



FINNISH NATIONAL  
AGENCY FOR EDUCATION

# Education in Finland

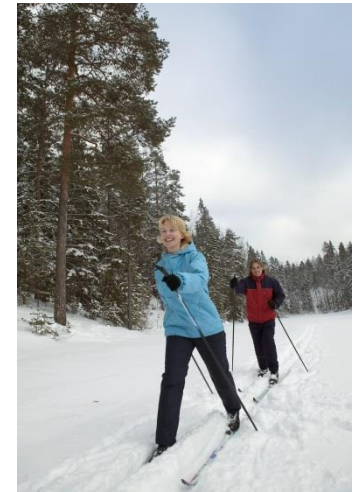
**Finnish National Agency for Education, 2021**



# Finland in brief

- population 5.5 million (18 inhabitants / sq. km)
- two official languages: Finnish and Swedish
- persons with foreign background:  
7.5 % of the population
- education level of the working age population:

- 9 % basic education
- 44 % upper secondary education
- 45 % 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

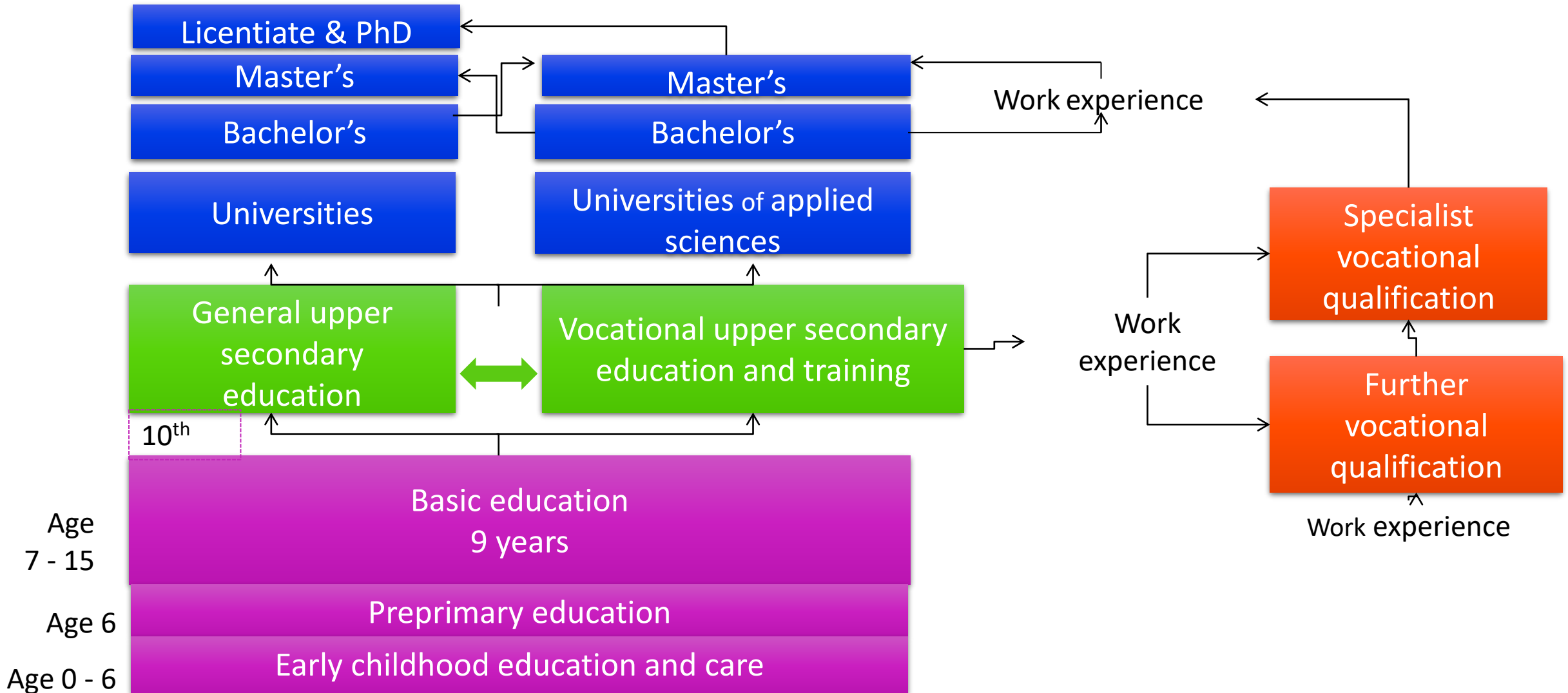
Parents

Pupils and students

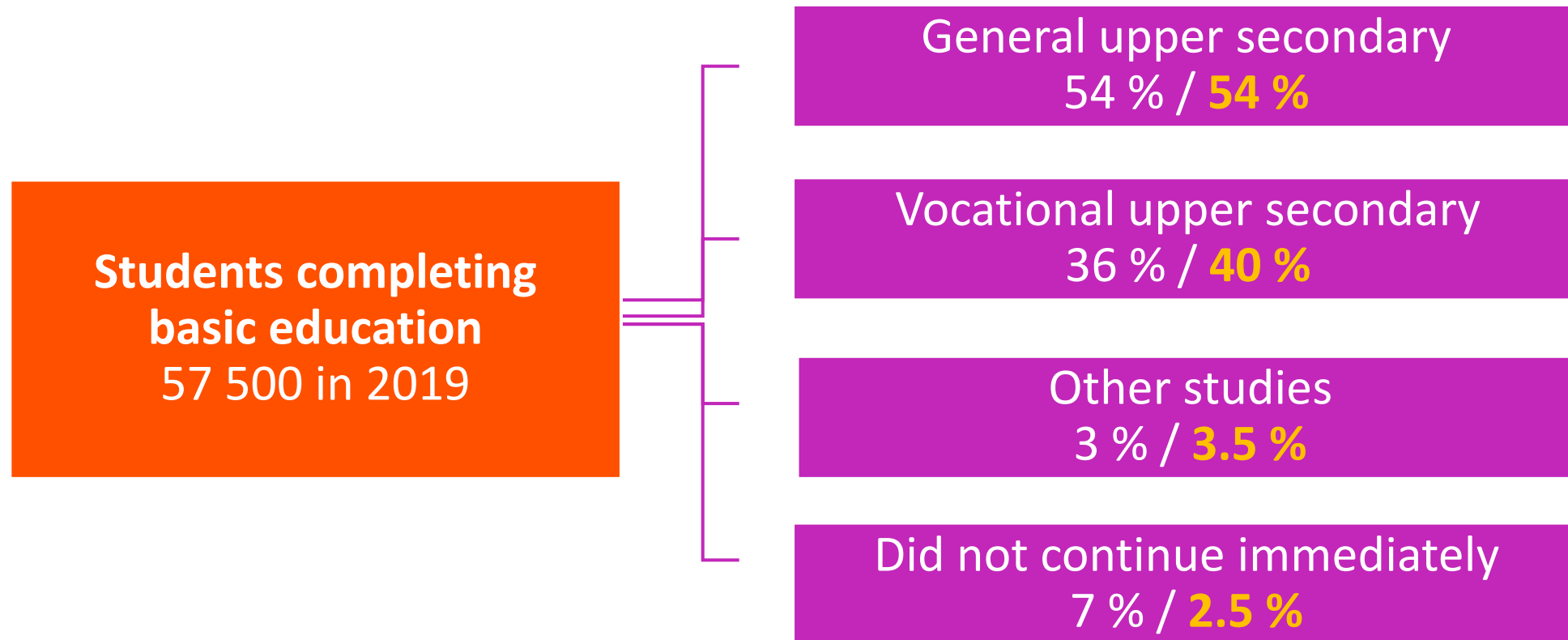
Research  
institutions

Relevant  
stakeholders

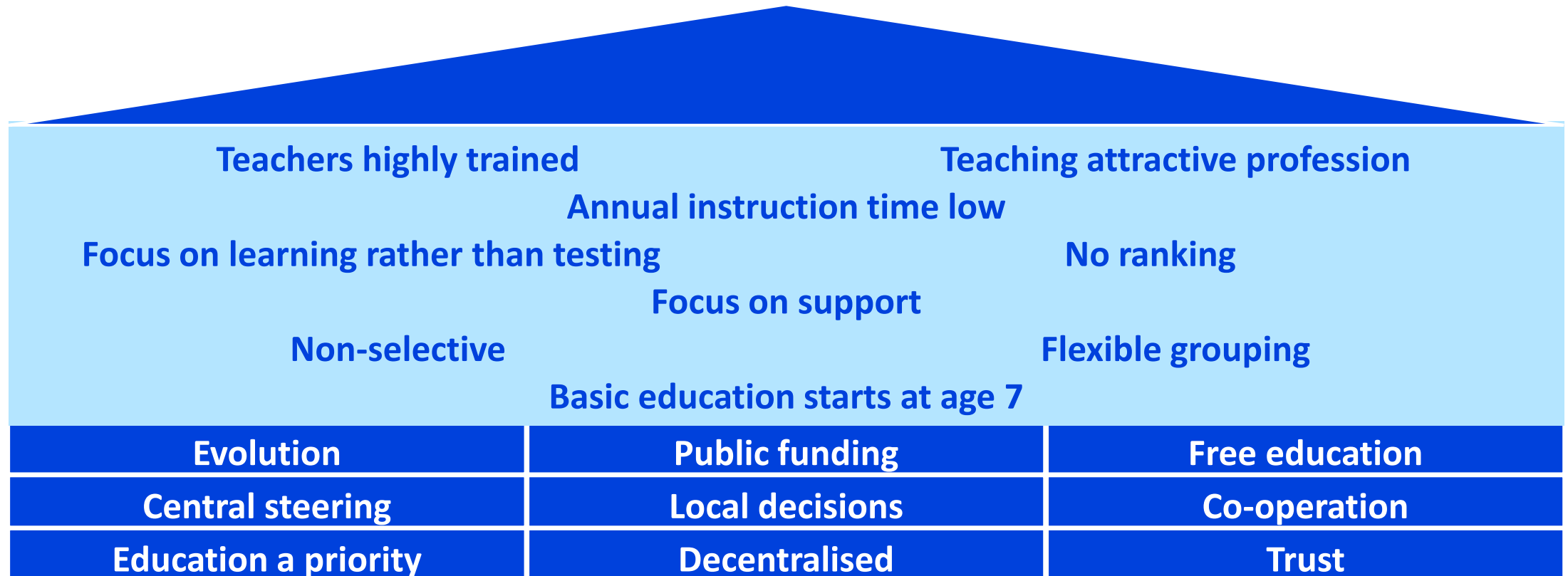
