

Achieving the Lisbon Goal: The Contribution of Vocational Education and Training Systems

Country Report: Finland

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This report is one of a series of European country reports. It has been written to support a larger report: Achieving the Lisbon Goal: the contribution of VET, prepared by the Lisbon-to-Copenhagen-to-Maastricht Consortium for the European Commission. This report is not intended as an official view. But rather independent insight into specific aspects of National VET systems in Europe.



NATIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION

Theme 1: Progress of national VET systems towards meeting the challenges of Lisbon

1. Strategies and barriers for improving the status, flexibility, and attractiveness of Initial VET (IVET)

a. Raise the status of IVET

Vocational qualifications have been reformed

Since 1 August 2001 all programmes leading to upper secondary vocational qualifications take three years to complete and comprise 120 credits. The core principles of the reform included extending the range of the qualifications, increasing on-the-job training and the correspondence of education to working life requirements. Students are provided with the knowledge and skills they need for further studies. One of the most important means to raise the status of IVET is a further development of the quality of the vocational education.

Over the next few years, skills demonstrations will be incorporated into all qualifications completed in upper secondary vocational education and training to prove the achievement of the objectives of vocational studies. These demonstrations are planned and organised in co-operation with businesses and other representatives of working life. The Ministry of Education and the National Board of Education are investigating models for arranging skills demonstrations in co-operation with the social partners. All upper secondary level vocational qualifications available at educational institutions may also be obtained through apprenticeship training.

b. Improve the attractiveness of IVET

Raising students awareness of IVET

Enhancing the attractiveness of vocational education has been a longstanding objective of educational policy in Finland. The labour administration has a wide training and vocational information service, the purpose of which is to support educational choices and job placements in different fields. Careers counselling is available through employment offices. "Occupy your time" campaign was launched in the 2000 which aim was to increase awareness of vocational education and training. The website (www.ammattillinenkoulutus.com) contains information about occupations, education and training.

Enhancing the study opportunities

Upper secondary vocational education and training will be developed into a more feasible alternative track to higher education. The aim is to offer opportunities for the whole age group leaving the comprehensive schools to continue studying in upper secondary schools or vocational institutions. The provision of basic vocational education and training intended for young people will be particularly directed at fields with labour shortages.

On-the-job learning

All upper secondary vocational qualifications with a scope of 120 credits include a period of on-the-job learning with a scope of at least 20 credits. On-the-job learning is focused, supervised and assessed study carried out in service or production capacities at the workplace. Usually students are not paid during the on-the-job learning.

c. Increase the flexibility of IVET

Local administration's decision powers were increased

In Finland centralised steering in education was drastically reduced in the 1990s and instead the local administration's decision-making powers were increased. Education providers and educational institutions have been able to decide on their activities that are based on national targets more and more independently. The development has led to a situation where the position and importance of evaluation has strengthened. Self-evaluation of educational institutions is becoming all the more important.

Co-operation between education providers

As part of the youth level pilot projects 1991-1999, the institutions formed local or regional co-operation networks, where instruction was organised jointly by local vocational institutions and general upper secondary schools. It is implemented by law (1999) that all education providers are obligated to cooperate with other education providers in the region, and the curriculum must provide students with individual choices concerning studies, also taking advantage of the instruction offered by other education providers.

Promoting students' opportunities for organising their studies

A tendency is towards providing students with advancement opportunities that are as individual as possible. Accreditation of previous studies aims to shorten the duration of education and to avoid unnecessary overlaps in education. The modularity of the qualifications increases flexibility and options; the qualifications consist of large modules, which the students may partially choose themselves and complete in the manner best suited to them. Teachers work together with the students to draw up personal study plans

d. What are the main barriers to achieving these objectives?

Although a lot of efforts have been made, vocational education and training still have a lower status compared to general education. The educational reforms alone may not be enough to change the public attitudes to be more positive towards VET. There probably is a need for more profound changes in the public attitudes. In addition, the insufficient cooperation between general education institutions and VET institutions and the lack of competent teachers may be possible barriers.

2. Reducing the number of early school leavers

a. Who leave education or training at the earliest opportunity and with few or no recognised qualifications?

According to Statistics of Finland in the year 2002 of comprehensive school graduates went

- 55 % to general upper secondary education,
- 37% to vocational upper secondary education and training,
- 2% to comprehensive school's 10th form,
- (6 % did not immediately continue studying).

According to Statistics of Finland dropping out of school in Finland is most common in the upper secondary vocational education. 12,3 % of the upper secondary vocational school students left the school during the school year 2001-2002. The equivalent for the upper general secondary school students was 4,1 % during that year.

There is lot of statistics available of school leavers, but not much information about the significance of dropping out to the students themselves and about their experiences related to the phenomenon. According to Komonen's study (2000) school leavers are not a homogenous group. Based on the study there can be found many reasons why students leave the school:

- Change of a study program,
- Studying in a vocational school works as visitation during which a student compares his or her abilities and professional expectations to the contents of study program,
- The contents of a study program don't match the hopes and the expectations given to the future profession,
- Study place is not of primary choice for a student,
- Studying in a school of secondary choice is considered to be one way to spend a year.

b. Who leave formal education with low levels of basic skills at age of 15?

According to the evaluation study (2002) carried by National Board of Education there is a statistically significant difference in attitude between girls and boys on the basis of school-specific averages at the final stages of basic education; girls relate in a more positive way to the study of the assessed subjects and to the usefulness of the subjects than boys. In northern Finland and the rest of the Finland apart from the capital city area, the difference between boys' and girls' performances is clear: girls perform better than boys. In better-performing schools differences between boys' and girls' performances are smaller or non-existent. Factors related to schools' operating environments appear to be closely related to the environment's education level and socio-demographic characteristics.

On the basis of mathematics assessments made in 1998 and 2000 two thirds of students demonstrated a good level of learning at the final stages of basic education. **Around one quarter of students receiving basic education have clear deficiencies in their mathematical skills.** It is a positive development that girls and boys seemed to do equally well in mathematics at the final stages of their basic education. According to the results, girl's levels of self-confidence as learners of mathematics were clearly lower than boys', even though their results were just as good.

