



# “Finland study visit”

*Final report*

*Entrepreneurship education subgroup*

*COPIE2*

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## A glimpse of the finnish education system

Finland has been consistently topping the rankings of best education systems in the last decade. The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has probably done more to promote a positive image of Finland around the world than any carefully designed tourism campaign. Finland's outstanding results have attracted the attention of policymakers, media and practitioners alike on the lookout for answers that explain such success. These are some of the commonly outlined factors:

- Highly skilled teaching profession that's also highly valued by society. It takes 5 years to become a teacher.
- A culture of trust. There's no inspection as such. Every single stakeholder is trusted and holds a good deal of autonomy leading to greater empowerment and motivation.
- Very little examination. Students take almost no exams until the end of secondary education thus providing a much more relaxed scenario to engage in real learning.
- Streamlined national core curriculum defined by the Ministry of Education. Municipalities and schools have a great degree of freedom to adapt it to local needs.
- A certainly homogeneous student population where average performance is higher than in other countries and differences among low performing students and high achievers are smaller.
- Flexible learning pathways where it is easy to migrate between vocational and academic strands.

Leaving aside this proven track record of success our area of interest was more precisely focused on the Finnish entrepreneurship education strategy whose essential features comprise a sustained and committed support on the government side complemented with a good understanding of the need to engage a broad number of stakeholders



## Rationale

Finland was chosen as a final destination as it has been consistently using ESF funds to finance entrepreneurship education projects. Thus, we thought some useful learning lessons could be hopefully derived from the Finnish experience and hopefully provide some hints on how to open up new funding possibilities for entrepreneurship education projects within the framework of ESF 2014-2020 programming period in other Member States and regions.

The study visit was organised to gain a deeper insight into:

- Integration of entrepreneurship education within current Finland's ESF Operational Programme.
- Coordination method between ESF and the Ministry of Education
- Implementation and impact of ESF-funded entrepreneurship education projects.

## Delegation

Our delegation was formed by:

- **Gerhild Vollherbst.** Programme manager. Deutsche Kinder und Jugend Stiftung. Germany.
- **Ilse Boeykens.** Policy Advisor. Department of Entrepreneurship and Innovation. Government of Flanders. Belgium
- **Antonio Georgopolis.** European Social Fund Agency Flanders. Belgium
- **Iván Diego.** COPIE2 expert. Spain.



## Agenda

### Tuesday 31 May

9.30 – 11.30 Visit to the **Ministry of Education and Culture**

<http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/?lang=en>

“**Guidelines for Entrepreneurship Education**” by Mr **Jussi Pihkala** (Counsellor of Education, Ministry of Education)

“**ESF programme for Mainland Finland and the Administration Structure of ESF**” by Ms **Leena Lyra** (Senior Adviser, Ministry of Education)

“**ESF Priority 4 Transnational and inter-regional cooperation in ESF activities in Finland**” by Ms. **Varpu Taarna** (Senior Adviser, Ministry of Employment and the Economy)

13.00 – 15.00 Visit to **Finnish National Board of Education - FNBE**

<http://www.oph.fi/english>

“**Driving change through Entrepreneurship Education and Competence**” Development Programme by Ms. **Minna Bálint** (Project manager, FNBE)

### Wednesday 1 June

9.30 – 12.30 Visit to **Finnish National Board of Education – FNBE**

#### **ESF-funded Entrepreneurship Education projects**

“**YES centres**” by Ms. **Virpi Utriainen**, Project manager

<http://www.yes-keskus.fi>

“**Measurent tool for entrepreneurship education**” by Ms. **Jaana Seikkula-Leino**, Project manager

<http://developmentcentre.lut.fi/english.asp>

“**YVI, developing Finnish teacher education through integrating entrepreneurship education**” by Ms. **Jaana Seikkula-Leino**, Project manager

<http://www.yvi.fi/>



## Entrepreneurship education, a joined up approach

The main features of entrepreneurship education in Finland have already been covered in one of the sections of this subgroup baseline study so we would kindly ask you to refer to this document for further information.

