

# SUMMARY

## The advanced syllabus in the German language

A total of 1,010 pupils from 76 Finnish-speaking schools participated in the assessment of learning outcomes for the advanced syllabus (A syllabus) in the German language. Girls accounted for over a half (57.5 per cent) of pupils in the sample, boys for 42.5 per cent. Finnish was the mother tongue of 98 per cent of the pupils, and the home language for 95 per cent of them.

The assessment measured four language skill sets. Listening comprehension was measured with a total of 24 items containing 12 multiple choice questions and 12 open-ended questions (answers given in Finnish). Reading comprehension was measured with a total of 25 items containing 12 multiple choice questions and 13 open-ended questions (answers given in Finnish). In addition, there were four tasks evaluating speaking skills: one narrative task in the form of a monologue, two dialogues involving everyday situations and one conversational task. Productive skills in written language were assessed using two tasks of different lengths.

### 1. Pupils' language skills by skill set

In listening comprehension, pupils demonstrated **good** achievement of the target proficiency levels. The level of good performance, A2.2, was achieved by the majority of pupils (44 per cent).

At this level, the pupils are able to handle concrete, everyday situations using key vocabulary and structures, provided that they are spoken to using standard language and at a low speed.

In reading comprehension, the target proficiency level of good performance, A2.2, was exceeded by 64 per cent of pupils, by at least one step on the proficiency scale. This demonstrates **excellent** achievement of the objectives.

The proficiency level achieved by the majority of pupils enables them to read various types of texts dealing with familiar topics and understand their main ideas and key words.

In speaking, a total of 59 per cent of pupils reached the target level of good performance, A2.1 or higher, demonstrating **good** achievement of objectives on average. At the level of good performance, A2.1, language users can describe their family and friends in a few short sentences in German, and are able to handle simple social interaction and the most common customer service situations in German, using simple basic vocabulary and structures.

In writing too, pupils demonstrated **good** achievement of the target proficiency levels, although by only a slight margin. The majority of pupils, 52 per cent, reached the target proficiency level A2.1 or higher. At the level of good performance, A2.1, the language user is able to cope with the most routine everyday situations that involve writing, using concrete basic vocabulary and structures.

All language skill sets were strongly correlated, with the strongest correlation being found between listening and reading comprehension skills.

While girls performed better than boys in comprehension skills, both demonstrated, on average, **good** achievement of the target proficiency level for listening comprehension. In listening comprehension assignments, boys were able to correctly complete 51 per cent of the items on average, while girls correctly completed 58 per cent of the items on average. On average, both girls and boys demonstrated excellent achievement of the target proficiency levels for **reading comprehension**. However, a statistically significant share of girls exceeded the target level in comparison to boys. In addition, among girls the average percentage of correctly completed items (46 per cent) was five percentage points higher than among boys. **In speaking**, girls demonstrated **good** achievement of the target level, while boys showed only **satisfactory** achievement. When comparing the performances of boys and girls, the difference in spoken German skills was statistically significant with girls performing better.

**In writing assignments**, a good level of performance was achieved by 40 per cent of boys and 62 per cent of girls. Girls therefore demonstrated **good** achievement of speaking skill objectives, whereas boys showed only **satisfactory** achievement. When comparing the performances of boys and girls, the difference in spoken German skills was statistically significant with girls performing better.

In all skill sets, the **parents' level of education** was correlated to pupils' performance; the higher the parents' level of education, the better the pupils' performance. The differences were smallest in speaking and greatest in reading comprehension and writing.

Statistically significant differences were found across all skill sets between **pupils who had applied for general upper secondary education** and those applying for vocational education and training; those applying for general upper secondary education performed better.

Studying of German as the first foreign language, in accordance with the **A1 syllabus** (advanced syllabus starting in grade three), was linked to better than

average results in all skill sets. Pupils who spent a maximum of half an hour on their **homework** before their next German lesson achieved better learning outcomes in all skill sets, in comparison to those who did not complete their homework.

In comprehension skills, the level of good performance was reached by pupils who had achieved a grade of 6 in German, in speaking by pupils who had achieved a grade of 7 and in writing by pupils who had achieved a grade of 8. The grade pupils had received in German was linked to their performance in assignments measuring all skill sets; the strongest relationship was found between the grade and **writing** skills.

**In regional terms**, the best results, on average, were found in **South-West Finland** and the weakest in Northern Finland and Lapland. Differences between various **types of municipality** were detected in all skill sets, with the exception of writing. On average, the best results were achieved in urban municipalities and the weakest in densely populated municipalities.