# No dead-ends in the education system



# What happens immediately after compulsory education? 2001 / 2019



# 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

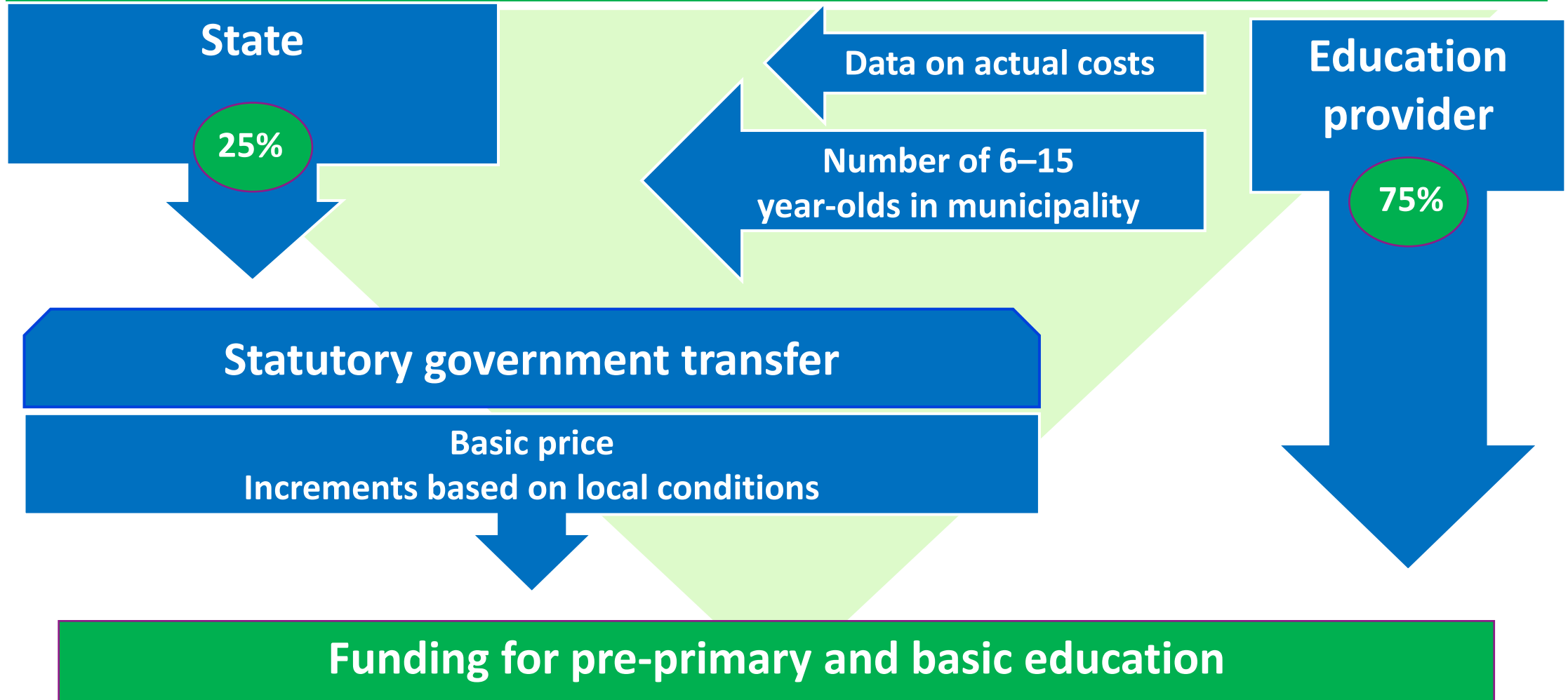
# Current issues

- differences between girls and boys in learning outcomes
- learners with migrant background
- admission to higher education
- ICT in focus, learning environments
- extending compulsory education



