



FINNISH NATIONAL  
AGENCY FOR EDUCATION

# Education in Finland

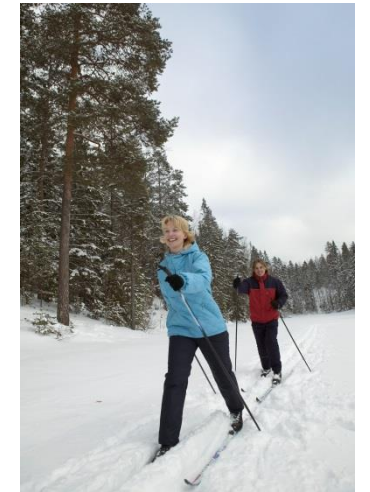
Finnish National Agency for Education, 2024



# Finland in brief

- population 5.6 million (18 inhabitants / sq. km)
- two official languages: Finnish and Swedish
- persons with foreign background: 8.3% of the population
- education level of the working age population:

- 11% basic education
- 46% upper secondary education
- 43% tertiary education



# Underlying educational understanding is based on equity

Everyone has the right to basic education free of charge. The public authorities shall guarantee for everyone equal opportunity to receive other educational services in accordance with their ability and special needs, as well as the opportunity to develop themselves without being prevented by economic hardship.

(Constitution of Finland)