Teaching practices favoured by teachers can be divided into the following categories: authentic and independent use of the language; practising of spoken language skills and use of ICT; independent practising of spoken language skills; authentic practising and independent work. The most common teaching practices employed by teachers were German spoken by the teacher in class and encouragement to use German; use of spoken exercises from the textbook and provision of feedback; constructing one's own sentences by speaking and completing grammar exercises on a computer. Homework was most often to be completed in writing. Use of ICT was limited and pupils were rarely given the opportunity to plan and evaluate their own work. Teachers of German placed somewhat greater value on linguistic, strategic and communicative skills than on general cross-curricular themes. The most common assessment practices used by teachers were written vocabulary tests and independent writing assignments included in tests. Written tests were considered the main basis for determining grades.

## **2. Practices promoting learning at school and outside school**

Pupils' learning practices can be divided into five categories, the most common practices being spoken exercises from the textbook completed in pairs; written vocabulary tests; regular completion of homework in German; and watching German-language films or video clips. While independent use of spoken language and self-motivated work by pupils were realised to a **satisfactory** degree, the use of authentic material, use of ICT and independent working methods,

and use of the German language in one's free time were at a **poor** level, based on this survey.

In comparison to boys, girls engaged more often in all practices promoting the learning of German. The statistically significant differences were small, however. Girls also completed their homework more regularly than boys.

Although pupils whose parents had a higher level of education used somewhat more versatile learning practices, the differences were small. Pupils whose parents had completed the matriculation examination completed their homework more regularly than pupils whose parents had not completed the matriculation examination. Those pupils planning to enter general upper secondary education used all learning practices in more cases than those aiming for vocational education and training. The biggest differences were found in independent work.

On average, those who studied German as their A1 language used all practices slightly more often in comparison to pupils studying German as an A2 language. Also, the higher the grade received by the pupil, the more versatile his or her learning practices were. The greatest differences were found in independent work and the use of German in one's free time.

The longer the pupils spent on German homework, the more versatile were the practices they used to learn German. This applies to cases where the time spent on homework was a maximum of one hour.

### **3. Pupils' opinions of the German language and the study of German**

In light of the sum of averages, all of the opinions held by pupils on the German language and study of German were **neutral**. The pupils were most positive about the usefulness of German. On average, girls expressed more positive opinions about the German language and study of German than boys. Girls also had slightly more confidence in themselves as learners, found the subject to be more useful, and liked the German language more than boys did.

Furthermore, pupils whose parents had both completed the matriculation examination held the most positive opinions in all respects.

Pupils who were planning to enter general upper secondary education held more positive views of their own language proficiency, felt German to be more useful and liked it more than their peers who were planning to enter vocational education and training.

Those who studied German as their first foreign language felt they had better language skills and liked the German language more than those studying in accordance with the A2 (advanced syllabus starting in grade five) syllabus. In practice, the detected differences were small but consistent.

The higher the grade received for German in the pupils' latest school report card, the more useful they thought the German language to be, the better they liked the language and the better they thought their language skills to be. A statistically significant relationship was found between each category of opinions and the grade received in German. Pupils who had received lower grades also felt that German was a useful language. The more time pupils reported that they spend on German homework, the more positive their opinions were in all of the aforementioned respects.

#### **4. Relationships between language skills, learning practices and opinions, and explanation models**

The variety of practices used by the pupils had a statistically significant relationship with all skill sets; however, in practice these relationships were moderate at best. The practices that were found to improve language skills the most were independent work and use of the German language during one's free time.

Regular completion of German exercises improved performance in all skill sets, especially with respect to attaining the B levels on the European framework.

Of the various opinion categories, the pupils' opinion of their own language skills showed the strongest relationship with the various skill sets: the better the pupils thought their language skills to be, the better they actually were. Furthermore, liking German and finding it useful correlated to a better performance in assignments measuring language skills.

The factors best explaining performance across all skill sets were the parents' level of education, the pupils' plans for further study, regular completion of exercises, use of the German language in one's free time and the pupils' own conceptions of themselves as learners.

#### **5. School-level results**

The greatest differences in performance between schools were found in speaking; with regard to other skill sets, the differences were approximately equal. The parents' level of education explained reading comprehension skills the most and speaking skills the least. When examining the results among pupils who had achieved a grade of 8 in German, the schools exceeded the level of

good performance in reading comprehension and achieved the same level, on average, in speaking and writing.