Basic education is free for  
pupils and families

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



# Expenditure on education 2019

- **Operative costs per pupil/student**

- pre-primary education

**6 285 €**

- basic education

**9 607 €**

- general upper secondary

**7 939 €**

- vocational upper secondary

**10 443 €**



well-being promotes learning

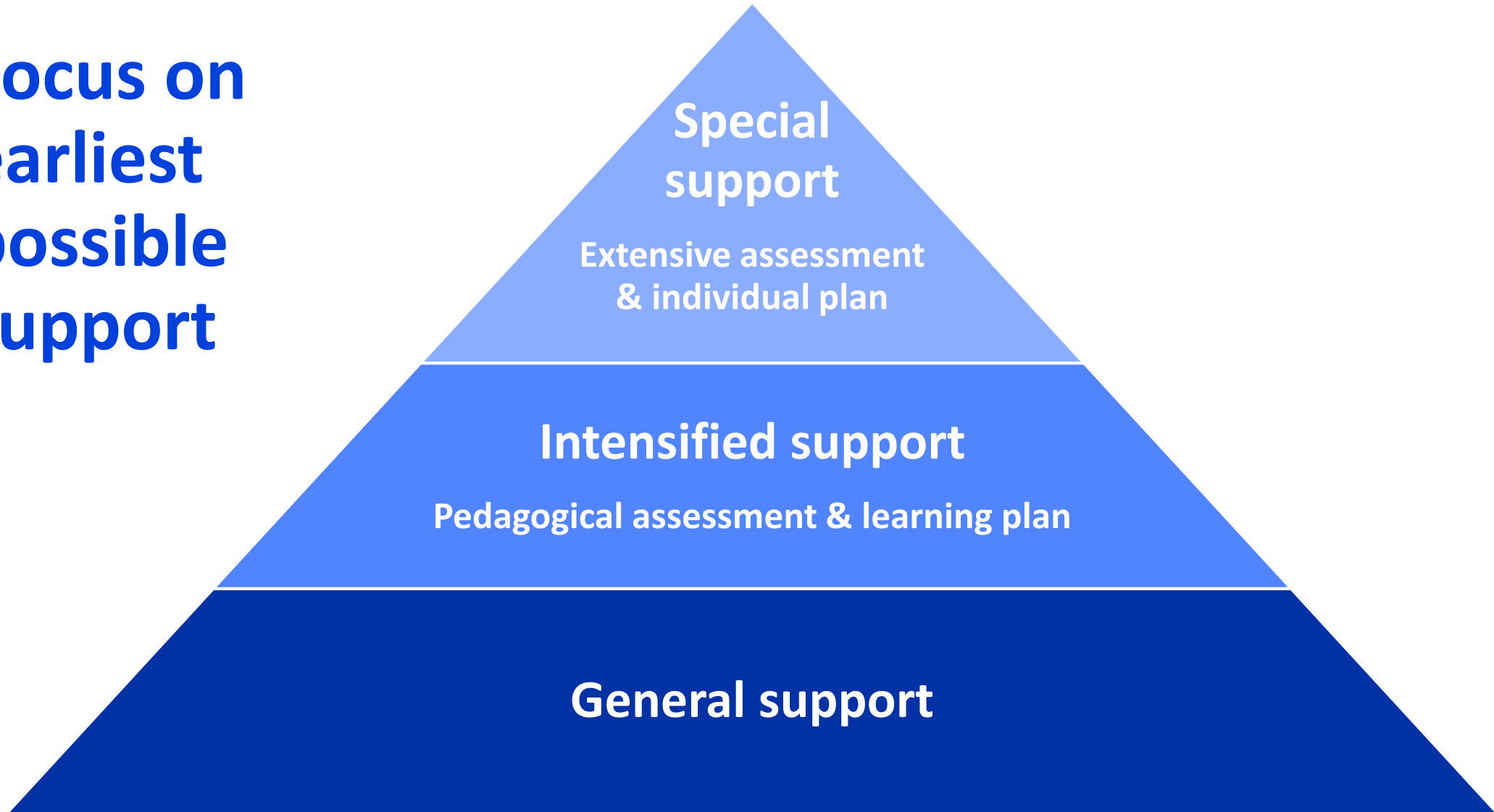
# Support to well-being & learning

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

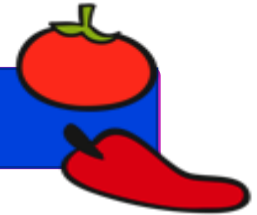
School meals generally consist of typical Finnish foods.  
A good school meal consists of:



warm main course



vegetables



bread and table spread



drink

water



# Guidance and counselling

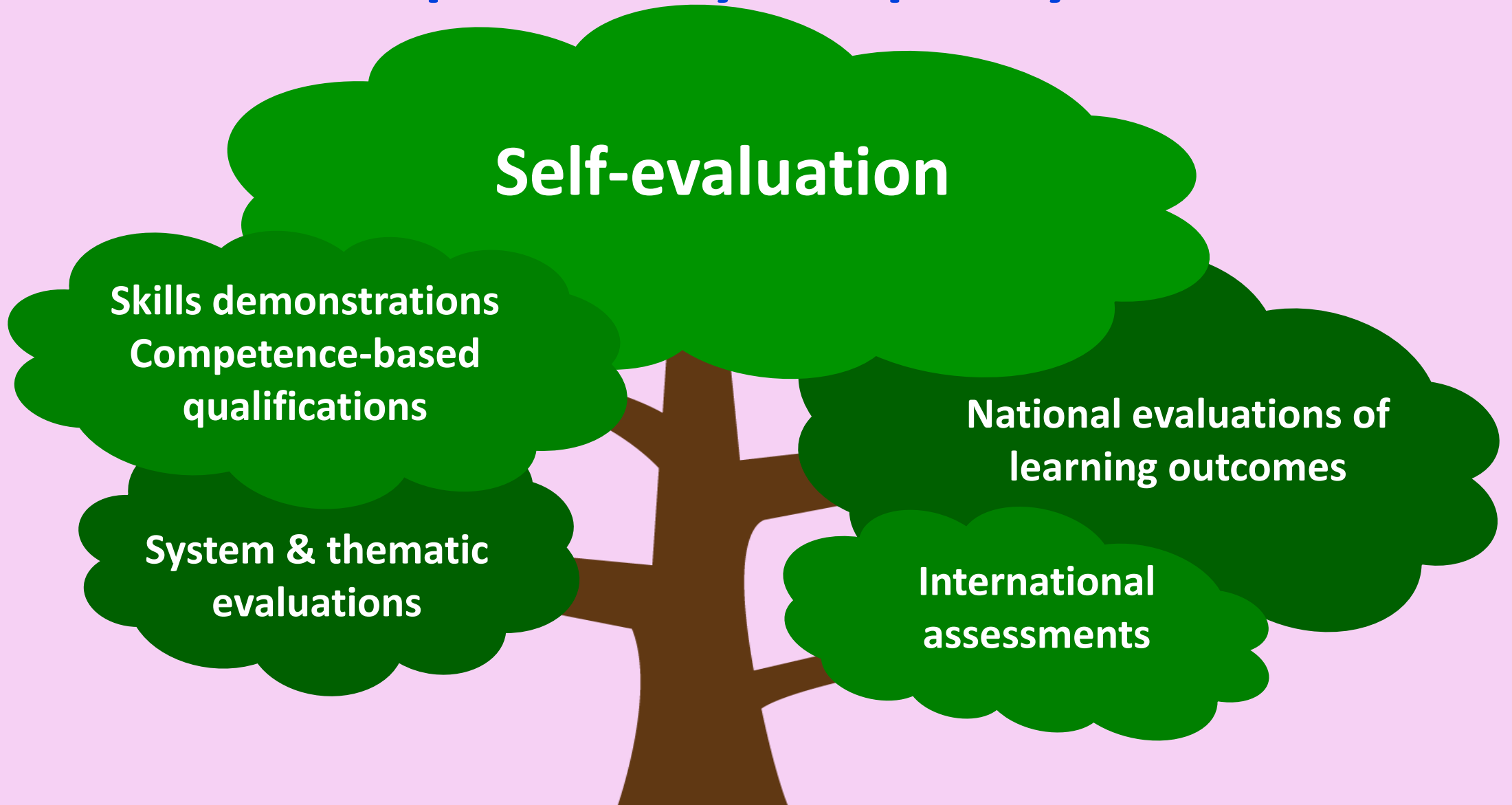


- Subjective right
- Part of the curriculum
- Collective and individual approach
- Develops learning skills
- Supports self-confidence, participation and personal growth
- Focus on transition points