# Education developed in partnership

National  
authorities

Local authorities

Teachers' union

Social partners

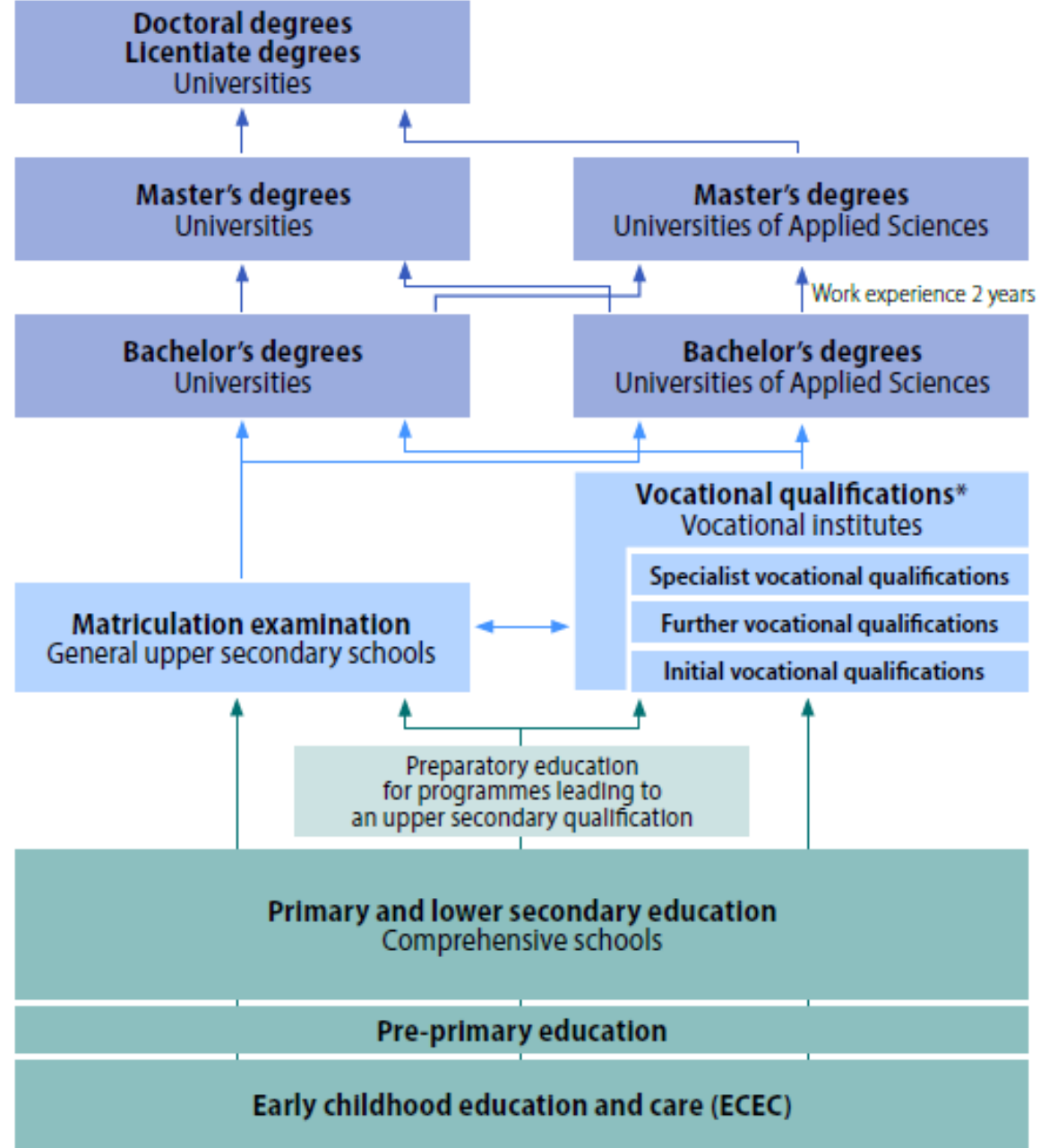
Parents

Pupils and students

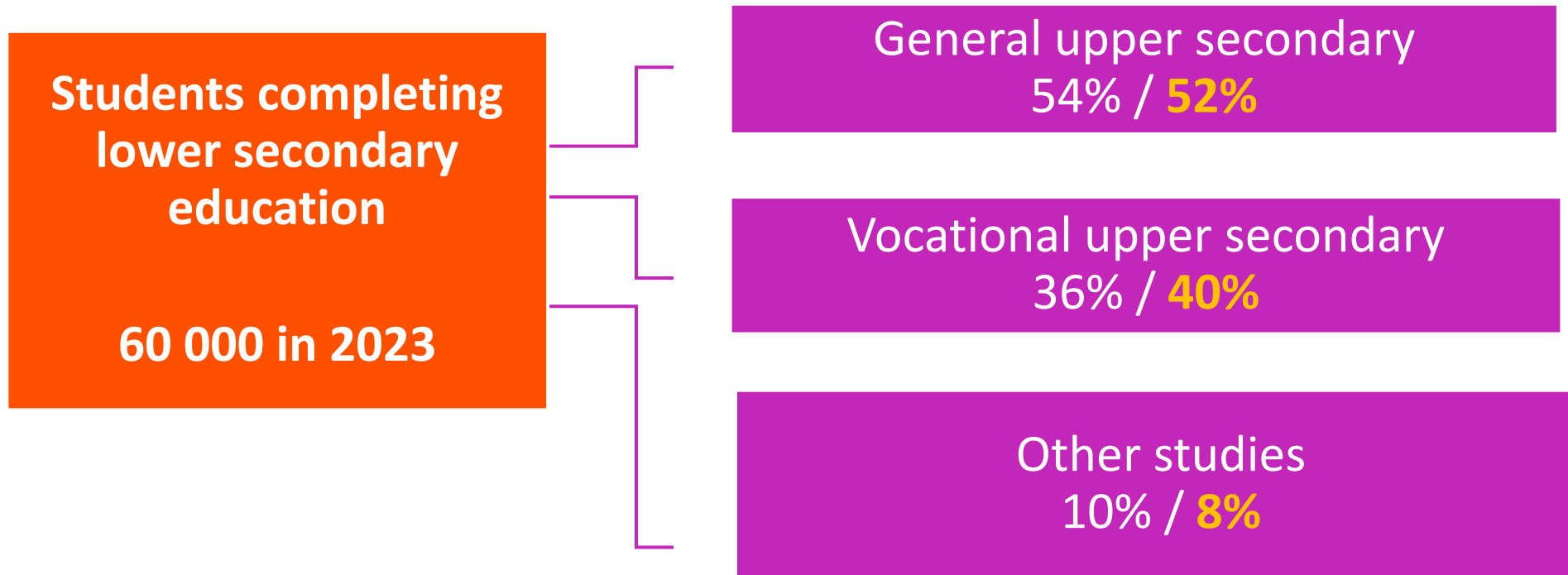
Research  
institutions

Relevant  
stakeholders

# Education system in Finland



# What happens immediately after lower secondary education? 2001 / 2023

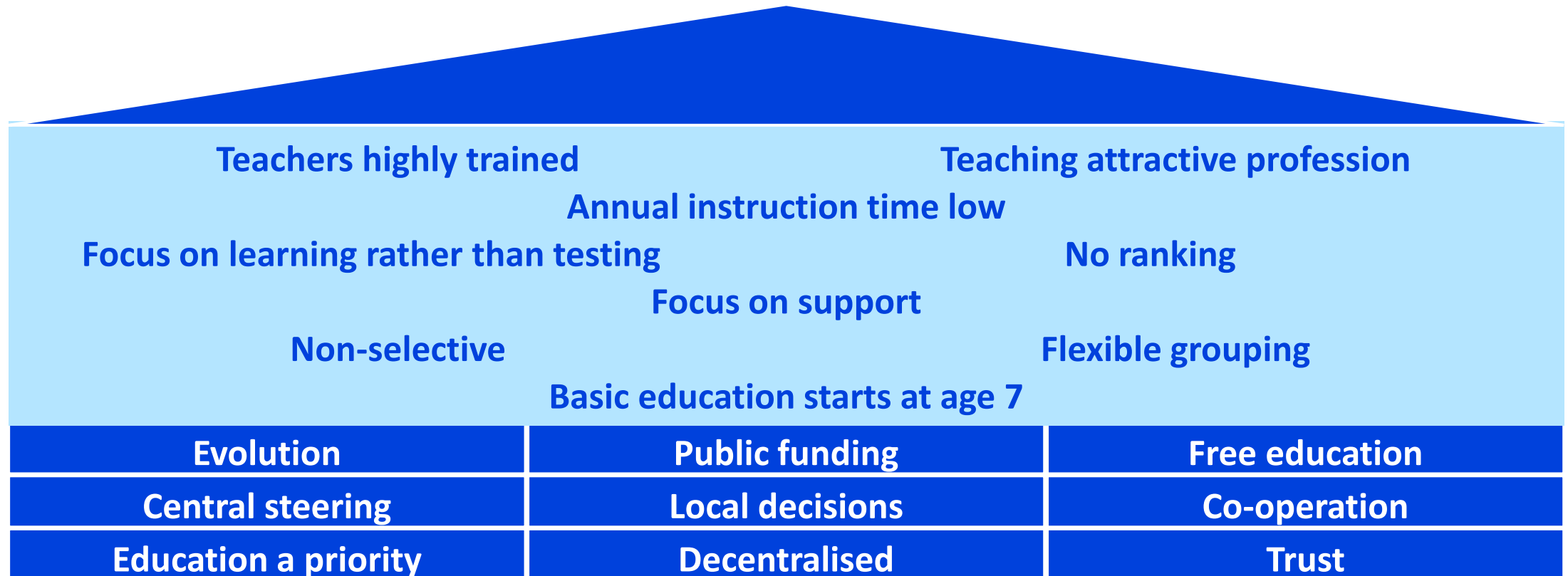


Other studies:

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

Source: Vipunen - Education Statistics Finland

# Specificities of the Finnish education system





# Two-tier national administration

## Ministry of Education and Culture

- Education policy
- Preparation of legislation
- State funding

## Finnish National Agency for Education

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



# Central steering



## Central

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

# Local decisions



## Local

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

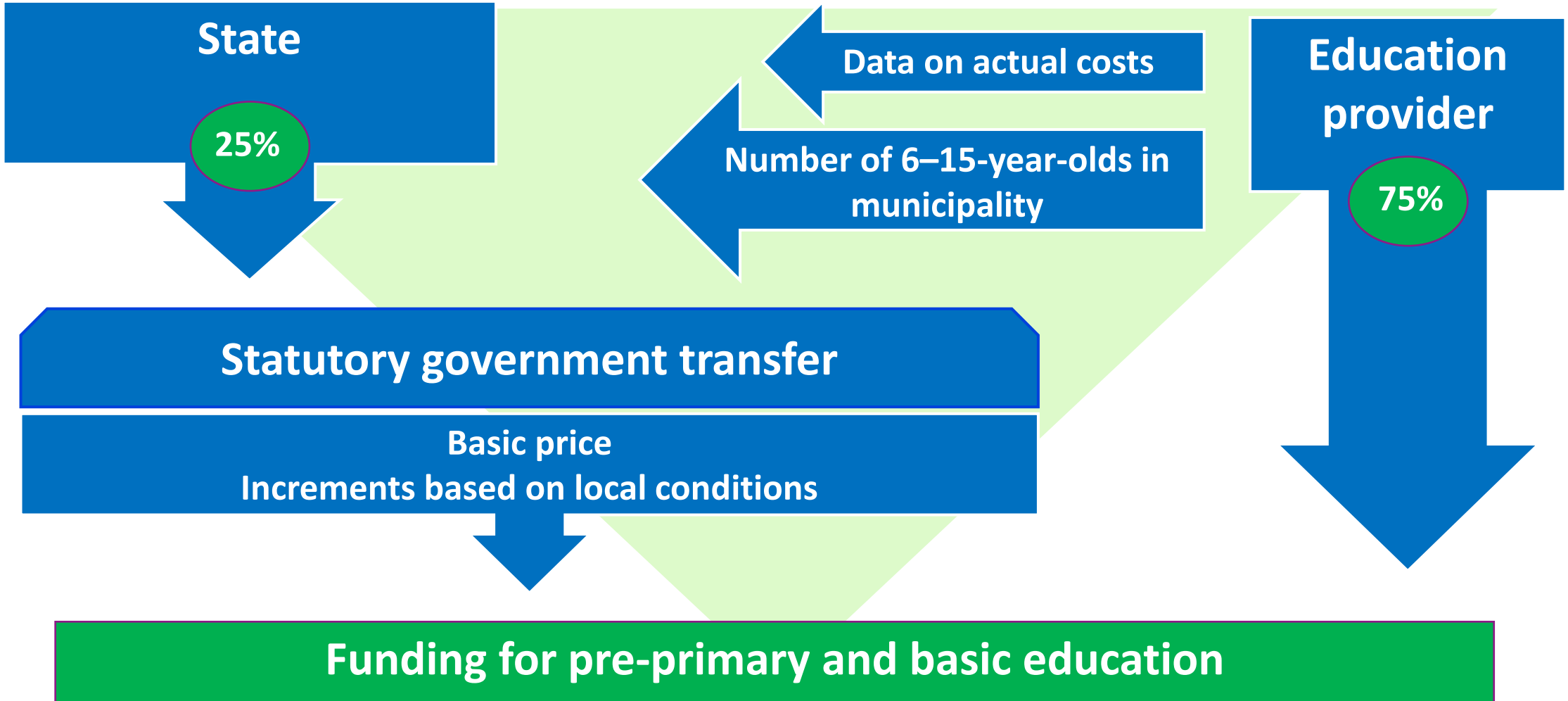
# Current issues

- decreasing learning outcomes
- mobile phone use at school
- differences between girls and boys in learning outcomes
- paying more attention to learners with immigrant background
- admission to higher education
- raising educational level among young adults