Linguistic knowledge and writing skills were on average good in the 2000 assessment. A significant amount of the basic education students that expressed an interest in continuing their studies in a upper secondary vocational education and training had trouble with the very basic skills in Finnish. **From the assessment of basic education student's first-language Finnish skills it was observed that boys who were inclined towards continuing studies in VET did not have acceptable writing skills. This accounted for 42 % of all boys.**

The reading skills of young Finnish people were the most advanced in the OECD countries. The PISA study indicates that 50% of Finnish 15-year-olds are excellent readers, when the average in the OECD countries is 32%. Within the different parts of reading, Finnish children were especially good in acquiring information and understanding and interpreting what has been read. **According to the PISA study only 7% of young people in Finland have poor reading skills, whereas the OECD average was of 18%.** The results indicate that in all 32 countries girls have better reading skills than boys. In

Finland the difference between the reading skills of girls and boys is the largest in the OECD countries. Finnish boys achieved an average of 520 points in reading skills, which is the highest in the OECD countries and clearly higher than the OECD average

The average performance level in English national tests was a 64%, “good” result. Girls did better in English than boys. **There are clear geographical differences in student’s results in the English language. The best results were achieved by students in southern Finland, and the worst results in the district of Lapland.**

The assessment of students’ learning to learn form part of the national performance evaluation strategy. Abilities in learning to learn are assessed with relation to knowledge and beliefs. The feelings of students who were finishing their comprehensive education towards their own motivations for studying were very positive. Students believed making an effort to be of importance in both learning and success. There were big differences between students. **One quarter of them was very much oriented towards avoidance of studying; in other words, they did not want to try or make an effort in order to learn. The lack of effort was evident especially in boys.**

3. Increasing VET at tertiary level

Steps taken to establish/improve technological and vocational qualifications at the tertiary level

Polytechnic post-graduate degree

In 1997 the question of the necessity for post-graduate degrees in polytechnics arose and a proposal was submitted to the Minister of Education in early 1998. The law on the trial polytechnic post-graduate degrees was confirmed 13 July 2001 and it came to force 1 January 2002 (L 645/2001). The law is in force until 31 July 2005. The Ministry of Education granted permission to 20 polytechnics to begin trial degree programmes at the beginning of 2002. As from 1 August 2002 twenty polytechnics arranged studies leading to a polytechnic post-graduate degree. The scope of these studies is 40-60 credits.

The polytechnic post-graduate degree is a new university degree and aimed at people who have completed a polytechnic degree or other applicable higher education degree, and have a minimum of three year's work experience in the field after the completion of the degree. The new higher education degree is determined on the basis of working life needs and is implemented in line with adult education goals.

Introduction of shorter post-secondary VET courses

Competence-based qualifications

During the 1990's, a system of competence-based qualifications was developed as part of the vocational education and training system. The system allows adults to demonstrate their vocational skills in specific competence-based tests regardless of where and how the skills have been acquired. The system aims to maintain and enhance the vocational skills of adults, to narrow the educational gap between generations, to promote self-employment, to develop working life, to promote employment and to support life-long learning. Competence-based qualifications and related preparatory training are specifically designed to accommodate the needs of working life. They are planned and arranged in co-operation with teaching staff and representatives of working life, including employers, employees and self-employed people. Adult education institutions as well as upper

secondary vocational schools provide preparatory training courses for people who want to complete competence-based qualifications.

There are three levels of competence-based qualifications: initial vocational qualifications (ISCED 3), further vocational qualifications (ISCED 4) and specialist vocational qualifications (ISCED 4). The initial vocational qualifications completed in the form of competence-based qualifications correspond to those taken in vocational education intended for young people. The further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications are primarily intended for people skilled in different fields to demonstrate their practical competence and vocational skills. Although taking part in competence tests does not require formal preparation, many participants acquire preparatory training, in which they are provided with individual learning programmes. Upper secondary vocational education and training provides preparation for upper secondary vocational qualifications and additional vocational training prepares for further and specialist vocational qualifications.

4. Incentives for updating knowledge and skills

a) Government

Work-based learning included in initial vocational education promotes cooperation between the world of work and education. On-the-job learning is guided and assessed curricular learning, and its minimum extent is 20 credits (study weeks). In 2002 some 45,000 students participated in such work-based learning.

A programme has been launched in support of on-the-job learning. One aim is to train 10,000 teachers and 20,000 on-the-job instructors within five years. The content and procedures of on-the-job learning have been developed in a specific pilot project. The support programme is co-financed by ESF and with an annual appropriation of 25 million euros.

The Noste Programme is a five-year (2003–2007) additional action programme for education and training targeted at those adults aged between 30 and 54 (at the beginning of 2004, the age group was extended to cover people up to the age of 59) who have only completed basic level education. The Noste Programme aims to provide the target group with an opportunity to complete upper secondary level vocational qualifications (vocational upper secondary education and training, further or specialist vocational qualifications) or specific modules of these free of charge. In addition, funds reserved for the Noste Programme may also be used to finance instruction in information society skills required in working life; in practical terms, this means training for Computer Driving Licences. The appropriations reserved for the Programme may also be used to finance completion of previously interrupted upper secondary school studies and completion of the basic education syllabus. (For further information, see question 5.)

b) Employers / c) Other stakeholders

The launch of the competence-based qualifications system in the mid-1990's and its establishment as part of the field of vocational education and training was a positive phenomenon. It has brought education and training closer to the needs of working life and introduced good tripartite co-operation into provision of adult education and training and determination of the occupational qualifications to provide. The competence-based qualifications system is also relatively well-known among employers.

The basic idea behind the system of competence-based qualifications is that adults with previous work and/or study experience should only study those contents required for qualifications that they do not as yet command. In other words, students do not need to spend time studying things that they have already learnt elsewhere. In preparatory training, they are taught any skills and knowledge that may be lacking in terms of the requirements of the qualification that they wish to complete. If an individual assumes that he or she already commands all the competence areas determined in the requirements of the qualification, he or she may also take the competence tests without any preparatory training. All further and specialist vocational qualifications are competence-based qualifications; in addition, it is also possible to complete initial upper secondary vocational qualifications as competence-based qualifications.

The competence-based qualifications system has been developed to be as close to working life as possible. Responsibility for organisation and supervision of competence tests rests with the Qualification Committees, which also write up certificates for students who have completed their qualifications. The Qualification Committees are required to comprise at least representatives of employers and employees and teachers. Where self-employment plays a significant role in a specific field, the Qualification Committee responsible for that field must also include representatives of this group. The fields and areas of responsibility of the Qualification Committees are decided by the National Board of Education.

