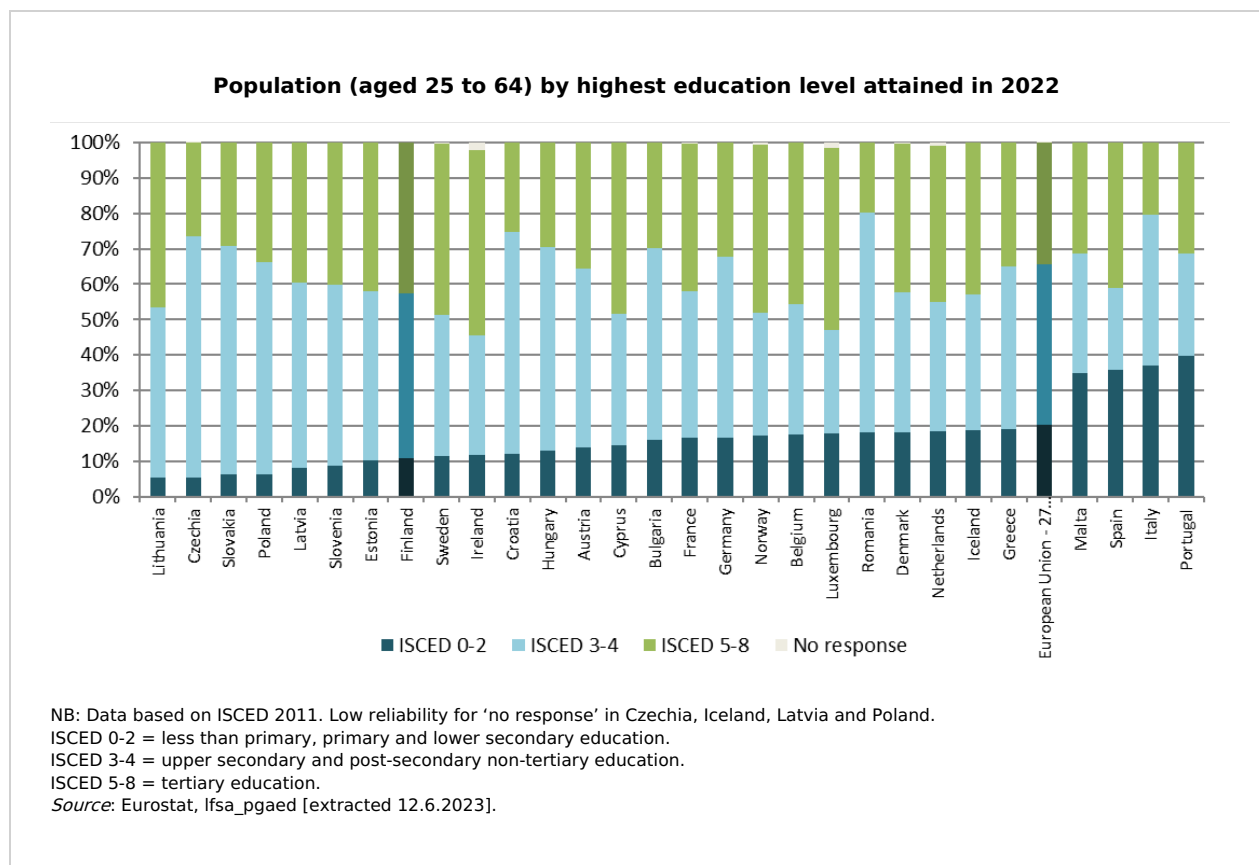
- [1] NB: Data for population as of 1 January; break in series. Eurostat table tps00001 [extracted 12.6.2023].
- [2] Eurostat table une_rt_a [extracted 12.10.2023].

CHAPTER 4.

Education attainment

4.1 Share of high, medium and low level qualifications

Completion of both upper secondary and tertiary studies is one of the objectives of national education policy. Finland has one of the highest shares of 25 to 64 year-olds with higher education qualifications (42.7%), although it has decreased slightly since 2020; the country also has one of the lowest shares of people with low qualifications (10.9%) in the EU.



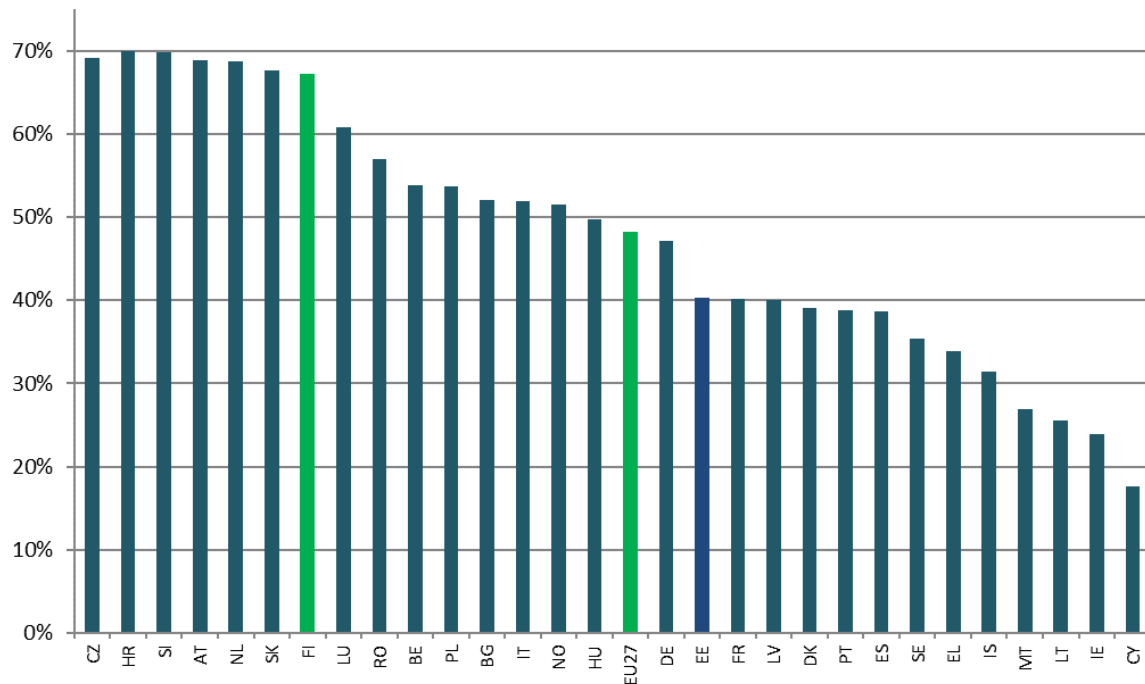
4.3 VET learners by level

Share of learners in VET by level in 2021

lower secondary	upper secondary	post-secondary
not applicable	67.3% (71.6% in 2017)	100%

Source: Eurostat, educ_uoe_enrs04 [extracted 13.6.2023].

Share of initial VET learners from total learners at upper-secondary level (ISCED level 3), 2021



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011.

Source: Eurostat, educ_uoe_enrs04 [extracted 1.11.2023].

4.4 Female share

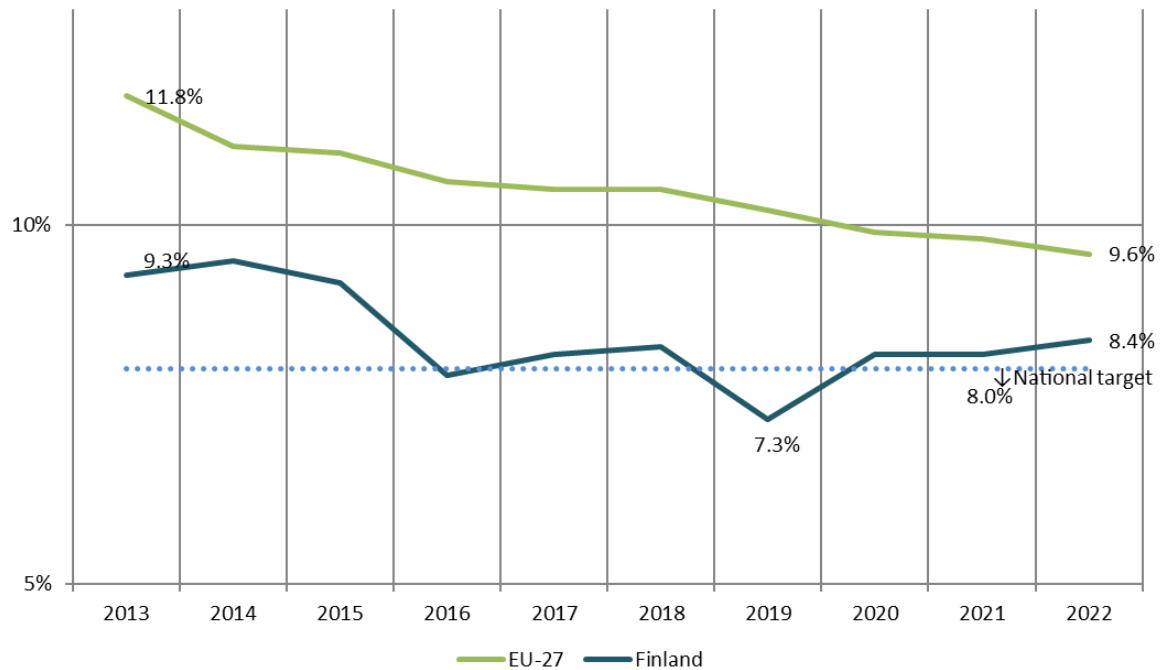
The male/female share in vocational upper secondary programmes is almost equal. In further qualification programmes, however, there are more females.

In 2022, 44% of all male VET students were in engineering, manufacturing and construction programmes. Services accounted for 18% and business and administration for 16% of all male VET students. Around one-third (32%) of females were enrolled in health and welfare, 19% in services and 23% in business, administration and law.

4.5 Early leavers from education and training

The share of early leavers from education and training was 8.4% in 2022. It has decreased by 0.9 percentage points since 2013 but hasn't reached the national country target of 'not more than 8%'.

Early leavers from education and training in 2013-22



NB: Share of the population aged 18 to 24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training
Source: Eurostat, edat_lfse_14 [extracted 12.6.2023] and European Commission, https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/european-semester/european-semester-timeline/national-reform-programmes-stability-and-convergence-programmes/2018-european-semester-national-reform-programmes-and-stabilityconvergence_en [extracted 14.11.2018].

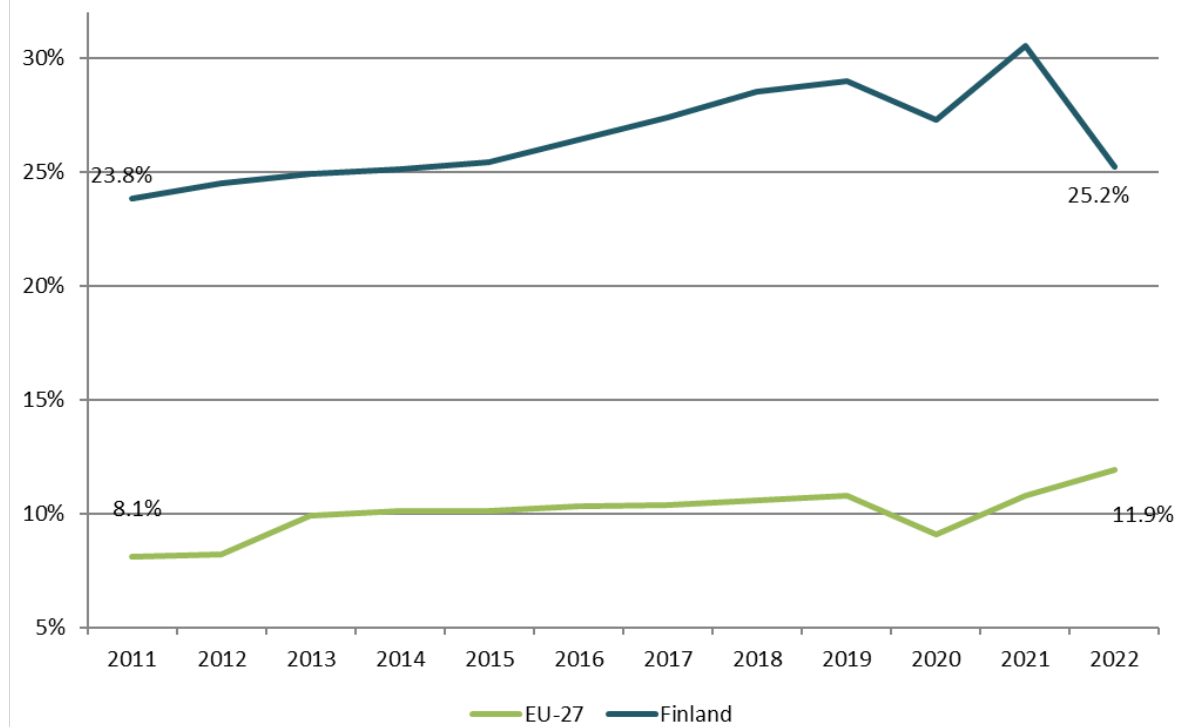
The overall duration of education and training is influenced by delays at transition points. For example, young graduates from upper secondary education at age of 19 cannot always enter higher education due to limited places available. The duration also depends how fast the learners complete their individual learning plan. The latter is now being addressed by the new financing mechanism that gives more weight to the effectiveness of studies and is pushing towards timely acquisition of qualifications.