Basic education is free for  
pupils and families

# Funding of pre-primary and basic education in a nutshell



# Expenditure on education 2021



- **Operative costs per pupil/student**

- pre-primary education

**6 713 €**

- basic education

**9 975 €**

- general upper secondary

**8 535 €**

- vocational upper secondary

**10 665 €**

well-being promotes learning

# Support to well-being & learning

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graph LR; A[Maternity & child health clinics] --> B[Early childhood education and care]; B --> C[School];
```

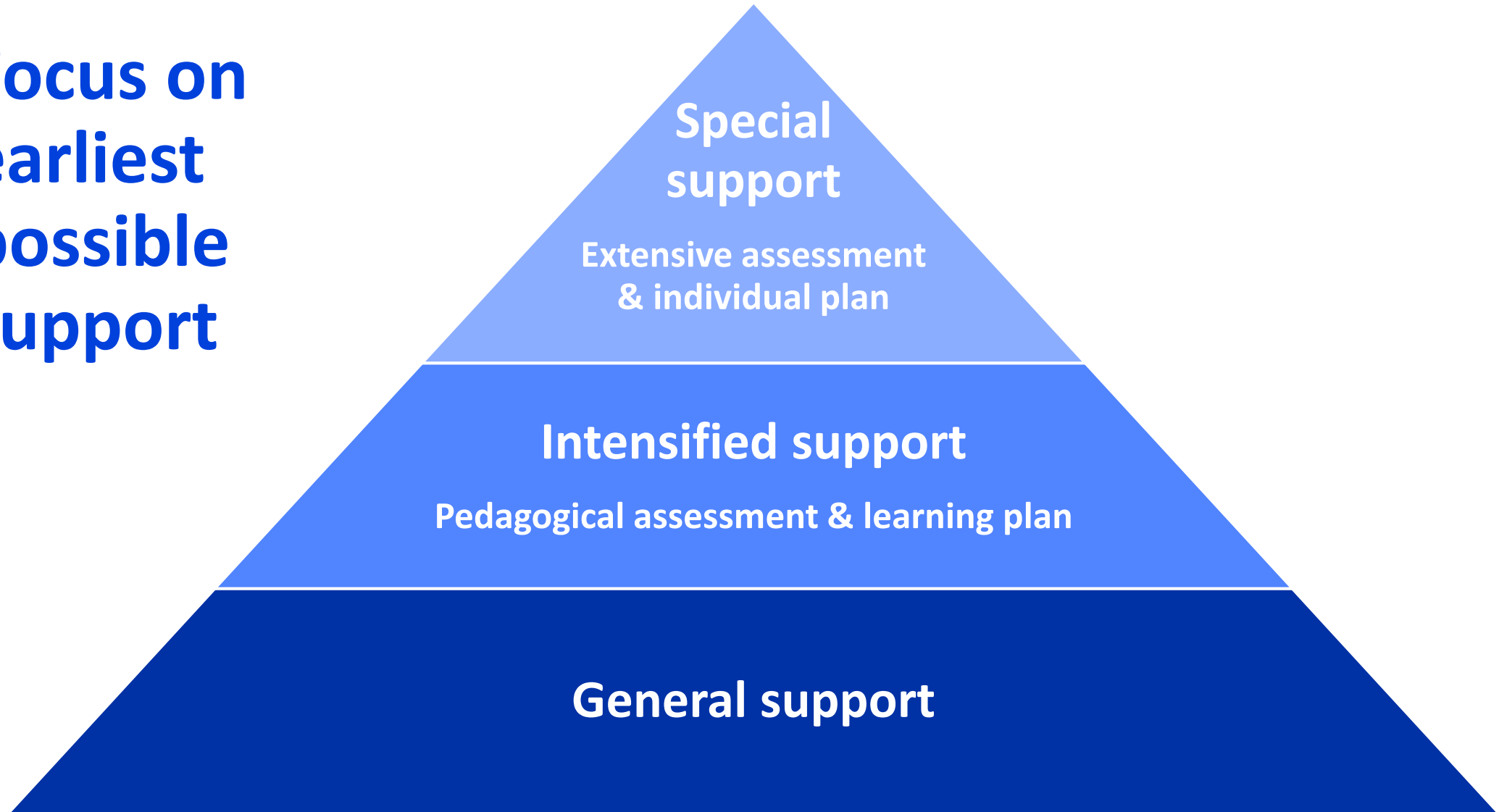
**Maternity &  
child health  
clinics**

**Early childhood  
education  
and care**

**School**



**Focus on  
earliest  
possible  
support**



# Pupil and student welfare

**Collective and  
individual  
approach**

**Health care**

**School meals**

**Safety**

# School meals

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



warm main course



vegetables



bread and table spread



drink

water



# Guidance and counselling

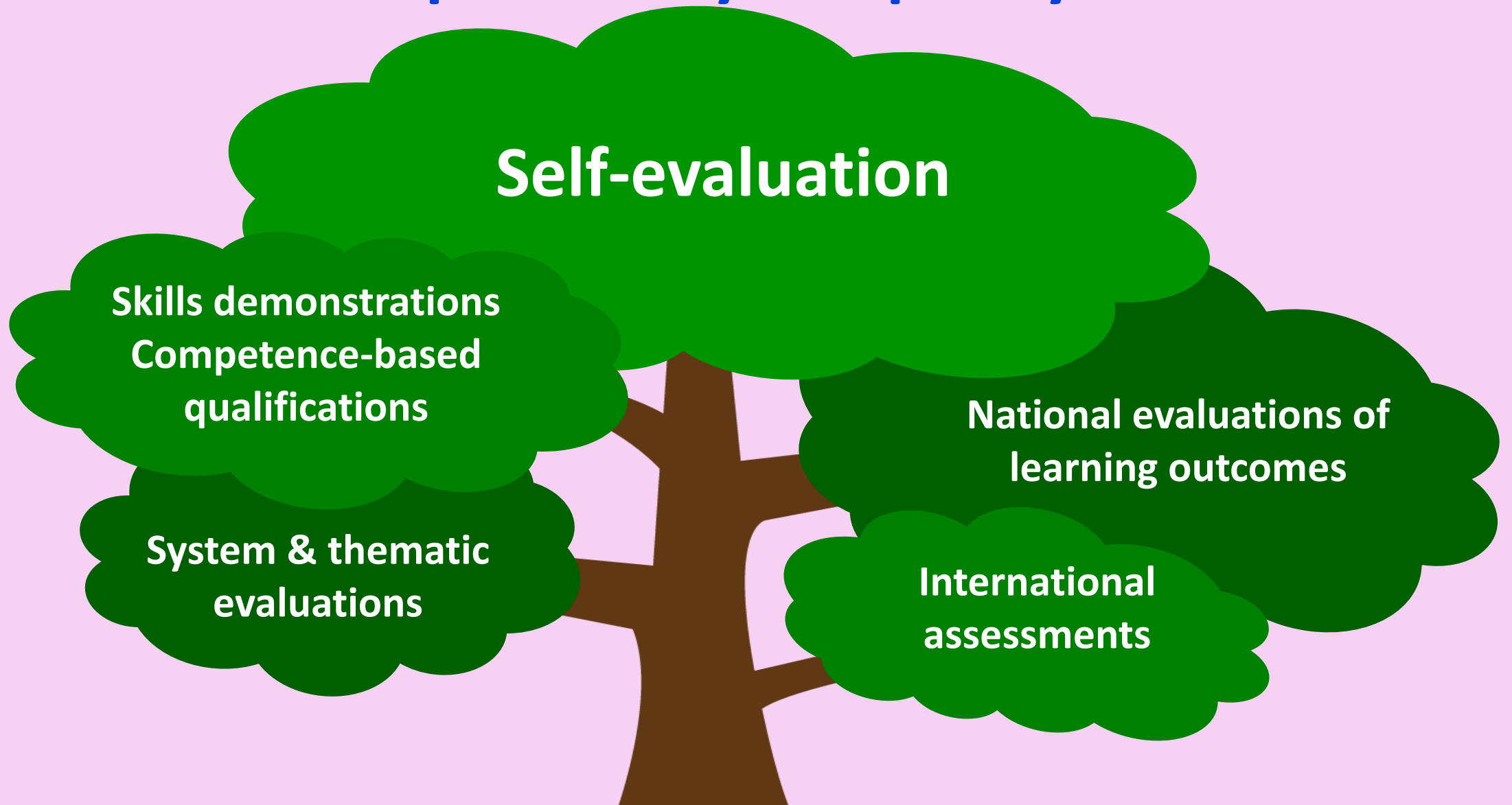


- Subjective right
- Part of the curriculum
- Collective and individual approach
- Develops learning skills
- Supports self-confidence, participation and personal growth
- Focus on transition points

Quality assurance is

a tool for development

# Education providers have main responsibility for quality



# Evaluation of learning outcomes function as traffic lights

National evaluation plan

Sample-based

Stratified

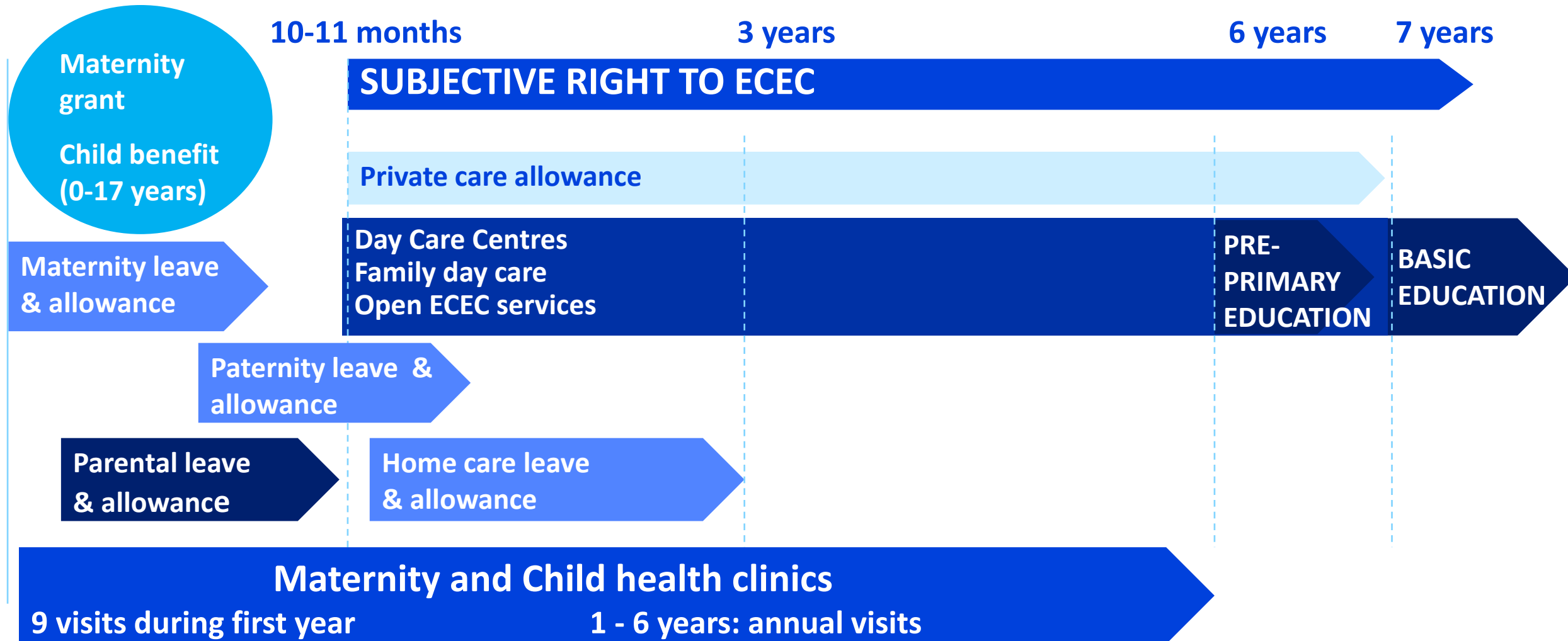
Mother tongue and  
mathematics every other  
year

Other subjects according  
to policy priorities



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

# Early childhood education and care (ECEC)



# Early childhood education and care (ECEC)



Photo: Liikuntapäiväkoti