Competence-based qualifications are provided in all sectors of vocational education and training and there are about 360 qualification titles.

d) Examples of the contribution of VET to successfully promoting inclusion

Projects related to activation towards vocational training and reducing the number of dropouts in education and training

In the autumn of 2000, 36 ESF projects were launched to promote activation towards vocational training. Student volumes in these new projects stand at around 700 students per year.

The aim of these projects has been to create alternatives within traditional vocational education and training, either by complementing 'normal' instruction or by transferring students to a small group for a shorter or longer period of time, where they have drawn up individual learning programmes and completed work-oriented studies towards initial vocational qualifications.

The long-term objective is to find procedures to change the entire institutional culture, in order for the largest possible proportion of students to be able to complete their studies and so as to provide flexible forms of study for different types of learners.

The projects to promote activation towards vocational training also involve co-operation with providers of basic education and representatives of working life. The aim is to ensure that students choose the right form of education that will allow them to find a sensible orientation for their studies right from the beginning.

Careers and Recruitment projects

The aim of these projects is to develop the careers and recruitment services provided by vocational institutions in order to promote students' employment opportunities or transfer to further and higher education. The projects aim to find tools to develop careers and

recruitment services at national level and methods that can be transferred from regional projects to be used by all vocational institutions.

Careers and recruitment services at vocational institutions are services intended for people studying and completing qualifications at these institutions. Preparation of students for the labour market and for further and higher education is an integral part of vocational education and training and student counselling. The customary educational role of vocational institutions also involves guidance in and promotion and monitoring of job placements. Careers and recruitment services are part of student counselling: careers and recruitment services mean student counselling from the perspective of students' placement in employment. Nevertheless, careers and recruitment services do not target the interface between school and work alone; instead, they also involve career guidance covering the whole pathway of study, i.e. guidance and counselling relating to choosing the field of study, orientation to work during studies and future planning for young people. Vocational institutions' careers and recruitment services are thus linked to their guidance and counselling system as a whole.

Workshops

'Workshops' have become an important tool for providing training for people at risk of social exclusion as well as their integration into working life and society in general. Workshops offer young people and adults practical work-related training as well as guidance and support for managing their own lives, but they do not have the right to grant vocational qualifications. The workshops' main forms of operation include subsidised employment and practical training, job coaching, training co-operation, individual counselling and apprenticeship training. A long-term aim is to help as many students as possible to complete their studies and to provide new, flexible forms of study for students with different learning styles.

5. Meeting the challenges of an aging population

The Noste Programme is a five-year (2003–2007) additional action programme for education and training targeted at those adults aged between 30 and 54 (at the beginning of 2004, the age group was extended to cover people up to the age of 59) who have only completed basic level education. The Noste Programme aims to provide the target group with an opportunity to complete upper secondary level vocational qualifications (vocational upper secondary education and training, further or specialist vocational qualifications) or specific modules of these free of charge. In addition, funds reserved for the Noste Programme may also be used to finance instruction in information society skills required in working life; in practical terms, this means training for Computer Driving Licences. The appropriations reserved for the Programme may also be used to finance completion of previously interrupted upper secondary school studies and completion of the basic education syllabus. In the latter case, the age limit set for students within the Programme is 25–54 years. The majority of funding for the Noste Programme is used for education and training provided in addition to those financed through basic funding schemes; in practical terms, this means financing additional student places allocated to this specific target group.

The general objectives of the Noste Programme are to enhance retention at work and career development of those adults who have not completed any education and/or training beyond the basic level, to mitigate labour shortages due to retirement of the baby-boomers' generation and to contribute to the employment rate.

Adults with basic education only have often had negative study experiences and their learning skills may be at a level that does not create sufficient conditions for completion of upper secondary vocational qualifications; in addition, they often have a high threshold for starting studies. Consequently, the Noste Programme aims not only to provide opportunities to complete qualifications, but also to finance various measures to support studies. In addition to certificate-oriented education and training, the Programme's resources are thus also used to promote outreach activities and support measures for studies. The former refers to concrete attempts to find eligible students and motivate them to start education or training. Such trainees are sought and their study needs are charted in places of work, for example. In addition, outreach activities mean provision of information and counselling related to education and training.

Measures to support studies refer to development of study skills and support for successful conclusion of studies. The threshold for concluding certificate-oriented education or training would be too high for certain students without support activities. Support activities may include studies in 'tool subjects' (such as languages or mathematics) or general development of learning skills. In addition to the educational organisation responsible for providing education and training, support activities may also be arranged by another educational institution contracting with the former. Consequently, liberal adult education institutions, for example, play a significant role in organisation of support activities. One of the objectives of the adult education system within the Noste Programme has therefore been to reinforce co-operation between vocational institutions and those providing general education.

It is estimated that about 80% of the Programme's resources are allocated to training preparing for upper secondary vocational qualifications or their modules, while training for Computer Driving Licences accounts for the remaining 20%. During the first year of the project (2003), the appropriation reserved for activities within the State Budget made it possible to fund about 7,400 places for new students. The intention is to expand the Programme so as to allow approximately 10,000 adults to start education or training every year.

6. Effectiveness and efficiency of VET

a) Employment

Upon completion of comprehensive school, young people tend to choose general upper secondary education more often than vocational education and training. In 2002, 55% of those leaving compulsory education continued in general upper secondary education, 37% moved on to upper secondary vocational education and training and 2% opted for the voluntary 10th form of comprehensive school. The remainder deferred their studies.

There have been concerted efforts to increase the attractiveness of vocational education and training. This objective has been pursued through means such as increasing on-the-job learning, intensifying student counselling and improving opportunities for further and higher education.

Table 1. Proportion of unemployed people in 2001 among those who obtained a certificate in 2000, by level of education (%)

Comprehensive school leaving certificate	1.3
Upper secondary school matriculation	4.1

examination	
Upper secondary vocational qualification	15.7
Post-secondary vocational qualification	8.1
Vocational higher education degree	3.4
Polytechnic degree	6.4
Bachelor's degree (University)	2.4
Master's degree (University)	3.5
Licentiate's degree (University)	1.1
Doctor's degree (University)	1.5
TOTAL	6.0

Source: Statistics Finland

The table shows that the proportion of unemployed people among certificate-holders is highest among those who had completed vocational education and training (15.7%). On the other hand, the general trend is that the unemployment rate decreases as the level of education increases. This has been typical of the Finnish labour market for a long time now.