For more information visit [Cedefop project page on tackling early leaving](#) and our interactive toolkits: [Cedefop VET toolkit for tackling early leaving](#) and [Cedefop VET toolkit for empowering NEETs](#).

4.6 Participation in lifelong learning

Lifelong learning offers training opportunities for adults, including early leavers from education.

Participation in lifelong learning in 2011-22



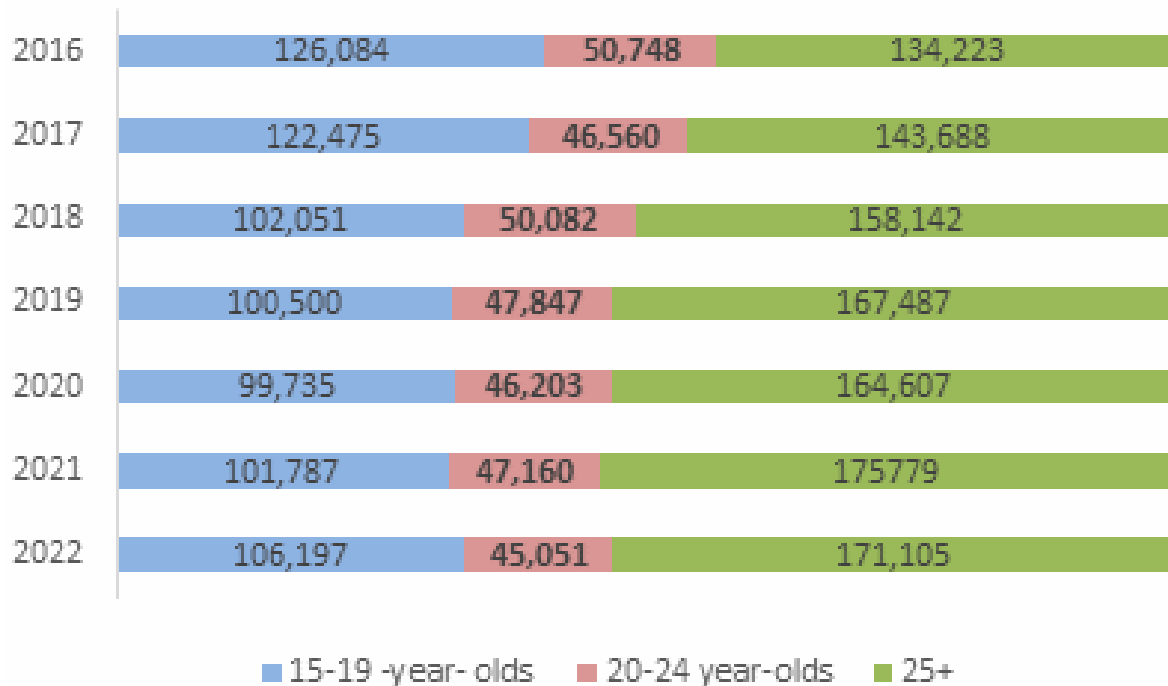
NB: Share of adult population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training.
Source: Eurostat, trng_lfse_01 [extracted 12.6.2023].

Participation in lifelong learning is traditionally high in Finland. Even though it has decreased by 5.3 percentage points since 2021, it was 25.2%, more than double the EU-27 average of 11.9% in 2022.

VET is an important form of adult education. After the 2018 reform, IVET and adult education are no longer separated. Six out of 10 VET students are currently above age 20.

4.7 VET learners by age

VET learners by age group in 2016-22



Source: Statistics Finland (Vipunen). <https://vipunen.fi/>[accessed 28.8.2023]

The share of adults (aged 25 and above) in initial and continuing VET has been increasing both in absolute numbers and proportionally. In the programme aiming for upper secondary vocational qualification the share of adults has been increasing and was 35% in 2022. In further qualifications the share is around 90% and in specialist qualifications it is constantly high - 98%.

CHAPTER 5.

VET within education and training system

The education and training system comprises:

- early childhood education and care (ISCED level 0);
- pre-primary education (ISCED level 0);
- primary education and lower secondary education; (ISCED levels 1 and 2), also called basic education;
- Upper secondary education (ISCED level 3 and 4);
- Tertiary education (ISCED levels 6, 7, and 8).

Early childhood education and care (*varhaiskasvatus, småbarnsfostran*) is not compulsory and participation requires the payment of a small fee. It is provided to children up to age six.

Pre-primary education (*esiopetus, förskoleundervisning*) is compulsory and it is provided to learners aged 6 years old.

Basic education (*perusopetus, grundläggande utbildning*) is compulsory. It is divided into primary education, provided in grades 1 to 6, to learners aged 7 to 12, and into lower secondary education, provided in grades 7 to 9, to students aged 13 to 16 years old.

Since August 2022, preparatory education for an upper secondary qualification (TUVA) combines optional additional basic education, also known as 10th grade, with preparatory education for general upper secondary education (LUV) and preparatory education for vocational education and training (VALMA). Preparatory education and training for work and independent living (*työhön ja itsenäiseen elämään valmentava koulutus, utbildning som handleder för arbete och ett självständigt liv*) is available for those who need special support due to illness or injury. It provides students with instruction and guidance according to their personal goals and capabilities.

Compulsory education was extended from age 16 to 18 in August 2021.

Upper secondary education (*toisen asteen koulutus, utbildning på andra stadiet*) is provided in grades 10 to 12, to students aged 17 to 19 years old. It is divided into general (*lukioskoulutus, gymnasieutbildning*), and vocational (*ammattillinen koulutus, yrkesutbildning*).

Tertiary education (*korkeakoulutus, högskola*) is provided by universities (*yliopisto, universitet*) and by universities of applied sciences (*ammattikorkeakoulu, yrkeshögskola*).

Promoting employment and self-employment are key elements of VET. Guided and goal-oriented studying at the workplace is an essential part of VET. Studying at the workplace is either based on apprenticeship or on training agreement. Both can be flexibly combined. Learning at the workplace can be used to acquire competence in all vocational qualifications as well as promoting further training or supplementing vocational skills. Studying at the workplace can cover an entire degree, a module or a smaller part of the studies.

After the VET Reform in 2018 VET no longer differentiates between youth and adult training.

Initial VET (vocational upper secondary programmes) provides learners with vocational skills they need for entry-level jobs. It also supports learners' growth into good and balanced individuals and members of society, and it provides them with the knowledge and skills needed for further studies and for the development of their personalities. A holder of a vocational upper secondary qualification has broad-based, basic vocational skills to work in different tasks in the chosen field, as well as more specialised competence and the vocational skills required for work in at least one section of the chosen field.

Continuing VET (further and specialist programmes) provides more comprehensive and specialised competences and requires labour market experience. They are mainly acquired by adults in employment with an IVET qualification; however, this is not a precondition for the taking of the qualification. A holder of a further vocational qualification has the vocational skills that meet work needs and that are more advanced or more specialised than what is required in the vocational upper secondary qualification. A holder of a specialist vocational qualification has vocational skills that meet work needs and that are highly advanced or multidisciplinary.

All programmes are competence-based. This means that completing a qualification does not depend on where and how competences have been acquired. All learners who have completed basic education may enrol in VET, but each provider decides the selection criteria. In some regions there is a competition for potential learners between general upper secondary and VET schools. VET often attracts more applicants than there are places available, especially in programmes in social services, health and sports, vehicle and transport technology, business and administration, electrical and automation engineering, and beauty care.

Study units (also known as modules)

All programmes leading to a qualification include vocational units:

- compulsory;
- optional.

In addition to the above, all initial vocational qualification programmes include units that consist of common, rather than specific, vocational competence:

- communication and interaction competence;
- mathematics and science competence;
- citizenship and working life competence.

The common units may be included in further and specialist qualifications but only if this is seen as necessary when making the personal competence development plan.

Key competences

Key competences help students to keep up with the changes in society and working life. In the wake of the 2018 VET reform (Vocational Education and Training Act 531, adopted in 2017 and in force since 2018), key competences are no longer addressed as a separate part of vocational competences. They have been modified so that key competences are included in all vocational skills requirements and assessment criteria. The key competences for lifelong learning are: digital and technological competence; mathematics and science competence; competence development; communication and interaction competence; competence for [sustainable development](#); cultural competence; social and citizenship competence; and entrepreneurial competence.

Personal competence development plan

At the beginning of VET studies objectives for competence development are recorded in a personal competence development plan for each learner. A teacher draws up the plan together with a learner. An employer or another representative of a workplace or other cooperation partner may also participate in the preparation of the personal competence development plan, when required. The plan includes information on, for example, identification and recognition of prior learning, acquisition of missing skills, demonstrations of competence and of other skills, and the guidance and support needed. Prior learning acquired in training, working life or other learning environments must be recognised as part of the qualification. The learner can also include units from general upper secondary curriculum, other vocational qualifications (incl. further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications) or degrees of universities of applied sciences in his personal competence development plan. The plan can be up-dated during the studies whenever necessary.

Work-based learning

Work-based learning (WBL) is provided mainly in real work environments (companies). If this is not possible, it can also be organised in school facilities.

The 2018 reform aimed to increase the share of work-based learning in VET by offering more flexibility in its organisation. All learners take part in WBL and any form of WBL (training agreement or apprenticeship training) may be taken by learners in any qualification programme. WBL may be provided during the whole programme duration and cover the whole qualification, a module/unit, or a smaller part of the programme. The most suitable method for a learner is agreed in the personal competence development plan.

The legislation does not stipulate a maximum or minimum amount of work-based learning, but it strongly recommends that VET providers organise at least part of the learning at the workplace. The form of WBL may vary during the studies. A learner may transfer flexibly from a training agreement to apprenticeship training when the prerequisites for concluding an apprenticeship agreement are met. Work-based learning is guided and goal-oriented training at a workplace, allowing learners to acquire parts of the practical vocational skills included in the desired qualification.

CHAPTER 6.

Apprenticeship

Training agreement

This type of WBL can be offered in all initial and continuing VET programmes. At the very beginning of the training, the personal competence development plan shall be designed by the teacher/guidance counsellor, working life representative and the learner. The WBL periods are defined in this plan.

Learners are not in an employment relationship with the training company. They do not receive salary and employers do not receive any training compensation. But companies gladly recruit people with work experience. Within this system, the learners acquire some experience during their studies, and the learner and the company get to know each other. It is possible to change from a training agreement to an apprenticeship training contract, if prerequisites for concluding an apprenticeship agreement are met.

A training agreement period can also be conducted abroad, as an exchange period, e.g. within the Erasmus+ programme or through other programmes or individual arrangements.

Apprenticeship training contract

Any qualification can be acquired through apprenticeship training - a work-based form of VET that is based on a written fixed-term employment contract (apprenticeship contract) between an employer and an apprentice, who must be at least 15 years old. Working hours are at least 25 hours per week. Apprenticeships have been used mainly in further and specialist vocational education. Since the 2018 reform, there is no indication in the legislation where the theoretical part should be acquired. In fact, the word 'theory' is no longer in use. Instead, 'learning in the working place' and 'learning in other environments' terminology applies. If the company is able to cover all the training needs, there is no need for the learner to attend a school venue at all. Learners themselves find work places for the training. The employer has no obligation to keep the apprentice employed after the training period is completed.

