

No. 142**REPORT**

for the period of 1 June 2018 to 31 May 2021 made by the Government of Finland, in accordance with article 22 of the Constitution of the International Labour Organization, on the measures taken to give effect to the provisions of the

Human Resources development Convention, 1975 (No. 142)
(Ratification of which was registered on 14 September 1977)

I LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS

The Act on the temporary amendment of the Act on Public Employment and Business Services (1139/2020), in force from 1 January 2020 to 30 June 2022

Temporary amendments to the labour market training

The goal of vocational labour market training often is to complete a vocational qualification, a further or a specialist vocational qualification, or a vocational qualification module. In addition, further or continuing education is also organised in many sectors. The Public Employment and Business Services Act's provisions on the labour market training (chapter 5) have been temporarily amended. In accordance with the legislative amendment (1139/2020), the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment and the Employment and Economic Development Offices can, subject to certain conditions, procure degree studies and offer them as part of labour market training between 1 January 2021 and 30 June 2022. The aim of the amendment is to promote employment and to ensure the availability of skilled labour, especially in the growth sectors, while taking account of the impact of the Covid-19 epidemic on the labour market. The act entered into force on 1 January 2021 and remains in force until the end of June 2022.

Act on Public Employment and Business Service (916/2012) has been temporarily amended so that the following could be acquired as labour market training, in addition to the current training:

- studies leading to a university degree in order to complete interrupted university studies,
- studies leading to a university degree for a person who already has a post-secondary level degree or a similar level degree completed abroad in the same field,
- studies leading to a new university degree for a private customer who has already completed a university degree if the person can be accepted, based on their previous degree, to an education targeted at a limited group of people for which the eligibility of the applicants is defined separately by the university and if the studies are estimated to be completed within 24 months.

To be admitted as a student requires, similar to all labour market training, that the person is suitable for the training and for the profession or task pursued and that the Employment and Economic Development Office has stated that the person needs training. When acquiring studies leading to a university degree as labour market training, the Employment and Economic Development Office would select the students and the university or university of applied sciences would decide on the admittance of the student.

The amended act entered into force on 1 January 2021 and is valid until the end of June 2022. The act would be applied to studies which start, at the latest, on 30 June 2022 and end, at the latest, on 30 June 2024.

Labour market training and its exceptions in the COVID19 situation

Labour market training can be carried out together with the employer, in which case the employer participates in financing the training. The products of the joint procurement of labour market training are RecruitmentTraining, TäsmäKoulutus Training (targeted training) and ChangeTraining (MuutosKoulutus) (instruction of Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment on the application of the Act on Public Employment and Business Service, MEAE/2376/00.03.05.02/2017, *hereinafter implementing guidelines of the Act on Public Employment and Business Service*), the minimum duration of which is 10 days according to the application guideline. In the exceptional situation caused by the pandemic, it has been made possible for the duration of joint procurement training to be less than 10 days for a justified reason.

In accordance with the implementing guidelines of the Act on Public Employment and Business Service, joint procurement training must be vocational training. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment has specified its guidelines in this respect so that training can be not only vocational training, but also vocationally oriented training based on the needs of employers or trainees or training that promotes professional skills. When planning the content of training, vocational training must therefore be evaluated broadly. Vocationally oriented labour market training can be used to implement a variety of continuing and in-service training courses that meet the skills needs of jobseekers and companies and other employers, as well as training programs tailored to each case.

In accordance with the implementing rules of the Act on Public Employment and Business Service, the ChangeTraining is suitable for layoff situations when personnel are laid off for the time being and at the beginning or during the layoffs it becomes clear that the layoff becomes a dismissal for all or the majority. In a pandemic situation, small companies in particular would probably not have had the financial means to contribute to the training costs, so the guidelines were streamlined so that instead of ChangeTraining, fully state-funded labour market training can also be acquired for the needs of employees who are dismissed or laid off by an individual company as part of the transition security package.

Independent study supported by unemployment benefit has also been made more flexible, taking into account the pandemic situation.

