



# spotlight on VET FINLAND

## VET in Finland

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, qualifications structure and core subjects included in them are determined by the government.

More than 40% of the relevant age group start upper secondary VET studies immediately after basic education; most of these obtain their VET qualifications at vocational institutions. All qualifications include at least six months' on-the-job learning. The most popular fields are technology, communications and transport, and social services, health and sports. Half the students are female, though the proportion varies greatly from field to field. Technology and natural sciences are still very male-dominated areas while healthcare and social services, tourism and catering are female-dominated.

In addition to school-based upper secondary VET, vocational qualifications can be obtained in apprenticeship training or as competence-based qualifications:

- apprenticeship training includes courses at vocational institutions. The share of work-based learning (WBL) is 70% to 80%. Most apprentices are adults;
- competence-based qualifications are usually completed by adults. In addition to the 52 vocational qualifications offered, there are nearly 300 further and specialist qualifications in different fields. Vocational and further vocational qualifications are at upper secondary level and may be obtained through competence tests, independent of how vocational skills were acquired. The specialist vocational qualification is at post-secondary, non-tertiary level.

Authorisations to provide VET are granted by the ministry. They cover VET fields, qualifications, number of students, language of instruction, locations, special educational tasks and other issues. VET providers may also be assigned tasks to develop and serve the world of work.

VET providers are responsible for organising training in their areas, for matching provision with

local labour market needs, and for devising curricula based on national qualification requirements. They also decide independently on issues such as type of education and training provided and the method for completing studies, within the limits of their authorisation from the education ministry. A VET provider may be a local authority, municipal training consortium, foundation or other registered association or State company.

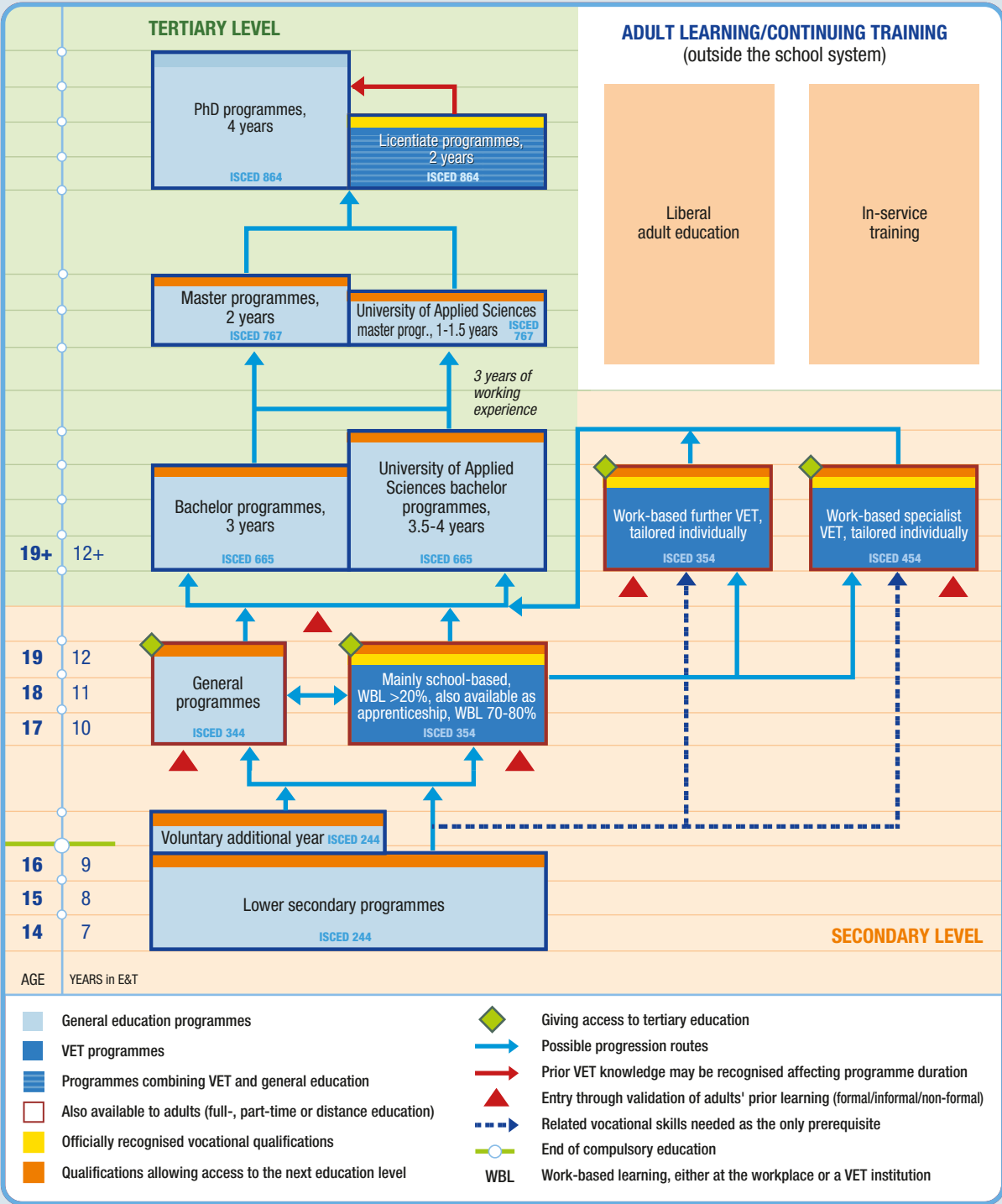
National qualification requirements ensure nationally uniform vocational competence; they are the basis for evaluating learning outcomes. These requirements are drawn up by the Finnish National Board of Education in the context of broad cooperation with stakeholders (employers' organisations, trade unions, the Trade Union of Education, and student unions).