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

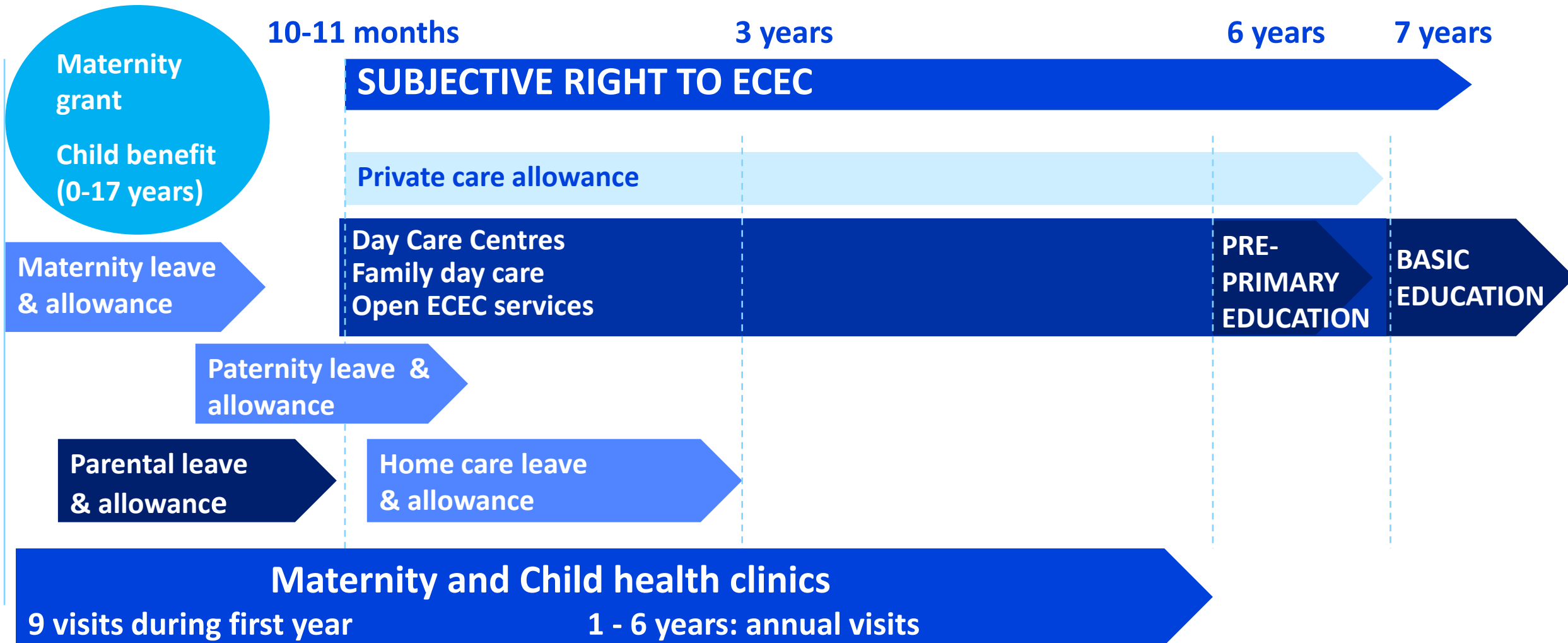
Stratified

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**

# ECEC plans and curriculum

**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:**

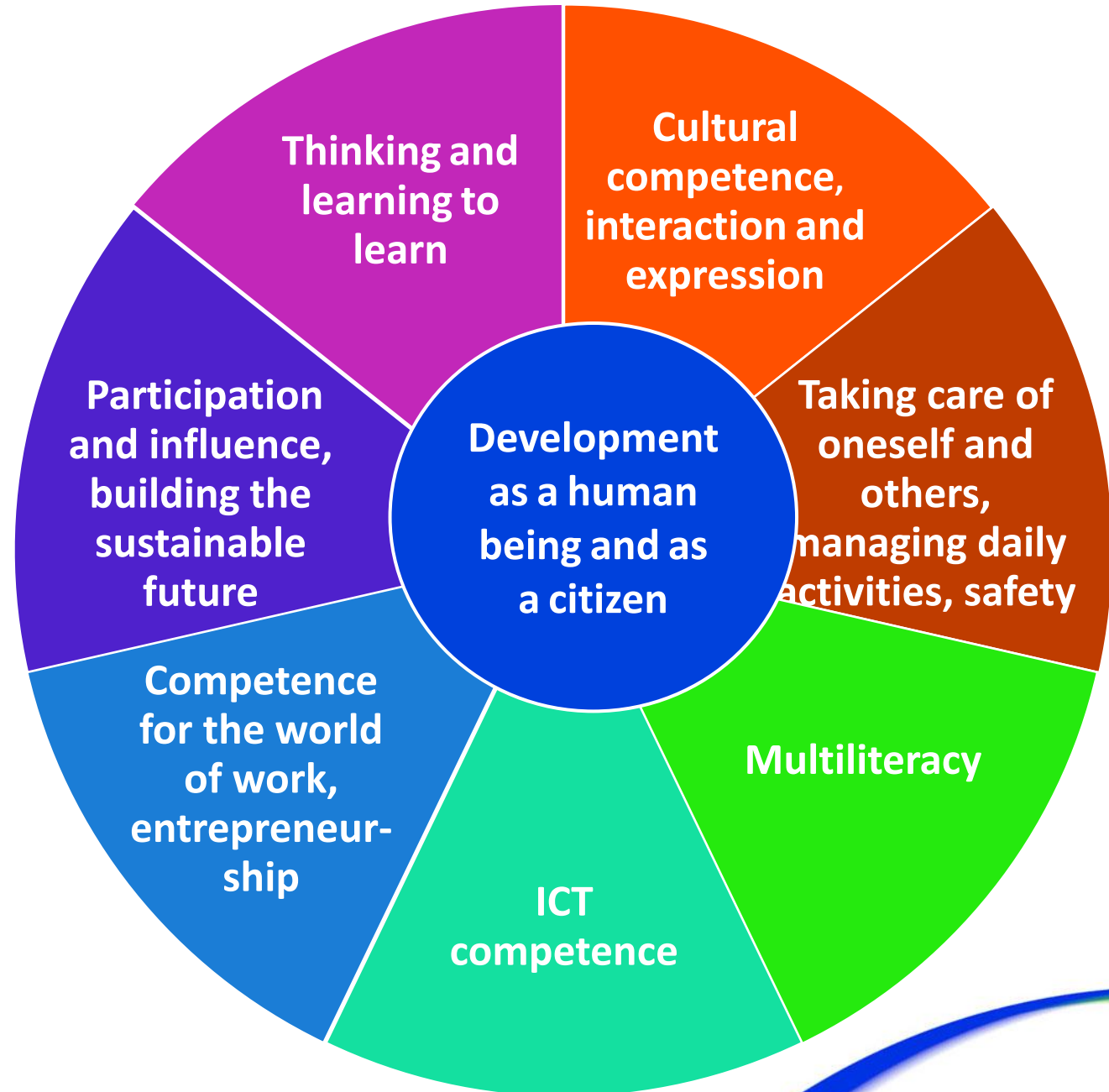
**every  
child is  
unique**



# 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

Active learner

Sustainable way  
of living

Integrative  
teaching

School as a  
learning  
community

Comprehensive  
education

# 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

# Upper secondary education

Flexible

Personalised

Individualisation

Modular/course structure

Combining general & vocational studies

