

# Transitions from Initial Vocational Education and Training Qualifications to Working Life in Finland – Observations and Reflections from an International Expert Panel

## 1 Introduction

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) carried out an evaluation in 2024–2026 on employment outcomes after initial vocational education and training (IVET) qualifications in Finland. The aim of the evaluation was to produce information on the current state of employment after vocational education, how opportunities for employment can be supported during education, and what kinds of development measures are needed in VET to promote employment. In addition, the evaluation aimed to identify good practices at both national and international level for promoting employment.

The evaluation involved both a national evaluation group and an international expert panel. The task of the international expert panel was to examine Finnish IVET in an international context and to identify the strengths and areas for development of IVET from the perspective of promoting employment. In addition, the panel was tasked with highlighting good practices from other countries in supporting the promotion of employment. The panel consisted of the following members:

- Christian Helms Jørgensen, professor, MSc (Sociology) & PhD, professor emeritus, Department of People and Technology, Roskilde University, Denmark
- Rita Kask-Klesmann, adviser, Area of Vocational Education and Training, Vocational Education and Skills Policy Department, Ministry of Education and Research, Estonia
- Johanna Schumacher, investigator, Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education, Sweden
- Rolf van der Velden, professor emeritus, Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market (ROA), Maastricht University, the Netherlands

The panel received background documentation from FINEEC (see Appendix 1 for an overview), had several online meetings to discuss the materials with FINEEC staff and had an online meeting with members of the national evaluation panel (see Appendix 2) on 3 December 2025. On 29–30 January 2026 the panel was in Helsinki for onsite interviews with several policymakers and stakeholders (see Appendix 3). The panel has prepared this report through a

series of online meetings and a process of commenting on and refining a common online text available to all panel members.

The members of the panel are aware that they are presenting an outsider's view on the Finnish IVET system. Although this has some advantages in terms of bringing a new perspective, it also comes with limitations as the experts do not have the deep inside knowledge that national experts have. The conclusions and recommendations in this report should therefore be regarded as food for thought, intended to offer ideas and perspectives to support reflection and the further development of Finnish IVET to strengthen employment outcomes.

The experts would like to thank the staff of FINEEC (Raisa Hievanen, Kirsi Hiltunen, and Jani Goman), for their excellent support and the interviewees for their open and thoughtful answers during the interviews. Any mistakes in the current report remain our responsibility.

The outline of the report is as follows. Section 2 presents the problem statement that guided our review. Section 3 provides a more general overview of factors affecting the labour market position of IVET graduates. Section 4 discusses the role of work-based learning and Section 5 the role of transitions to the Universities of Applied Sciences (UASs) in terms of graduate unemployment. Section 6 addresses other reflections regarding IVET in Finland.