However we will carry out a quick analysis of Finland National Entrepreneurship Education Strategy using the framework provided by DG Enterprise in the “Towards Greater Cooperation and Coherence in Entrepreneurship Education” (EC, 2010) where the main elements of an ideal National Entrepreneurship Strategy have been outlined:

### 1. An agreed definition of terms of reference – what is Entrepreneurship Education?

The document “Guidelines for Entrepreneurship Education” (Ministry of Education, 2010) includes a clear definition:

*“Entrepreneurship education mainly refers to a wide-ranging work done within the education administration with a view to enhancing entrepreneurship. [...] Practical measures are geared to inculcate positive attitudes and develop knowledge and skills relating to entrepreneurship, create new business, upgrade entrepreneurs’ skills and their personnels’ competencies and bring about an entrepreneurial mode of operation at the workplace and in all other activities. Entrepreneurship education is rooted in lifelong learning and a networked mode of operation”*

### 2. Cross-ministry involvement as key stakeholders

The **Ministry of Education** assumes a leading role in close cooperation with the **Ministry of Employment and Economy**. The **Finnish National Board of Education** is the governmental agency responsible for development of education and training and directly accountable to the Ministry of Education.

### 3. Stakeholder consultation to establish wide-ranging buy-in and comprehension

Stakeholder consultation takes place at national, regional and municipal level. For instance the **Federation of Finnish Employers, Teacher Unions,**



**intermediary organizations** and **local authorities** have played an important role in the identification of priorities and regularly consulted on the shaping of entrepreneurship education policies.

#### 4. Embedding core competences throughout the national curriculum

Entrepreneurship is considered a **key cross-curricular theme** in the national core curriculum for basic, upper secondary and adults education under the headings “**participatory citizenship and entrepreneurship**” in basic education and “**active citizenship**” in upper secondary and adults’ education.

#### 5. Developing high level and strategic aims and objectives

Two documents published by the **Ministry of Education**, the **Development plan. Education and Research. 2007-2012** and **Guidelines for entrepreneurship education** provide the policy backdrop for all actions promoting entrepreneurship in the education system. This clear vision is further backed up by a very good linkage and integration between strategic aims and allocation of ESF funds to projects that are already included in the 2015 priorities.

#### 6. Integrating and buttressing the strategy with identified good practice.

In this particular sense, it is highly remarkable the contribution of YES centres, an ESF-funded national network of enterprise education resource centres providing advice, information and training on entrepreneurship education to teachers and schools. YES centres share and effectively disseminate information on good practices.

#### 7. Training the teachers

Teacher Education was considered a critical success factor in order to push forward the enterprise education agenda in Finland. So first and foremost the focus was placed on the development of the entrepreneurial competence of teacher trainers.

Currently opportunities to receive training on enterprise education are available both at Initial Teacher Education and CPD. Enterprise education is backed up by a growing body of evidence derived from research undertaken at different universities in the country.

#### 8. Developing a logic chain which includes indicators, outputs, outcomes and results

The Guidelines for Entrepreneurship Education defines a specific set of priorities but quantitative indicators are left out of the picture. However Finland has gone a long way to assess entrepreneurship outputs and outcomes with evidence-based research.



## 9. Strategies demonstrating progression from primary through to tertiary (vocational and non vocational phases)

The goals and priorities of entrepreneurship education for each level of education are clearly described in the Guidelines for Entrepreneurship Education. A set of priorities is defined from Early Childhood to Higher Education with the focus gradually tilting from the development of general soft skills on the development of business know-how and start-up procedures in VET and Higher Education. Adult Vocational Education and Training is also considered.

## 10. Resourcing the strategy

ESF is being used to finance large-scale and strategic projects on entrepreneurship education. ESF-funded projects are aligned with medium to long term policies (eg. Guidelines for Entrepreneurship Education). ESF projects act as trailblazers whose impact is used to inform future policy and improve the national core curriculum.

# Two basic policy papers to understand the importance of entrepreneurship education in Finland

Two documents published by the **Ministry of Education** provide the policy backdrop for all actions promoting entrepreneurship in the education system:

- **Development plan. Education and Research. 2007-2012.**
- **Guidelines for entrepreneurship education**

The **Development Plan 2007-2012** states the need to diversify and expand entrepreneurship education and strengthen related education and training under the heading “Connections between education and working life and the promotion of entrepreneurship education”. Specific measures are described for each level of education

### General education

- Embedded in national core curriculum under the heading “Active citizenship and entrepreneurship”
- Entrepreneurship education expected to play a more prominent role in Upper Secondary.



