



OPETUS- JA KULTTUURIMINISTERIÖ
UNDERSVINGS- OCH KULTURMINISTERIET

Bildung as a Way Forward for Finland

A vision for higher education
and research for 2040

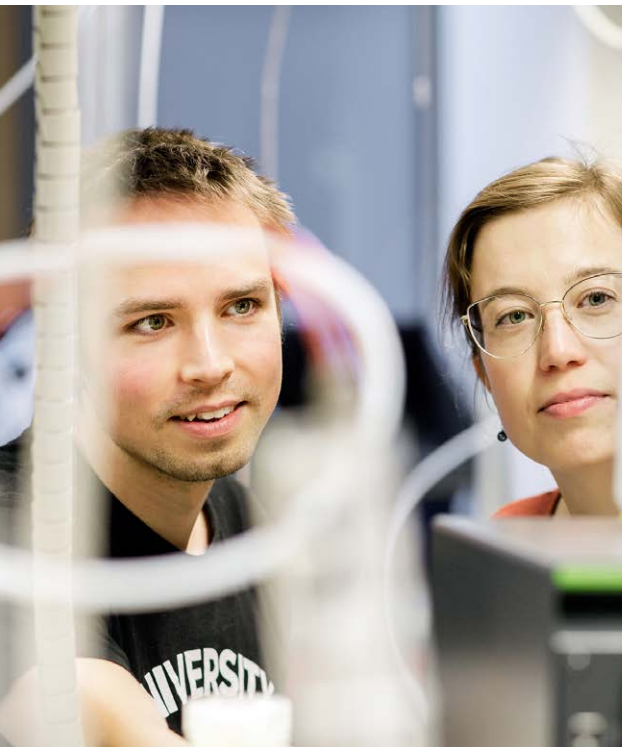


Photo: Suvi-Tuuli Kankaanpää / KEKSI



Photo: Pasi Markkanen



Why we need a vision for higher education and research extending to 2040



Photo: Pasi Markkanen

The world and Finland are changing rapidly, and the landscape of higher education institutions is evolving with them.

Globally, we are influenced by climate change and biodiversity loss, an increasingly polarised world order, emerging technologies and intensifying international competition.

At national level, Finland faces demographic shifts, pressure on the sustainability of public finances and the need to sustain the Nordic welfare model.

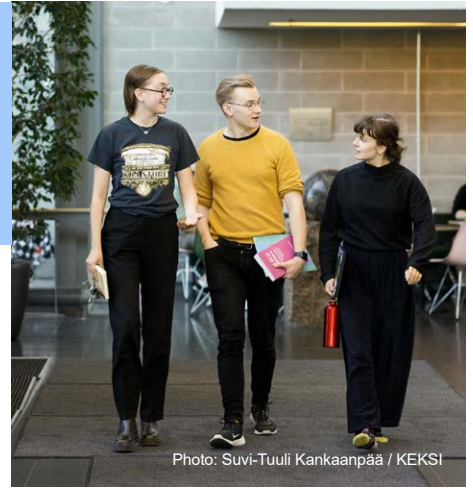
Higher education institutions and evidence-based knowledge generate prosperity and growth and help us address the challenges facing humanity.

More information about the vision

The Vision for Higher Education and Research 2040 is available in the Institutional Repository for the Government.

Check out the publication (<https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-415-055-2>)
Ministry of Education and Culture 2026/6

Finland must raise its level of education – 60 per cent of young adults to hold a higher education degree



Finland is widely recognised as a global leader in education and training. However, we have fallen behind our peers in the share of young people with a higher education qualification. Research shows that highly

educated professionals play a decisive role in driving productivity and enhancing wellbeing. Most young people would like to pursue higher education. We must ensure they can access it.

At present, Finland lags behind peer countries in the proportion of higher education graduates

Share of the population aged 25–34 with a tertiary education degree in Finland, the EU and OECD countries in 2010 and 2024 (Source: OECD, Education at a Glance).



Research fuels growth and wellbeing – 4 per cent of GDP for research and development

Finland's success, wellbeing and economic growth are built on research and innovation. We have set ambitious targets for research and development and remain committed to achieving them. We need more high-quality research

and development. Collaboration between organisations will become a central strength of Finland's RDI system. We will invest in skills and talent, which underpin effective research and development.

Finland needs both private and public R&D investment to kickstart growth

*R&D expenditure as a share of GDP in
2010–2024 and the target level for 2040
(Source: Statistics Finland and Ministry of
Education and Culture estimates).*



TARGETS AND PROPOSED ACTION

1. Finland as a frontrunner in bildung, democracy and academic freedom



Bildung, research-based knowledge and a highly educated population drive positive societal change and help address the defining challenges of our time. Higher education communities are the primary engine of renewal. Academic freedom in science, in the arts and at the higher education must be safeguarded across the entire sector.

We are moving towards our goals:

- Assess the need for legislative reform to safeguard academic freedom in higher education institutions.
- Higher education institutions and the research community promote practices that prevent harassment, undue pressure and inappropriate influence.
- Reinforce the role of higher education expertise in preparedness and in strengthening democracy.
- Implement the principles of responsible research assessment.