VET providers are responsible for initiating the contract. The demand and supply of contracts/work places are not always in balance. There are regional and field-specific differences but usually there are not enough apprenticeship places in companies.

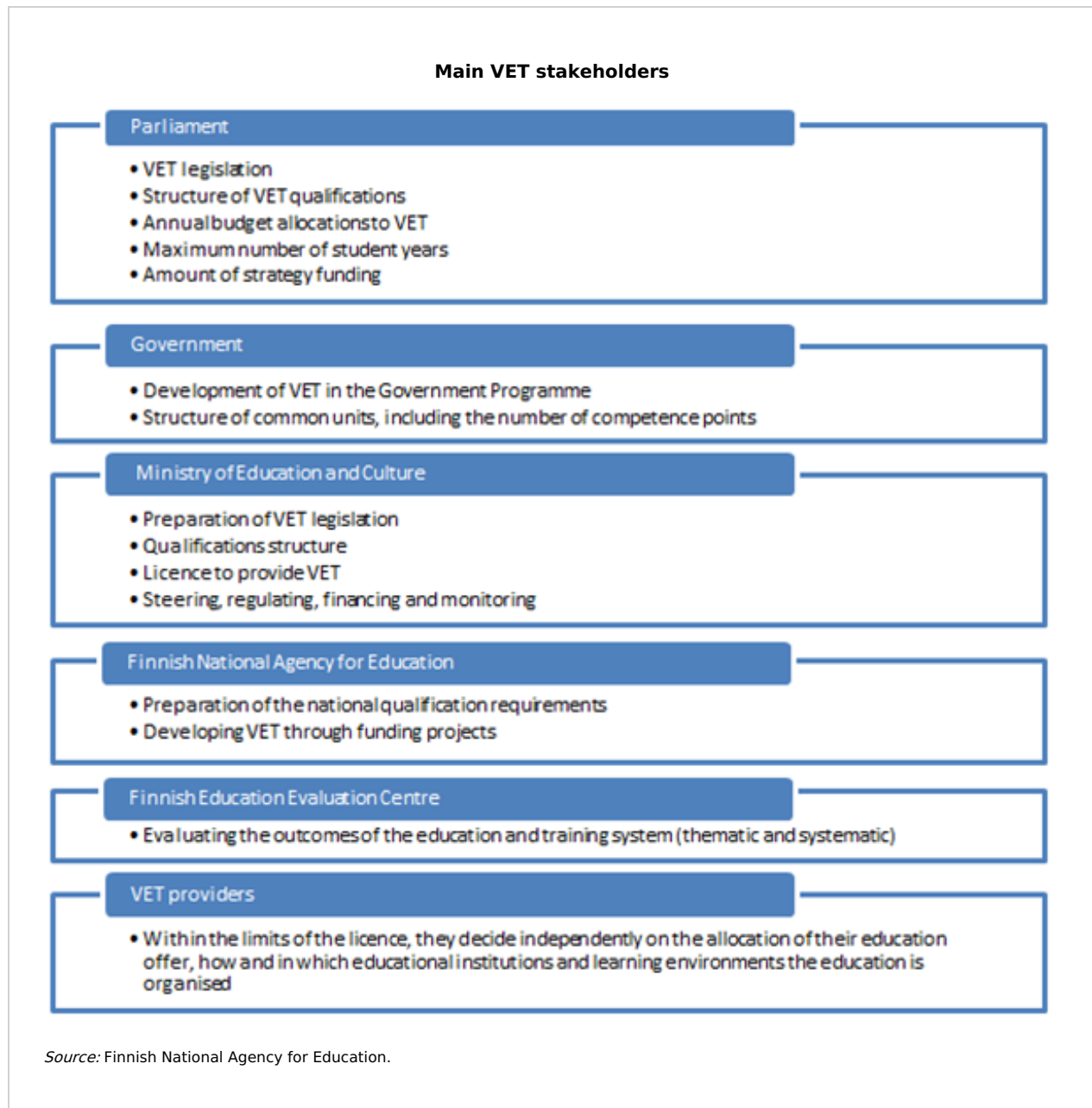
Apprenticeship training is based on the requirements of the relevant qualification, according to which the learner's personal competence development plan is drawn up. It considers the needs and requirements of the workplace and the learner. Approximately 70-80% of the time used for learning takes place in the workplace where the apprenticeship contract is concluded. Periods of theory and in-company training alternate, but a common pattern does not exist; it is agreed in the personal competence development plan.

The employer pays the apprentice's wages according to the relevant collective agreement for the period of workplace training. For the period of theoretical studies, learners receive social benefits, such as a daily allowance and allowances for accommodation and travel expenses. The education provider pays compensation to cover the costs of training provided in the workplace. The employer and VET institution agree on the amount of compensation before the training takes place; a separate contract is prepared for each learner.

CHAPTER 7.

VET governance

At national level, the general goals for VET and the qualifications structure (3) are determined by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The ministry also grants the licences for education provision. The Finnish National Agency for Education decides the national requirements of qualifications, detailing the goals and core content of each vocational qualification.



Vocational qualification requirements are developed in broad-based cooperation with stakeholders. The national qualification requirements have been based on a learning-outcomes approach since the early 1990s. Consequently, close cooperation with the world of work has been essential.

Cooperation with the world of work and other key stakeholders is carried out to ensure that qualifications support is flexible and promotes efficient transition to the labour market, as well as occupational development and career

change. In addition to the needs of the world of work, development of VET and qualifications considers consolidation of lifelong learning skills, as well as the individuals’ needs and opportunities to complete qualifications flexibly to suit their own circumstances.

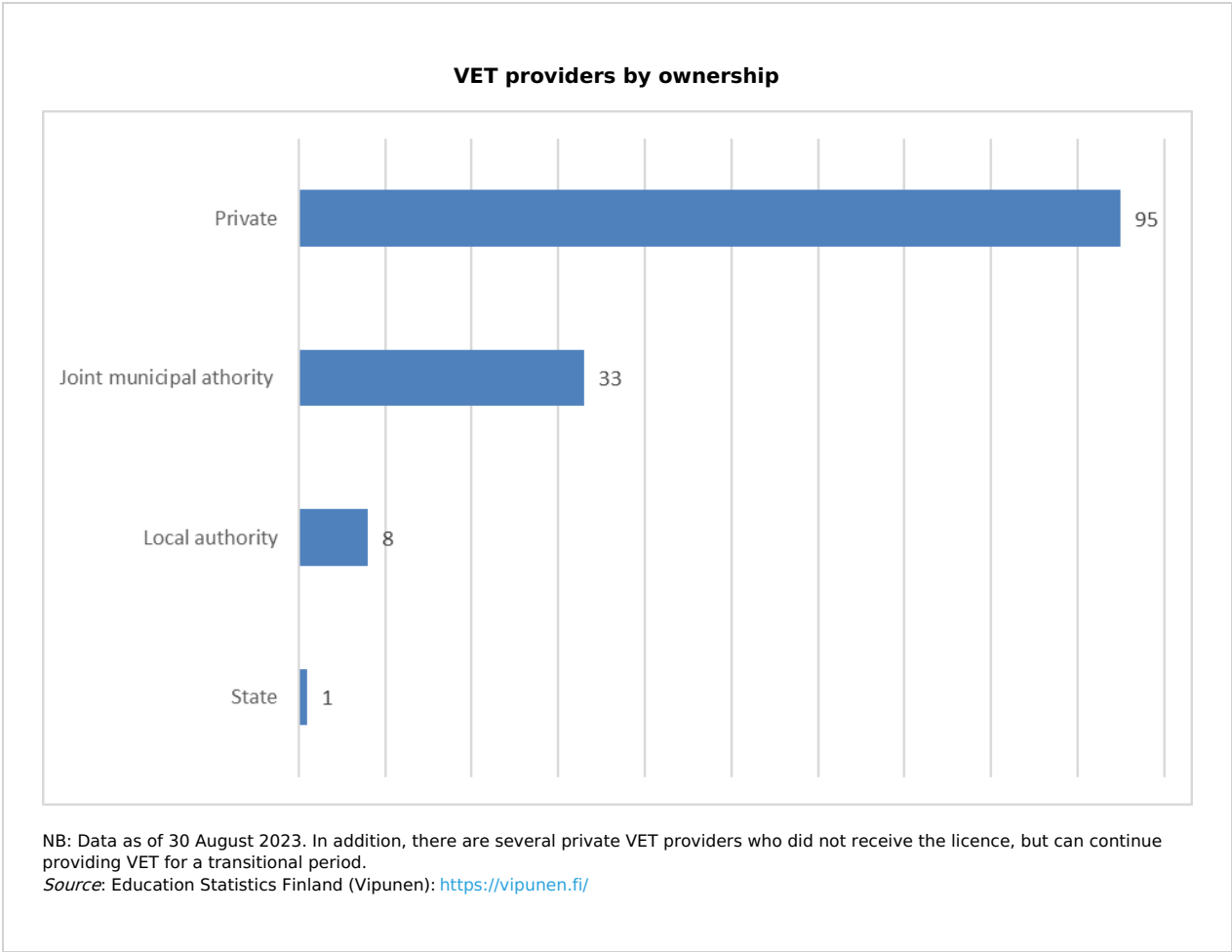
The Ministry of Education and Culture grants authorisations to VET providers, determining the fields of education in which they are allowed to provide education and training and their total learner numbers. VET providers determine which vocational qualifications and which study programmes within the specified fields of education will be organised at their vocational institutions.

To enhance the service capacity of VET providers, they have been encouraged to merge into regional or other strong entities. Across Finland, education providers cover all VET services and development activities. Thus, vocational institutions offer initial and continuing training both for young people and adult learners. Vocational institutions work in close cooperation with the labour market. Their role is to develop their own provision in cooperation with the labour market on the one hand, and to support competence development within small and medium-sized enterprises on the other. This strategy for vocational institutions has been a necessary means of ensuring and increasing the flexibility of education and training. Consequently, larger vocational institutions can offer enough vocational modules to ensure that learners can customise their programmes and choose studies that match changing needs for competences.

Vocational institutions can organise their activities freely, according to the requirements of their fields or their regions and decide on their institutional networks and other services.

VET providers

Around 69 % of VET providers are privately owned and 24 % are owned by joint municipal authorities. There are 137 VET providers in total; this is less than in 2021 as they have been strongly encouraged to merge. This cost-efficiency trend in education has been apparent since the mid-1990s. The ministry encourages VET providers towards voluntary mergers to ensure that all education providers have sufficient professional and financial resources to provide education.



The most common types of VET provider are vocational institutions (owned by municipalities, industry and the service sector) (4). They provide education and training to more than 75% of initial VET learners. Specialised (usually owned

by one private company or association, e.g. car manufacturers) and special needs (usually owned by municipalities and associations, e.g. Organisation for Respiratory Health) vocational institutions, fire, police and security service institutions (national) and folk high schools, sports institutions, music schools and colleges (local) account for less than 10% of learners in initial VET. Vocational adult education centres (public and regional) mostly provide further and specialist VET.

Private vocational institutions operating under the 2018 VET Act are supervised by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Similar to public VET providers, they receive government subsidies and have the right to award official qualification certificates.

Out of 137 VET providers in total, there are 7 specialised vocational institutions, which are generally maintained by manufacturing and service sector enterprises. They are national private institutions, also referred to as 'government dependent private institutions', which provide training for their own needs outside the national qualifications structure described above, and which mainly focus on continuing training for their own staff. The specialised vocational institutions (also national private institutions) have been authorised by the Ministry of Education and Culture to provide education and training. Although these institutions receive State funding, most of the costs are covered by the owners of these enterprises (or by the enterprises responsible for them).

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- [3] Qualification structure is a system of qualifications. It defines how many there are, initial, further and specialist VET qualifications: their share, titles and competence points (total and for common units; their division within the qualification is decided by the Finnish National Agency for Education).
- [4] Some VET providers are foundations or limited companies; they are categorised as 'private' but municipalities usually have shares in such companies/foundations.

