



FINNISH NATIONAL
AGENCY FOR EDUCATION

Education in Finland

Finnish National Agency for Education 2026



Finland in brief

- population 5.6 million - 18 inhabitants / sq. km
- two official languages: Finnish and Swedish
- persons with foreign background:
11 % of the population
- education level of the working age population:

- 11% primary and lower secondary education
- 46% upper secondary education
- 43% tertiary education



Education developed in partnership

National
authorities

Local authorities

Teachers' union

Social partners

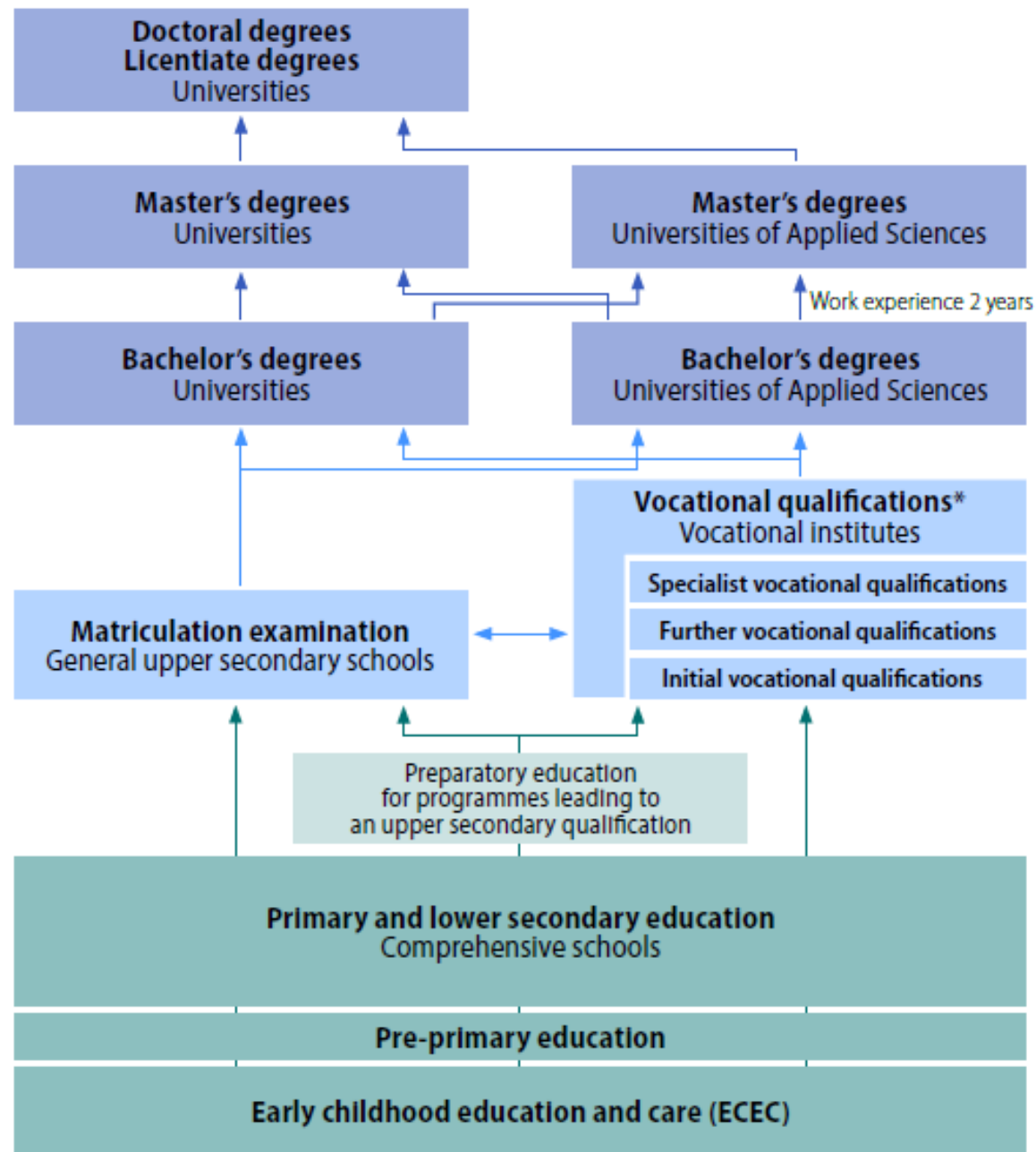
Parents

Pupils and students

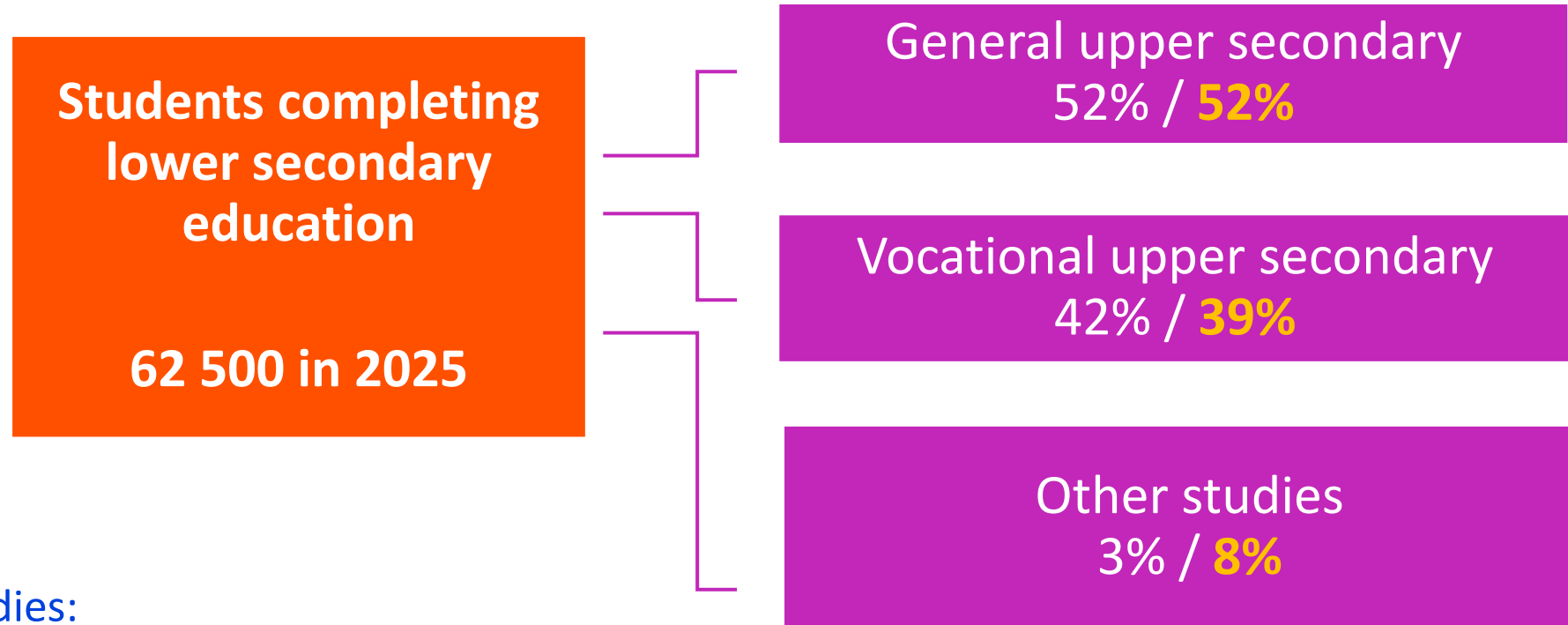
Research
institutions

Relevant
stakeholders

Education system in Finland



What happens immediately after lower secondary education? 2015 / 2025



Other studies:

- Preparatory education for programmes leading to an upper secondary qualification (TUVA)
- Preparatory education for work and independent living (TELMA)
- Completion of compulsory education at folk high schools

Two-tier national administration

Ministry of Education and Culture

- Education policy
- Preparation of legislation
- State funding

Finnish National Agency for Education

- National development agency
- National core curricula & qualification requirements
- Support for evidence-based policy-making
- Services for learners

Central steering



Central

- Educational priorities
- Minimum time allocation
- National core curricula
- Size of state subsidies

Local decisions



Local education providers

- Educational priorities
- Local curricula
- Allocation of subsidies
- Class size
- Recruitment
- Quality assurance

Current issues

- decreasing learning outcomes
- learners with immigrant background
- admission to higher education
- raising educational level among young adults
- promoting a physically active lifestyle
- demographic changes



Primary and lower
secondary education
is free for
pupils and families

Expenditure on education 2024



- **Operative costs per pupil/student**
 - pre-primary education **8 950 €**
 - primary and lower secondary education **11 650 €**
 - general upper secondary **10 123 €**
 - vocational upper secondary **11 466 €**

well-being promotes learning

Pupil and student welfare

**Collective and
individual
approach**

Health care

School meals

Safety

School meals

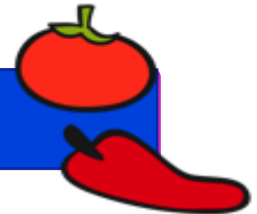
School meals generally consist of typical Finnish foods.
A good school meal consists of:



warm main course



vegetables



bread and table spread



drink

water



Guidance and counselling

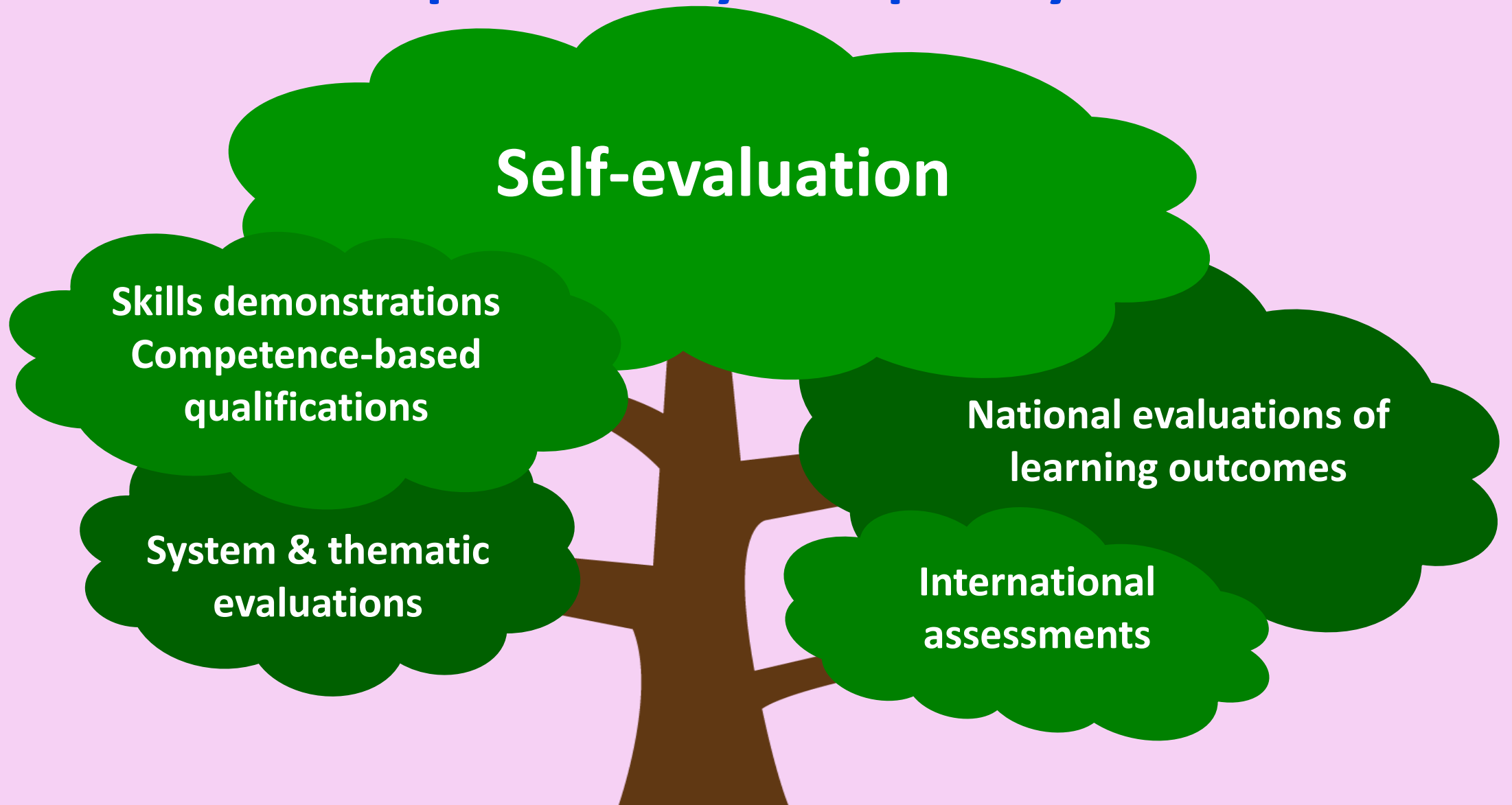


- Subjective right
- Part of the curriculum
- Collective and individual approach
- Develops learning skills
- Supports self-confidence, participation and personal growth
- Focus on transition points

Quality assurance is

a tool for development

Education providers have main responsibility for quality



Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) is an independent authority responsible for the national evaluation at all levels of education

The evaluations can focus on areas such as:

- learning outcomes
- the performance and practices of education providers
- quality management systems in education
- implementation of curricula

Additionally FINEEC:

- audits and evaluates quality management systems
- develops tools and methods for quality assessment
- produces Information for educational development and decision-making
- supports education providers in quality management
- promotes consistent and equitable quality practices nationwide

Evaluation of learning outcomes in primary and lower secondary function as traffic lights