Extension of compulsory education

The objective of extending compulsory education is to raise the level of education and competence at all levels of education, to bridge learning gaps, to improve equality and non-discrimination in education and to enhance the wellbeing of children and young people. The aim is for every young person to complete upper secondary education. As requirements for skills, knowledge and competence increase, jobseekers are expected to hold at least an upper secondary qualification. Compulsory education after comprehensive school education is mainly completed in general upper secondary education or in vocational education and training. In addition, inter alia learning materials such as text books and the equipment required in instruction are free of charge.

The Act on Compulsory Education entered into force on 1 August 2021, but the obligation to apply already entered into force on 1 January 2021. In practice, the obligation to apply for and study in upper secondary education affects those young people who are in year 9 of comprehensive school education in spring 2021.

Additional information on the extension of compulsory education can be found on the following website: <https://minedu.fi/en/faq-about-the-extension-of-compulsory-education>

II

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III APPLICATION OF THE ARTICLES IN FINLAND

The Strategy for Lifelong Guidance

The Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment appointed in April 2020 the National Lifelong Guidance Forum. The task for Forum was to prepare a proposal for a Lifelong Guidance Strategy.

The Strategy for Lifelong Guidance 2020–2023, jointly published by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, ties in with the objectives of the Programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin’s Government related to education, employment, wellbeing and inclusion. It aims to improve people’s abilities to make educational and career decisions for themselves and to ensure that they receive the necessary support through multi-channel information, advice and guidance services.

The strategy examines the lifelong guidance as a continuum of the whole lifespan. It is seen as a dialogue between individuals and their own career management skills, as well as information, advice and guidance that support the acquisition of these skills. Lifelong guidance is promoted comprehensively, taking into account the objectives of individuals, communities and society alike.

Based on the strategy, over the government term of 2020–2023, measures will be taken to widen access to guidance, strengthen lifelong career management skills and enhance skills assessment, upskilling and career development in the working life. The aim is to create a well-functioning digital service for continuous learning that makes better use of shared information on education, the labour market and competence. Co-operation across governmental sectors enhanced by a permanent national representative structure to co-ordinate the development of evidence-based quality and impact of lifelong guidance services. This entity will support both national and regional actors. The training programmes of career practitioners will be evaluated and subsequent descriptions of the core and special competences of career professionals will be developed to promote the overall quality of the guidance services. The long-term objective is that guidance advocates an equal, fair and diverse society in Finland.

Lifelong guidance is one of the key tools for supporting individuals and society in the transformation of the world of work and competences. Lifelong guidance covers activities and services that enable people of different ages, at any stage of their lives, to:

- recognise their skills and mirror them with not only the opportunities and needs of the labour market, but also the opportunities to develop their competence
- make meaningful plans and decisions relating to education and career paths, for example.

There are many information, advice and guidance services related to education and working life available in Finland, which can, in principle, be accessed by anyone. In practice, however, these services do not reach all. People in working age usually only receive guidance when they become unemployed.

The diversity of actors and services makes it difficult to develop guidance as a whole. Both digital and administrative solutions are needed to make services a meaningful entity for a lifelong learner.

Based on the Strategy for Lifelong Guidance, over the government term of 2020–2023, measures will be taken to make guidance more readily available, strengthen lifelong career management skills and make it easier to identify, acquire and plan careers in the world of work. The aim is to create a well-functioning digital service for continuous learning that makes better use of shared information on education, the labour market and competence.

Multidisciplinary cooperation between different administrative branches will be improved. In order to coordinate the development of guidance, a permanent national structure will be created, which will support national, regional and local actors and gather information supporting the development of guidance.

The quality of services will be improved by assessing the educational needs of those involved in guidance work to ensure they have the skills to perform well in their work.

The Strategy for Lifelong Guidance is linked to the ongoing reform of continuous learning, which is included in the Government Programme. The reform aims to alleviate skills shortages and to improve upskilling opportunities for working age people. The strategy is also linked to the Government's objective of raising the employment target, extending compulsory education and developing work and related wellbeing.

The National Lifelong Guidance Forum and its Secretariat will draw up an action plan for the implementation and funding of the proposals for the strategy. The Forum will regularly monitor the implementation of the strategy and will ensure that strategic objectives for lifelong guidance are also set for the next government term.