#### VET

- Entrepreneurship studies will be expanded in connection with the reform of curricula for Initial VET
- On-the-job learning and apprenticeships will be strengthened.

#### Higher Education Institutions

- Entrepreneurship studies offered as optional studies to all in Higher Education Institutions
- Entrepreneurship education will be also included in researcher training.

#### Adult Education

- Further and continuing generation will be targeted to support enterprises' generation change processes, the creation of entrepreneurship based on a different competence base and the renewal of business.

The **Guidelines for Entrepreneurship Education** outlines the shape of future to come forecasting a desirable state of affairs in 2015. This entails:

- Enhanced networking among stakeholders at local, regional, national and international level
- Regions and municipalities taking the lead with a well developed and extended network of regional resource centres.
- Full integration as part of national core curricula as well as school-specific curricula across all levels.
- Increased entrepreneurship among VET and Higher Education qualification holders
- Growing body of cross-disciplinary research on entrepreneurial learning environments and entrepreneurship pedagogy
- Entrepreneurship firmly embedded in initial teacher training and CPD.

## ESF, a valuable tool to improve enterprise education in Finland

ESF has proven to be a very effective tool to finance entrepreneurship education projects in Finland during the current programming period (2007-2013).



ESF Operational Programme in Finland has identified 4 key priorities:

- **Priority 1. Development of work organisations, the workforce and enterprises and promoting entrepreneurship.**
- **Priority 2. Promoting access to employment and sustainable inclusion in the labour market and preventing social exclusion**
- **Priority 3. Development of expertise and service systems that promote the functioning of the labour market.**
- **Priority 4. Transnational and inter-regional ESF Actions (not covered by FNBE)**

In order to meet the goals set for each priority, the ESF Fund Programme for Mainland Finland is structured in different **National Development Programmes** whose main features are described below:

- Covers a particular area: employment, workforce, entrepreneurship, education and wellbeing at work
- Aims to improve and renew current operating models, pilot new initiatives and disseminate info on best practices
- Comprises a number of projects
- Pools results and practices from individual projects
- Offers support structure for projects
- Monitors projects profitability and impacts
- Ensures projects meet objectives and form a strategic development entity
- Promotes networked cooperation between projects
- Disseminate best practices and embed in order to secure sustainability

Projects are implemented regionally and funded by the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment and the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) so that the national strategy is matched with local needs.

ESF support to entrepreneurship education is basically provided via the **“Driving Change through Entrepreneurship Education and Competence” Development Programme** included in **“Priority 1. Development of work organisations, the workforce and enterprises and promoting entrepreneurship.”**



# A specific National Development Programme for Entrepreneurship Education

## “Driving Change through Entrepreneurship Education and Competence”

**Development Programme** allocates **7.6 € Million** during the current programming period 2007-2013 to strengthen the role of entrepreneurship education and improve the competence of teaching staff. The **Finnish National Board of Education** is the funding authority and grants support for ESF projects developing entrepreneurship education.

The Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) is the agency responsible for the development of education and training in Finland, from pre-primary to VET and Adult Education. FNBE is directly accountable to the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The ESF unit within FNBE is in charge of:

- Implementation of project application procedures and selection of projects
- Monitoring and supervision of project activities
- Dissemination of good practice
- Promotion of networked cooperation between projects

“Driving Change through Entrepreneurship Education and Competence” is one of the five National Development Programmes funded by FNBE with leverage from ESF. It aims to:

1. Promote teachers’ and principals’ competence in entrepreneurship education
2. Create regional networks across school boundaries, comprising different stakeholders
3. Build learning pathways supporting business and entrepreneurial competence from pre-primary to higher education
4. Develop learning environments and teaching materials familiarising learners with business activities and increasing action-based learning for individuals and groups

A steering group set up at the Ministry of Education oversees the development of the National Programme. FNBE manages ESF money and deals directly with project promoters. FNBE favours large-scale, ambitious projects with potential to improve



national core curriculum and inform future policies. Each project is allocated roughly 1 million € and is developed in 3 years.