## **6. Comparison of results**

In the comparison based on benchmark items, performance among pupils following the A syllabus in the German language had deteriorated slightly since 2002. Pupils' opinions have remained approximately the same, although they felt German to be slightly less useful than in 2002. Differences between schools have increased somewhat since 2002 in all comparable skills sets, with the greatest differences being found in listening comprehension.

When comparing the advanced (A) and short (B) syllabuses, pupils following the A syllabus managed to correctly complete a higher percentage of tasks in all assignments common to both in the assessment. However, pupils studying in accordance with the B syllabus expressed more positive views of the German language and their own skills, and achieved and exceeded their own target levels by a clearer margin than pupils studying in accordance with the A syllabus. Writing proved the most difficult skill for pupils studying in accordance with both syllabuses.

## **7. Development suggestions**

The quality of school instruction and assignments can be improved by integrating the various skill sets, thereby supporting the development of speaking skills in particular. Assignments that inspire pupils to engage in regular study should include authentic material and situations where the language is used, both at school and outside school, alongside the use of ICT and planning of one's own work. Information on the demand for German language skills and support for German studies should be particularly targeted at boys, pupils whose parents have not completed the matriculation examination, and pupils who are planning to enter vocational education and training. Assessment should be based equally on both spoken and written skills and work, with each component accounting for a clearly defined share of the grade. International cooperation and networking among pupils and teachers, as well as the use of ICT and social media, create motivating and authentic experiences for learning the German language. The European Language Portfolio provides help in implementing all of these measures.

## The short syllabus B in the German language

A total of 1,349 pupils from 108 schools participated in the assessment of learning outcomes for the B syllabus (short syllabus starting in grade eight) in the German language. Of these schools, 89 were Finnish-speaking and 19 Swedish-speaking. 80 per cent of the pupils went to a Finnish-speaking school and 20 per cent to a Swedish-speaking school. Slightly less than two thirds (62.3 per cent) of the pupils were girls and slightly over a third (37.7 per cent) were boys.

The assessment measured four language skill sets. Listening comprehension was measured with a total of 25 items containing 12 multiple choice questions and 13 open-ended questions (answers given in Finnish). Reading comprehension was measured with a total of 24 items containing 12 multiple choice questions and 12 open-ended questions (answers given in Finnish). There were four tasks evaluating speaking skills: one narrative task in the form of a monologue and three dialogues involving everyday situations. Productive skills in written language were assessed using two tasks of different lengths.

### 1. Pupils' language skills by skill set

In listening comprehension, 19 per cent of the pupils reached the target levels A.1.2 – A1.3 and the majority (78.1 per cent) exceeded them by at least one step on the proficiency scale. This demonstrates **excellent** achievement of the objectives. In practice, the majority of pupils were able to understand simple speech or follow a conversation in concrete everyday situations, dealing with topics that were of immediate importance to the pupil.

In reading comprehension, the target proficiency level A1.2 – A1.3 was achieved by 12.1 per cent of pupils, with 79.9 per cent of pupils exceeding this level by at least one step. With this skill set too, objectives were achieved to an **excellent** degree. The majority of pupils were able to understand simple texts containing the most common vocabulary. They were also able to acquire easy-to-predict everyday information from texts that were a few paragraphs long.

In spoken language skills, slightly less than a third of pupils reached the target levels A1.1.–A1.2 and a little under a third (65.4 per cent) exceeded the target level by at least one step. This means the target proficiency levels were achieved to an **excellent** degree. The majority of pupils were able to briefly introduce themselves and tell about their friends and family, as well as handle simple social interaction and the most common customer service situations.

In writing skills, the target proficiency levels A1.1–A1.2 were reached by 46.7 per cent of the pupils and exceeded by 47.3 per cent, which demonstrates **good**

achievement of the target levels. For the majority of pupils, their written German skills were sufficient for communicating immediate needs in short sentences and producing a few sentences that describe their friends and family. All language skill sets were strongly correlated, with the strongest correlation found between listening and reading comprehension skills.

Girls performed better than boys in listening comprehension. Although both girls and boys showed excellent achievement of the target proficiency levels, girls exceeded the target level more often than boys. On average, girls were able to complete a higher percentage of items in assignments measuring both comprehension skills.

Both girls and boys achieved the target levels for **speaking** skills to an excellent degree, i.e. the majority exceeded the target levels by at least one step on the proficiency scale. However, differences were detected at the lower and upper proficiency levels, with girls accounting for a larger share of pupils at the upper levels. Also with **writing** skills, girls demonstrated excellent achievement of the target levels, with the majority exceeding them by at least one step. Boys achieved the target levels to a **good** degree, i.e. the majority reached the target levels but did not exceed them. The differences between boys' and girls' performance were statistically significant in both speaking and writing.