Eligibility for higher education



# Distribution of lesson hours in general upper secondary education

Compulsory courses	47–51
Minimum total of specialisation courses	10
Minimum total number of courses	75

# Distribution of courses sample of subjects

Subject	Compulsory courses	Specialisation courses
Mother tongue & literature	6	3
A-language	6	2
B-language	5	2
Other languages		8+8
Mathematics	6-10	2-3
Environment & science	5	16
Humanities & social sciences	11	14
Arts, crafts & sports	4-6	7

# Matriculation examination

- Minimum 4 tests
- Mother tongue + 3 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)

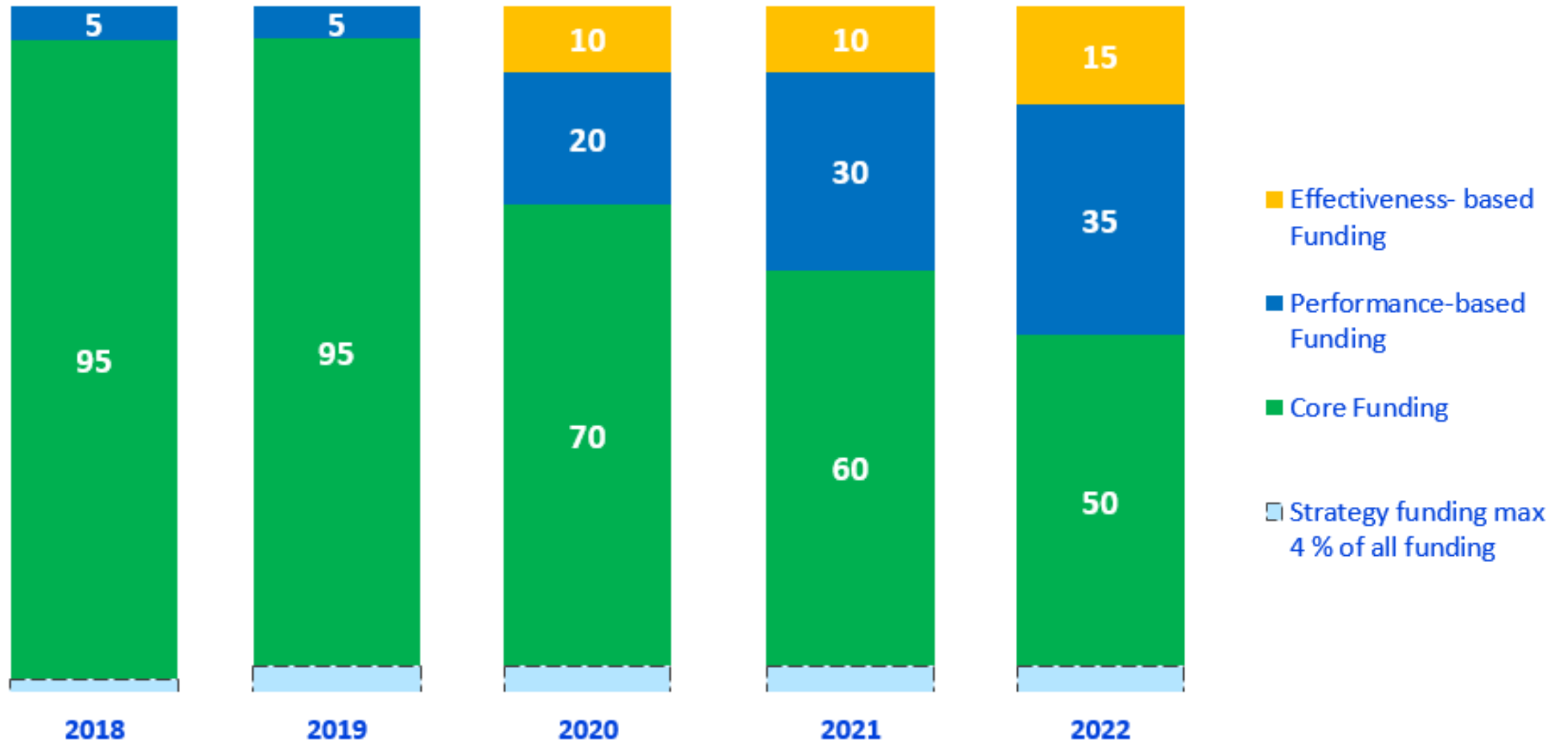
Strategy funding Maximum 4 % of total funding