Cooperation with the world of work is considered essential. In addition to contributing to national qualification requirements, representatives from enterprises participate in work on local curricula, organise and plan training and skills demonstrations, and are part of regional committees. They also assess both skills demonstrations in upper secondary qualifications and competence tests in competence-based qualifications.

Flexibility and individualisation have become means to respond to changing labour market requirements. Studies in upper secondary VET are based on individual study plans, comprising both compulsory and optional modules. Modularisation allows for a degree of individualisation of qualifications; for example, students can include modules from other vocational qualifications (including both further and specialist vocational qualifications) or applied sciences degrees. Flexibility also enables education providers to meet both regional and local labour demands more effectively.

There are no dead-ends within the education system. From the late 1990s the vocational track has offered eligibility to access polytechnics and universities, so upper secondary VET became equal to general upper secondary education in terms of providing access to higher education.

# VET in the Finnish education and training system



NB: ISCED-P 2011. EQF levels have not yet been defined.  
Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Finland.

## Distinctive features of VET

National qualification requirements have been based on a learning-outcomes approach since the early 1990s. Flexibility of vocational qualifications has increased, for example, by diversifying opportunities to include modules from other vocational qualifications (including further and specialist vocational qualifications) or polytechnic degrees. More flexibility will allow students to create individual learning paths and increase their motivation for completing their studies. It is also meant to give education providers an opportunity to meet regional and local labour market demands more effectively. Studies in upper secondary VET are based on individual study plans, comprising both compulsory and optional study modules. Modularisation allows for a degree of individualisation of qualifications.

The Finnish National Board of Education reformed all 52 vocational qualifications in 2015. The fundamental goal of this reform was to strengthen the learning-outcomes approach of vocational qualification requirements and the modular structure of qualifications. This supports building flexible and individual learning paths and promotes validation of prior learning.

A career as a VET teacher is generally considered attractive, reflected in the high number of applications to enrol in vocational teacher training programmes that invariably exceed intake. Recently, about 30% of eligible applicants were admitted to training.

## Challenges and policy responses

There is growing concern over the risk of social exclusion of youth. In 2015, among 20 to 29 year-olds, 15.7% were neither in employment nor in education and training. Youth unemployment is on the increase; the rate for 15 to 24 year-olds was 20% in 2014 and 21.4% in 2016. This costs the nation approximately EUR 300 million a year.