TARGETS AND PROPOSED ACTION

2. Expanding young people's access to higher education



Photo: Suvi-Tuuli Kankaanpää / KEKSI

Higher education must be accessible to all. Young people will access higher education directly after completing upper secondary education. The share of young adults with a higher education degree will rise to 60 per cent. Finland is a leader in modern learning. Higher education institutions will foster supportive and thriving communities for study and work.

We are moving towards our goals:

- Continue reforming student admissions and increase the number of study places in higher education.
- Develop a national framework for guidance and learner support.
- Strengthen young people's readiness for higher education and expand general upper secondary provision.
- Modernise higher education and teaching to meet evolving skills needs.
- Higher education institutions establish shared principles for on-campus and distance learning.
- Reform the funding and steering of continuous learning.

TARGETS AND PROPOSED ACTION

3. Creative talent and ambitious research renewing society



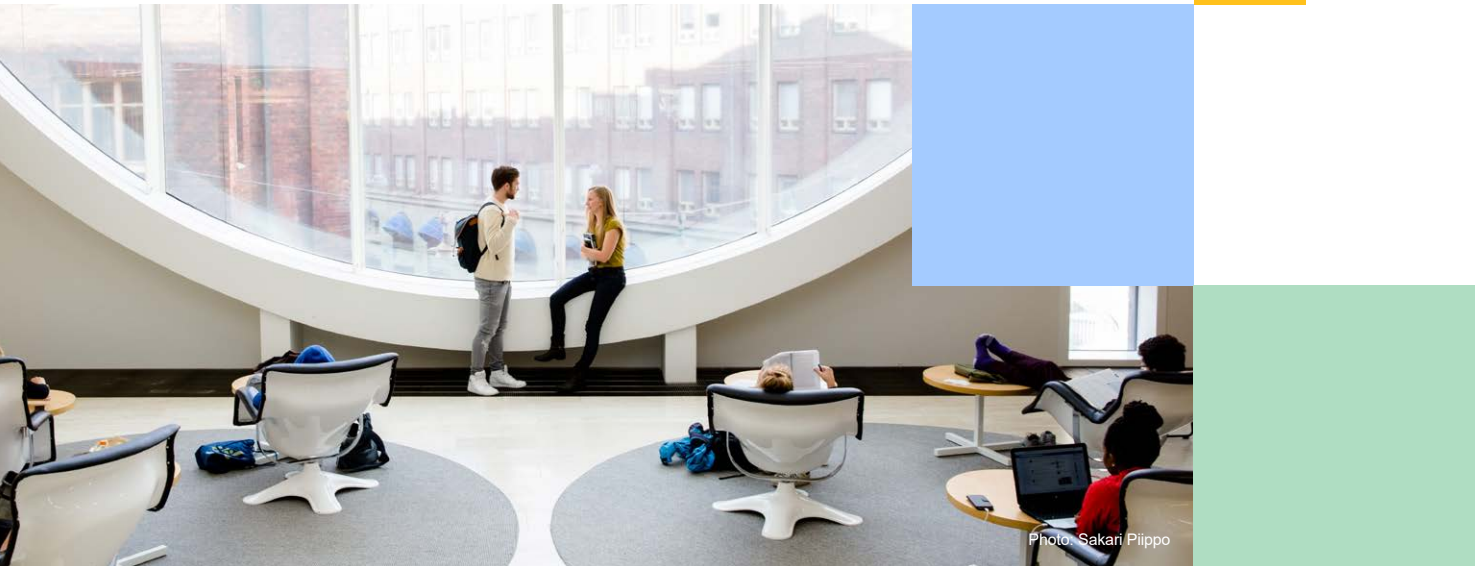
Groundbreaking research and artistic work provide the foundation for education and training, innovation and a sustainable economy. High-quality education and research make Finland an attractive and responsible international partner. The number of R&D personnel will grow, and the overall level of education will rise. Finland will attract and retain international talent.

We are moving towards our goals:

- Continue implementing the parliamentary R&D policies towards 2040.
- Higher education institutions deepen their specialisation and strengthen their areas of expertise in research and education.
- Finland consolidates its position as a European leader in data-driven science.
- Continue reforming doctoral education and define a normative duration for doctoral studies.
- Ministries align their policies and practices on responsible international cooperation and research security.
- Integrate an international dimension into all degree programmes and strengthen links between international students and employers.

TARGETS AND PROPOSED ACTION

4. A dynamic and financially sustainable higher education system



Ambitious renewal will build the capabilities Finland will need in the future. This requires higher education institutions to specialise while working more closely together. Funding for higher education and research will diversify and grow.

We are moving towards our goals:

- Launch a comprehensive reform of the higher education system to deliver the vision objectives.
- Reform the principles guiding institutional steering, funding and regulation of educational responsibilities.
- Modernise external quality assurance in education and research.
- Develop shared digital services for higher education and research.
- Higher education institutions establish common principles for the ambitious and responsible use of artificial intelligence.
- Simplify cooperation in RDI between higher education institutions, businesses and research organisations.