The Strategy for Lifelong Guidance (unfortunately only in Finnish and Swedish), link: <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/162576>

Youth Guarantee

During the reporting period, the Youth Guarantee has remained the overarching concept of youth employment. The Youth Guarantee and the continued commitment to the European Youth Guarantee can be found in the Government Programmes of both Prime Minister Sipilä (former government) and in the Government Programme of the Prime Minister Marin (present government). The aim of the Youth Guarantee is to shorten the service process for young people so that a young person can be offered a personally suitable solution within 3 months of the beginning of unemployment.

One Stop Guidance Centres

The development of one-stop shops for young people has remained the most important measure of the Youth Guarantee. These One Stop Guidance Centres have been developed continuously since 2014. In 2018, the operations of One Stop Guidance Centres were consolidated with EUR 5 million in annual funding, which was channelled through TE offices. In 2018, a project was also launched to strengthen the ability of One Stop Guidance Centres to provide low-threshold psychosocial support. This psychosocial support project was consolidated in the One Stop Guidance Centres with state budget funding in 2020. One Stop Guidance Centres have been coordinated with the support of the European Social Fund. At the end of the project period, 2021 operations will be established in the Employment and Economic Development Administration. There are 70 One Stop Guidance Centres in operation and the state supports the development of the network of those through a common support structure. In addition, funding for the European Union's Recovery Facility will be allocated to strengthening the multidisciplinary nature of the One Stop Guidance Centres. The focus of developing of the One Stop Guidance Centres is now on strengthening multidisciplinary and connecting, especially to social and health services.

The effectiveness of the One Stop Guidance Centres was evaluated in a study published in 2019. The One Stop Guidance Centres were found to have quite significant potential as an accelerator of service processes. Young people who visit the One Stop Guidance Centres turn to services faster and more often than through TE offices. The effects of the One Stop Guidance Centres on employment become positive after about 200 days of unemployment. This means that the employability of young people improved as a result of the services and the service process of the One Stop Guidance Centres. The One Stop Guidance Centres are aimed specifically at those young people who need stronger support to move forward. In the case of educated and skilled young people, the employment effect of the One Stop Guidance Centres did not differ from that of TE offices, but was felt by those who had been unemployed for a longer period.

Reform of the Act on Vocational Education

The Act on Vocational Education (531/2017) was reformed in the beginning of 2018. Two reports on the state of implementation of the reform of vocational education and training were completed in 2021. According to the reports, the implementation of the reform has progressed properly. The new legislation has improved the efficiency of the implementation of education and makes it easier for individual study paths and study periods. Although the reform has not meant significant changes for all education providers, it can be seen as harmonising vocational education and training and operating practices. The new legislation on vocational education and training supports the organisation of working life-oriented education and training and has increased cooperation between education providers and companies. The reports highlight proposals for improvements to the financing system, including the incentive to organise short-term training and to take better into account the impact of funding.

The Government of Sanna Marin launched a continuous learning reform in 2019 and the policy approaches have been adopted for continuous learning. The policies identify means and support measures aimed at ensuring that all working-age people can develop their skills and competence. More opportunities will be provided for studying and learning in the workplace, and the matching of the demand and supply of skilled labour will be improved. As part of the continuous learning reform, the Act of Continuous Learning Service Centre (682/2021) has approved and the Centre will start its activities in autumn 2021. The Centre coordinates and develops information, advisory and guidance services for working-age people, analyses foresight data on labour and skills needs and supports regional networks. The Centre also finances training and competence services.

Programme to Develop Quality and Equality in Vocational Education and Training (2020-2022)

The programme aims to develop equality and quality in vocational education and training and to ensure that all students in vocational education and training acquire solid occupational competence and good basic skills for work, life and lifelong learning. The three-year programme is part of the implementation of the Government Programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government. The programme promotes raising the level of competence, strengthening equality and non-discrimination in education, reducing learning gaps and realising objectives related to developing quality in vocational education and training, as outlined in the Government Programme.

In addition, it helps prepare the of Government's key measures, such as extending compulsory education, reforming continuous learning, and preparing measures for supporting integration. The programme will pursue and step up support for the implementation of the reform of vocational education and training.