The government introduced the youth guarantee programme from the beginning of 2013. This offers everyone under 25, as well as recent graduates under 30, a job, on-the-job training, a study place or rehabilitation within three months of becoming unemployed.

Dropout from vocational education and training is far more common than from general upper secondary education, although it is not high in European terms (7.6% in the 2013/14 school year). Prevention of both dropout from education and exclusion from society is a policy priority: every individual who drops out of education and the labour market is seen as being both a personal tragedy and a significant cost to society. A programme was set up in 2012 to develop anticipatory and individualised procedures in guidance and counselling and create pedagogical solutions and practices supporting completion of studies, as well as work-centred learning environments and opportunities. There is also emphasis on creating practices to recognise prior learning more effectively. An additional EUR 4 million have been allocated to this programme.

The government is currently undertaking VET system reform, which aims to renew VET legislation and the financing system, and to promote learning at the workplace. This reform is planned to come into force in 2018.



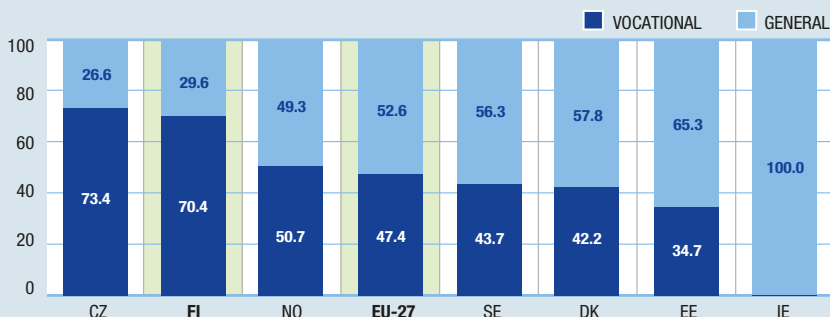
# FINLAND



## Education and training in figures

### Upper secondary students (ISCED 2011 level 3) enrolled in vocational and general programmes

% of all students in upper secondary education, 2014

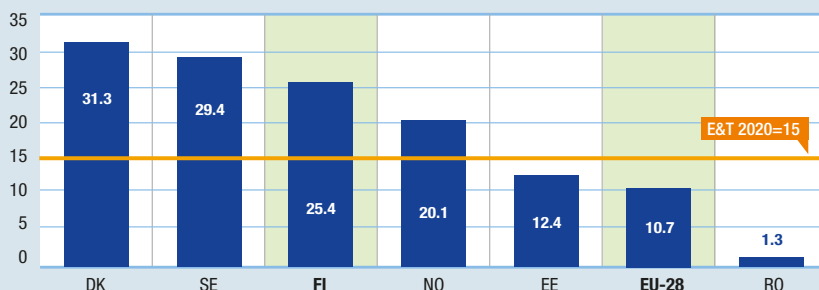


NB: 47.4% is the provisional weighted EU average for 2014 based on available country data (27 countries).

Source: Cedefop calculations, based on Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 22.4.2016.

### Lifelong learning

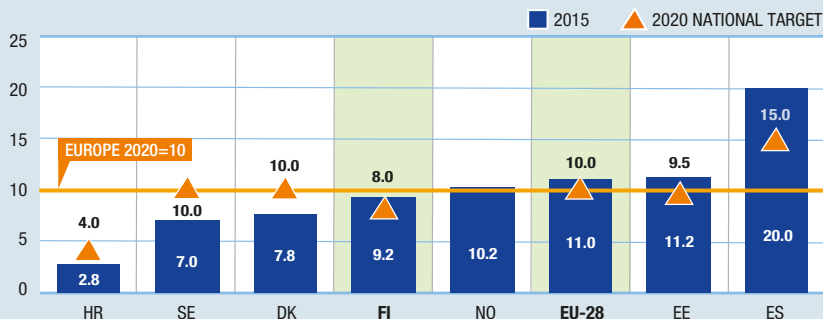
% of population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2015



Source: Eurostat labour force survey, date of extraction 16.5.2016.