- Universal entitlement (0-6 years)
- Main forms:
  - ECEC centres
  - family day care
- Integrated approach to education, care & teaching => EduCare model
- Moderate fees; 0-290 €/month in municipal ECEC

# ECEC plans and curriculum

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

**National core  
curriculum for  
ECEC**

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

**Local curricula  
& plans**



**Child's overall well-being in focus**

**Integrative education**

**Individual ECEC plan, no learning standards**

**Learning through play essential**

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

**ECEC partnership**

# Pre-primary education at the age of six

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



Basic education:

Every pupil is unique and

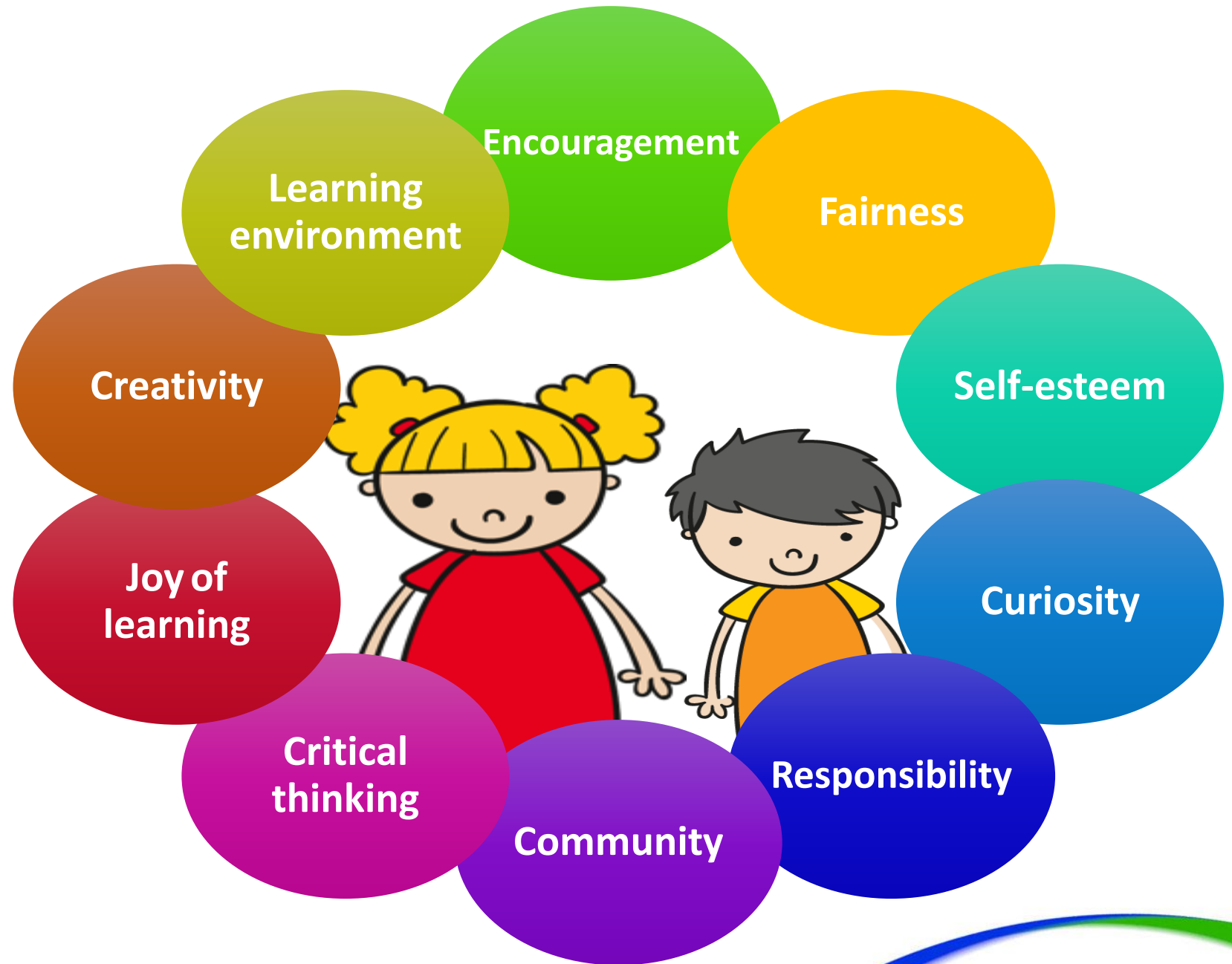
has the right to

high-quality education



**Maximising  
potential:**

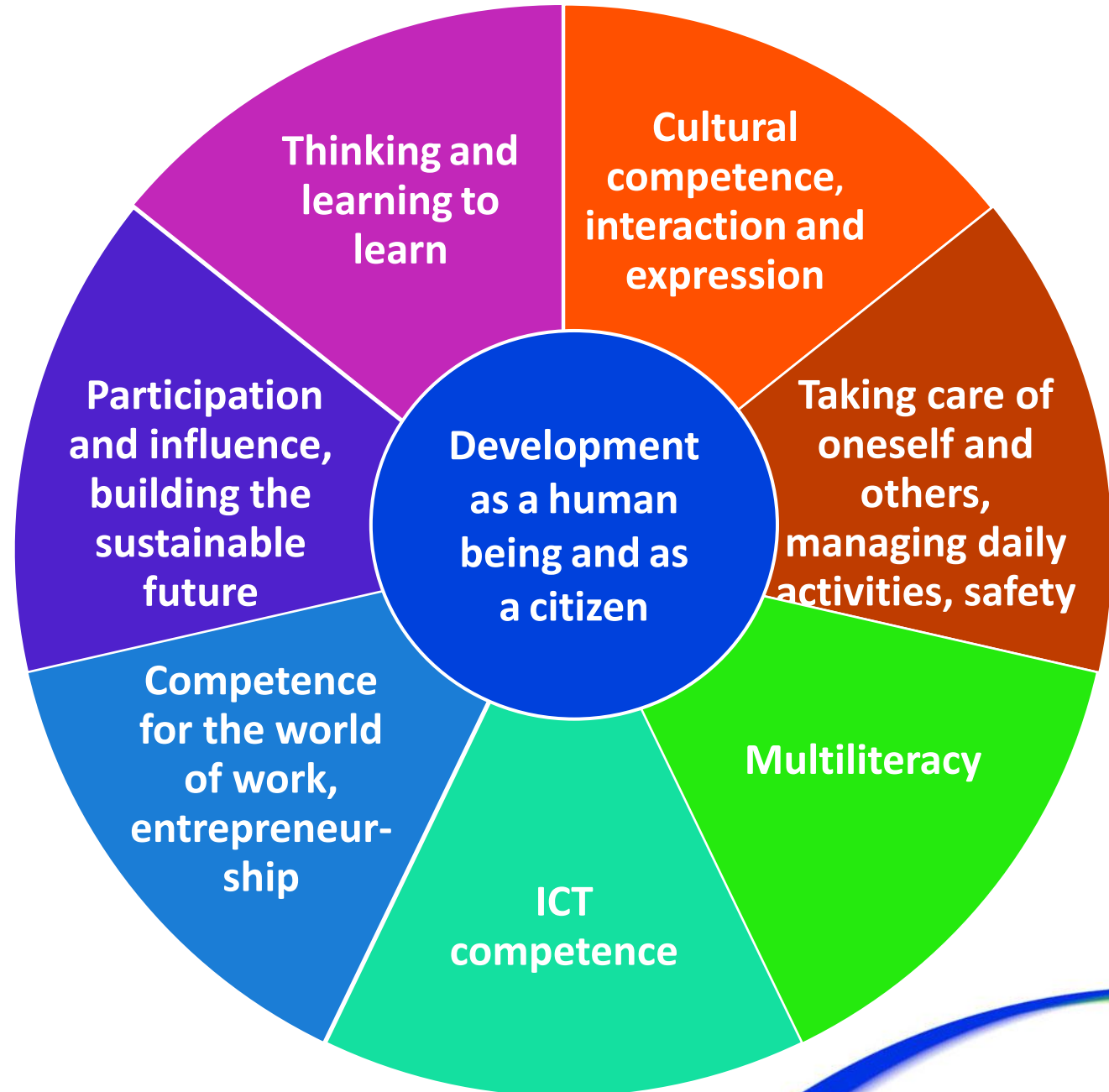
**every  
child is  
unique**



# Rethinking competences

## National Goals for Basic Education and Transversal Competences

- knowledge
- skills
- values
- attitudes
- will



# National minimum time allocation sample of subjects (annual weekly lessons<sup>1</sup>)

Forms	1–2	3–6	7–9	Total
Mother tongue & literature	14	18	10	42
Mathematics	6	15	11	32
A language (1st foreign language)	2	9	7	18
B language (2nd national language)	–	2	4	6

Forms	1–6	7–9	Total
Environment and science	14	17	31
History & civics	5	7	12
Arts, crafts & sports			62
<sup>1</sup> Total annual no. of lessons x 38	Total min		224

# Basic education curriculum

## Core ideas



# Conception of learning

## Learner's active role

- Sets targets
- Reflects & analyses
- Solves problems

## Interaction

- Learns with others and in different environments
- Understands consequences