According to a report by Räisänen and Vuorenmaa (2003), vocational education and training have been fairly successful in terms of students' employment. Students' placement in employment upon completion of education has varied considerably due to economic fluctuations. Bearing in mind cyclical factors and the persistent high unemployment rate in Finland, those completing their qualifications in different fields of study have been relatively successful in finding employment. Depending on the field and the specific time, about 30–50% of students found employment immediately upon completion of their qualifications. It appears that a good study record and successful periods of on-the-job learning tend to promote placement in employment. In addition, placement has been enhanced by the fact that those completing a qualification have also been willing to relocate. Newly qualified people generally find their first jobs within their own fields.

Vocational institutions' good and diverse contacts with working life have positive links to students' studies and institutions' results. Students' practical training or on-the-job learning improve employment opportunities, while vocational institutions' good contacts with working life improve vocational competence. (Räisänen & Frisk 2002.)

From the perspective of representatives of working life, newly qualified people generally command the basic skills, but there are some deficiencies in customer orientation and teamwork. They also consider education and training to be too narrow in certain fields, which means that placement in related fields or in other assignments is very rare. To some extent, representatives of working life criticise conservative attitudes, which cause vocational institutions to continue to produce labour force oriented towards old-fashioned ideas. They expect vocational institutions to train labour force to have good basic skills and the 'right attitudes'. Capabilities important to working life, such as competence related to entrepreneurship, economic activities and profitability and, to some extent, basic vocational skills, do not meet expectations. (Räisänen & Frisk 2002.)

b-c) Effectiveness and the funding system

The Ministry of Education is responsible for education and training in Finland. The exception is labour market training, for which the responsibility belongs to the Ministry of Labour.

The responsibility for educational funding and construction of schools is divided between the State and the local authorities or other education providers. In addition to their own funding, local education providers are entitled to receive a state subsidy for the establishment and operating costs of their institutions. The funding criteria are the same irrespective of ownership.

The vocational education and training are mostly financed by the state and municipals or federations of the municipalities.

In 2000 the majority of vocational institutions were maintained by local authorities and joint municipal boards. A few of these (about 19%) were maintained by private organisations. The funding criteria are uniform irrespective of ownership.

The state subsidy for operating costs is granted on calculatory grounds, which are confirmed annually per pupil, lesson or other unit. The state subsidy is calculated to cover 57% of the operating costs. The most significant factor influencing the amount of state subsidy is the student quantity. Due to the calculation method, the municipal contribution will follow the students throughout the country, wherever they choose to study. The municipal contribution is determined as a proportion of the calculatory educational costs of the entire country per each inhabitant of the municipality. The state subsidy is payable to the education provider according to the student-specific unit price. The state subsidy is not earmarked to be used for a particular purpose. In addition, some vocational institutions are awarded performance-based funding.

In 2002 performance-based funding was granted to the first vocational institutions. The amount granted was 2.5 million euros. The Ministry of Education decides on awarding the performance-based funding. The allocation of performance-based rewards distributed in 2002 was based on the performance-based funding index, which has been combined from the following indicators:

- 1) Effectiveness (job placement and further studies)
- 2 Processes (dropping out, % ratio of qualification certifications holders to entrants and utilisation rate of licence to provide education and training)
- 3) Staff (formal teaching qualifications and staff development)

When the performance-based funding index is calculated, indicators are assigned different weights of importance.

Theme 2 Innovation in Teaching and Learning Processes

7. Improvements in learning processes and contents

On-the-job learning

All upper secondary level qualifications build on the comprehensive school syllabus. The scope of all vocational qualifications has been 120 credits (three years) since 1 August 2001. Students who have completed general upper secondary school and/or the matriculation examination or some vocational studies can include part of their previous studies in the vocational qualifications.

The qualifications can be completed in the form of institutional (school-based) education and training, apprenticeship training or competence-based qualifications. In terms of young people's education and training, the school-based form is by far the largest.

The scope of the qualifications is determined in credits. One year of study consists of 40 credits, whereas one credit is equivalent to 40 hours of a student's work. The scope of a qualification remains the same, although the actual time spent by students taking the qualification may vary individually, according to the educational track chosen and to previous studies or work experience.

All upper secondary vocational qualifications with a scope of 120 credits include a period of on-the-job learning with a scope of at least 20 credits. On-the-job learning is focused, supervised and assessed study carried out in service or production capacities at the workplace. Usually students are not paid during the on-the-job learning.

On-the-job learning is agreed through a written contract between the workplace and the education provider. A prerequisite for making a contract is that the workplace has a sufficiently high volume of production or services, a wide range of tools and other facilities and the qualified personnel needed to provide training in accordance with the relevant national core curriculum. As a rule, on-the-job learners do not have contracts of employment with the employers.

Skills demonstrations

Over the next few years, skills demonstrations will be incorporated into all qualifications completed in upper secondary vocational education and training. Students will show how well they have achieved the objectives of their vocational studies and acquired the vocational skills required by the labour market. The skills demonstrations will be scheduled to run throughout the entire period of education and training and they will be organised in co-operation with workplaces. The objective is to organise skills demonstrations in work situations that are as realistic as possible, for example in connection with periods of on-the-job learning. Skills demonstrations will however only form part of the students' assessments; the school part will still be three years. Skills demonstrations aim to improve and assure the quality of vocational education and training. The pilot projects run from 2000 to 2006.

The Individualisation of Adult Education and Training

The Individualisation of Adult Education and Training project, known as the AiHe project, was initiated in the year 2000. The project involves 56 educational institutions, which are developing new operating methods and tools to individualise adult learning in co-operation with workplaces. The project will continue until the end of 2006. The aim is to improve the quality and effectiveness of competence-based qualifications through individualisation.

The AiHe project promotes the development of individual learning programmes in educational institutions and business environments. Working groups of experts are producing models and tools for the purposes of guiding and individualising adult learning. The working groups consist of adult educators, representatives of working life and other experts in guidance, education and training.

An important target of development within the AiHe project is identification and recognition of adults' competence and implementation of individualised learning pathways. Educational institutions and experts from working life are testing and evaluating new models and tools together with adult learners.

All choices concerning a student or a candidate taking a qualification are made taking their personal resources into account. Special attention is paid to measures in support of adults' studies. Studies to improve aptitude for study and tool subject studies become critical when adults are being empowered to take active charge of their studies. A counsellor's task is to help learners to construct and pinpoint their own interpretations. Good educational guidance encourages learners to question certainties and to retain their curiosity.

In order to support individual students to shape visions of the future and to position themselves in the future, a teacher needs to be aware of their own assumptions and also of their own fears. The AiHe project provides teachers and working life experts with training to consolidate client-focused and guidance-related operating methods.