National evaluation plan

Sample-based

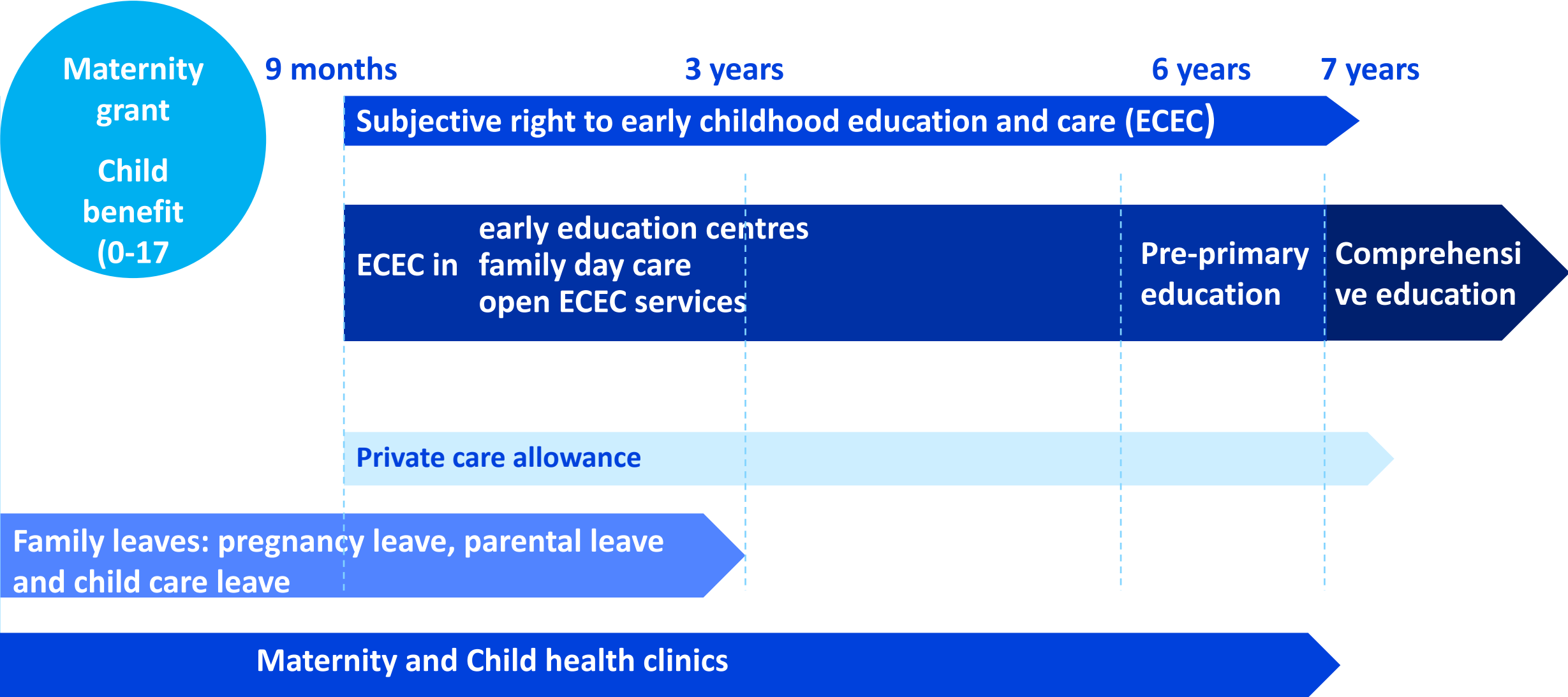
Stratified

Mother tongue and
mathematics every other
year

Other subjects according
to policy priorities

Child's overall development
and joy of learning
emphasised in Early Childhood
Education and Care

From birth to school



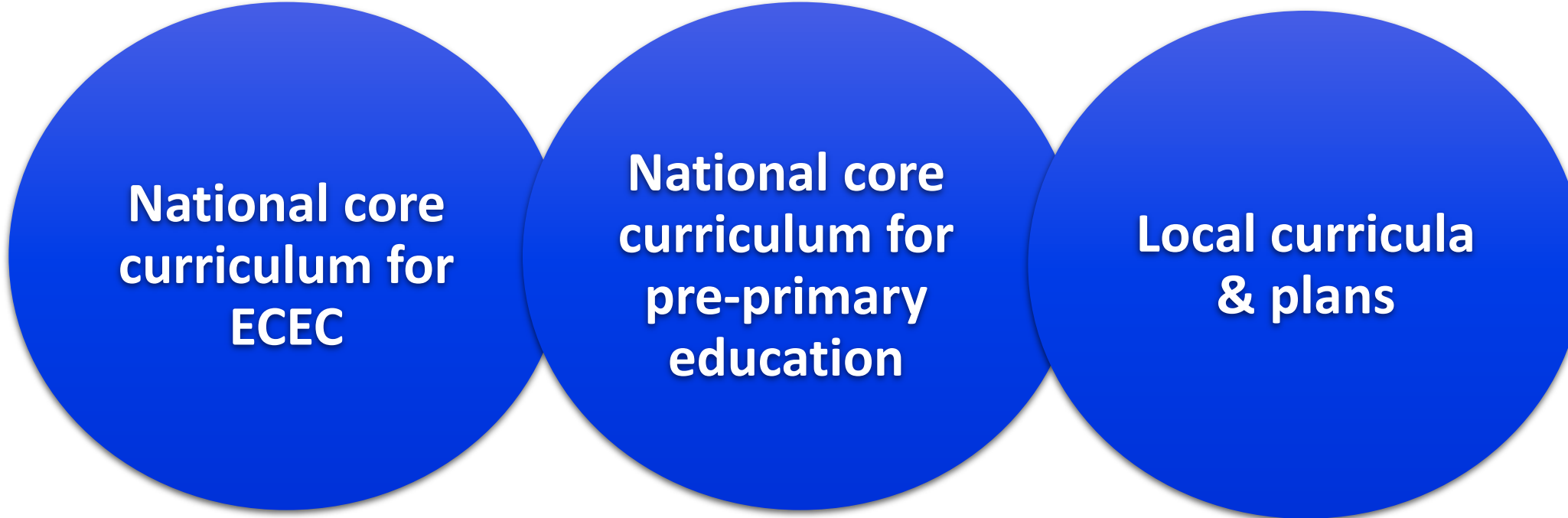
Early childhood education and care (ECEC)