The pupils' performance in all skill sets showed a statistically significant positive relationship with their **parents' level of education**. When comparing the results by **mother tongue**, pupils with Swedish as their mother tongue performed better in all skill sets than pupils with Finnish as their mother tongue. The target levels for comprehension skills were achieved to an excellent degree by both language groups. However, Swedish-speakers typically reached a higher level of proficiency than Finnish-speakers. The differences were greater in reading comprehension, with Finnish-speakers mostly reaching the level A2 and Swedish-speakers the level B1. Statistically significant differences were found across all skill sets between **pupils who had applied for general upper secondary education** and those who had applied for vocational education and training; those applying for general upper secondary education performed better. In **spoken** German skills, pupils applying for general upper secondary education demonstrated **excellent** achievement of the target levels A1.1–A1.2, while those applying for vocational education and training demonstrated **good** achievement. In **writing** skills too, pupils applying for general upper secondary education demonstrated excellent achievement and pupils applying for vocational education and training good achievement of the target levels A1.1–A1.2.



The **grade** pupils had received in German was linked to their performance in assignments measuring all skill sets; the strongest relationship was found between writing skills and the grade received. While a good level of performance in all skill sets was already achieved by pupils who had received the grade of 5, the upper target level for all skill sets was exceeded only by pupils who had achieved grades of 9 and 10. Pupils with a grade of 8 exceeded the target levels in all skill sets with the exception of writing. Pupils who spent a maximum of half an hour on their **homework** before their next German lesson achieved better learning outcomes in all skill sets, in comparison to those who did not complete their homework.

In **regional** comparisons, the best performance, on average, was found in **South-Western and Western Finland** and the poorest performance in Eastern Finland. **By municipality type**, pupils in densely populated municipalities performed best in listening comprehension and pupils in urban municipalities in reading comprehension.

When examining the results by the **school's language of instruction**, both language groups achieved the target levels for listening and reading comprehension to an excellent degree; however, Swedish-speaking schools performed better than Finnish-speaking ones. In listening comprehension, the pupils in Swedish-speaking schools correctly completed 60 per cent of the items on average, while in Finnish-speaking schools the completion rate was 50 per cent. Variability in performance was somewhat greater in Finnish-speaking schools. Both language groups demonstrated good attainment of the target levels for listening comprehension. In reading comprehension, the pupils in Swedish-speaking schools completed correctly 59 per cent of the items on average, while in Finnish-speaking schools the completion rate was 50 per cent. Variability in performance was greater in Finnish-speaking schools. Both Finnish- and Swedish-speaking schools demonstrated excellent attainment of the objectives set for spoken skills, with A1.3 being the most typical proficiency level achieved. Finnish-speaking schools attained the target levels for written skills to a good degree and Swedish-speaking schools to an excellent degree.

Practices reported by teachers can be divided into five main categories: authentic and independent use of the language, spoken exercises during lessons and use of ICT, independent work methods and self-motivated practising of grammar and vocabulary. In general, self-motivated practising of grammar and vocabulary was the most common practice used; however, it was also the one with the greatest variation among respondents. Spoken language exercises during lessons and use of ICT were the rarest practices.

The most common practices employed by teachers were encouragement to use the German language outside the school; information searches on the Internet and vocabulary practice on a computer; spoken language exercises in pairs using a textbook; and vocabulary practice by constructing one's own spoken sentences. It was discovered that pupils of teachers who favoured authentic and independent use of the language in their teaching understood spoken German better than others. The best performance in listening comprehension was noted among pupils of teachers who had assigned self-motivated grammar and vocabulary exercises. Authentic and independent use of the language and independent practising of vocabulary and grammar were also linked to better reading comprehension skills and writing skills in the German language.

The main basis for determining grades were written tests, followed by the pupil's effort and attitude and spoken and authentic use of the language. All of these aspects linked to the pupils' spoken skills in German. On average, teachers felt language skills to be the most important objective, followed by working and interaction skills and common cross-curricular themes and courage in self-expression.

The most popular **professional practices used by teachers** were obtaining teaching materials from the Internet and reading professional publications. International pupil and teacher exchanges were rare.

