

# Background Information:

## Higher Education System in Finland



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# Higher Education System in Finland

## I. General Characteristics

<b>Population</b>	
Total population (1.1.2013) (million) <sup>1</sup>	5.43
Population density (2013) (persons per square kilometre) <sup>2</sup>	17.9
<b>Population Structure (2013) (share of total population %)<sup>3</sup></b>	
0-14 years	16.4
15-24 years	12.2
25-49 years	31.6
50-64 years	21.0
65 years and older	18.8
<b>GDP</b>	
GDP per capita in PPS (2013), EU 28 = 100 <sup>4</sup>	113
GDP year-on-year growth rate (2013) <sup>5</sup>	-1.3
<b>Education (2012) (All levels)<sup>6</sup></b>	
Enrolment	
Total (ISCED 0-6)	1,394,613
Tertiary Level of Education (ISCED 5-6)	308,924
<b>Tertiary Education</b>	
Population aged 25-64 years with tertiary education (2012) (%) <sup>7</sup>	40.0
Population aged 30 – 34 years with tertiary education (2012) (%) <sup>7</sup>	46.0
Public expenditure on tertiary education (percentage of GDP) (2011) <sup>8</sup>	1.9

## 2. Types of Higher Education Institutions

Higher education in Finland is offered by 14 public universities and 24 universities of applied sciences (polytechnics)<sup>9</sup> under the branch of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Thus, the Finnish higher education system has a binary structure. Additionally, university level higher

<sup>1</sup> European Commission. (2013). *Eurostat Compact Guides: Basic Figures on the EU, Winter 2013/2014 Edition*. Luxembourg: Publications office of the European Union.

<sup>2</sup> Eurostat. (2013). *Population density*. Retrieved from <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tps00003&plugin=0>

<sup>3</sup> Eurostat. (2013). *People by age group*. Retrieved from <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=tps00010&language=en>

<sup>4</sup> Eurostat. (2013). *GDP per capita in PPS*. Retrieved from <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tec00114>

<sup>5</sup> Eurostat. (2013). *Real GDP growth rate*. Retrieved from <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tec00115>

<sup>6</sup> Eurostat (2014). *Students by ISCED level, age and sex*. Retrieved from [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=educ\\_enr1rt&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=educ_enr1rt&lang=en)

<sup>7</sup> OECD. (2014). *Education at a glance 2014: OECD Indicators*, pp. 44. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/edu/Education-at-a-Glance-2014.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> OECD. (2014). *Education at a glance 2014: OECD Indicators*, pp. 232. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/edu/Education-at-a-Glance-2014.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Eurydice. (2014). *Finland: Types of Higher Education Institutions*. Retrieved from: [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Finland:Types\\_of\\_Higher\\_Education\\_Institutions](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Finland:Types_of_Higher_Education_Institutions)

education is offered by the National Defence College, Åland University of Applied Sciences, and the Police University College.

The universities in Finland primarily focus on academic research and offer degrees in first (Bachelor), second (Master), and third (Doctoral) cycle qualifications. They are independent legal entities having autonomy in management and decision making. A major portion of their funding (64 %) <sup>10</sup> comes through the state.

All 24 polytechnics were undergoing reform at the time of the EUROSTUDENT survey and they became independent legal entities in 2015 with significant public funding. Polytechnics are multi-field institutions providing vocational higher education and maintaining close links to business, industry, and the service sector. Unlike universities, the polytechnics focus on professional and application based skills and offer degrees in first and second cycle qualifications. The study structure of Master courses at the polytechnics is flexible and allows students to work alongside their studies.

### 3. Study Structure

Finland joined the Bologna process in 1999 and introduced qualifications compatible with the Bologna three sequential levels in 2005 <sup>11</sup>. Higher education attainment and student's performance are measured in credit points compatible with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).