Photo: Liikuntapäiväkoti

- Universal entitlement (0-6 years)
- Main forms:
 - early education centres
 - family day care
- Integrated approach to education, care & teaching => EduCare model
- Moderate fees; 0-311 €/month in municipal ECEC

ECEC plans and curriculum



The diagram consists of three overlapping blue circles arranged horizontally. The leftmost circle contains the text 'National core curriculum for ECEC'. The middle circle contains the text 'National core curriculum for pre-primary education'. The rightmost circle contains the text 'Local curricula & plans'. The circles overlap such that the middle circle is partially covered by the left and right circles, and the right circle is partially covered by the middle circle. A decorative blue and green curved line is visible at the bottom right of the slide.

**National core
curriculum for
ECEC**

**National core
curriculum for
pre-primary
education**

**Local curricula
& plans**



Child's overall well-being in focus

Integrative education

Individual ECEC plan, no learning standards

Learning through play essential

Language, physical activity, exploration, artistic experiences and self-expression

ECEC partnership

Pre-primary education at the age of six

- free and compulsory
- provided in early education centres or schools
- minimum 700 hours per year
- promoting child's prerequisites for growth, development and learning
- a continuous learning path from ECEC to school
- integrative education
- learning through play, joy of learning



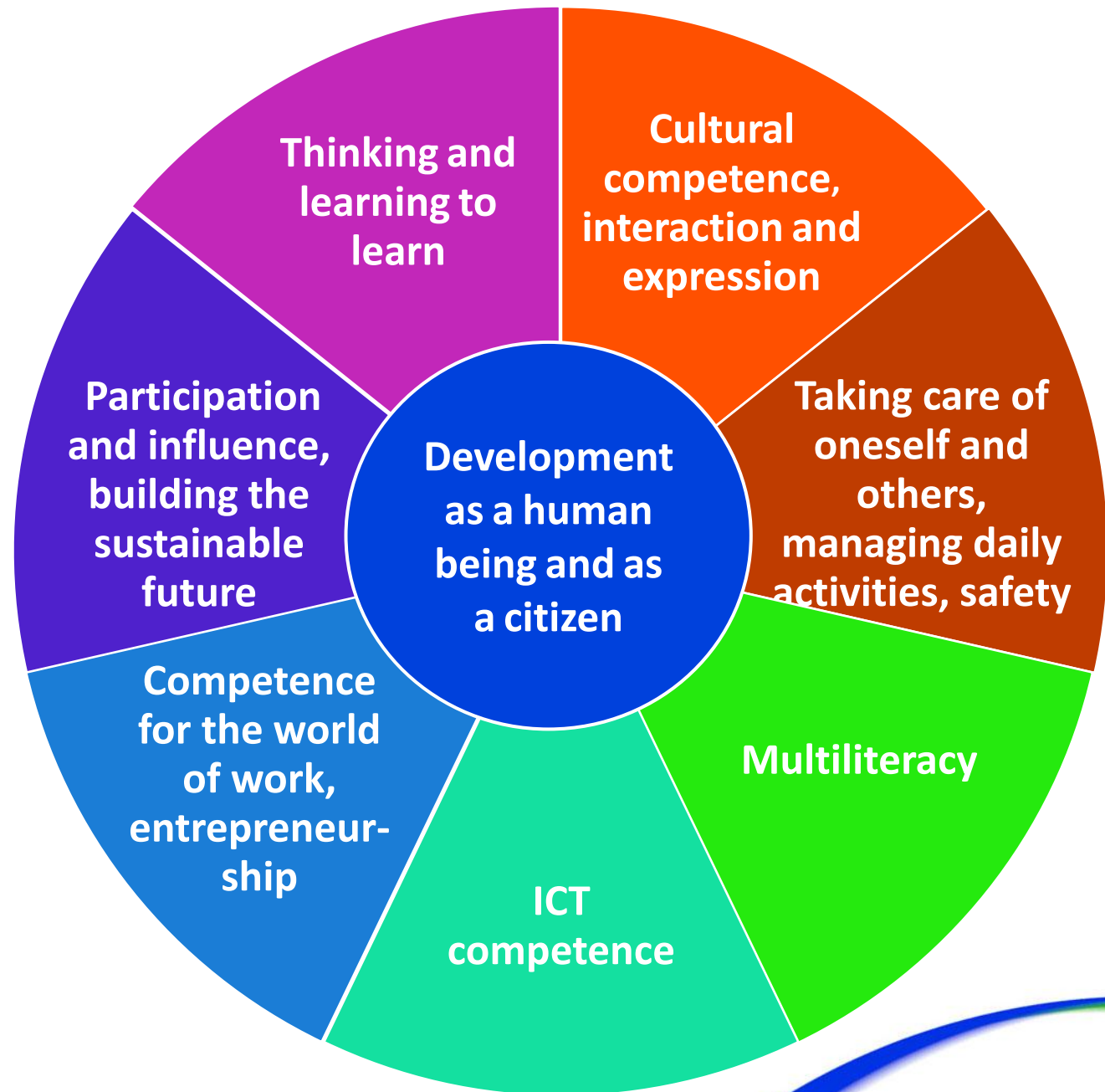
Primary and lower secondary
education:

Every pupil is unique and
has the right to
high-quality education

Rethinking competence

National Goals for Basic Education and Transversal Competences

- knowledge
- skills
- values
- attitudes
- will



National minimum time allocation sample of subjects (annual weekly lessons¹)

Year class	1–2	3–6	7–9	Total
Mother tongue & literature	15	19	10	42
Mathematics	7	15	11	32
A language (1st foreign language)	2	9	7	18
B language (2nd national language)	–	2	5	6

Year class	1–6	7–9	Total
Environment and science	14	17	31
History & civics	5	7	12
Arts, crafts & sports			62
¹ Total annual no. of lessons x 38 weeks	Total min		228

Primary and lower secondary education curriculum

Core ideas



Conception of learning

Learner's active role

- Sets targets
- Reflects & analyses
- Solves problems

Interaction

- Learns with others and in different environments
- Understands consequences

Learning to learn

- Recognises own way of learning
- Applies this to promote learning

Self-conception and confidence

- Helps setting targets
- Receives feedback

General upper secondary education
aims at
broad-based knowledge

General upper secondary education

Flexible and personalized, based on study units with no year-specific classes, defined as certain number of credits

Combining general, vocational & higher education studies

Eligibility for higher education



Distribution of lesson hours in general upper secondary education

Compulsory studies	94 – 102* credits
Minimum total of elective studies	48 – 56* credits
Minimum total number of studies	150 credits

*Total number depends on the student's scope of syllabus in mathematics

Matriculation examination

First national examination in the Finnish education system is at the end of general upper secondary education

- **Minimum 5 tests:** Mother tongue + 4 of the following
 - Mathematics
 - Second National Language
 - Foreign Language
 - Humanities and Natural Sciences
- One or more optional tests possible
- Biannual

vocational education
and training:

focus on competences and
individual learner



Vocational education and training (VET)

