

## ISTP 2025 - Country report (Finland)

### Commitment 1

*We will make sure that every child and young person is given sufficient support on their path of learning. Support must be provided as soon as the need is identified. The extent of the support a student needs may vary from very little to a considerable amount, or the student may need many types of support simultaneously. We will place greater emphasis on ways to provide more robust support for learning in early childhood education and care.*

### Implementation

- In accordance with the Prime Minister Orpo's Government Programme, the Government has amended the **legislation on support for learning in pre-primary, primary, as well as lower and upper secondary education**, incl. in vocational education and training. The aim is to clarify procedures and unify the support chain across different levels of education, and also regionally. The aim is that pupils and students receive the support they need for learning throughout their educational path and to secure continuities from one level of education to the next.

The key is to enable low-threshold learning support for pupils and students so that the support needs are **identified early** and the accumulation of challenges are prevented. Another key objective is to make the decision-making procedures related to support measures clearer and to reduce the obligation of teachers to record entries into documentation on support measures. The core curricula will be updated by the Finnish National Agency for Education to comply with the amended legislation. The aim is also to ensure that schools have sufficient resources to implement the support. In pre-primary and primary education, EUR 100 million in permanent annual funding in central government transfers will be allocated to education providers to implement the reform.

The amended Act on Primary and Lower Secondary Education (1090/2024) will enter into force on 1 August 2025. The Acts on General Upper Secondary Education and Vocational Education and Training, will enter into force in August 2025 and 2026 respectively.

- Support measures in ECEC have been strengthened already earlier via amending the **Act on ECEC**, which entered into force in August 2022. The **reform strengthened the child's right to receive the support needed in accordance with inclusive principles**. A total of 35 million euros of government grants for ECEC providers were issued to implement the revised act and strengthen every child's right to support in ECEC in 2022–2023. The Government has also agreed to give **permanent state subsidy** to municipalities for implementing the reform in ECEC. In 2022 the subsidy was 6.25 million and from 2023 onwards, 15 million euros every year. The Ministry finances several research projects on the implementation of the reform and possible needs for legislative amendments. Research projects will be completed in 2024 and 2025. The Ministry has prepared a report to the Government on the implementation of support under the reform of the Act on ECEC and on the need to amend the regulation on child support in the end of 2024<sup>1</sup>.
- In connection with the reform of support for learning in primary and lower secondary education, the **availability of special needs teachers will be improved** by increasing the education of special needs teachers through separate funding. The Ministry of Education and Culture will allocate separate funding in 2025 (and in the next two years, if the Parliament grants funding for this) for additional places in professional studies of special needs teachers. In addition, negotiations between the Ministry of Education and Culture and the universities for the university agreement period 2025–2028 were concluded in 2024, and it was agreed to raise the quantitative degree objectives for teacher education.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/165997/OKM\\_2024\\_38.pdf?sequence=1](https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/165997/OKM_2024_38.pdf?sequence=1)

The intake of special needs teacher students has also previously been increased with special funding granted to universities. At the end of 2023, the Ministry of Education and Culture granted eight universities a total of appr. two million euros in funding for the education of Finnish and Swedish-speaking special needs teachers (incl. also special class teachers and special needs teachers in ECEC), and Swedish-speaking student counsellors.

- **Basic education will be increased by 3 weekly lessons per year.** At the same time, however, the curriculum for basic education will not be expanded accordingly. These additional lessons give more time for the learning process. The increases will be targeted especially at the lower grades of basic education, strengthening reading, writing and arithmetic skills, as mastering basic skills is a prerequisite for later learning. In grades 1 to 2, teaching of both mother tongue and literature and mathematics will be increased by one weekly lesson and in grades 3 to 6, teaching of mother tongue and literature will be increased by one weekly lesson. Thus, the total amount of instruction in grades 1 to 6 will increase by three weekly lessons per year. The total cost of the change is EUR 20.6 million. Amendments to decrees enter into force in August 2025.
- **Discretionary government grants to improve equality and quality in ECEC, pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education.** The purpose of the grants is to strengthen the support for learning and to reinforce inclusion, wellbeing, equity, non-discrimination and to ensure the principle that the nearest neighborhood school continues to be the best option for the family. The grant will strengthen equality by allocating support to schools located in areas with more socioeconomic disadvantage, strengthen learning performance and reduce the size of learners' groups. The grant must be allocated to the acquisition of additional personnel. Discretionary government grants to improve equality in ECEC, pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education has been established in accordance with the Prime Minister Orpo's Government Programme. A total of 145,683 MEUR in discretionary government grants for measures promoting educational equality and non-discrimination can be applied for in 2024-2026.