8. Improving the integration of different learning sites; integration of formal and informal learning

Accreditation of formal, non-formal and informal learning

In terms of the validation/accreditation of formal, non-formal and informal learning individual educational institutions are given a great deal of freedom in applying the framework provided by the legislation in practice. There is also separate legislation on the validation/accreditation of formal, non-formal and informal learning at universities and polytechnics, which fall within the remit of the Ministry of Education.

In its general definition, 'accreditation' means that a student can compensate for some of the studies required for a given ongoing qualification with studies, practical work or working experience acquired elsewhere. The legislation makes this the student's subjective right to some extent.

In vocational education and training, the accreditation is increasingly used and it has become an established practice. Accreditation is used in order to shorten study times and avoid overlapping of studies. In vocational education and training, the accreditation is closely linked to student assessment.

Accreditation is based on the Act on Vocational Education (630/1998). This allows for studies to be arranged to some extent differently if the student is already considered to possess some of the necessary knowledge and skills in the curriculum. Furthermore, students are entitled to be accredited with studies completed elsewhere provided that the objectives and main content of these studies conform with the curriculum.

Summer jobs and previous work experience shall be accredited, provided that the competence acquired through these is determined to conform with the objectives of the curriculum.

The educational institution shall compare conformance of studies with the curriculum in terms of objectives and core contents. Where necessary, the correspondence of competence shall be verified by means of different skills demonstrations. Accreditation shall be promoted by developing various forms of assessment to facilitate it.

In polytechnic adult education, the time spent to complete a degree is usually slightly shorter than in regular polytechnic education, since adult students' previous studies and work experience may be taken into account. Completed open polytechnic studies may be recognized if the person enters to degree-oriented polytechnic education. Correspondingly open university education may be accredited in degree studies. In most fields, there is a

specific 'open university track', which gives the right to study for a degree upon completion of a required number of credits at an open university.

Competence-based qualification system

In order to ensure the recognition of learning and competencies, Finland has developed a fairly effective system of competence-based qualifications. For this purpose the programmes of further vocational qualifications are composed of modules. The qualification is awarded when all the modules have been taken. The qualifications are taken in the form of competence-based qualifications which allow for adult students to demonstrate their vocational skills regardless of how and where they have acquired the skills.

The candidate can take the constituent tests either (after) during formal training or without training, on the strength of competence gained elsewhere, e.g. in working life. The tests are based on national standardised field-specific qualification guidelines.

There are three levels of competence-based qualifications: initial vocational qualifications, further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications. The initial vocational qualifications completed in the form of competence-based qualifications correspond to those taken in vocational education intended for young people. The further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications are primarily intended for adults – mainly for people skilled in different fields to demonstrate their practical competence and vocational skills. Participation in a competence test is subject to a fee.

Although taking part in competence tests does not require formal preparation, many participants acquire preparatory training, in which they are provided with individual learning programmes. Initial vocational education provides preparation for initial vocational qualifications and additional and supplementary vocational training prepares for further and specialist vocational qualifications.

On-the-job learning

All upper secondary vocational qualifications with a scope of 120 credits include a period of on-the-job learning with a scope of at least 20 credits. On-the-job learning is focused, supervised and assessed study carried out in service or production capacities at the workplace. Usually students are not paid during the on-the-job learning.

On-the-job learning is agreed through a written contract between the workplace and the education provider. A prerequisite for making a contract is that the workplace has a sufficiently high volume of production or services, a wide range of tools and other facilities and the qualified personnel needed to provide training in accordance with the relevant national core curriculum. As a rule, on-the-job learners do not have contracts of employment with the employers. (See question 7.)

9. Evaluation and quality assurance of VET provision

a) For the individual

Vocational Institutional Education and Training

The students' knowledge and skills and their progress are assessed at sufficiently regular intervals both during and after the studies. The students' acceptable performances are graded on the following scale: excellent (5), good (4–3) and satisfactory (2–1). Free-choice studies may, with the consent of the student, be given a pass mark without indicating a grade. Assessment is conducted by the teachers and, for on-the-job learning periods, the

teacher in charge of the period together with the on-the-job instructor or trainer appointed by the employer. The assessment must guide and motivate the students as well as develop their abilities in self-assessment.

Apprenticeship Training

Each student will receive two certificates,

1. The student's performance in on-the-job training and in theoretical studies are assessed with the following scale of grades: excellent (5), good (4–3) and satisfactory (2–1).
2. Assessment of initial vocational qualifications governed by the Vocational Adult Education Act follows the scale used in initial vocational education. Conversely, assessment of further and specialised vocational qualifications applies the scale of pass/fail.

Competence-based qualifications and skills demonstrations

For some time now, vocational adult education and training have involved a system of competence-based qualifications. Competence-based qualifications consist of competence tests, which are independent of the way in which skills have been acquired. The Qualification Committees play a significant role in this system. Assessment of competence tests also involves working life experts from outside the vocational institution and qualification certificates are awarded by the appropriate Qualification Committee.

In addition, equivalent skills demonstrations are being introduced as part of student assessment in upper secondary vocational education and training intended for young people (see question 7). Skills demonstrations will always require external assessment by a representative of working life.

b) For the institution

Each education provider is obligated to evaluate the education it provides as well as its effectiveness (the self-evaluation obligation) and to participate in external evaluation of its operations. There are no specific external inspection activities in Finland. An education provider may be a local authority (municipality), a joint municipal board or a private organisation.

The National Board of Education published a recommendation for quality management in vocational education in 1999 and a recommendation for quality management of apprenticeship training in 2002. Among other things, these recommend that education providers and educational institutions should carry out an external evaluation once every three years. Education providers or educational institutions may purchase external evaluation services. In addition, education providers may apply for a Quality Award in vocational education and training.

c) For the system

The field of vocational education and training has formerly involved overall evaluations, which have, in addition to the national evaluation of learning outcomes, extensively covered specific sectors of education or fields of study. The framework for evaluation has been the evaluation model of educational outcomes, which is used to evaluate the effectiveness, efficiency and financial accountability of vocational education and training. In addition, there have been thematic evaluations and evaluations covering several fields

of study, such as evaluation of student counselling, as well as learning outcomes in core subjects, such as skills in mathematics, native language and foreign languages and natural sciences, and learning-to-learn skills.