Close cooperation with the labour market

Work-based learning

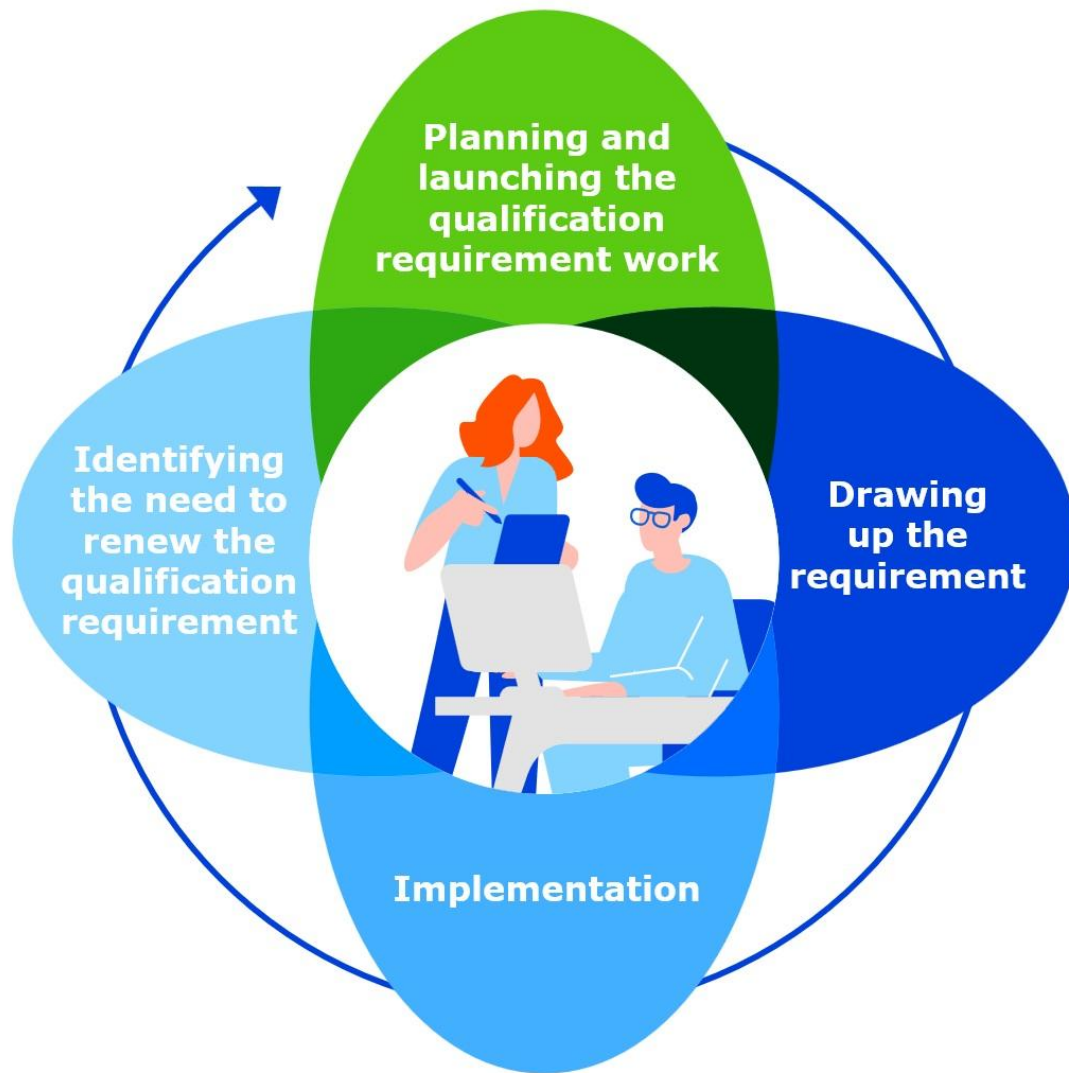
Flexible learning pathways

Open pathways from VET
to higher and further education

Main VET stakeholders

- **Parliament:** Legislation, qualification structure, budget, student number limits.
- **Government:** VET development in the Government Programme; structure of common units.
- **Finnish Education Evaluation Centre:** Evaluates education system outcomes.
- **Ministry of Education and Culture:** Legislation, qualification structure, licences, steering, funding and monitoring.
- **Finnish National Agency for Education:** National qualification requirements, quality management, regulations, national students' and employer's feedback
- **VET providers:** Decide how and where education is organised within their licence.

VET qualification requirement process



Identifying the need to renew the qualification requirement

- Determining the required changes to content and structure
- Defining the unit's work plans and resources

Planning and launching the qualification requirement work

- Focusing the resources and planning the project
- (Procurement of expert work)
- Launching the work

Drawing up the requirement

- Preparing the regulation text
- Hearing stakeholders, incl. circulation for comments
- Deciding on the requirement
- Publishing the requirement

Implementation

- Communication
- Information guidance using various measures

Developing VET

**Improving
effectiveness**

**Work-life oriented
qualifications**

Quality assurance

Flexibility & individualisation,
Restructuring the financing
and operational guidance of
VET