Throughout 2007-2013 FNBE has opened 2 application periods. Project selection follows the principles of openness and transparency. Application must comply with general ESF requirements plus specific selection criteria for each Development Programme. Thirty two project proposals were submitted and seven were finally approved:

1. YES Centres. Regional resource centres for entrepreneurship education
2. NY (Young Enterprise). Private-led initiative that has become a solid part of schools' curricula
3. Measurement Tool for Entrepreneurship Education. University of Laapenranta. A self-assessment tool to diagnose teachers' pedagogical approaches to entrepreneurship education.
4. YVI. University of Turku. Developing Finnish Teacher Education through integrating entrepreneurship education as part of initial teacher training.
5. HOPE. Encouragement of business start-up in VET schools
6. Yrittäjyyskasvatuksen Polksu. Learning pathway supporting entrepreneurial competence across school boundaries.
7. Assembling project. Aalto University. Helsinki School of Economics. Collection and analysis of best pedagogical practices during period 2002-2010.

The profile of project promoters is diverse. Universities, regional development centres, private institutions. Projects receive up to 85% ESF funding and the rest is covered by municipalities.

## Some ESF entrepreneurship education projects coordinated by FNBE

### YES centres

YES centres provide practical services supporting entrepreneurship education for teaching staff from pre-primary to higher education. The service has been designed to provide easy and fast access to learning resources, research and best practices on entrepreneurship education. YES centres bring together teachers, entrepreneurs and other relevant stakeholders. Whereas most of them are located in a physical space some of them consist mainly of a travelling regional chief that provides support to schools.



Inspired by a Canadian initiative, the first YES centre was set up in Kokkola back in 2000 and the project has been scaled up with ESF support. Currently there are 17 YES centres in operation throughout the country under the umbrella of a recently registered YES association to coordinate network actions.

YES centres could be defined as action-oriented hubs for entrepreneurship education. YES activities include:

- Local and national training events for teachers
- Reinforcement of school-business cooperation
- Development of teaching resources and curricular content together with teachers
- Exchange and dissemination of entrepreneurship education resources developed at regional or national level.
- Service of Junior Achievement-Young Enterprise Finland.

Four catalogues are published every year following a simple colour code.

- Yellow: Overview of recent research and teaching resources.
- Green: Compendium of Best Practices across regions.
- Red: Compendium of best practices on School-Business cooperation
- Purple: Guidelines and practical examples to embed Entrepreneurship Education in different subjects.

YES centres figure prominently in the projected state of affairs as described in the Guidelines for Entrepreneurship Education. Thus, in 2015 these regional resource centres are expected to reassert their position and cover the whole country. This is a good example of scaling up and effective use of ESF funds to inform future policy. Once ESF funding is discontinued YES centres costs will be assumed by municipalities thus securing sustainability.

**2008-2011**

<http://www.yes-keskus.fi>

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### **Measurement Tool for Entrepreneurship Education**

Lappeenranta University of Technology coordinates this 4-year development project started in 2008. The project seeks to design a self-assessment tool for teachers to prompt a reflection on the extent to which they daily teaching practice promotes entrepreneurial skills and attitudes. Baseline research concluded teachers were confused about the aims and practices of Entrepreneurship Education. The





measurement tool is expected to strengthen teacher's role as learners of Entrepreneurship Education.

The tool is a web-based survey ([www.lut.fi/entre](http://www.lut.fi/entre)) and is divided into 5 broad categories:

- Entrepreneurship & Entrepreneurship Education
- Pedagogical solutions
- Operating culture
- Learning environments
- Operation in networks

It takes approximately 15 minutes to fill the questionnaire. Questions deal mainly with pedagogical issues. For instance, teachers are asked to look back to the last six months and think about how often they have used different methodologies. Teachers' input is automatically processed and a feedback e-mail is sent back containing links and tips to improve teaching.