For the purposes of evaluation of education, the Finnish Education Evaluation Council was established for a fixed term under the auspices of the Ministry of Education in 2003. Its tasks are only just being formulated. The starting point is for the organisations performing evaluations (such as universities and research institutes) to form an evaluation network, which will be co-ordinated by the Finnish Education Evaluation Council. The National Board of Education has been assigned the specific tasks of evaluating learning results and participating in the evaluation network.

Similarly, evaluation of higher education is carried out by the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council, which operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and is appointed for a fixed term.

In terms of evaluation of learning outcomes, vocational institutions are shifting towards a system of skills demonstrations based on functional modules of working life. At present, a system is also being created to handle young people's vocational education and training, where the national evaluation of learning outcomes will be integrated into the system of skills demonstrations.

10. Professional development and status of teachers and trainers

At the beginning of 1999 teacher qualifications for general and vocational institutions were harmonised. The same minimum of 35 credits (35 credits=52.5 ECTS) , which corresponds to one year of full-time study, of pedagogical studies is required of teachers for all types of educational institution (basic education, general upper secondary schools, vocational institutions and liberal adult education institutions). The fundamental idea is that students are to achieve such core knowledge of teaching and learning that can be generalised to all forms of education and training. The teachers' pedagogical studies thus form the common core material concerning all forms of teacher education.

Generally teaching staff are obliged to participate in in-service training. In the case of teachers in vocational upper secondary schools this based on collective agreements for civil servants and the number of days of required in-service training varies from 1-5 outside school hours per school year depending on the vocational sector.

This type of continuing training is free of charge for teachers and they enjoy full salary benefits during their participation. The responsibility for funding such training rests with teachers' employers, mainly local authorities. The contents and implementation method of training are decided by individual employers. Each employer may organise training itself or may order it from some education provider (universities, polytechnics, organisations, private continuing education and training providers).

Teachers at vocational adult education centres are not formally required to participate in in-service training, but generally it is promoted by the employers as the adult education centres have to compete with other institutions as training providers (cf. below).

By law, polytechnic teachers are generally obliged to participate in training activities in order to develop their professionalism as well as familiarise themselves with the world of work.

According to a sample-based study published in 1999, VET teachers participate in in-service training much more than their colleagues in general education. During the research

period of 2.5 years (1996-1998), teachers in vocational upper secondary education and training spent 49 days in in-service training and teachers in adult education centres 50 days. The corresponding figure for teachers in polytechnics was 83 on the average.

Participation in continuing education and training does not have a direct bearing on teachers' salary and career development. The training is intended for keeping their skills and competences up to date.

Continuing education focusing on education policy priorities is organised from budgeted funds. The content priorities of this type of education are determined in the State Budget on an annual basis. The National Board of Education has an important role in the continuing training of teachers. The office allocates annual state budget funds (nearly 8,200,000 euros in 2004) for further education of teachers. The topics prioritised in 2004 are:

1. Promoting eLearning
2. Developing the foundation of learning and subject-specific skills. Entrepreneurship
3. Increasing the well-being of the students and developing guidance
4. Developing on-the-job learning and skills demonstrations
5. Multicultural school and cultural clashes
6. Training for school management

This education is free of charge for participants. Each employer decides whether individual teachers may participate in education during their working hours and with full salary benefits and whether they receive compensation for possible travel and accommodation expenses.

For vocational teachers the National Board of Education has drawn up two continuing training programmes, the *näyttötutkintomestarikoulutus* (= specialist in competence-based qualifications) and *opettajan työelämäosaamisen opinnott* (=studies for teachers in increasing their competence in the world-of-work). Both comprise 15 credits (=22.5 ECTS). These programmes support the VET reform in the late 1990s which brought on-the-job learning periods and skills demonstrations to all vocational upper secondary education and training. In 2003 the state allocated 1,346 million euros for providing teachers in VET with continuing training related to on-the-job learning. In 2000-2003 48 % of the teachers participated in this training.

Many VET schools have their own programmes or are involved in projects providing the teachers with the opportunity to take part in on-the-job learning periods.

In Finland teachers are very autonomous in their professions and thus have considerable opportunities to influence their work. The transfer of decision-making powers closer to schools and teachers has been characteristic of the Finnish education system since the 1980s. Such a development trend became particularly strong in the 1990s. The aim in increasing the decision-making powers of schools was to strengthen the schools' readiness to meet the needs of their surrounding communities and to take decision-making to be as close as possible to those affected by the decisions. In addition to their opportunity to influence the curricula and course design, they are also free to take their own decisions regarding pedagogy, learning materials and student assessment. Finnish teachers can also very often participate in making decisions on the school budget and, in particular, on the allocation of resources within the school.

Theme 3 Building European Competences for a European Labour Market

11. Challenges & policies in relation to the Lisbon employment strategy

a-b) Main challenges and responses

According to the 'Kok report' (Kok 2003), Finland is close to the overall employment rate target and it exceeds the employment rate target for women. It has achieved a high increase in the participation of older workers over the last decade, coming close to the EU target for older workers. Finland clearly stands out as one of the best performers in R&D and innovation across the world. The unemployment rate is slightly above the EU average, and is particularly high for young people.

The Kok report states that each Member State should undertake a close examination of the risk of unemployment, inactivity or poverty traps for specific family situations and/or income level. In some Member States, the risk of unemployment traps - which exists if financial factors alone are taken into consideration - is mitigated by the existence of strong incentives to take up a job. In Finland, such compensating factors are not strong enough and steps should be taken to eliminate the trap.

According to the current Finnish Government Programme, the emphasis in labour market supports will be shifted from passive support to active. The subsistence allowance incorporated in the labour market support will be developed into an 'activation supplement' and opportunities to take part in the process will be increased. A model will be based on eligibility for labour market support depending on participation in active measures after a period of unemployment. The effectiveness of these measures will be improved. Implementation of the system will require a sufficient number of active measures.

According to the Kok report, efforts to limit the cost of labour have started to pay off in a number of countries and should be pursued with priority given to low-paid jobs. Looking at the overall levels of taxation (tax wedge) on low wages, combined with the share of these taxes paid by employers, it appears that Finland should give priority to reducing non-wage labour costs further.

According to the current Government Programme, the government will cut taxes over the electoral period, especially taxes on labour. The tax structure will be developed to better boost employment and promote entrepreneurship, taking into account the effects of taxation on Finland's ability to compete as a location for businesses and their key functions. Taxes on labour will be eased by lowering taxes on earned income. In the case of low-wage jobs, contributions by employers will be reduced selectively, in a manner to be specified at a later time. Reforms will also be made in VAT to this end.