CHAPTER 8.

VET financing mechanisms

Current financing system

Education is publicly funded through public tax revenue at all levels. This has been perceived in Finland as being a means of guaranteeing equal education opportunities for the entire population irrespective of social or ethnic background, gender and place of residence. Funding criteria for receiving State funding are uniform for public and private VET providers.

Private funding only accounts for 2.6% of all education expenditure. Its share is slightly higher in upper secondary VET and higher education, but still remains below 5%.

Public funding is mainly provided by the State (30%) and local authorities (municipalities) (70%). VET providers decide on the use of all funds granted. In upper secondary VET, operating costs per learner vary between EUR 6 488 for all apprenticeships (companies cover most of the costs) to EUR 27 956 in special needs VET (5).

In VET (excluding apprenticeships and special needs), funding varies by study field. Total VET funding is 1.5% from government spending and 13% from the spending of the Ministry of Education and Culture (2019).

Operating costs per learner in upper secondary VET by study field in 2017, 2020 and 2022 (euros)

(excluding apprenticeships and special needs)	2017	2020	2022
humanities and education	8692	8990	9061
culture	11136	10636	12149
social sciences		6873	8438
business, administration and law	7331	7502	8429
natural sciences	7998	10838	12015
technology, communications and transport	10302	10055	
natural resources and the environment	13449	12489	13275
social services, health and sports	8288	9274	10059
tourism, catering and domestic services	10417	10487	12411
optional additional year	15950	11277	12493

Source: Education Statistics Finland (Vipunen): <https://vipunen.fi/>

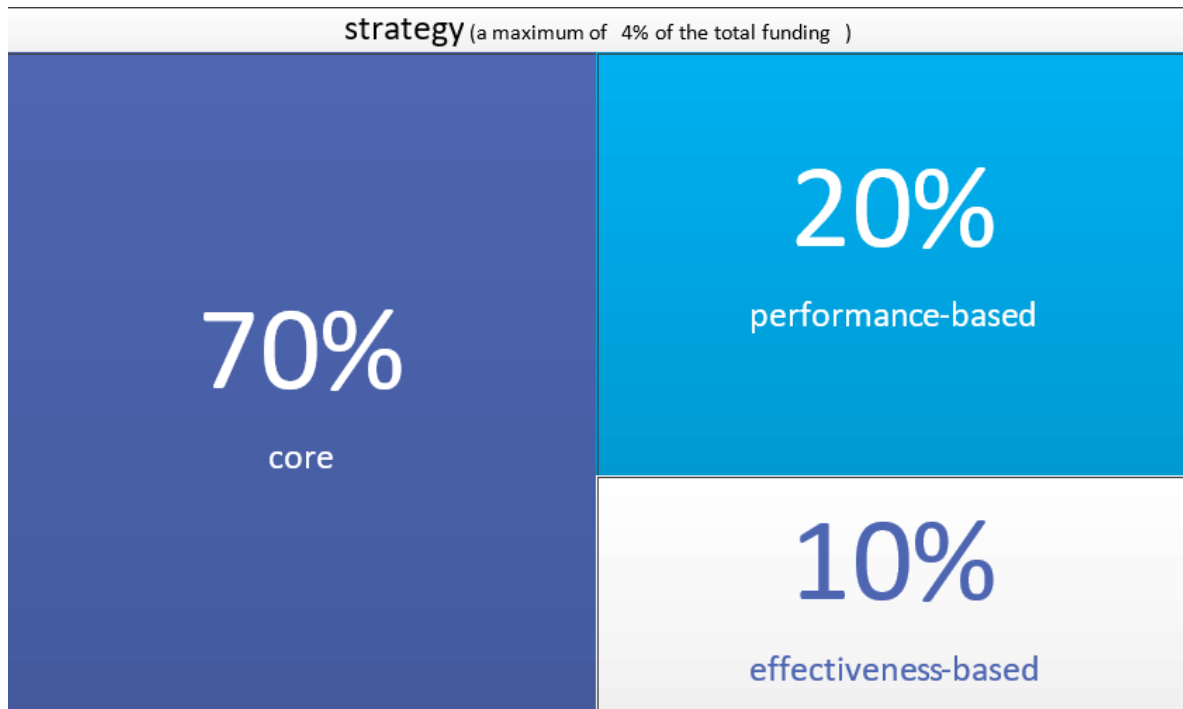
At the beginning of 2018, the unit price of apprenticeship training was increased to the same level as that of institution-based training. This has encouraged education providers to increase their offer of apprenticeship training. In addition, if the apprentice is a long-term unemployed jobseeker, lacks professional skills, or is disabled, the employer may also receive a State-funded pay subsidy.

The 2022 financing system for better performance

With the amendment to the Act on the Financing of the Provision of Education and Culture (532/2017) that entered into force at the beginning of 2018 with changes in 2020, a single coherent funding system was established for all VET programmes. The Act includes one uniform funding system for the provision of VET covering vocational upper secondary education and training, vocational further education and training, apprenticeship training and labour market training leading to a qualification. Funding criteria are uniform irrespective of the type of education provider.

The new system of funding is moving away from the model of mainly core funding and a very small element of performance funding (5%), towards one based on funding divided into core, performance and effectiveness and strategy.

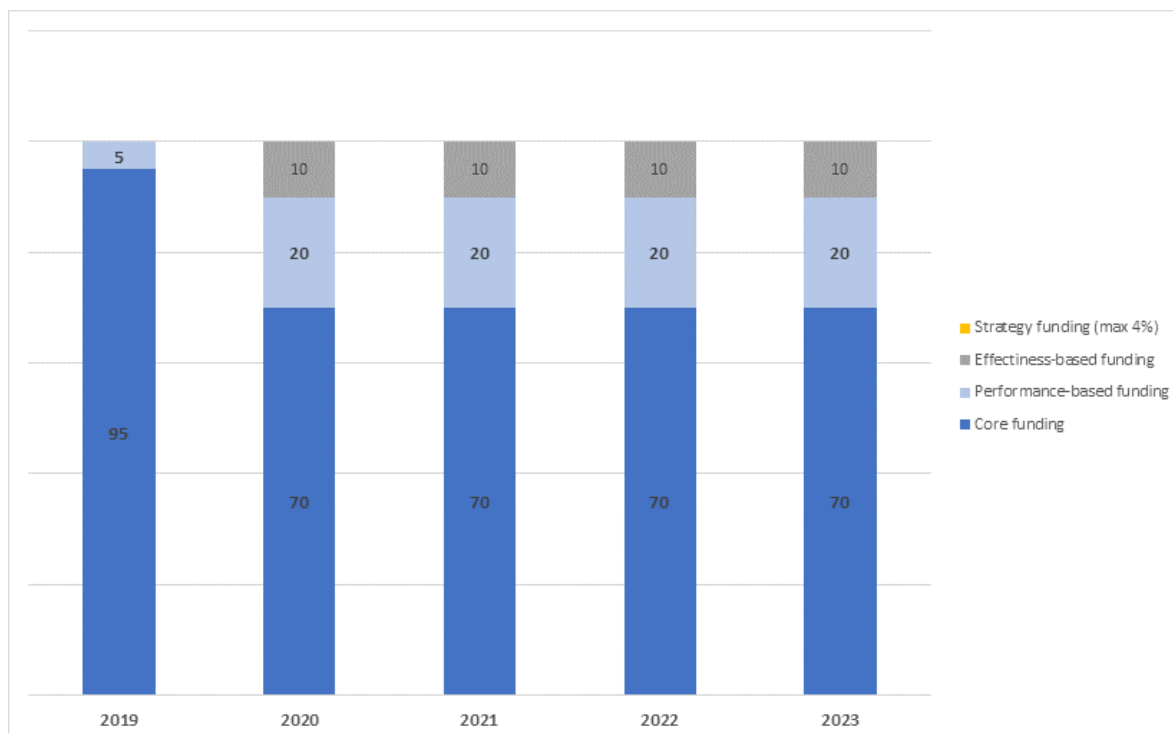
Share of VET funding elements as of 2022



Source: Ministry of Education and Culture, 2021.

- 70% core funding is based on the number of students; it is important for forward planning and ensuring future provision of VET in all fields and for all students;
- 20% performance funding is based on the number of completed qualifications and qualification units; it is meant to steer education providers to target education and qualifications in accordance with competence needs and to intensify study processes;
- 10% effectiveness funding is based on students' access to employment, pursuit of further education and feedback from both students and the labour market (6); it aims to encourage education providers to redirect education to fields where labour is needed to ensure that education corresponds to the needs of the working life and that it is of high quality and provides the students with the competence to study further;
- in addition, a relatively small amount of strategy funding (decided by parliament) will be made available; it is meant to support development and actions that are important from the education policy standpoint. It could be used, for example, for VET national development projects, skills competitions and developing education provider networks (e.g. mergers).

VET funding elements in 2019-23 (%)



Source: Ministry of Education and Culture.

- [5] The most recent available data of 2017.
- [6] VET providers must collect these data. The system is not fully operational yet as the new financing system will be ready in 2023.

CHAPTER 9.

Teachers and trainers

9.1 VET teacher types

In VET, there are:

- teachers of vocational units, teachers of common units, special needs teachers;
- workplace instructors.

Teaching is a popular profession in Finland. The popularity of vocational teacher education has been consistent over many years, largely because of the flexible arrangements for completing studies. While up to a third of the applicants are admitted annually, there are major variations between different fields.

Those who apply for a place in vocational teacher education are, on average, older than applicants of other forms of teacher education. This is because applicants are required to have prior work experience in their own field. The average age of applicants and those admitted as learners is approximately 40 years.

The proportion of women among applicants and teacher training learners has increased noticeably in recent years. Unlike in other teacher education programmes, it is more difficult for women than for men to gain a place in vocational teacher education. Regarding salaries and terms and conditions of employment, there are no remarkable differences between teachers in general education and VET.

Although there are no official data for trainers (7) on the attractiveness of their profession, the general impression is that trainers are generally satisfied with their training tasks. In many cases, they perceive more responsibilities and autonomy as recognition of their professionalism; time spent with young learners away from normal routine is also considered to be a reward. Workplace instructors participate in the assessment of competence demonstrations taking place at the workplace. This assessment plays a significant role on learners' qualification certificates.

Teacher and workplace instructor qualifications

Teacher of vocational units	Appropriate higher education qualification, 3 years of work experience, teacher's pedagogical studies
Teacher of common units	Master's level in subject taught / master's in technology, teacher pedagogical studies
Special needs teacher	One of the qualifications above and special needs teacher in VET studies or other appropriate studies
Workplace instructor	No formal requirements

Source: <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/1998/19980986#L5>

First, teachers of vocational units must have an appropriate higher education degree in their own vocational sector. If such a degree does not exist, it can also be supplemented by the highest possible other qualification in the sector. In some fields, it has been difficult to find qualified teachers. Another challenge is sometimes limited shop floor experience of teachers with a university degree. In some fields, therefore it is now possible to acquire teaching qualifications by completing a specialist vocational qualification (ISCED 4) or some other qualification or training that provides solid competence in the field concerned.

Second, they must have a pedagogical teacher training qualification with 60 ECTS credit points, and third, they need relevant work experience in their own field. Teachers of vocational units complete teacher's pedagogical studies at five tertiary-level institution for occupational teacher training (universities of applied sciences). Teachers of common units (such as languages and mathematics) generally complete them at universities.

The content of teacher training is updated continuously by vocational teacher education colleges. The institutions enjoy wide autonomy in deciding on their curricula and training arrangements. Legislation sets the qualification requirements, but only at a general level.

Requirements for workplace instructors

Workplace instructors are generally experienced foremen and skilled workers. They frequently have a professional qualification but hold no pedagogical qualifications.

There are no formal qualifications requirements for trainers in Finland. Their participation in continuing professional development (CPD) is also left completely up to them and their employers.

There are, however, training programmes available for trainers that follow national guidelines as recommended by the

Finnish National Agency for Education. According to the guidelines, training for trainers comprises three modules, providing participants with the capabilities required to:

- plan training at the workplace;
- provide vocational competence demonstrations;
- instruct VET learners and assess their learning;
- and impart vocational skills.

The Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) recommends that, where possible, people acting as workplace trainers should participate in the training of trainers. VET education providers are responsible for providing the training.

9.2 Continuing professional development of teachers/trainers

The responsibility for providing [CPD for teachers](#) lies with teachers' employers, usually municipalities based on the collective agreement for teachers, organised by the employer as in-service personnel training. The minimum scope of this in-service training is three working days per school year. This training is free of charge for teachers. The employer decides on the method of implementation and the content of the training.

In-service training on education policy focus areas is organised using government budget funds. Management and teachers of vocational and adult education institutions can participate in this training. The focus areas in the content of the training are decided yearly by the Ministry of Education and Culture in cooperation with EDUFI.

The employer decides whether a teacher can participate in the training during working hours and receive full pay and compensation for the possible travel and accommodation expenses. The employer also decides on how substitution is arranged during the training period.

The Finnish National Agency for Education allocates the funds for, monitors and develops this State-funded CPD. The aim of this training is to promote the effectiveness of the education system and the [quality of education](#), as well as to support the implementation of education policy reforms.

The state-funded CPD in 2023 focused on the following themes:

- subject and field specific competences;
- cultural and language competences;
- assessment competences;
- digital competences and the use of technology in education;
- sustainability competence;
- promoting participation, well-being and safety;
- support for learning and individual study paths;
- continuous learning;
- promoting collective working culture and leadership skills.

Besides a specific location, training may also take place in digital learning environments or at the participant's workplace.

For more information visit Cedefop project page on [Teachers' and Trainers' professional development](#) and our interactive toolkits for VET practitioners: [Cedefop VET toolkit for tackling early leaving](#) and [Cedefop VET toolkit for empowering NEETs](#). You may also read [Cedefop/ReferNet country reports on Teachers and Trainers in a Changing World](#) and [Cedefop comparative analysis](#).

[7] In-company trainers (nationally referred to as workplace instructors) are responsible for supervising learners during their on-the-job learning periods or apprenticeship training in enterprises.

CHAPTER 10.

Shaping VET qualifications

10.1 Anticipating skill needs

Skills anticipation activities are well established and linked to policy-making. For more than a decade, socio-economic factors such as the effects of the economic recession, the gradually decreasing labour force, and the ageing population have increased the need to improve the match between supply and demand skills. As a result, significant investment in skills anticipation has been undertaken by the government and its partners. The aim is to steer the education system - both VET and higher education - to meet the needs of the labour market.

At national level, the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI), which operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture, produces long-term (10+ years) as well as medium term (5-9 years) ([national forecasts](#)) on the demand for labour and education needs in support of decision-making. It is supported by National Forum for Skills Anticipation, established in early 2017 and continuing to its second term during 2021-24. The Ministry of Education and Culture decides on study places by field of education. At regional level, councils anticipate skills needs in the region. The forecasting data is also used for guidance and employment counselling to provide information regarding future employment opportunities and considered in the development of VET qualifications. The EDUFI also supports regional forecasting efforts, which are carried out under the supervision of regional councils. The goal is to steer the number of learner places in education and training provision to ensure that it matches developments in the demand for labour as closely as possible.

In general, there is a high degree of stakeholder involvement in skills anticipation activities. Major trade unions, employers, regional councils, and representatives of education institutions are involved in anticipation exercises. The responsibility of education providers for anticipating and responding to labour market changes has increased, as operational targeting and steering powers (8) have been devolved to universities, universities of applied sciences, and VET providers. Providers are required to play an active role in addressing the national/regional labour market skills needs.

In addition, a wide range of national and regional EU-funded anticipation and forecast projects are carried out by organisations such as research institutions, labour market and industry organisations, VET providers, universities and universities of applied sciences. In particular, regional anticipation activities have developed rapidly in the past decade. Key players in these activities include regional councils, the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centres), VET providers, and higher education institutions.

Governance and funding of the relevant exercises are the remit of three ministries (Education and Culture, Finance, Economic Affairs and Employment). These ministries engage in a variety of skills anticipation exercises, taking advantage of the long-term baseline forecasts of economic development produced by Pellervo economic research. The first regional anticipation projects were launched at the beginning of the 2000s. The ministries mostly finance development prognoses of branches, which also include the demand for labour.

Skills anticipation influences government policies on VET, higher education and adult education. Forecasts of future skills demand have an impact on decisions about education supply. Skills anticipation also has an impact on curriculum planning in VET and higher education institutions.

Dissemination of the data generated by skills anticipation exercises is an important element of the anticipation activity. The aim is to make the output from anticipation exercises accessible to a wide audience (policy-makers, employers, jobseekers and young people, etc.) through a range of channels including reports, workshops and online publications. Despite the focus on dissemination of skills anticipation data, there is a need to improve the user friendliness of the existing database to improve information for learners, job seekers and employers (9).

Quantitative anticipation

The Finnish National Agency for Education is responsible for quantitative anticipation. It has developed the model for anticipating long-term demand for labour and educational needs. The model provides long-term data on changes in the demand for labour, natural wastage of labour (10), demand for skilled labour and educational needs. Quantitative anticipation is used to provide information on quantitative needs for vocationally and professionally oriented education and training in upper secondary vocational education and training, university of applied sciences education and university education. The focus is on anticipating the demand for labour over a period of circa 15 years (11).

Qualitative anticipation

The Finnish National Agency for Education coordinated a project on future competences and skills, known as the VOSE project, between 2008 and 2012. The aim of this project was to create a process model for anticipating vocational competence and skills needs for the future (looking 10 to 15 years ahead).

The knowledge produced through the model serves different levels of education, including vocational, university of applied sciences and university education. Anticipatory knowledge may be utilised, for example, in the national core curriculum, in curriculum planning and the development of the content of education.

The development of the anticipation model has involved social partners representing the piloted sectors (the real estate and building sectors, the social, welfare and health care sectors and the tourism and catering sectors), representatives of research institutions and of various fields of education, as well as other experts in the sectors in question.

A new anticipation period began at the start of 2021 and will last until the end of 2024. In the new period, the anticipation of skills, labour and training needs will be done primarily for 5 to 9 years. Also, long-term anticipation is continuing.

National forum for skills anticipation

The National Forum for Skills Anticipation) serves as a joint expert body in educational anticipation for the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish National Agency for Education. The system consists of a steering group, anticipation groups and a network of experts. The task is to analyse changing competence and skills needs; their impact on the development of education on the basis of the anticipation data; and to promote the interaction of education and training with working life in cooperation with the Ministry and Finnish National Agency for Education. Anticipation groups consist of representatives of employers, employees, education providers, educational administrators, teaching staff and researchers in each field. Anticipation groups are involved in both qualitative and quantitative anticipation work. There are nine anticipation groups representing the following fields:

- natural resources, food production and the environment;
- business and administration;
- education, culture and communications;
- transport and logistics;
- hospitality services;
- built environment;
- social, health and welfare services;
- technology industry and services;
- process industry and production.

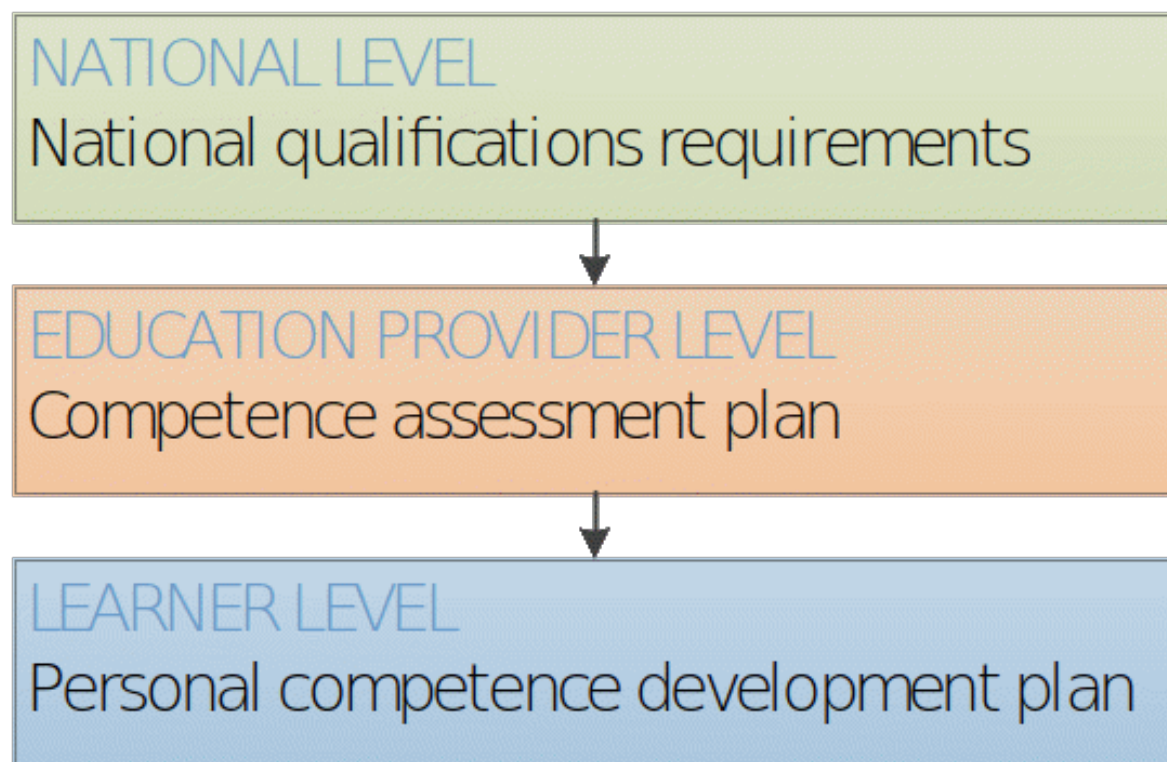
See also Cedefop's [skills forecast](#) and [European Skills Index](#).

10.2 Designing qualifications

The [VET curriculum system](#) consists of the:

- national qualification requirements;
- education provider's competence assessment plan;
- learner's personal competence development plan.

Designing VET qualifications



Source: Finnish National Agency for Education.

National qualification requirements

Before the 2018 reform, the national qualification requirements for different qualifications were often updated every five to 10 years on average or whenever necessary, either partially or completely. Since 2018, updating the qualifications became a continuous process based on the changing needs in the world of work and the results of anticipation of skill needs.

The starting point for updating a qualification may be changes in the skills needs in the labour market. These changes can lead to a change of the qualification requirements, or even the qualification structure, of initial, further and specialist vocational qualifications. Changes to the qualification structure also require qualification requirements to be renewed. The process of preparing a qualification requirements document usually takes 1 to 2 years.

Within the national qualifications framework (NQF), the Finnish National Agency for Education has placed upper secondary vocational qualifications and further vocational qualifications at level 4 (referenced to level 4 of the EQF) and specialist vocational qualifications at level 5. The [ECVET system](#) was put into practice in Finland in 2014 and from the beginning of August 2018, in accordance with ECVET recommendations, vocational upper secondary qualifications have covered 180 competence points; further vocational qualifications 120, 150 or 180 competence points; and specialist vocational qualifications 160, 180 or 210 competence points. One year of full-time study corresponds to 60 competence points.

The qualification requirements are drawn up under the leadership of the Finnish National Agency for Education in tripartite cooperation with employers, employees and the education sector. Self-employed people are also represented in the preparation of qualification requirements in fields where self-employment is prevalent. The qualification requirements determine: the units included in the qualification; any possible specialisations made up of different units; selection of optional units in addition to compulsory ones; the vocational skills required for each qualification unit; the guidelines for assessment (targets and criteria of assessment); and the ways of demonstrating vocational skills.

The qualification requirements and the vocational competences form the basis for identifying the types of occupational work processes in which vocational skills for a specific qualification can be demonstrated and assessed.

When an update is initiated, the Finnish National Agency for Education sets up a qualification project, inviting experts

representing employees, employers and teachers in the field to participate. In the course of its work, the expert group must also consult other experts in the world of work. Once the expert group has completed a draft version of the new qualification requirements, the document will be sent to representatives of unions, organisations, the world of work and VET providers for a broad consultation process. Following this process, the Finnish National Agency for Education adopts the qualification requirements as a nationally binding regulation.