## Learning to learn

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

## Self-conception and confidence

- Helps setting targets
- Receives feedback

General upper secondary education  
aims at  
broad-based knowledge

# General upper secondary education

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

Combining general, vocational & higher education studies

Eligibility for higher education






## Distribution of lesson hours in general upper secondary education

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

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

# Matriculation examination

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

- 
- Minimum 5 tests
  - Mother tongue + 4 of the following:
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> national language
    - foreign language
    - mathematics
    - general studies(one subject in sciences and humanities)
  - One or more optional tests possible
  - Biannual

vocational education  
and training:

focus on competences and  
individual learner

# Funding of vocational education and training (2022)

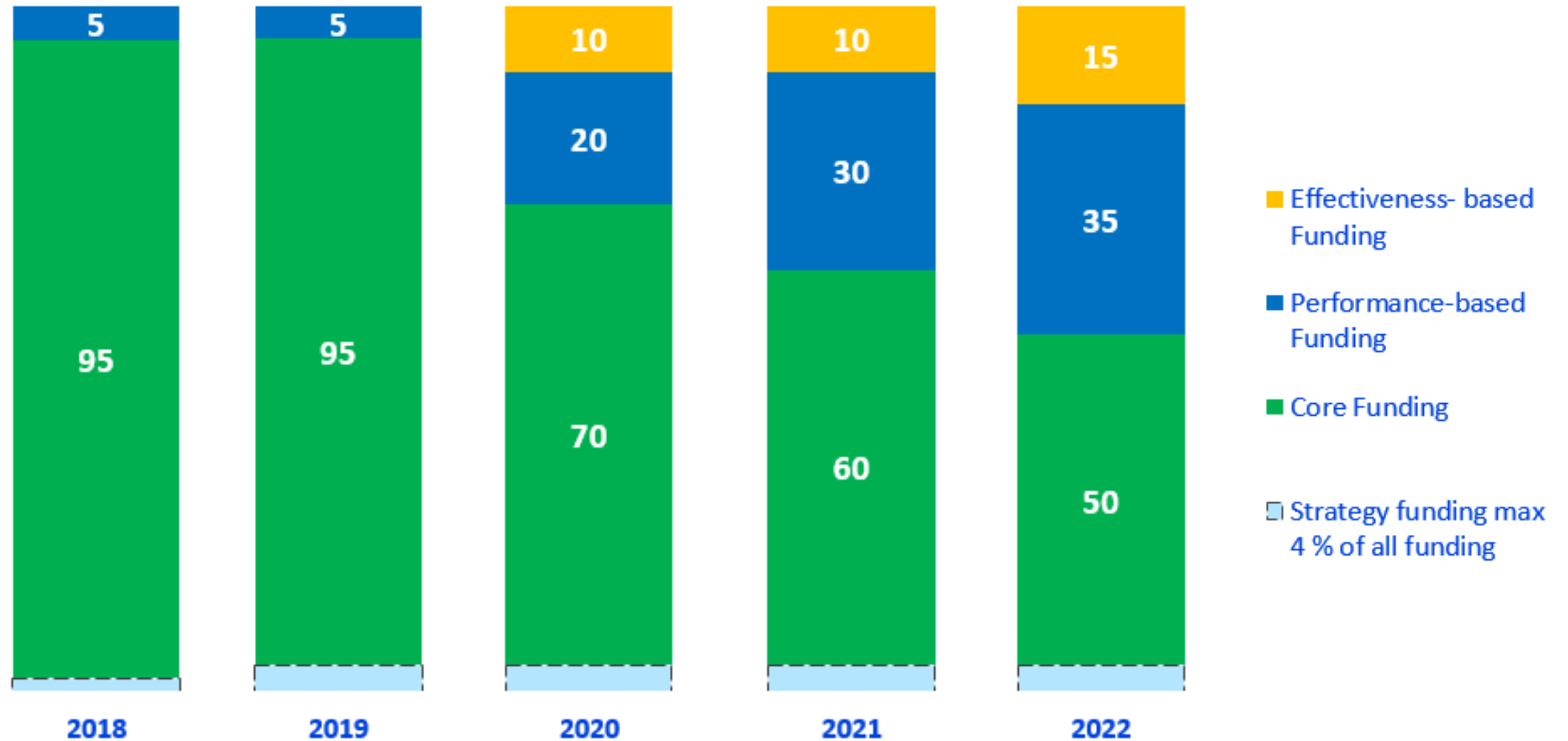
Strategy funding Maximum 4% of total funding

**50%**  
**Core funding**  
Student years

**35%**  
**Performance-based funding**  
Qualifications and qualification units

**15 %**  
**Effectiveness-based funding**  
Employment and further studies

# Distribution of total funding VET (%)





# Vocational education and training (VET)

Close cooperation with the labour market

Work-based learning

Flexible learning pathways

Open pathways from VET  
to higher and further education

# Developing VET

**Improving  
effectiveness**

**Drop-out &  
exclusion**

**Quality  
improvement**

Flexibility & individualisation,  
Recognition of prior learning