Another cause for concern in many existing and new Member States is the integration of young people in the labour market. The unemployment rate for young people is typically double that of adults. In Finland, this rate is about 20%.

The Kok report states that Finland can do more to improve the efficiency of their preventive and active measures, as suggested by insufficient performances in terms of reintegration of the unemployed in the labour market.

The Development Plan for Education and Research for 2003–2008 focuses heavily on improving employment opportunities for young people. The objective of the plan is to increase the proportion of people with at least upper secondary certificates among the population aged 25–29 in Finland from the current 85% to at least 90% by the year 2015. Employment opportunities for young people will also be improved by intensifying guidance and counselling and by developing on-the-job learning and the quality of vocational education and training.

The National Board of Education has launched an extensive development project for educational guidance for 2003–2006. The objective of the development project is to support educational institutions and partners in the evaluation of guidance and counselling activities, development and planning of guidance and counselling services and in in-service training. The aim is to intensify guidance and counselling activities and pupil/student welfare measures in order to prevent social exclusion. The project's key long-term objectives include decreasing dropout rates, ensuring smoothness of the study track, including transitional phases, and developing monitoring systems and co-operation between different branches of administration.

All upper secondary vocational qualifications with a scope of 120 credits include a period of on-the-job learning with a scope of at least 20 credits. On-the-job learning is focused, supervised and assessed study carried out in service or production capacities at the workplace. (See question 7.)

Over the next few years, skills demonstrations will be incorporated into all qualifications completed in upper secondary vocational education and training. Students will show how well they have achieved the objectives of their vocational studies and acquired the vocational skills required by the labour market. Skills demonstrations aim to improve and assure the quality of vocational education and training. (See question 7.)

The aim of the Noste programme is to improve the position of older and less educated employees on the labour market. The Noste Programme is a five-year (2003–2007) additional action programme for education and training targeted at those adults aged between 30 and 54 (at the beginning of 2004, the age group was extended to cover people up to the age of 59) who have only completed basic level education. (See question 5.)

According to the Kok report, all Member States should design comprehensive active ageing strategies. Sweden has achieved the highest employment rate for older workers. Finland stands out as the country where employment trends of older workers have been the most favourable since 1995. Their experience should serve as an example to the many countries that are lagging behind the Stockholm and Barcelona targets.

The aim of the Finnish Government's Employment Policy Programme is to increase the employment and labour force participation rates of different age groups and to extend the time spent on the labour market by 2–3 years from the present level. Social welfare services will be developed to encourage individuals to keep in better touch with working life.

In Finland, the 2004–2009 Workplace Development Programme for the Improvement of Productivity and the Quality of Working Life (TYKES) will support employees' vocational development, work ability and well-being at work, together with functional work

communities and, ultimately, the ability of employees to remain longer in employment. TYKES builds upon the experiences made with the former Work Place Development Programme and National Productivity Programme. The former focused on changing the mode of operation at workplaces (e.g. introducing team work, learning opportunities, innovative use of ICT), disseminating knowledge on workplace development and strengthening the workplace development structure. The latter aimed to speed-up productivity improvement and to promote Finland's competitive edge. (See also 'Noste Programme' in question 5.)

According to the Kok report, achieving better integration of minorities and immigrants in the labour market is a challenge for all existing and new Member States. More attention to this issue is also needed in Finland.

The Development Plan for Education and Research for 2003–2008 states that increasing immigration will be addressed primarily by developing the regular education and research system, so as to guarantee that immigrant people's special needs are taken into account. This involves the following measures, among others:

- Participation of immigrant girls and women in education will be increased.
- Education will focus specifically on sufficient command of the Finnish or Swedish language for immigrant pupils and students.
- Immigrant pupils will receive support in preservation and development of their own native language skills with a view to achieving functional bilingualism.
- Tolerance and positive attitudes towards different cultures will be emphasised as part of all education.

c) Obstacles

In recent years, the field of vocational education and training has seen several reforms: qualifications have been expanded, on-the-job learning has been increased, opportunities for further study have been improved and evaluation has been developed through skills demonstrations. In addition, attention has been paid to guidance and counselling. The overall objective has been improvement of the quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training. However, one issue that may emerge as a key question in terms of the Lisbon Goals is whether the number of young people opting for vocational education and training will be sufficient to make it possible to satisfy demand for skilled labour as the baby boomers retire in the next few years. In addition, raising the level of education among older employees without upper secondary education is a significant challenge, which is being addressed through the Noste Programme.

12. Involving stakeholders

a) Role of social partners

The Vocational Education Act provides that special attention should be focused on working life needs in education. Education must be organised in co-operation with representatives of business life and other sectors of working life. The most important channels through which the social partners and representatives of business life can participate in the planning of vocational education and training at a national level are the Adult Education Council, the training committees and the Advisory Board for Educational Co-operation set up by the Ministry of Education as well as the governing bodies and consultative committees of educational institutions.

The Adult Education Council gives statements and proposes motions to develop adult education and training, and prepares reports on the situation of adult education and training. The task of vocational training committees and the Advisory Board for Educational Co-operation is to plan and develop vocationally oriented education and training and to promote interaction between education and working life in co-operation with the Ministry of Education and the National Board of Education.

Vocational adult education and training includes a system of qualification committees. These are appointed by the National Board of Education and organised according to what is known as the tripartite principle. Their tasks include supervising and steering the organisation of competence tests, confirming qualifications and signing qualification certificates.

Usually, vocational institutions seek to establish local networks to become involved in regional business life. The board of a vocational institution may include a sufficient number of working life experts from those fields in which the institution provides instruction. Vocational institutions may also have one or more consultative committees. Consultative committee is composed of people representing the institution, its teaching staff, the major labour market organisations of the field and other experts involved in the development of the institution. The task of consultative committees is to promote the activities of the institutions and their co-operation with local working life. In addition, they may also handle curricula and other issues concerning the internal development of the institution.

b) Actions of social partners

Actions taken at national level

In December 2002 all Finnish national-level social partners concluded the bi-annual 'national income agreement', covering 95% of all wage earners in Finland. The agreement contained an explicit reference to the Frameworks of Actions and it included a special annex for education and training matters. The main actions of the national social partners have been to implement it. In particular, the following measures have been taken:

- The social partners set up a joint working group to further develop the competence-based qualification system.
- The social partners decided to set up another working group which deals with issue of how to make labour market and working life attractive to young people.
- The social partners paid attention in the national income agreement to the importance of planned development of personnel in companies. In order to support this they recommended that the sectoral social partners start action programmes which can include best practices, guidance and examples on useful systems such as how to create individual training plans at enterprise level.
- The social partners set up a working group jointly with the Ministry of Labour on how to improve the employability of employees in structural change situations.
- The social partners have supported 'the Noste Programme' (see question 5) from the start on and have been active in implementing and developing it. They are members of the steering group of this programme.
- The Ministry of Education set up a working group on the proposal from the social partners concerning apprenticeship training for least advantaged group in the labour market and to improve the function of apprenticeship system for adults.