The Finnish National Agency for Education determines the working life committee under which the specific qualification will fall or establishes a new working life committee for the new qualification. Working life committees are tripartite bodies consisting of employers and employees' representatives, teachers and self-employed people. They play a key role in the quality assurance of VET. They ensure the quality of the implementation of competence demonstrations and competence assessment and develop the VET qualifications structure and qualification requirements.

Vocational qualifications are structured in a modular way. These modules comprise units of work or activities found in the world of work. Each vocational qualification unit is a specific occupational area, which can be separated into an independent and assessable component. The vocational skills requirements determined for each qualification unit focus on the core functions of the occupation, mastery of operating processes and the occupational practices of the field in question. These also include skills generally required in working life, such as social skills and key competences for lifelong learning. All qualification requirements share a common structure.

The targets of assessment defined in the qualification requirements indicate those areas of competence on which special attention is focused during assessment. The criteria for assessment have been derived from the vocational skills requirements. The assessment criteria determine the grades awarded for units in upper secondary vocational qualifications and the standard of an acceptable performance in further and specialist qualifications. The section entitled 'Ways of demonstrating vocational skills' describes how candidates are to demonstrate their vocational skills in vocational demonstrations.

The qualifications requirements adopted by the Finnish National Agency for Education are published in electronic form on the [Finnish National Agency for Education website](#).

Competence assessment plans

Competence assessment plans are prepared by the respective education provider for each training programme or qualification. The plan details the guidelines and procedures adopted by the education provider regarding the implementation of competence assessment. The plan includes how the following aspects are to be carried out (who does what, how, where it is registered and how the student, staff and stakeholders (12) are informed): recognition of prior learning; demonstration of competence; skills assurance before the demonstration of competence; assessment; certification; preparatory programme planning; and monitoring the implementation of the plan itself.

The competence assessment plan is used by teachers, guidance personnel and assessors of competence. The feasibility of the plan is self-monitored and self-assessed by VET providers as part of their quality assurance system. The plan is attached to the application for a licence to provide VET.

Learner personal competence development plan

At the beginning of VET studies objectives for competence development are recorded in a personal competence development plan for each learner. A teacher draws up the plan together with a learner. An employer or another representative of a workplace or other cooperation partner may also participate in the preparation of the personal competence development plan, when required. The plan includes information on, for example, identification and recognition of prior learning, acquisition of missing skills, competence demonstrations and other demonstration of skills, and the guidance and support needed. Prior learning acquired in training, working life or other learning environments has to be recognised as part of the qualification. The learner can also include units from general upper secondary curriculum, other vocational qualifications (incl. further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications) or degrees of universities of applied sciences in their personal competence development plan. The plan can be up-dated during the studies whenever necessary.

Involvement of the world of work in developing qualification requirements and quality in VET

The representatives of the world of work participate in the anticipation of skills and education needs both nationally and regionally, for example through anticipation groups, advisory committees and through consultation processes. They participate in drawing up the qualification requirements at national level and they are represented in working life committees.

At regional level the representatives from enterprises participate in the organisation and planning of training and skills demonstrations, regional committees as well as assessment of skills demonstrations. This allows continuous feedback from the world of work.

In 2017, the former 30 national education and training committees were replaced by nine anticipating groups representing different vocational fields (see Section 3.1.3). Members of these groups are representatives of employers, employees and self-employed entrepreneurs, as well as VET providers, higher education institutions, teaching staff, researchers and educational administration. The anticipating groups are appointed until 2020. Their tasks include:

- analysing changing and new competence and skills needs of working life and their implications for different levels of education;
- offering recommendations for the development of VET programmes;
- strengthening cooperation between upper secondary VET and higher education;
- providing public authorities with recommendations on new development needs and cooperation between the world of work and education.

More information on national qualifications frameworks and the qualifications types can be found in the [NQF online tool](#).

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- [8] It means that VET providers can decide within the limits of the licence received from Ministry of Education and Culture what qualifications and training programmes to offer.
- [9] This section is based on Cedefop's Skills Panorama (2017). [Skills anticipation in Finland. Analytical highlights series](#).
- [10] A reduction in the number of employees, which is achieved by not replacing those who leave.
- [11] Growth in competences for Finland: proposed objectives for degrees and qualifications for the 2020s ([Suomi osaamisen kasvu-uralle. Ehdotus tutkintotavoitteista 2020-luvulle](#)).
- [12] Teachers, guidance and counselling staff and assessors of competence.

CHAPTER 11.

Quality assurance

Continuous **improvement of VET quality** is a key priority in Finland. The following activities are essential when assuring that vocational education and training meets the requirements of the world of work.

Stakeholder roles in assuring VET quality	
Ministry of Education and Culture	- Guidelines of the education policy and strategic definitions of policy - Preparation and implementation of legislation - Steering and supervision of VET sector - Licence to provide education - Finance and resources
Finnish National Agency for Education	- Development of VET - Qualification requirements and other regulations - Support of quality assurance and development, guidance and counselling to VET providers - Anticipation of skills needs - National Reference Point of European quality assurance in VET
Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC)	- Evaluation data for decision making and development - External evaluation of quality assurance systems, evaluation of learning outcomes and thematic and system evaluations - Support of quality assurance and evaluations to VET providers - International cooperation - Development of education evaluation
Working life committees	- Quality assurance of competence tests and assessment of learning - Participation in development of qualification structure and qualification requirements - Utilisation of evaluation data and feedback information in working life committees' own work
VET providers	- Evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of education and operation and their constant improvement - Regular participation in external evaluations - Utilisation of evaluation data and feedback information in VET provider's own work
Learners and working life	- Feedback from VET - Participation in building VET system and its implementation - Participation in the production of the evaluation data as part of the evaluation made by FINEEC

Source: Finnish National Agency for Education.

The quality assurance of VET consists of VET provider's own quality management, national VET steering and external evaluation.

VET legislation sets the frame for VET providers' operations. The law requires that the VET provider is responsible for the quality of qualifications and programmes offered and for their constant improvement. VET providers have to have a functional quality assurance system in place. According to the law, they must evaluate the quality, effectiveness (employability, pursuit of further education and feedback from learners and working life) and 'profitability' (i.e. how well the operations have met the needs of the learner and the world of work, and have the resources been used in an optimal way) of the qualifications, programmes and other operations. The purpose of VET provider self-evaluation is to recognise strengths and targets to be developed. The ministry offers non-compulsory criteria for self-evaluation to support the process.

The national VET steering includes legislation and regulations related to financing and qualification requirements. It also includes quality strategy, quality award competition, government subsidies for quality improvement, supporting materials produced by the ministry and the agency and criteria for self- and peer evaluation.

According to the VET legislation, VET providers also have to participate regularly in external evaluations of their operations and quality management systems and publish the main results of those evaluations. External evaluation

includes the quality assurance of competence demonstrations and competence assessment made by the working life committees and evaluations made by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre.

Supervision of qualifications

Working life committees are responsible for the supervision of providing qualifications. Their aim is to ensure the quality and working life orientation of VET. They are statutory bodies of elected officials, appointed by the Finnish National Agency for Education to manage a public duty.

The committees' duties are:

- ensuring the quality of the implementation of competence demonstrations and assessment;
- participating in the development of qualification structure and vocational qualifications;
- processing learners' rectification requests concerning competence assessments.

Working life committee members handle these tasks for 3 years, in addition to their regular duties. A maximum of nine members may be appointed to each working life committee. They must represent employers, employees, teachers and, if self-employment is common within the sector in question, self-employed professionals. There are 39 working life committees. Each working life committee is responsible for one or more qualifications. Working life committees participate in developing the qualification structure and in designing the qualification requirements. They also participate in quality assurance of skills demonstrations and assessment through national feedback, follow-up and evaluation data, and may also visit the skills demonstrations events, when necessary. Finally, they handle the requests related to the rectification of assessment.

Quality assurance of VET providers

The legislation on VET gives education providers a great deal of freedom in deciding on the measures concerning their education provision, use of public funding and quality management. The legislation obliges the providers to evaluate their training provision and its effectiveness as well as to participate in external evaluations. This means that the education providers need to have their own operating system that contains relevant and functional quality management measures (selected by VET providers).

Self-evaluation and external evaluation support VET providers' continuous improvement and results-oriented performance. Through evaluation, providers obtain information about major strengths and development needs. VET providers monitor, assess and analyse results achieved systematically through means such as surveys, quantitative indicators and self-evaluation. In VET, data and information are most often collected through queries (13) and assessments of learning outcomes. The VET provider collects the feedback from learners and saves the learners' answers in the online system that has been developed for this purpose. The Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish National Agency for Education have access to the results.

External evaluation of training is frequently (the term used in the legislation) carried out, for example, by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre. Internal audits, benchmarking and peer reviews are other methods employed in evaluation.

Learner and labour market feedback

Starting from 2020, one sixth of effectiveness-based funding has been granted to VET providers based on the feedback from learners. The learner feedback is collected via a centrally designed questionnaire which learners answer twice: at the beginning of the studies and at the end, once the learner has demonstrated all the skills and competences needed for the qualification. Learner feedback and its collection are regulated in the legislation.

In the questionnaire, the learners respond to statements rating them on a five-point scale from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). At the beginning of their studies learners are required to rate statements relating to the following themes: flexibility of starting time of studies and content of the individual programme; accreditation of prior learning; and support and guidance needed. At the end of their studies, learners give feedback concerning the following themes: flexibility in studies; the ways in which teaching facilities and the learning environment supported studies; receiving support and guidance during studies; equity between learners and workers at the workplace; opportunities to study and learn in the workplace; gaining of entrepreneurial competence; and assessment of their individual competence and readiness for the working life and further studies.

Labour market feedback has been collected since July 2021. A questionnaire is sent to all trainers who have instructed students in apprenticeship training or according to a training agreement in their workplaces. VET providers also collect feedback twice a year from their partner entrepreneurs. The feedback system aims to ensure that VET meets the specific and changing needs of the labour market for worker skills and competences. The labour market and learner feedback, together with the students' access to employment after the completion of VET, form 10% of the funding.

New quality assurance guidelines

The new strategy for quality assurance in VET drawn up by the Ministry of Education and Culture with stakeholders was published at the end of 2019. After the 2018 reform, the VET system has emphasised quality management, together with the providers' role in managing VET. The new strategy is supposed to cover all parts of the national quality assurance system:

- VET providers' quality management,
- national steering of VET,
- external evaluation of VET,

except the method that VET providers may select themselves.

[13] VET provider collects feedback from learners twice: at the beginning of studies and at the end.

CHAPTER 12.

Validation of prior learning

Validation of non-formal and informal learning has relatively long and established roots in Finland and the legislation and policies are well developed and detailed. However, there is no one single law for this; laws and regulations for each field of education define validation separately. These fields include general upper secondary education, vocational education and training (including continuing VET), and higher education. The core message of the legislation is that validation of non-formal and informal learning 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. Validation is based either on:

- documentation presented or
- competence demonstration.

The Vocational Upper Secondary Education and Training Decree (673/2017) defines the principles for recognising prior learning. Each student's personal competence development plan must include recognition of prior learning. Prior learning acquired in training, working life or other learning environments has to be recognised as part of the qualification. The recognition of prior learning must be done in all VET qualifications: in vocational, further and specialist qualifications.

CHAPTER 13.

Incentives for learners

Equal opportunities are a long-standing fundamental principle of the Finnish education policy. The background of learners, including their financial circumstances, should not be a barrier to participation in education. Most education provision is publicly funded and free for learners from pre- primary to higher education levels. In addition, financial support for learners of all ages is available.

Financial support for full-time learners

Financial support is available for full-time VET learners. The main forms of support are study grants, housing supplements with transport subsidy and government guarantees for student loans. The first two of these are government-financed monthly benefits, while student loans are granted by banks.

Study grants

A study grant is available as soon as eligibility for child benefit finishes at the age of 17. The monthly amount before tax (14) is between EUR 43.15 and 279 depending on the age, marital status and type of accommodation.

Student housing allowance and transport subsidy

The housing allowance covers 80% of the rent but may not exceed EUR 201.60 per month. The allowance is EUR 88.87 per month for people living in dormitories in education establishments. In addition, school transport subsidy is available when the distance between home and school exceeds 7km or 10km depending on whether the student is subject to compulsory education.