**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

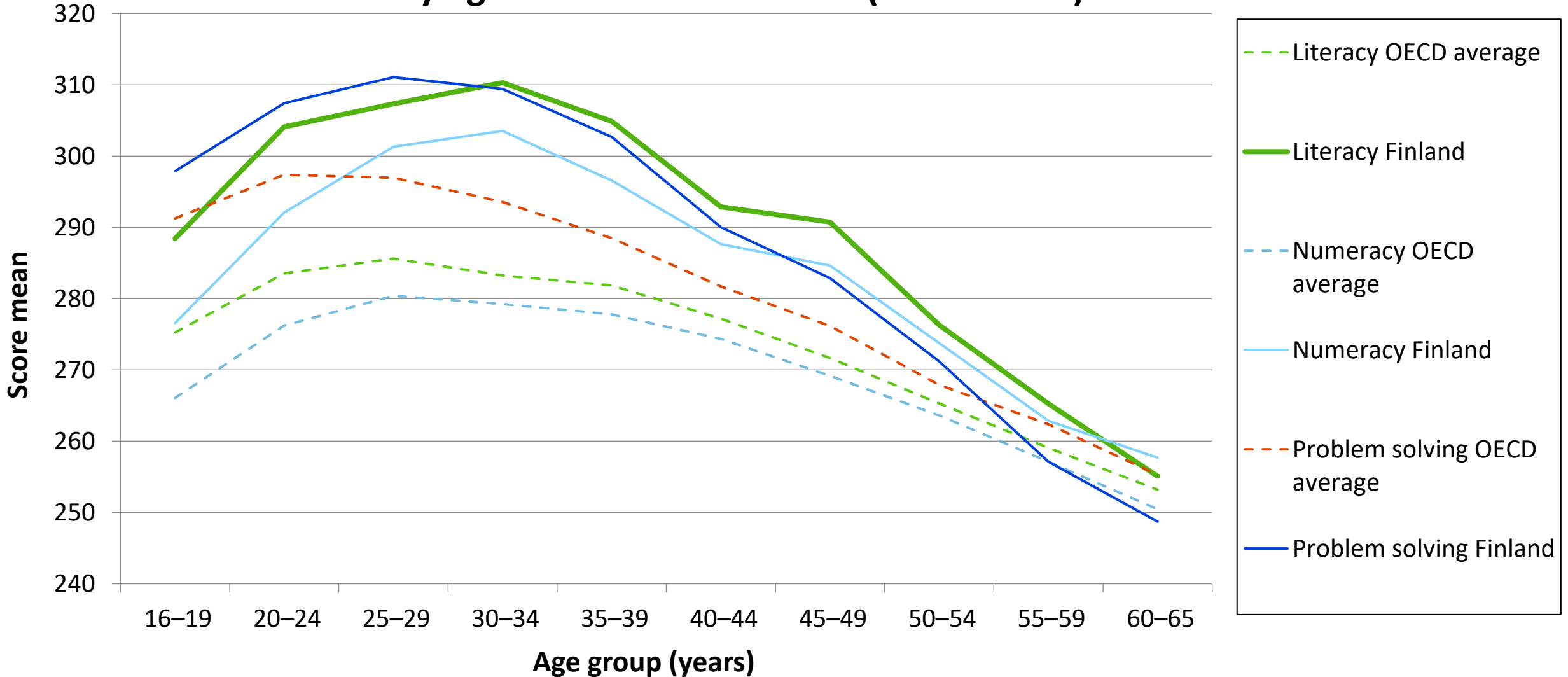
**29 % of the population aged 25 to 64  
participating in non-formal adult education in 2019**

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
<b>Finland</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>24.8</b>	<b>33.3</b>
<b>EU-28</b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>9.8</b>	<b>11.9</b>



# Skills and age: Finland and OECD average

## Skills by age in Finland and OECD (PIAAC 2013)



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
- R&D of UAS 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

# Finnish teachers are supportive

Finnish teachers believe in:

- equity and encouragement
- individual support
- strengthening the pupils' thinking skills
- developing the pupils' self-confidence and tolerance



Source: From goals to interaction.  
Evaluation of pedagogy in Finnish basic education 2008  
(National Council for Evaluation in Education in Finland)