#### First cycle qualification (Bachelor)

- The first cycle qualification includes Bachelor programmes, with study duration of three to four years. The duration of the course varies according to the type of higher education institution. For instance, the length of a Bachelor programme at a university is generally three years whereas at the polytechnics the study duration varies between three and four years since these also include a mandatory traineeship.
- The workload associated with a Bachelor degree at a Finnish university is 180 to 210 ECTS credits, whereas a polytechnic Bachelor degree generally requires 210 to 220 ECTS credits, but for several degrees 270 ECTS.

#### Second cycle qualification (Master)

- The study duration of a second cycle Master degree is two years at a university and one to one and a half years at a polytechnic.
- The workload associated with a Master degree is typically 120 ECTS credits, with the exceptions of degrees in psychology, music, veterinary medicine, dentistry, and medicine where the programmes are more extensive. A Master degree at a polytechnic institution requires 60 to 90 ECTS credits.

#### Third cycle qualification (Licentiate and Doctoral)

##### Licentiate

- The workload associated with a Licentiate varies between 300 and 360 ECTS credits.

<sup>10</sup> Eurydice. (2014). *Finland: Types of Higher Education Institutions*. Retrieved from:

[https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Finland:Types\\_of\\_Higher\\_Education\\_Institutions](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Finland:Types_of_Higher_Education_Institutions)

<sup>11</sup> CIMO. (2014). *Objectives of the Bologna process and Finland*. Retrieved from

[http://www.cimo.fi/services/services\\_by\\_sector/higher\\_education/the\\_bologna\\_process\\_in\\_finland/objectives\\_of\\_the\\_bologna\\_process\\_and\\_finland](http://www.cimo.fi/services/services_by_sector/higher_education/the_bologna_process_in_finland/objectives_of_the_bologna_process_and_finland)

## Doctoral

- A Doctoral degree is awarded on the basis of a Doctoral thesis and a public defence of the thesis.
- The majority of the universities host a graduate school with Doctoral programmes.

## 4. Admission Requirements<sup>12 13 14</sup>

The entry requirements are similar across both higher education sectors in Finland. The national higher education policy is grounded in the principle of equal access in terms of both educational background and funding of studies. The eligibility criteria to study at an institution of higher education (both for lower and higher university degree) include the Finnish matriculation examination, vocational qualification, or a relevant foreign qualification. Same eligibility criteria apply to the polytechnic sector as well. However, the admission criteria and student intake are decided upon by the higher education institutions themselves according to the target number of degrees. The target number of degrees is determined between the Ministry of Education and Culture and the higher education institutions based on a quantitative anticipation of educational needs. In Finnish higher education it is a common practice to have entrance examinations especially at the undergraduate entry level. At the universities, a student is admitted to study for both a Bachelor and Master level degree, for either of these, or for a postgraduate degree. The polytechnics do the selection for both of the levels separately.

There are no separate entry requirements for Master programmes after the students have completed their Bachelor degrees; however, at the polytechnics a Bachelor degree and three years of work experience are required. Admission to a programme leading to a Doctoral degree requires a Master degree or a corresponding foreign degree.

## 5. Enrolment Levels

Figure 1 shows trends in enrolment levels (ISCED 5, 5B and 6, ISCED 97) in Finland between 2003 and 2012. The student numbers in Tertiary Type 5 increased between 2003 and 2008, decreased slightly in 2009 and have increased since then. Students' enrolments in Tertiary Type 5B declined in 2004 and have remained stable since then. Level 5A includes both the university and polytechnic degrees.