Government guarantees for student loans

The government guarantees that student loans (with some exceptions) are available to learners who are receiving a study grant. A loan guarantee can, however, also be granted to learners, who are not receiving a study grant, if they live with their parent and they are 18-19 years of age and attend a secondary level education institution, or if they are under 17 and live alone.

Student loans are available from banks operating in Finland. The lending bank will check the loan guarantee details with the social insurance institution of Finland (Kansaneläkelaitos or Kela) when granting a loan. Interest, repayment and other terms and conditions applying to the loan are agreed between the bank and the learner. The amount of the loan is EUR 300 per month (in secondary education for learners under age 18) or EUR 650 per month (in secondary education for learners of age 18 or older).

Learning material supplement

In 2021, extended compulsory education came into force in Finland. It extends compulsory education and makes upper secondary education free of charge for young people up to the age of 20. Although upper secondary education is free of charge, other students are required to buy their own learning materials (for instance, books, toolsets and any other materials).

Study leave for employees

All employees in a contractual and public service employment relationship are entitled to study leave when the full-time employment relationship with the same employer has lasted for at least 1 year (one or multiple periods). The maximum length of study leave with the same employer is 2 years over a period of 5 years. If the employment has lasted for less than a year, but for at least 3 months, the maximum length of study leave is 5 days.

The studies must be subject to public supervision. The study leave is unpaid unless otherwise agreed with the employer.

Employment Fund support for adult learners

The Employment Fund administered by social partners of the Finnish labour market supports employees' professional development leading to a qualification. In 2022, the Employment Fund granted EUR 178 million in adult education allowances and scholarships for qualified employees.

Adult education allowance

An adult education allowance is available to employees and self-employed people who wish to go on a study leave for at least 2 months. The allowance is a legal right and can be granted to an applicant who has a working history of at least 8 years, and who has been working for the same employer for at least 1 year. To qualify for the allowance, the applicant must participate in studies leading to a qualification or in further vocational training organised by a Finnish

education institution under public supervision. The duration of the allowance is determined based on the applicant's working history and ranges from 2 to 15 months. The amount of adult education allowance is affected by the income before the supported studies and the income and benefits during the studies.

Scholarships for qualified employees

A scholarship is available for those who have completed a vocational, further or specialist qualification. The amount of the one-time scholarship is EUR 414 and it is tax-free. The scholarship must be applied for within a year after completing the qualification. A total of EUR 11.5 million in grants for vocational qualifications was awarded to 27 755 people in 2022.

[14] Learners pay taxes from their allowances if they receive income from other source(s).

CHAPTER 14.

Incentives for enterprises to boost their participation in VET provision

An employer who takes on an apprentice may receive training compensation to cover the costs of training provided at the workplace. The amount of compensation to be paid to the employer is agreed separately with employer and VET provider as part of each apprenticeship contract. Average training compensation varies between EUR 100-200 per month for initial VET qualification and EUR 10-100 per month for continuing VET. It is funded by the municipal funds and is paid either by the local apprenticeship centre or the education institution providing apprenticeship training.

CHAPTER 15.

Guidance and counselling

Guidance and counselling start at the beginning of basic education and continue through all education levels. The guidance and counselling provided within the education system are complemented by guidance services offered by public employment offices.

In upper secondary VET, guidance counsellors play a key role in coordinating, planning and implementing guidance and counselling. VET learners have a right to receive guidance and every VET provider has a guidance counsellor available (providers can share this service).

Teachers also play a big role in giving guidance for learners. But guidance is also an integral part of the work of all teachers. A teacher's task is to guide and motivate the learners to complete their qualifications, support them in the planning of their further studies, help them to find their strengths and develop their learning skills. Guidance and counselling should enable all pupils to reach the best results possible for them. In the workplace, guidance is coordinated by a qualified trainer.

Teachers working as guidance counsellors in Finnish schools must have a teacher training qualification at Master's level, supplemented by studies in guidance and counselling.

The topics covered by guidance and counselling include different education and training options and the development of learners' capabilities to make choices and solutions concerning education, training and future career. Educational support and guidance also cover areas such as support for learning according to the individual capacity of the learners, school attendance and learner welfare.

There have been few major changes in guidance and counselling in recent years but, within the 2018 VET reform, the role of guidance and counselling has been emphasised. VET was made more individual and flexible for learners.

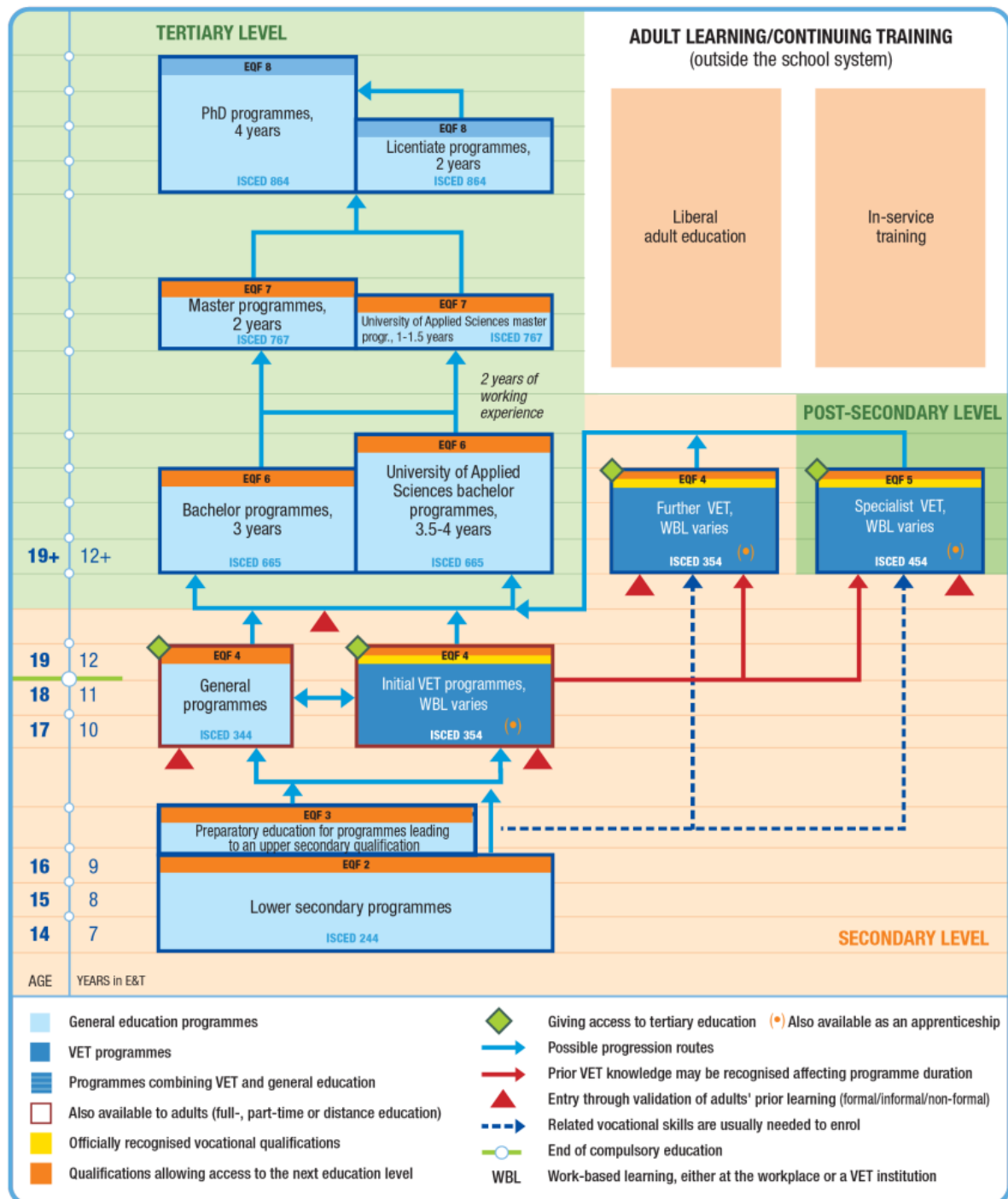
Learners' individual needs and existing competences are considered in all vocational studies. A personal competence development plan is prepared for each learner. The plan is drawn up by the teacher or guidance counsellor together with the learner and, when applicable, a representative from the world of work. The plan identifies and recognises the skills previously acquired by the learner and outlines what kind of competences the learner needs and how they will be acquired in different learning environments.

In addition to guidance and counselling related to learning methods and practices, the personal competence development plan includes information on necessary supportive measures. The support received by a learner may include special teaching and study arrangements due to learning difficulties, injury or illness, or studies supporting learning abilities.

Please also see:

- [guidance and outreach national reports](#);
- [Cedefop's labour market intelligence toolkit](#);
- [Cedefop's inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices](#).

Vocational education and training system chart



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop, & Finnish National Agency for Education. (2023). Vocational education and training in Europe – Finland: system description.

In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2024). Vocational education and training in Europe: VET in Europe database – detailed VET system descriptions [Database].

www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/finland-u3

VET Programme Types

EQF 4
Initial VET programmes
WBL varies
ISCED 354

Mainly school-based VET programmes (also available as apprenticeship) leading to EQF level 4, ISCED 354 (Ammatillinen perustutkinto)

EQF level	4	ISCED-P 2011 level	354
Usual entry grade	10	Usual completion grade	12
Usual entry age	16	Usual completion age	19
Length of a programme (years)	3 Duration depends on the prior learning of the student, especially in the case of further and specialist vocational programmes, and is defined in the personal competence development plan of each learner.		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	 (compulsory until the age of 18)		
Is it initial VET?			
Is it offered free of charge?			
		Is it part of formal education and training system?	
		Is it continuing VET?	
		Is it available for adults?	

ECVET or other credits 180 [competence points](#)

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)

- training agreement;
- apprenticeship;
- programmes that comprise work-based learning but are not apprenticeships or fall under training agreement category.

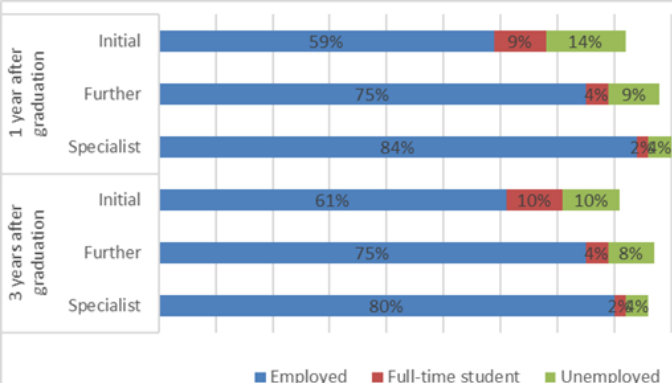
Main providers

The most common type of VET provider is vocational institutions (owned by municipalities, industry and service sector) (15). They provide education and training to more than 75% of initial VET learners. Specialised (usually owned by one private company or association, e.g. a car manufacturer) and special needs (usually owned by municipalities and associations, e.g. Organisation for Respiratory Health) vocational institutions, fire, police and security service institutions (national) and folk high schools, sports institutions, music schools and colleges (local) account for less than 10% of learners in initial VET. Vocational adult education centres (public and regional) mostly provide further and specialist VET.

Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies

=70-80%

The share of work-based learning (WBL) is individually planned for each learner in the personal competence development plan.

Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	• training agreement; • apprenticeship training contract.																															
Main target groups	After the reform in 2018, IVET and adult education are no longer separated.																															
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Admission to initial VET programmes requires a basic education graduation certificate.																															
Assessment of learning outcomes	There are no final examinations in VET. Once learners successfully complete all the studies included in their personal competence development plans, the VET provider grants a certificate for the entire qualification or for one or more units of the qualification. All VET programmes ensure eligibility for higher education studies.																															
Diplomas/certificates provided	The national qualification requirements define the required vocational competence, principles of assessment and how the competence is demonstrated. They are drawn up by the Finnish National Agency for Education in cooperation with working life (16). Each qualification has a number of competence points: • 180 for initial/upper secondary vocational qualifications; • 120/150/180 for further vocational qualifications; • 160/180/210 for specialist vocational qualifications.																															
Examples of qualifications	Initial vocational qualification in horse care and management(17)																															
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Graduates can: • enter the labour market ◦ employed full-time ◦ employed and in education; • continue with further education.																															
Destination of graduates	<table><thead><tr><th>Time after graduation</th><th>Qualification</th><th>Employed</th><th>Full-time student</th><th>Unemployed</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td rowspan="3">1 year after graduation</td><td>Initial</td><td>59%</td><td>9%</td><td>14%</td></tr><tr><td>Further</td><td>75%</td><td>4%</td><td>9%</td></tr><tr><td>Specialist</td><td>84%</td><td>2%</td><td>4%</td></tr><tr><td rowspan="3">3 years after graduation</td><td>Initial</td><td>61%</td><td>10%</td><td>10%</td></tr><tr><td>Further</td><td>75%</td><td>4%</td><td>8%</td></tr><tr><td>Specialist</td><td>80%</td><td>2%</td><td>4%</td></tr></tbody></table> NB 2021 data (most recent). Source: Education Statistics Finland (Vipunen):https://vipunen.fi/	Time after graduation	Qualification	Employed	Full-time student	Unemployed	1 year after graduation	Initial	59%	9%	14%	Further	75%	4%	9%	Specialist	84%	2%	4%	3 years after graduation	Initial	61%	10%	10%	Further	75%	4%	8%	Specialist	80%	2%	4%
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	Specialist	80%	2%	4%																												

Awards through validation of prior learning	 The Vocational Upper Secondary Education and Training Decree (673/2017) defines the principles for recognising prior learning. Each student's personal competence development plan must include recognition of prior learning. Prior learning acquired in training, working life or other learning environments has to be recognised as part of the qualification. The recognition of prior learning must be done in all VET qualifications: in vocational, further and specialist qualifications.
General education subjects	 All programmes leading to a qualification include vocational study units: • basic and field-specific study unit(s) (compulsory); • specialised study units (compulsory and optional). In addition to the above, all initial vocational qualification programmes include study units that consist of common rather than specific vocational competence: • communication and interaction competence; • mathematics and science competence; • citizenship and working life competence. The common units may be included in further and specialist qualifications but only if this is seen as necessary when making the personal competence development plan.
Key competences	 Key competences help students to keep up with the changes in society and working life. In the wake of the 2018 VET reform, key competences are no longer addressed as a separate part of vocational competence. They have been modified so that key competences are included in all vocational skills requirements and assessment criteria. The key competences for lifelong learning are: digital and technological competence; mathematics and science competence; competence development; communication and interaction competence; competence for sustainable development; cultural competence; social and citizenship competence; and entrepreneurial competence.
Application of learning outcomes approach	
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	The share of vocational upper secondary (IVET) learners in 2022 was 72% of all VET learners.

- [15] Some VET providers are foundations or limited companies; they are categorised as 'private' but municipalities usually have shares in such companies/foundations.
- [16] Representatives of the employees/self-employed and employers (altogether called 'working life' in Finland).
- [17] Qualification holders manage daily stable maintenance and horse care tasks and are able to carry out the essential maintenance tasks associated with horse care, such as care of hooves and tack. In addition to basic competence in the field, qualification holders have specialist skills to work either as a groom or a riding instructor in various sectors of the horse industry. The qualification titles produced by the vocational qualification in horse care and management are groom and riding instructor.

EQF 4

Further VET,

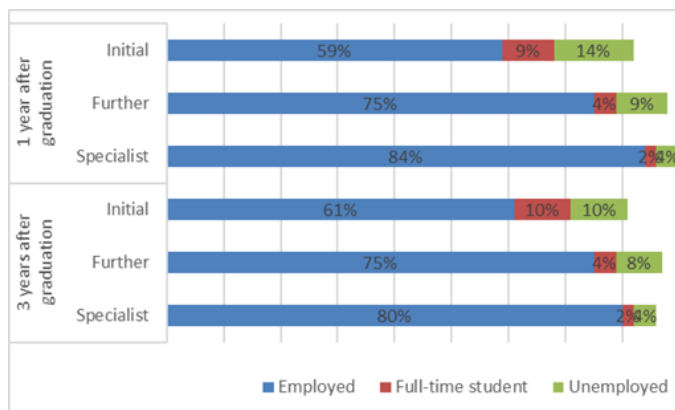
WBL varies

ISCED 354

Work-based further VET, tailored individually, leading to EQF level 4, ISCED 354 (ammattitutkinto)

EQF level	4	ISCED-P 2011 level	354
Usual entry grade	12+	Usual completion grade	12+
Usual entry age	19+	Usual completion age	19+
Length of a programme (years)	The duration depends on a person's prior learning; usually it is less than 2 years (18)		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	✗	Is it part of formal education and training system?	✓
Is it initial VET?	✗	Is it continuing VET?	✓
Is it offered free of charge?	It is possible to collect moderate student fees; on average 15% of the costs of the training.		Is it available for adults? ✓
ECVET or other credits	120/150/180 competence points		
Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)	• training agreement; • apprenticeship; • programmes that comprise work-based learning but are not apprenticeships or fall under a training agreement category.		
Main providers	The most common type of VET providers is vocational institutions (owned by municipalities, industry and service sector) (19). They provide education and training to more than 75% of initial VET learners. Specialised (usually owned by one private company or association, e.g. a car manufacturer) and special needs (usually owned by municipalities and associations, e.g. Organisation for Respiratory Health) vocational institutions, fire, police and security service institutions (national) and folk high schools, sports institutions, music schools and colleges (local) account for less than 10% of learners in initial VET. Vocational adult education centres (public and regional) mostly provide further and specialist VET.		
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	The share of work-based learning (WBL) is individually planned for each learner in the personal competence development plan.		
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	• training agreement; • apprenticeship training contract.		
Main target groups	Young learners and adults After the 2018 reform, IVET and adult education are no longer separated.		
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Admission to further vocational qualifications is decided on a case-by-case basis, taking work experience into consideration. However, work experience or prior qualifications are not a precondition for enrolling.		

Assessment of learning outcomes	There are no final examinations in VET. Once learners successfully complete all the studies included in their personal competence development plans, the VET provider grants a certificate for the entire qualification or for one or more units of the qualification. All VET programmes ensure eligibility for higher education studies.
Diplomas/certificates provided	The national qualification requirements define the required vocational competence, principles of assessment and how the competence is demonstrated. They are drawn up by the Finnish National Agency for Education in cooperation with working life (20). Each qualification has a number of competence points: • 180 for initial/upper secondary vocational qualifications; • 120/150/180 for further vocational qualifications; • 160/ 180/210 specialist vocational qualifications.
Examples of qualifications	Further vocational qualification in horse care and management (21)
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Graduates can: • enter the labour market ◦ employed full time ◦ employed and in education; • continue with further education.
Destination of graduates	



NB 2021 data (most recent).

Source: Education Statistics Finland (Vipunen): <https://vipunen.fi/>

Awards through validation of prior learning	✓ The Vocational Upper Secondary Education and Training Decree (673/2017) defines the principles for recognising prior learning. Each student's personal competence development plan must include recognition of prior learning. Prior learning acquired in training, working life or other learning environments has to be recognised as part of the qualification. The recognition of prior learning must be done in all VET qualifications: in vocational, further and specialist qualifications.
General education subjects	✗ All programmes leading to a qualification include vocational study units: • basic and field-specific study unit(s) (compulsory); • specialised study units (compulsory and optional); • communication and interaction competence; • mathematics and science competence; • citizenship and working life competence. The common units may be included in further and specialist qualifications but only if this is seen as necessary when making the personal competence development plan.
Key competences	✗
Application of learning outcomes approach	✓
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	17% (2022)

-
- [19] Some VET providers are foundations or limited companies; they are categorised as 'private' but municipalities usually have shares in such companies/foundations.
- [20] Representatives of the employees/self-employed and employers (altogether called 'working life' in Finland)
- [21] The further vocational qualification in horse care and management comprises eight competence areas and seven qualification titles (in parentheses): provision of equine-assisted services (provider of equine services); provision of horse breeding service (same as previous); provision of equine massage services (horse massage therapist); farriery (farrier); tack-making (tack-maker); riding instruction (riding instructor (FQ)); training and coaching riding horses (trainer of young riding horses); provision of training services in harness racing (trainer of trotters).

EQF 5

Specialist VET,

WBL varies

ISCED 454

Work-based specialist VET, tailored individually, leading to EQF level 5, ISCED 454 (Erikoisammattitutkinto)

EQF level	5	ISCED-P 2011 level	454
Usual entry grade	12+	Usual completion grade	12+
Usual entry age	19+	Usual completion age	19+
Length of a programme (years)	The duration depends on a person's prior learning; usually it is less than 2 years (22)		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	✗	Is it part of formal education and training system?	✓
Is it initial VET?	✗	Is it continuing VET?	✓
Is it offered free of charge?	It is possible to collect moderate student fees; on average 15% of the costs of the training.		Is it available for adults? ✓
ECVET or other credits	160/180/210 competence points		
Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)	• training agreement; • apprenticeship; • programmes that comprise work-based learning but are not apprenticeships or fall under a training agreement category.		
Main providers	The most common type of VET providers is vocational institutions (owned by municipalities, industry and service sector) (23) . They provide education and training to more than 75% of initial VET learners. Specialised (usually owned by one private company or association, e.g. a car manufacturer) and special needs (usually owned by municipalities and associations, e.g. Organisation for Respiratory Health) vocational institutions, fire, police and security service institutions (national) and folk high schools, sports institutions, music schools and colleges (local) account for less than 10% of learners in initial VET. Vocational adult education centres (public and regional) mostly provide further and specialist VET.		
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	The share of work-based learning (WBL) is individually planned for each learner in the personal competence development plan.		
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	• training agreement; • apprenticeship training contract.		
Main target groups	Young learners and adults After the 2018 reform, IVET and adult education are no longer separated.		
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Admission to further vocational qualifications is decided on a case-by-case basis, taking work experience into consideration. However, work experience or prior qualifications are not a precondition for enrolling.		

Assessment of learning outcomes	There are no final examinations in VET. Once learners successfully complete all the studies included in their personal competence development plans, the VET provider grants a certificate for the entire qualification or for one or more units of the qualification. All VET programmes ensure eligibility for higher education studies.
Diplomas/certificates provided	The national qualification requirements define the required vocational competence, principles of assessment and how the competence is demonstrated. They are drawn up by the Finnish National Agency for Education in cooperation with working life partners (24) . Each qualification has a number of competence points: • 180 for initial/upper secondary vocational qualifications; • 120/150/180 for further vocational qualifications; • 160/180/210 specialist vocational qualifications.
Examples of qualifications	Specialist vocational qualification in horse care and management (25)
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Graduates can: • enter the labour market ◦ employed full time ◦ employed and in education; • continue with further education.
Destination of graduates	NB: 2021 data (most recent). Source: Education Statistics Finland (Vipunen): https://vipunen.fi/
Awards through validation of prior learning	 The Vocational Upper Secondary Education and Training Decree (673/2017) defines the principles for recognising prior learning. Each student's personal competence development plan must include recognition of prior learning. Prior learning acquired in training, working life or other learning environments has to be recognised as part of the qualification. The recognition of prior learning must be done in all VET qualifications: in vocational, further and specialist qualifications.
General education subjects	 All programmes leading to a qualification include vocational study units: • basic and field-specific study unit(s) (compulsory); • specialised study units (compulsory and optional); • communication and interaction competence; • mathematics and science competence; • citizenship and working life competence. The common units may be included in further and specialist qualifications but only if this is seen as necessary when making the personal competence development plan.
Key competences	
Application of learning outcomes approach	
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	8% (2022)

[23] Some VET providers are foundations or limited companies; they are categorised as 'private' but municipalities usually have shares in such companies/foundations.

[24] Representatives of the employees/self-employed and employers (altogether called 'working life' in Finland).

- [25] The specialist vocational qualification in horse care and management comprises four competence areas and qualification titles (in parentheses): managing horse stables operations (head groom); working as a specialist in farriery (farrier (SQ)); equestrian sports management (equestrian sports manager); riding instruction (riding instructor (SQ)).