Learning environments  
Youth guarantee, funding  
reform, work-based learning

Local development plans,  
quality strategies,  
competence-based

# Key competences for lifelong learning

Entrepreneurial competence

Digital competence

Societal competence and citizenship

Competence of sustainable development

Cultural competence

Mathematical, natural scientific and technical  
competence

Development of competences

Communication and interaction competence



Adult education is popular

# Adult Education and Training

- General upper secondary education for adults
- Vocational adult education and training
- Adult education in higher education institutions
- Liberal adult education
- Labour market training



## 2.2 million participants in adult education not leading to a qualification

**25% of the population aged 25 to 64 participating in non-formal adult education in 2022**

	Total	Male	Female
Finland	25	21	30
EU-27	12	11	13

Dual model in higher education

# Higher education

## 14 universities

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


## 25 universities of applied sciences

- Education is based on labour market needs
- Research and development (R&D) of Universities of Applied Sciences aims at supporting instruction and promoting regional development

## Steering in higher education

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

## HE institutions decide on

- Administration
  - Admission
  - Content of study programmes
  - State funding
- 

Finnish teachers are  
trusted professionals

# Most teachers are required a master's degree

**ECEC teachers**  
180 ECTS (3 years)

**Class teachers**  
300 ECTS (5 years)

**Subject teachers**  
300 ECTS (5–6 years)

**Teachers  
of vocational  
studies**

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

**Principals**

teacher education  