- Some years ago the social partners jointly proposed to the Government creation of a special tripartite national council on knowledge and competences. This proposal has taken some time to be decided but lately the discussions between the Government and the social partners have been promising and now the Ministry of Education is preparing necessary conditions to create this tripartite national council.

Actions taken at sectoral level

The Federation of Finnish Electrical and Electronics Industry together with all the appropriate social partners have started a project named 'Mirror'. It is part of the Equal Community Initiative funded by the European Social Fund. It has been set up to find ways to develop a basis for increasing the learning motivation of girls in mathematics, natural sciences and technology. Its main objective is to increase the proportion of girls participating in technology, especially in mechanical engineering, IT and electronics, by offering positive examples and role models as well as by developing motivational education and learning methods.

Public authorities responsible for health care together with appropriate social partners are preparing a joint recommendation concerning the principles, practices and methods of continuing training in order to fulfil the requirements of health care of high quality. Employers' organisation KT will in future follow yearly the number of days and persons having participated in the training.

The State Employers Office has developed e-learning facilities for state agencies. An open platform for e-learning was given at the disposal of the ministries on a pilot basis in 2003.

Actions taken at company level

- ***Finnair***

Finnair, the Finnish airline company, started the Competence Management Programme in 2001. The Programme defines the key competences in four roles in each business unit. The roles are management, superior, expert and employee. The key competences are the same in the title level but the content has been adapted according to the specific needs of each role. The development discussion identifies the learning needs of each individual and upon this process the learning paths are built.

- ***Federation of Municipalities of Vocational Education in Northern Savo***

The Federation of Municipalities of Vocational Education in northern Savo has modernised its organisation and accordingly made it easier to offer further training for its personnel in order to secure the quality of competences and knowledge at all levels of organisation.

Source: UNICE 2004. Framework of Actions for The Lifelong Development of Competencies and Qualifications. Second Follow-Up Report.

13. Transparency, recognition & mobility

a) Credit framework

In Finland, the scope of the qualifications is determined in credits. One year of study consists of 40 credits, whereas one credit is equivalent to 40 hours of a student's work. The scope of a qualification remains the same, although the actual time spent by students taking the qualification may vary individually, according to the educational track chosen and to previous studies or work experience.

All upper secondary vocational qualifications with a scope of 120 credits include a period of on-the-job learning with a scope of at least 20 credits. On-the-job learning is focused,

supervised and assessed study carried out in service or production capacities at the workplace. Usually students are not paid during the on-the-job learning.

b) Qualifications framework

In Finland, the initial, further and specialist vocational qualifications included in Finland's official and effective qualifications structure have been determined in Decrees issued by the Ministry of Education. This arrangement could be considered to form the qualifications framework in Finland.

In Finland, all upper secondary level qualifications build on the comprehensive school syllabus. The scope of all vocational qualifications has been 120 credits (three years) since 1 August 2001. Students who have completed general upper secondary school and/or the matriculation examination or some vocational studies can include part of their previous studies in the vocational qualifications.

The qualifications can be completed in the form of institutional (school-based) education and training, apprenticeship training or competence-based qualifications. In terms of young people's education and training, the school-based form is by far the largest.

In order to ensure the recognition of learning and competencies, Finland has developed a fairly effective system of competence-based qualifications. For this purpose the programmes of further vocational qualifications are composed of modules. The qualification is awarded when all the modules have been taken. The qualifications are taken in the form of competence-based qualifications which allow for adult students to demonstrate their vocational skills regardless of how and where they have acquired the skills.

The candidate can take the constituent tests either (after) during formal training or without training, on the strength of competence gained elsewhere, e.g. in working life. The tests are based on national standardised field-specific qualification guidelines.

There are three levels of competence-based qualifications: initial vocational qualifications, further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications. The initial vocational qualifications completed in the form of competence-based qualifications correspond to those taken in vocational education intended for young people. The further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications are primarily intended for adults – mainly for people skilled in different fields to demonstrate their practical competence and vocational skills. Participation in a competence test is subject to a fee.

Although taking part in competence tests does not require formal preparation, many participants acquire preparatory training, in which they are provided with individual learning programmes. Initial vocational education provides preparation for initial vocational qualifications and additional and supplementary vocational training prepares for further and specialist vocational qualifications.

c) Implementation of Europass

The 'Europass Training' system was introduced in Finland in January 2000. Since then, more than 2500 'Europass Training' documents have been sent by the National Board of Education to educational or training establishments (educational institutions or organisers of apprenticeship training). Feedback on completed European training periods and the use of the 'Europass Training' document has been collected from students and educational or training establishments since the introduction of the 'Europass Training' system in Finland. (See 'The Use of Europass in Finland 2000–2002' www.oph.fi/english -> EUROPASS -> Using the EUROPASS -> The Use of EUROPASS Training in Finland)

Pro Europass - Apprentices across the Border is a Leonardo da Vinci pilot project, which promotes apprenticeship training in Europe through Europass Training and the establishment of a transnational network. The contractor of the project is the Apprenticeship Training Centre of the City of Helsinki, Finland and the co-ordinator is Amiedu Professional Training Center, Finland. Partner organisations include companies, training institutions, apprenticeship training offices, chambers, trade unions, labour unions and research institutes from Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany and Norway.

The project addresses the need for improving the apprenticeship training and apprenticeship trainees' 'euro-qualifications'. In the field of metal, electrotechnical, electrical and telecommunications industries, there is a clear need to provide new, easily accessible and attractive pathways leading to international professional qualifications. In addition to this those sectors are facing to an increasing demand of skilled work force and to difficulties in attracting young employees. This project develops practical guidelines for companies, especially SMEs whose participation in the implementation of the project results is of primary importance for the promotion of mobility within European Union and EFTA countries as well. www.amiedu.net/europass

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