Figure 1: Trends in enrolment levels

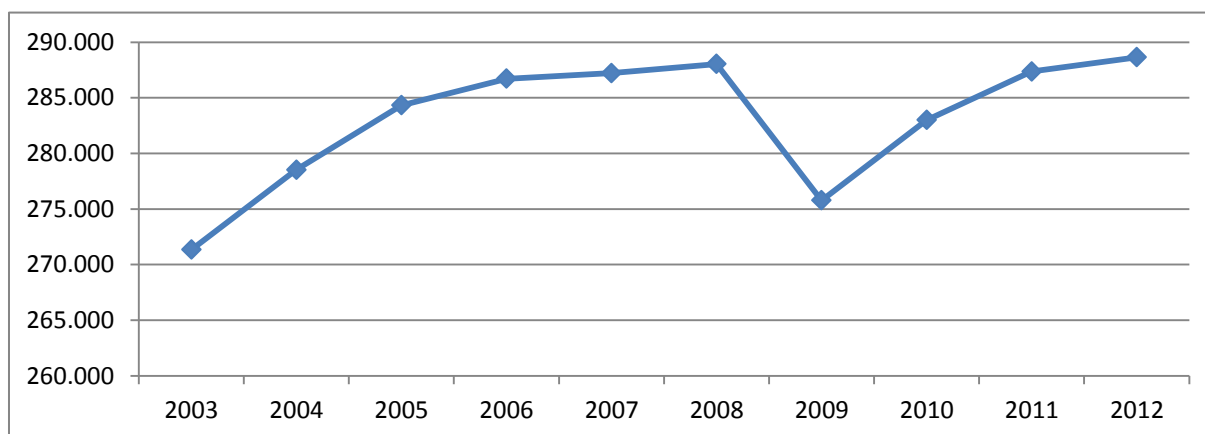
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<sup>12</sup> Eurydice. (2014). *Bachelor*. Retrieved from <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Finland:Bachelor>

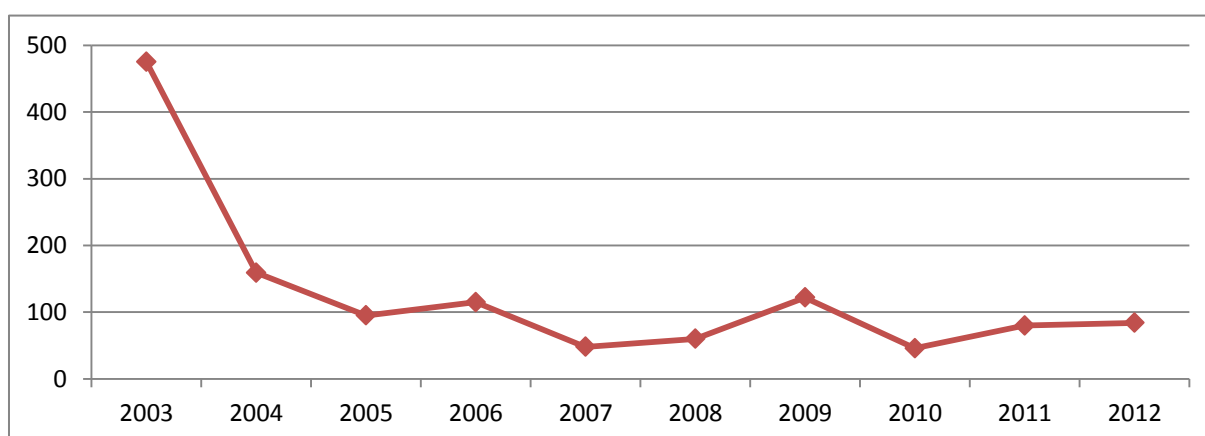
<sup>13</sup> Eurydice. (2014). *Second cycle programmes*. Retrieved from [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Finland:Second\\_Cycle\\_Programmes](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Finland:Second_Cycle_Programmes)

<sup>14</sup> Eurydice. (2014). *Third cycle (PhD) programmes*. Retrieved from [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Finland:Third\\_Cycle\\_%28PhD%29\\_Programmes](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Finland:Third_Cycle_%28PhD%29_Programmes)