Research is an integral part of the project and together with users' tests and feedback has contributed to fine-tune the tool. The tool will be launched nationally in 2011. Joined up approach and synergies among projects have been identified as one of the main strengths of National Development Programmes. In this particular case, the Lappeenranta University of Technology has trained YES centres staff to implement the tool in order to facilitate widespread implementation of the tool next autumn.

**2008-2012**

<http://www.lut.fi/entre>

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#### **YVI. Virtual learning environment and entrepreneurship education in initial teacher training.**

YVI is a nationwide, multidisciplinary research and development project coordinated by the Teacher Training School of Turku University. Twenty-six different partners are involved in this project comprising Teacher Training Schools, Departments of Teacher Education, Universities, VET schools, business organizations and regional and national authorities.

YVI intends to generate a virtual learning environment of entrepreneurship education that acts as a one-stop shop, a reference point for teacher educators willing to develop the pedagogical aspects of entrepreneurship education. Teaching materials will be categorized according to school level.



At present Entrepreneurship Education is only compulsory in two teacher training centres. By the year 2013, YVI project aims to have it embedded as part of all teacher education courses. The learning environment will facilitate integration of entrepreneurship in strategies and curricula through joined up planning, implementation and evaluation. By the same token, networking and multidisciplinary research will be strengthened.

Seamless collaboration and support between projects could be again highlighted. YVI Learning Environment is being used to disseminate the Measurement Tool for Entrepreneurship Education and local YES centre provides a valuable input to the actions developed by Teacher Training Institute at University of Turku.

**2010-2013**

<http://www.yvi.fi>

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Some other interesting projects in progress funded by FNBE with leverage from ESF will further enrich this picture. This is the case of the Assembling Project, a mapping of 150 best pedagogical practices in entrepreneurship education from 2000 to 2010 currently developed by Aalto University School of Economics. Results will be ready by spring 2012.



## Key learning points

The national development programme “Driving Change through Entrepreneurship Education and Competence” led by FNBE provides a general framework and a clear set of priorities. FNBE directs ESF funding to large scale, strategic and ambitious 3-year projects that have a direct impact in the design and implementation of national core curriculum. It can be said that these projects act as trailblazers that will inform future policies on the educational arena.

Concentrating funding on large projects is seen as a more effective way of investing resources and securing scalability and impact. This is certainly a move away from the “let a thousand flowers bloom” strategy that characterises other funding streams such as the Lifelong Learning Programme. The tricky issue of overlapping funding streams for entrepreneurship education is out of the question in Finland. ESF leverage is mainly used to develop strategic goals at national level that are aligned with priorities contained in broader policy documents such as the “Guidelines for Entrepreneurship Education”.

Coordinated efforts to push forward the entrepreneurship education agenda have first and foremost concentrated on teachers. Analyzing teachers’ perceptions through research paved the way to design strategies aimed at positioning entrepreneurship higher up in the list of priorities. The review of the national development programme gives us a flavour of the potential of ESF leverage to improve entrepreneurship education in what represents a thoughtful and carefully orchestrated strategy at national level. The self-diagnostic tool, YES regional resource centres, YVI initial teacher training and online learning environment represent some of the elements of a full package of measures that support teachers in that transition to a new culture of learning and teaching.

As it has been earlier noted in this report, FNBE, as the umbrella organization encourages cross-pollination among projects thus securing a joined up approach and good dissemination and mainstreaming.

Pedagogical research is a built-in feature in all ESF entrepreneurship education projects. In this sense, a growing body of evidence-based research will support efficient and effective decision making.

Entrepreneurship education is at the heart of the reforms needed in Europe for the future. The combination of entrepreneurship and education is highlighted both in the Europe 2020 strategy and in the new European employment guidelines. Thus entrepreneurship education must be one of the key elements to secure smart and inclusive growth for Europe



Although entrepreneurship education is currently being financed with ESF funds in some regions and Member States, there is a strong need to reinforce this option in the next programming period. Finland focuses on improving the knowledge and skills of teaching staff by promoting entrepreneurship, a goal completely relevant and compliant with the scope of ESF policy. We hope the Finland experience inspires other Member States and regions to open up funding possibilities for entrepreneurship education projects within the framework of ESF 2014-2020 programming period.

## Contact

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## Reference documents

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- Baseline study on enterprise education. COPIE2. 2009
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