

## ***Preliminary National Statement of Commitment of Finland to Transform Education***

The objectives of the transformation of education in Finland are outlined in the [Education Policy Report of the Finnish Government](#), launched in 2021. The report, first such report since 2004, was prepared in broad consultation with national and local stakeholders and NGOs. The report was extensively discussed by the Parliament of Finland in 2021-2022. An implementation plan for the report will be prepared in autumn 2022, in extensive consultation with the stakeholders and decisions on implementation will be taken by the new government when it takes office in 2023.

Finland has monitored closely the effects of covid-19 disruption on the education system on all levels and used extensive targeted government aid to enable education providers to adapt their services during the pandemic and to address the learning losses incurred during the crisis. Analyses on the effects of the covid-19 will continue as further learning outcomes and wellbeing data will be collected.

### **Objectives of the transformation of education**

In the medium to longer-term, extending to 2040, Finland is committed to promote the following overarching objectives to transform education addressed by the Government's Education Policy Report:

- 1) raise the level of education, learning outcomes and competences among the population on all levels of education,
- 2) offer equal opportunities for learning for all throughout life, increase participation of underrepresented groups and narrow the differences in learning outcomes
- 3) strengthen wellbeing of children and youth

### **Revised targets and benchmarks**

The national education targets and benchmarks have been revised upwards on all levels of education:

- In **primary and lower secondary education** the two decades long decline in and growing inequality of learning outcomes is to be halted. The learning outcomes will be raised and learning disparities narrowed by fostering wellbeing and inclusion in early childhood education and care and in school communities. Skills in literacy and numeracy will be strengthened and particular attention will be paid to developing the skills for critical thinking among children and young people.
- In **upper secondary education** the government has implemented extension of compulsory education from the end of lower secondary education at age 16 to age 18, allowing for the first two years of upper secondary education to be covered by compulsory education. The aim is that every young person will complete an upper secondary qualification. With the reform, the upper secondary education has become universally free of costs for learners, including learning materials and travel. The extension of compulsory education is supplemented by extension of free upper secondary education to cover all upper secondary students below age 20. In all measures, our focus is on support, wellbeing and guidance of learners.
- The transformation of work has been progressing rapidly for some years now, and the COVID-19 crisis will speed it up further, increasing the demand for tertiary educated workforce. In **tertiary education**, the objective is that 50 % of youth aged 25-34 will have tertiary education by 2030. The objective is also to triple the number of mobile degree students starting tertiary education in Finland by 2030.

### **Strengthening efficiency and equity in public funding**

To meet the challenges, Finland is committed to consider an **overhaul of legislation and funding** that would safeguard an equitable realisation of high quality for educational and cultural rights throughout the country. Legislation governing early childhood education and care, pre-primary education, primary and lower secondary education will be brought together into one clear package.

A higher level of education and competence can only be achieved with adequate resources for education and research and wiser allocation of resources. The funding of education in Finland relies heavily on public resources, with the express aim of ensuring equal learning opportunities for all at all levels of education. The Government's Education Policy Report aims to achieve a **commitment to investment in education that spans over parliamentary terms** and to achieve **better allocation of existing resources**. The report proposes that funding for education be boosted by allocating the imputed savings from shrinking age cohorts to develop early childhood education and care and primary and lower secondary education.

The report proposes that the financing system of pre-primary and basic education be amended to include **needs-based funding**. The parliament demands that needs-based funding is used to decrease segregation and enhance equality across Finland. Extension of needs-based funding should allow for increased equity and efficiency of provision of education.

Efficiency of investment in education is improved by facilitating flexible continuous learning in the work place, by allocating appropriately the resources for continuous learning and increasing participation in education of currently underrepresented groups. **Long-term financing that is predictable** is a prerequisite for achieving the objectives set for education and research.

Finland is committed to:

- strengthen the role of needs-based funding in education funding.
- reduce the fees charged for early childhood education and care and to, in the long-term, make it entirely free of charge for families.
- reallocate savings from shrinking cohorts to education.

### **Development policy and global engagement in education**

Finland is committed to an active role in advancing transformation towards inclusive and equitable quality education. Education is a priority in Finland's work in the **UN human rights council** and an essential element in our international relations with our global partners.

Education is one of the five priority areas in [Finland's Development Policy Across Parliamentary Terms](#) (2021). There is a broad national and parliamentary consensus, recognizing Finland's opportunity and responsibility to address the global learning crisis. Building on the needs of partner countries and Finland's strengths, our development policy in education will focus on the following outcomes:

- teachers and schools have strengthened capacities to improve learning outcomes;
- the right to equitable and inclusive education is better realized, particularly for all girls, women and persons with disabilities;
- youth acquire relevant skills for work and life.

We will use our resources in a strategic way to support **systemic changes** such as inclusive and gender transformative education plans and policies, innovations that enhance the quality of teaching and learning, teacher training and school meal systems. We will advocate for increased and more equitable financing for education. We will ground our efforts on a human rights based approach and the principles of equality and non-discrimination. Further, climate change adaptation and mitigation will be cross cutting objectives in our support to education.