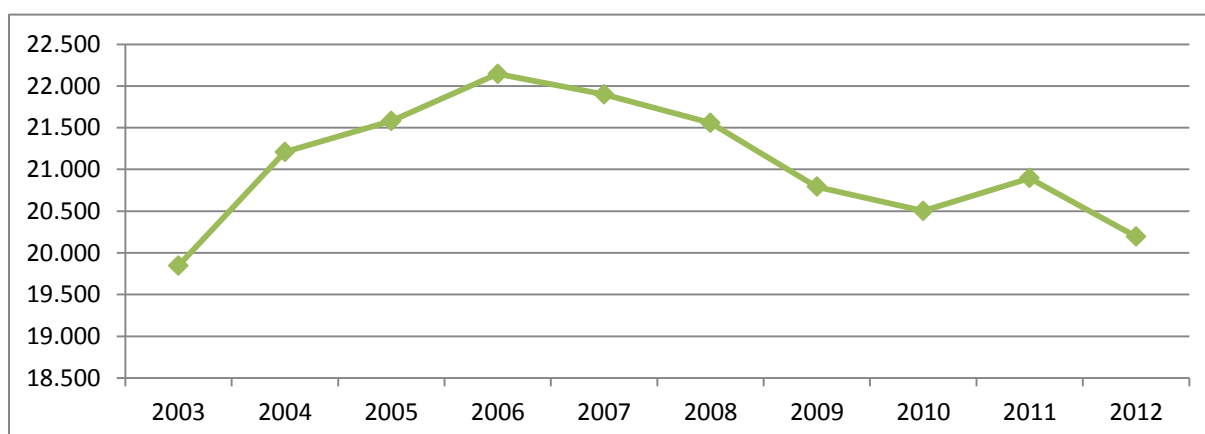
a) Tertiary Type 5A



b) Tertiary Type 5B



c) Tertiary Type 6



**Data source:** Eurostat (2014), *Students by ISCED level age and sex*, European Commission.  
[http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=educ\\_enlr1t1&lang=en#](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=educ_enlr1t1&lang=en#)

## 6. Registration and/or Tuition Fees

There is no tuition fee in Finland for Bachelor or Master programmes. However, from 2010/2014, a tuition fee (annual average 8,000 Euro<sup>15</sup>) trial period in English-language Master programmes for non-EU students was introduced.

## 7. Financial Support for Students

Financial aid is available for all Finnish students and is provided in the form of study grants, housing supplements, and student loans. Financial aid is paid for a limited period the amount of which depends on the student's age, form of housing, their income, as well as the level of education. Students can also apply for a bank loan with the government guarantee for study loans. The loan is guaranteed by the government but has to be repaid after graduation. Higher education students also receive support in the form of meal subsidies. The third cycle funding is diverse: many students are employed directly by the universities, Doctoral studies are also funded through employment outside of the university or with other resources.

## 8. Note on the Finnish data provided for EUROSTUDENT V

At Finnish universities, a common practice is for a student to be admitted to study for both a Bachelor and Master level degree. Bachelor students at universities might not have considered Master studies as a continuation of studies.

Adult students and foreign students were included in Finnish sample for the first times in EUROSTUDENT V. Results are not comparable with the previous rounds of EUROSTUDENT because of these changes in the sample.

This report is based on the following sources:

CIMO. (2014): *The Bologna Process in Finland*. Retrieved from

[http://www.cimo.fi/services/services\\_by\\_sector/higher\\_education/the\\_bologna\\_process\\_in\\_finland](http://www.cimo.fi/services/services_by_sector/higher_education/the_bologna_process_in_finland)

Eurydice. (2014). *Overview Finland*. Retrieved from

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Finland:Overview>

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

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from <http://www.studyinfinland.fi/>

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<sup>15</sup> Study in Finland. (2014). *Tuition and Scholarships*. Retrieved from

[http://www.studyinfinland.fi/tuition\\_and\\_scholarships/tuition\\_fees/trial\\_period\\_2010\\_2014](http://www.studyinfinland.fi/tuition_and_scholarships/tuition_fees/trial_period_2010_2014)