## **Commitment 2**

***We will take an active role in influencing the working conditions of teachers in early childhood education and care and in schools so that they will want to stay in their profession (instead of changing occupation) and have (time and) opportunities to give support to learners on their path of learning and in their emotional wellbeing***

### **Implementation**

- The **availability of ECEC staff** has been one of the main concerns in Finland, especially of ECEC teachers and special needs teachers. The Ministry is reviewing the challenges on staff retention, in order to plan measures on how to attract and retain a well-qualified and motivated workforce in ECEC and ensure the attractiveness of profession. Results will be available in year 2025.

The Prime Minister Orpo's Government Program includes objectives to **increase university intake** for ECEC teacher training. To meet the goals of the government program addressing the labor shortage, the numerical targets for teacher education in ECEC have been raised in the agreements between the Ministry of Education and Culture and universities for the contract period 2025-2028 to 1280 (the annual target for the period 2021-2024 was 855) and for special needs teachers from 206 (years 2021-2024) to 230. The intake of students has also been increased with **special funding granted** to universities for many years already. In the state's public finance plan for the years 2024–2027, an appropriation of 17.36 million euros has been allocated to increase the intake for ECEC teacher training in universities.

- To support the implementation of the Government Programme, the Government has also launched a **strategic alliance with the six largest cities**, Espoo, Helsinki, Oulu, Tampere, Turku and Vantaa (so-called six cities). Addressing the shortage of skilled personnel in ECEC has been identified as one of the development themes of this cooperation. The group discussing issues related to ECEC has made proposals to respond to the shortage of skilled workers. One of the measures identified is the **competence development programme pilot for ECEC personnel**. In accordance with the alliance partnership, the state allocates funding (6 MEUR in 2025) to the implementation of the pilot in the six largest cities. With this funding, cities will purchase degree programmes for their staff from higher education institutions leading to the qualification of ECEC teachers and social pedagogues in ECEC.
- During recent years many initiatives have taken place in efforts to develop education and training leading to qualification, including leadership in ECEC. In 2024, recommendations were published by the **National Forum** for Developing Education and Training Provision and Programmes in ECEC served in 2021–2023.<sup>2</sup> In 2024, also the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) published an **evaluation on ECEC education** provided by universities, universities of applied sciences and vocational institutions (2022–2023), providing information on development needs in the ECEC staff training.<sup>3</sup> At the end of 2023, FINEEC also launched an evaluation report on the state, strengths and areas of development of **ECEC leadership**.<sup>4</sup>
- Additionally, commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Culture, the University of Helsinki has drawn up proposals extending to the year 2035 for **developing leadership in ECEC, pre-primary, as well as in primary and lower secondary education**.<sup>5</sup> However, in the beginning of the year 2025 there are not yet governments decisions or funding about going further with the recommendations. Support for leadership and **networking** between leadership researchers, leaders and developers has also been facilitated and strengthened by the National Agency for Education.
- **Discretionary government grants to improve equality in ECEC, pre-primary and primary education** have been established in accordance with the Prime Minister Orpo's Government Programme. A total of 145,683 MEUR in discretionary government grants for measures promoting educational equality and non-discrimination can be applied for in 2024-2026.

### **Commitment 3**

***We will make sure that the entire educational pathway from early childhood education and care to higher education is better taken into account when developing the educational system, drawing on research-based knowledge.***

### **Implementation**

- Education in Finland is developed constantly, based on research and evidence. Data and evidence is gathered through various means and actively used in policy planning, as well as foresight. In 2023, the Ministry of Education and Culture launched a new tool to be published annually – a “**Bildung Review**” (sivistyskatsaus), which compiles statistical and other information on the administrative branch of the Ministry, its development and situation in international comparison. The objective of the review is to create an overall picture of the extensive administrative branch as a whole. The review has been published twice so far (2023 and 2024), providing an overview of development in the Ministry’s administrative branch over the past decades. The latest stage, which began in the 1990s, is characterised by a decline in the achieved learning outcomes, the plateauing of the rising

<sup>2</sup>[https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/165440/OKM\\_2024\\_7.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/165440/OKM_2024_7.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

<sup>3</sup>[https://www.karvi.fi/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/documents/KARVI\\_0724.pdf](https://www.karvi.fi/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/documents/KARVI_0724.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>[https://www.karvi.fi/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/documents/Karvi\\_2923.pdf](https://www.karvi.fi/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/documents/Karvi_2923.pdf)

<sup>5</sup><https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/164596>

level of education among Finns, as well as a gradual decrease in public input into education.<sup>6</sup> Next review on the development and the status of education in Finland was published in 2024, bringing more light in regional variation in participation in educational and cultural services. Educational attainment and the use of educational and cultural services are differentiating regionally and at the level of smaller areas.<sup>7</sup>