Micro-credentials,
Competence-based VET

Quality strategy, Support for
learning

Key competences for lifelong learning

Literacy competence

Multilingual competence

Mathematical competence and competence in science,
technology and engineering

Digital competence

Personal, social and learning-to-learn competence

Citizenship competence

Entrepreneurship competence

Cultural awareness and expression competence

FUNDING SYSTEM FOR VET, 2026 ONWARDS

STUDENT-YEAR BASED FUNDING 50%

Student years

PERFORMANCE-BASED FUNDING 30%

Completed qualifications
and units

EFFECTIVENESS-BASED FUNDING 18%

Employment and further
studies after graduation

Adult education is popular

LIFELONG LEARNING

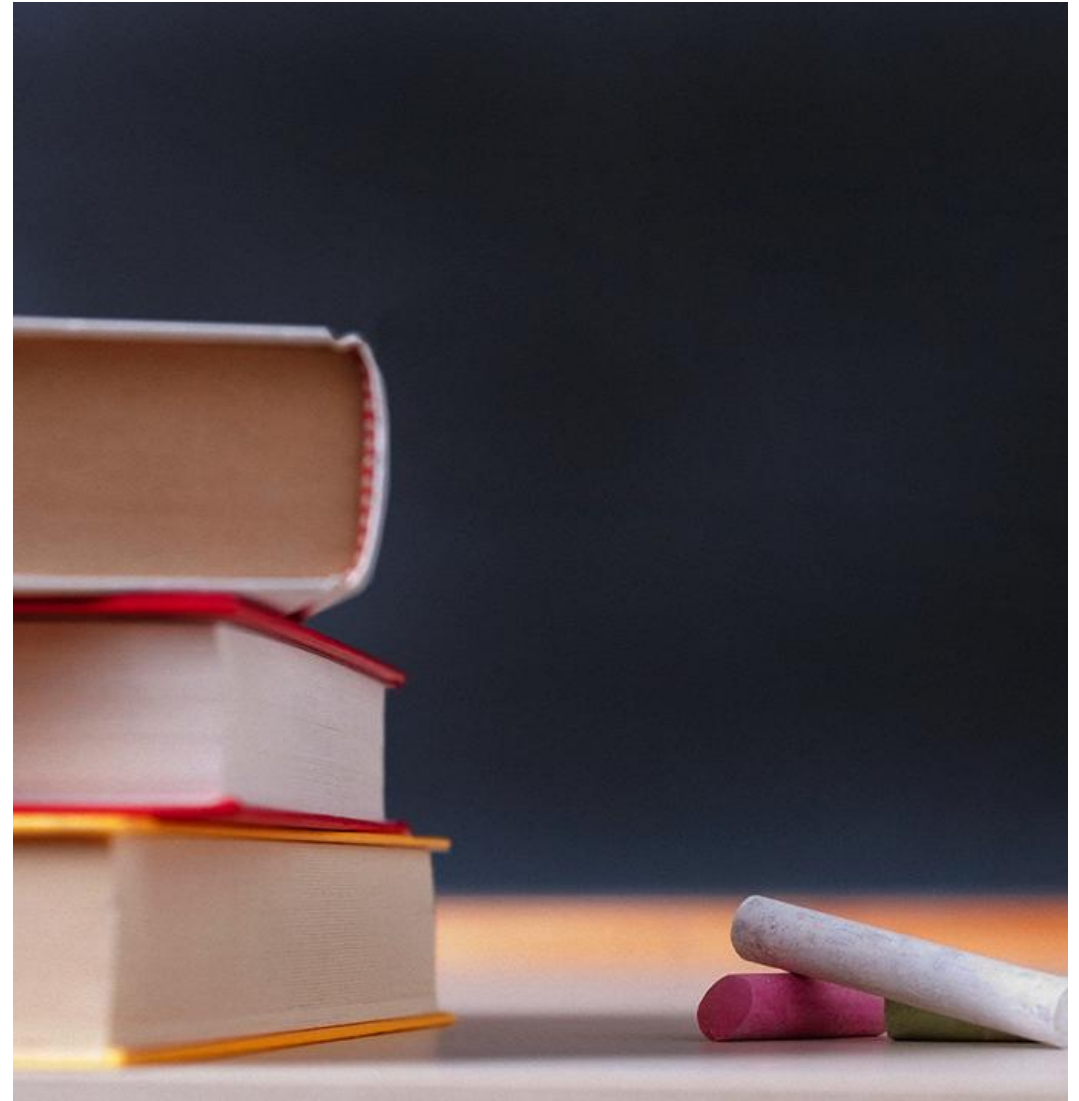
**General upper secondary
education for adults**

**Vocational education and
training**

Higher education institutions

Liberal adult education

Labour market training



Adult education not leading to a qualification

46% of the population aged 25 to 64 participating in non-formal adult education in 2024 (last 12 months)

	Total	Male	Female
Finland	46	41	51
EU-27	26	25	51

Dual model in higher education

Higher education

14 universities

- conduct research and provide education based on research
- interact with society and promote the effectiveness of research results

24 universities of applied sciences

- education is based on labour market needs
- research and development (R&D) aims at supporting instruction and promoting regional development

Steering in higher education

- 4-year agreements between HE institution and Ministry of Education and Culture: target results, monitoring and resources
- Government funding ca. 64 % of HEI budgets*

HE institutions decide on

- Administration
- Admission
- Content of study programmes
- Allocation of government funding

* Year 2024. Source: Vipunen Education Statistics Finland

Finnish teachers are
trusted professionals

Most teachers are required a master's degree

ECEC teachers
180 ECTS (3 years)

Class teachers
300 ECTS (5 years)

Subject teachers
300 ECTS (5–6 years)

**Teachers
of vocational
studies**

suitable higher education
degree
+ work experience
+ pedagogical studies
of 60 ECTS

Principals

teacher education
+ e.g. certificate
in educational
administration

Teacher training is popular - teacher training institutions can select their students.

Intake into teacher education 2025 (% of those who applied)

ECEC teacher education	33 %
Class teacher education	20 %
Subject teacher education	15 - 50 %*
Vocational teacher education	34 %

Source: Vipunen Educational Statistics Finland

*depends on the subject being taught

Finnish lower secondary (ISCED 2) teachers are satisfied with their jobs

- **87 %** of teachers consider their initial **teacher education to be of good quality** - OECD average 75%
- Teachers' instructional autonomy is high in designing and preparing lessons, selecting teaching methods and implementing the curriculum in a flexible way
- **48 %** of teachers feel that **teachers are valued in society** - OECD average 22%
- **85 %** of teachers are **satisfied with their jobs** - OECD average 89%

Comparing Finnish education

Finnish education in international comparison

**Instruction
time low**

**Differences
between schools
small**

**Girls outperform
boys**

**Moderate
costs**

**Teachers feel
valued**