Programme for the development of student guidance

In 2020, the Ministry of Education and Culture launched a programme for the development of student guidance. The programme will strengthen the implementation of student and career guidance, practices, cooperation, systematism and continuity, especially from primary school to secondary school, but also from then on to further studies or working life. The curriculum will be implemented in close liaison with the implementation of the extension of compulsory education and quality programmes in primary and secondary education.

Please also see the answer in the section I.

IV

A copy of this report has been sent to following labour market organizations:

1. The Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK)
2. The Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK)
3. The Finnish Confederation of Salaried Employees (STTK)
4. The Confederation of Unions for Academic Professionals in Finland (Akava)

5. The Commission for Local Authority Employers (KT)
6. The State Employer's Office (VTML)
7. The Federation of Finnish Enterprises (SY)

Statements of the labour market organisations:

The Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK), The Finnish Confederation of Salaried Employees (STTK), The Confederation of Unions for Academic Professionals in Finland (Akava)

The previous report pointed out the reform in vocational education which entered into force in 2018. The implementation of the reform is being monitored. Deficiencies were already found before the coronavirus epidemic regarding on-the-job learning. There have been challenges in the provision and sufficient quantity of teaching and guidance, as well as in the availability of on-the-job learning locations. The labour market organisations are particularly concerned over the position, working hour allocation, and role of workplace counsellors. Workplace counselling is generally provided without any separately allocated working hours or separate compensation. During collective agreement rounds, the aim has been repeatedly to find a solution for this, but so far without any results. A development programme to improve quality and equality in vocational education (2020–2022) is in progress in the Ministry of Education and Culture in accordance with the Government Programme, in which the overall quality, availability and equality of vocational education, as well as ensuring the preconditions of continuous learning, are at the core.

Two factors can be pointed out regarding guidance: extending compulsory education to 18 years of age and stabilising Ohjaamo activities.

The extension of compulsory education is based on the attempt to reduce school dropouts, interruptions to studies, and exclusion in accordance with the youth guarantee. As a result of the reform, everyone completing their comprehensive school education will gain an upper secondary qualification and is also prepared for further studies. In addition, student guidance and student welfare services will be improved, along with the capacity of comprehensive schools to provide everyone with the skills to complete upper secondary education. The reform is linked to the objective of raising the competence and education level of Finnish people so that, by 2030, at least half of all young age groups complete a higher education degree. In conjunction with extending compulsory education, upper secondary education will be free of charge. The labour market organisations have supported the reform, especially from the perspectives of equality in education, the prevention of exclusion, and employment.

Ohjaamo one-stop guidance centres were originally launched as an ERDF project as part of the EU's Youth Guarantee programme. Ohjaamo centres provide young people of under 30 years of age with diverse low-threshold services in their various linkage and transition situations, including career services, and guidance and counselling for studies, living or wellbeing. Ohjaamo activities have since been stabilised, with roughly 70 Ohjaamo centres operating nationwide across Finland. In total, more than EUR 53 million of public funding has been allocated to Ohjaamo activities and their development in 2014–2021. Ohjaamo centres are developed in cooperation between different ministries, including the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The labour market organisations are strongly in favour of separate youth services, also regarding employment and business services, and the further development of multisectoral services directed at young people. Ohjaamo activities have produced good results, and the concept has also raised extensive international attention.

The role of vocational education in developing human resources: The majority of students in Finnish vocational education are adults. The significance of vocational education in improving employment and in updating and maintaining the competence of the working population are key in the entire educational field. The range and practices of vocational education, such as the competence- and working life-based approach and rolling admissions, support the goals of continuous learning and competence development throughout careers.

The Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK)

The overall reform of vocational education (in 2018) responds to the individual skills development needs of both young people and adults. A personal skills development plan is prepared for each student. The opportunities to gain new skills during a career have increased due to the fact that it is not always necessary to complete the entire degree, but the system also enables shorter parts of the degree to be completed, for example by an apprenticeship during the career. Further efforts are needed to implement the reform so that the possibilities of the legislation can be introduced in the various educational institutions.

With the extension of compulsory education (in 2020), more attention has been paid to support and guidance in the transition from basic education to postgraduate studies. More emphasis should be placed on the competence of study counselors, especially their knowledge on the needs of working life and companies.