- In accordance with the Prime Minister Orpo's Government Programme, efforts will be made to **raise the participation rate in ECEC**, especially for children over the age of 3, by means of information guidance and strengthening the knowledge base. Special measures will be targeted at raising the participation rate of children with immigrant backgrounds in ECEC. For this purpose, the Finnish National Agency for Education has developed support material for strengthening service guidance in ECEC.<sup>8</sup>
- The Ministry of Education and Culture has launched a **pilot for extending the pre-primary education for two years**. The pilot was carried out in 2021-2024, extending to ca. 14 000 children, born in 2016 and 2017. The aim has been to improve the quality of pre-primary education and strengthen continuum between ECEC, pre-primary and the basic education. The Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) prepared the National Core Curriculum for the two year pre-primary pilot and also supported municipalities in creating their own local pilot curricula. The research project is monitoring and evaluating the two-year pre-primary education trial. The study will be completed in 2025.
- As reported also under the 1<sup>st</sup> commitment, the Government is aiming to clarify procedures in providing support for **learning and unify the support chain from ECEC to upper secondary education, incl. in vocational education and training**. The aim is that pupils and students receive the support they need for learning throughout their educational path and to secure continuities from one level of education to the next. The key is to enable low-threshold learning support for pupils and students so that the support needs are identified early and the accumulation of challenges are prevented.
- In terms of higher education, the environment in which higher education institutions operate has changed significantly since 2017. Thus, the Ministry of Education and Culture will be formulating a **new vision for higher education and research**, aiming to respond to the changes in society and to formulate long-term guidelines for enhancing higher education and research. The vision extends to 2040 and will identify the required measures to achieve the vision.

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Finally, we wish to add the following, as it is relevant in all 3 commitments:

In December 2023, the Ministry of Education and Culture allocated funding for the new four-year term of the **Teacher Education Forum** (2024-2027). The aim of the Forum is to develop teacher education in Finland in broad cooperation based on research and knowledge. The forum brings together all relevant stakeholders, including all universities and universities of applied sciences, offering teacher education in Finland, taking into account teacher education of all levels of education, from initial teacher education to teachers' continuous professional development.

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<sup>6</sup>[https://valtioneuvosto.fi/-/1410845/sivistyskatsaus-kuvaa-suomen-koulutus-ja-kulttuurisektorin-kehitysta-viime-vuosikymmenien-ajalta-nykypaivaan?languaged=en\\_US](https://valtioneuvosto.fi/-/1410845/sivistyskatsaus-kuvaa-suomen-koulutus-ja-kulttuurisektorin-kehitysta-viime-vuosikymmenien-ajalta-nykypaivaan?languaged=en_US)

<sup>7</sup> [https://okm.fi/-/sivistyskatsaus-kokoaa-yhteen-sivistyshallinnon-tilastoja-ja-tietoja?languaged=en\\_US](https://okm.fi/-/sivistyskatsaus-kokoaa-yhteen-sivistyshallinnon-tilastoja-ja-tietoja?languaged=en_US)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.oph.fi/fi/koulutus-ja-tutkinnot/varhaiskasvatus/monialainen-yhteistyö-varhaiskasvatuksessa>

Main tasks of the Forum 2024-2027 are:

- Implementation of the **Teacher Education Development Programme**<sup>9</sup> (2022-2026) as well as the national STEM strategy<sup>10</sup> and its action plan regarding the measures related to teacher education.
- Vision work - Creating future scenarios through visioning teacher education.
- Research-based quality assurance - Designing and implementing a research-based quality assurance system.

Central aims during the current term are, according to Teacher Education Development Programme:

- Interest and staying power through foresight and student admissions
- Teachers' competence development is research-based and continuous
- Robust teacher education and continuous teacher learning by means of cooperation and networks
- Skillful management to help educational institutions become learning and evolving communities

During Forum's new term 2024-2027, Teacher Education Forum is coordinated by the University of Helsinki (<https://www.helsinki.fi/en/networks/teacher-education-forum>). The Forum is a joint project of all higher education institutions providing teacher education and relevant stakeholders, as in previous terms.

The National Teacher Education Forum is finalizing a vision for teacher education in 2050. The vision report is due to be published in spring 2025.

During its current four-year term (2024–2027), the Teacher Education Forum aims to design and implement a research-based quality assurance system for teacher education. The Forum launched the work at the end of 2024 by examining various topical research related to the quality of teacher education.

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<sup>9</sup><https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/164179/TeacherEducationDevelopmentProgramme.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

<sup>10</sup>[https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/164953/OKM\\_2023\\_22.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/164953/OKM_2023_22.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)