### Early leavers from education and training

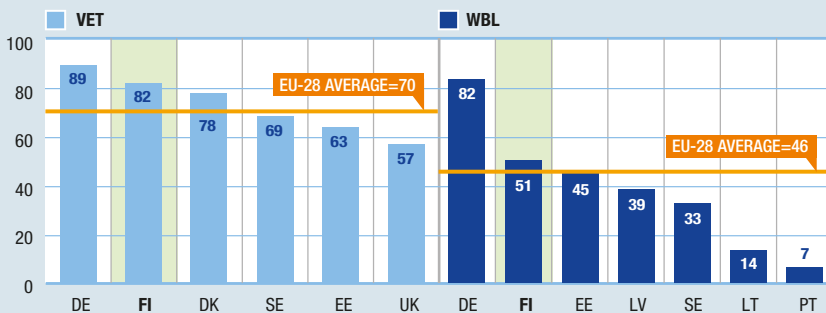
% of early leavers from education and training, 2015



NB: Break in time series in EU-28; low reliability in HR; definition for national target differs in DK, ES and SE.

Source: Eurostat labour force survey, date of extraction 16.5.2016.

### Share of employees (aged 24 to 65) with medium-level education (ISCED 3-4) who obtained a vocational qualification, and whose highest level of education involved some learning in a workplace (% , 2014)



NB: VET: survey respondents described their highest qualification as vocational;

WBL: studies involved some learning at a workplace (e.g. apprenticeships, internships, other forms of work-based learning).

Results may differ from those reported in national statistics and international surveys, as the online data collection method used does not always lead to fully representative findings.

Source: Cedefop European skills and jobs survey, 2014.



## Further information

- Cedefop ReferNet Finland (2014). *VET in Europe: country report Finland*.  
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[http://oph.fi/download/146428\\_Finnish\\_Education\\_in\\_a\\_Nutshell.pdf](http://oph.fi/download/146428_Finnish_Education_in_a_Nutshell.pdf)
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| <a href="http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/?lang=en">www.minedu.fi/OPM/?lang=en</a>                                                                             | Ministry of Education and Culture                                     |
| <a href="http://www.oph.fi/english">www.oph.fi/english</a>                                                                                             | Finnish National Board of Education                                   |
| <a href="http://www.tem.fi/index.phtml?l=en">www.tem.fi/index.phtml?l=en</a>                                                                           | Ministry of Employment and the Economy                                |
| <a href="http://www.oph.fi/english/sources_of_information/publications/brochures">www.oph.fi/english/sources_of_information/publications/brochures</a> | Brochures on VET and vocational adult education                       |
| <a href="http://www.stat.fi/index_en.html">www.stat.fi/index_en.html</a>                                                                               | Statistics Finland                                                    |
| <a href="http://www.ek.fi/ek/en/index.php">www.ek.fi/ek/en/index.php</a>                                                                               | Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK)                              |
| <a href="http://www.sak.fi/english">www.sak.fi/english</a>                                                                                             | Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK)                    |
| <a href="http://www.sttk.fi">www.sttk.fi</a>                                                                                                           | Finnish Confederation of Professionals (STTK)                         |
| <a href="http://www.oaj.fi">www.oaj.fi</a>                                                                                                             | Trade Union of Education in Finland (OAJ)                             |
| <a href="http://www.cimo.fi/frontpage">www.cimo.fi/frontpage</a>                                                                                       | Centre for International Mobility (CIMO)                              |
| <a href="http://www.sakkinet.fi">www.sakkinet.fi</a>                                                                                                   | National Union of Finnish Upper secondary Vocational Students (SAKKI) |
| <a href="http://samok.fi/en">http://samok.fi/en</a>                                                                                                    | Union of students in Finnish universities of applied sciences (SAMOK) |

This Spotlight is based on input from the Finnish National Board of Education (ReferNet Finland 2016).



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