# Most teachers are required a master's degree

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

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

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

**Teachers  
of vocational  
studies:**

**Master's , Bachelor's  
+ work experience+  
pedagogical studies  
of 60 ECTS  
(1 year)**

**Principals:**  
teacher education  
+ e.g. certificate  
in educational  
administration

# Teacher training institutions can select heavily

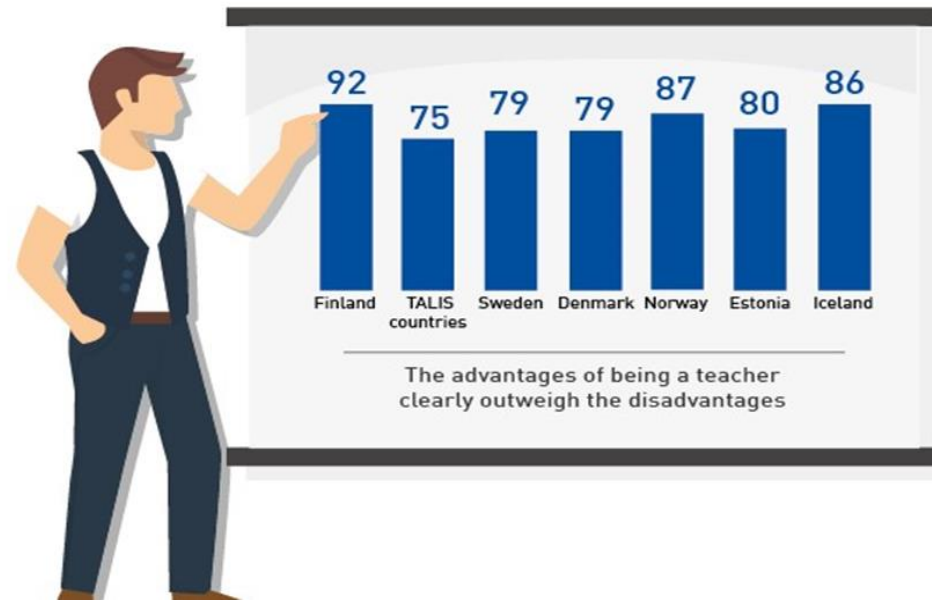
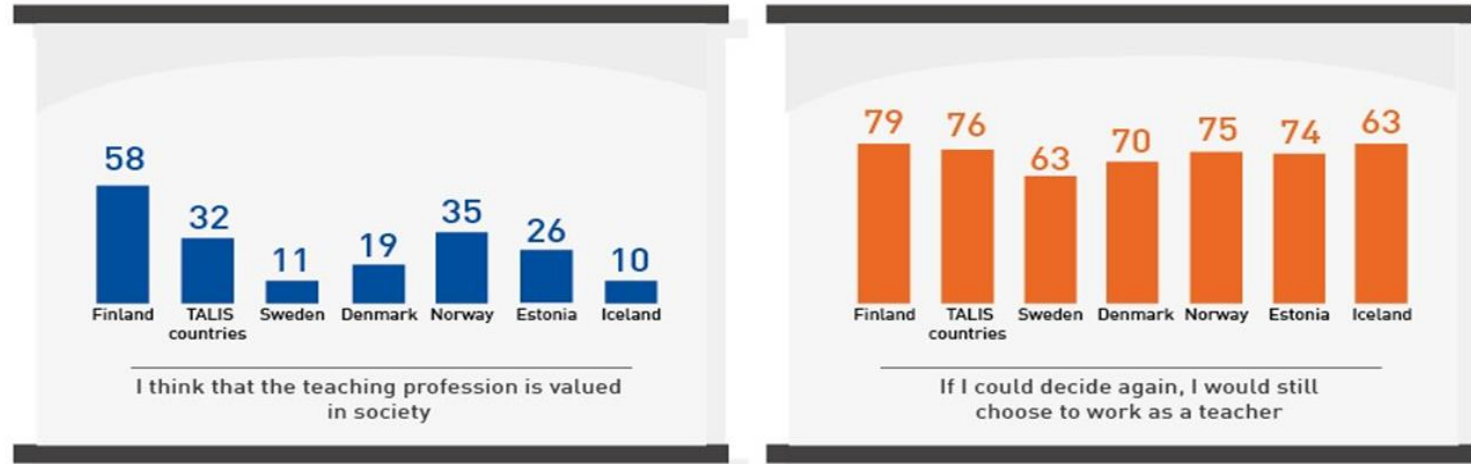
Intake into teacher education 2020 (% of those who applied)

Class teacher education	16 %
Subject teacher education	10 % – 53 %
Vocational teacher education	38 %



# Finnish lower secondary (ISCED2) teachers are satisfied with their career choice

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



# Teacher and principal salaries in Finland

(permanent contract, average actual gross salaries per month 2018)

- kindergarten teacher 2 700 €
- class teacher, primary education 3 700 €
- subject teacher, lower secondary 4 100 €
- subject teacher, general upper secondary 4 600 €
- vocational studies teacher (VET) 4 300 €
- principal, basic education 5 800 €
- principal, general upper secondary 6 000 €

**Average salary in the municipal sector in Finland 2018: 3 200 €**

# Salary is not the reason to become a teacher

Average actual monthly salary in the municipal sector 3 200 €

\* lower secondary subject teacher  
Source: Statistics Finland

3 900 €  
Teacher\*



6 200 €  
Doctor (health career)



4 500 €  
Lawyer



3 600 €  
Constable



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**

# PISA 2018: differences between schools smallest



- OECD average 29 %
- Finland 7 %

Variance of performance between schools as a proportion of total performance across OECD countries

# What do the high-performing school systems have in common?

- 1 They get the right people to become teachers.
- 2 They develop these people into effective instructors.
- 3 They put in place systems and targeted support to ensure that every child is able to benefit from excellent instruction.