+ e.g. certificate  
in educational  
administration



# Teacher training institutions can select heavily

Intake into teacher education 2022 (% of those who applied)

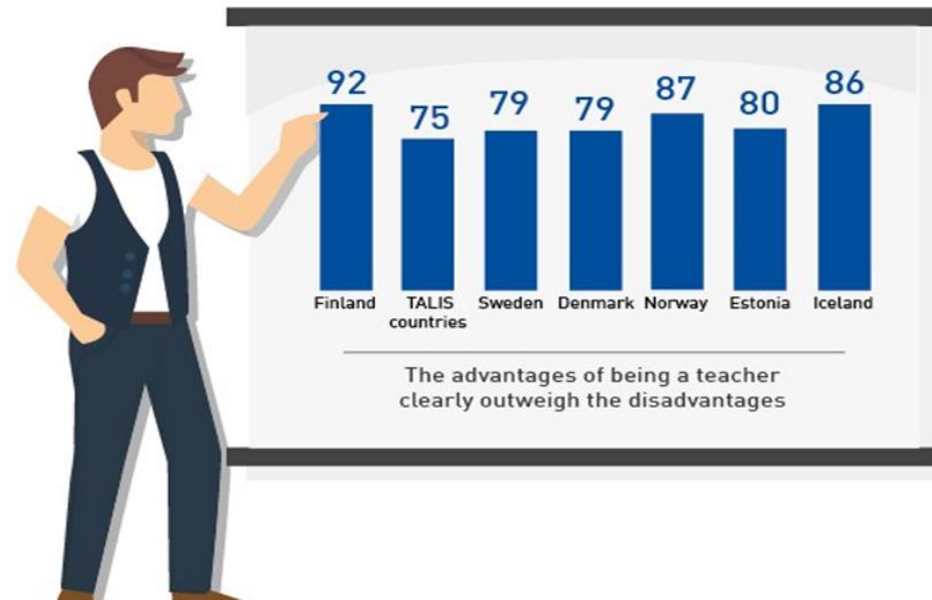
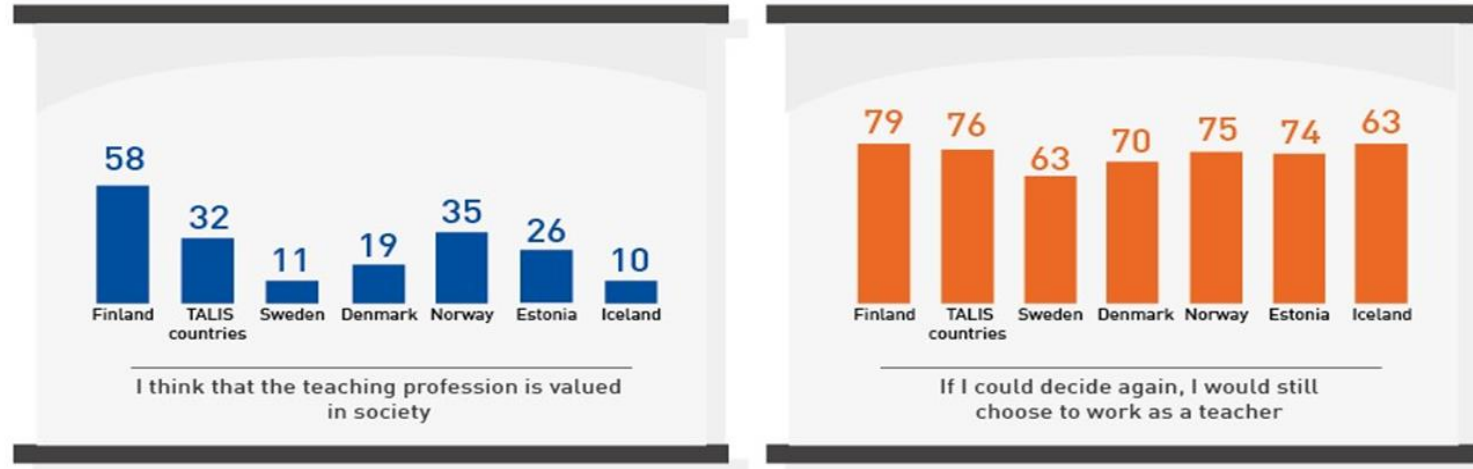
Class teacher education	below 20%
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Subject teacher education	10 – 50%
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Vocational teacher education	below 40%
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# Finnish lower secondary (ISCED 2) teachers are satisfied with their career choice

Percentage of teachers (%) who "agree" or "strongly agree" with the statements



# Teacher and principal salaries in Finland, 2022

Annual average salaries (including bonuses and allowances) of 25-64-year-old teachers and school heads in public institutions, in equivalent USD converted using PPPs for private consumption

• pre-primary teacher (ISCED 02)	<b>38 309 USD</b>
• class teacher, primary	<b>50 697 USD</b>
• subject teacher, lower secondary	<b>56 135 USD</b>
• subject teacher, general upper secondary	<b>63 188 USD</b>
• VET teachers (teachers of common studies and vocational studies teachers combined)	<b>59 278 USD</b>
• principal, primary	<b>71 130 USD</b>
• principal, lower secondary	<b>82 812 USD</b>
• principal, general upper secondary	<b>85 871 USD</b>

Source: OECD (2023), *Education at a Glance 2023: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris,  
<https://doi.org/10.1787/e13bef63-en>. Table D3.4.

Comparing Finnish education

# Finnish education in international comparison

**Instruction  
time low**

**Differences  
between schools  
small**

**Girls outperform  
boys**

**Moderate  
costs**

**Socio-economic  
effect moderate**

**Teachers feel highly  
valued**