## **2. Practices promoting learning at school and outside school**

Learning practices used by pupils in school can be divided into five categories, the most common practices being independent writing assignments included in tests, spoken exercises from a textbook completed in pairs, and use of the German language by the teacher during lessons. Listening to German-language songs and watching films represented the use of ICT during lessons and in one's free time. Vocabulary tests were also common. Pupils completed their German homework with high regularity. While self-motivated practising of spoken language skills was at a satisfactory level, planning and evaluating one's own work, use of ICT and media and use of the German language in one's free time were at a poor level.

Girls more regularly completed their homework than boys. When compared by **mother tongue**, Finnish-speaking pupils used all of these learning practices slightly more often and completed their homework more regularly than Swedish-speaking pupils. **Pupils planning to apply for general upper secondary education** completed their homework more regularly than those planning to apply for vocational education and training, but no differences were detected in

other learning practices. Furthermore, no differences linked to the **parents' level of education** were found with respect to the versatility of learning practices used among pupils following the B syllabus in the German language. Pupils with a higher **grade** in German completed their homework more regularly than pupils with a poorer grade, and also used more versatile learning practices. In addition, the more **time the pupil spent on homework**, the more versatile the learning practices applied.

### 3. Pupils' opinions of the German language and the study of German

In light of the sum of averages, all of the opinions held by pupils on the German language and the study of German were **neutral**. Pupils had the most positive opinion about the usefulness of German. They felt that the grade they had achieved in German corresponded well with their skills, on average.

Girls expressed slightly more positive opinions about the German language and the study of German than did boys, but the differences were small. Girls also had slightly more faith in their own skills, found the subject to be more useful, and liked the German language more than boys did. The difference between girls' and boys' opinions on the appropriateness of their grade was statistically significant: while more than one out of ten boys found their grade to be too poor, among girls only 6 per cent held this opinion.

Pupils who spoke Swedish as their mother tongue thought they had somewhat better German language skills than pupils with Finnish as their mother tongue; in practice this difference was small, however. Nearly half (47.8 per cent) of pupils in Swedish-speaking schools and approximately a third of pupils (33.6 per cent) in Finnish-speaking schools said they enjoyed going to school.

Pupils whose parents had both completed the matriculation examination held the most positive opinions on all aspects. Pupils who were planning to enter general upper secondary education held more positive views of their own language proficiency, felt German to be more useful and liked it more than their peers who were planning to enter vocational education and training. In practice, differences in opinion linked to the parents' level of education and the pupils' plans for further study were small.

The higher the grade received for German in the pupils' latest school report card, the more useful they thought the German language to be, the better they liked the language and the better they thought their language skills to be. A statistically significant relationship was found between each category of opinions and the grade received in German. In addition, pupils who had received lower

grades felt German to be a useful language. The more time pupils reported that they spent on German homework, the more positive their opinions were in all of the aforementioned respects.

When compared by **region**, overall differences in the versatility of learning practices used were small; however, several practices were used somewhat more in Northern Finland, Lapland and Eastern Finland. Among pupils following the B syllabus for the German language, no differences were detected between various types of municipality. When comparing replies given by teachers and pupils, it was noted that teachers reported more frequent use of the various practices than students did.

#### **4. Relationships between language skills, learning practices and opinions, and explanation models**

With all skill sets, the best way to develop German language skills was to complete German exercises on a regular basis. For the rest of the learning practices, the relationships with language skills were weak.

Of the various opinion categories, the pupils' opinion of their own language proficiency showed the strongest relationship with the various skill sets: the better the pupils thought their language skills to be, the better they actually were. The strongest relationships were found between written skills (reading comprehension and writing) and pupils' opinions of their own proficiency. In addition, a statistically significant relationship was identified between the various language skill sets and the pupils' opinions on the usefulness of German and how much they enjoyed German as a subject. However, these relationships were weaker in general, and in practice some of them were weak.

Pupils' opinions on the appropriateness of the grade they had received were linked to their performance across all skill sets. Those with the poorest performance thought their grades to be too poor and those with the best performance thought them to be too good. The pupils' opinions on the German language and the study of German were aligned with their conceptions on the school's quality characteristics (equality, school satisfaction, safety, cooperation between home and school and international connections).

A statistically significant relationship was observed between regular completion of exercises and the pupil's opinion regarding their grade. Those who completed their homework on a regular basis felt their grades were the most appropriate. Differences in listening and reading comprehension skills between those planning to enter general upper secondary education and those planning to enter vocational education and training were statistically significant in the case of

both boys and girls, with those planning for general upper secondary education performing better. A statistically significant relationship was found between the parents' level of education (pupils whose parents had completed the matriculation examination performed better) and girls' performance across all skill sets and boys' listening comprehension skills. Girls and boys who spoke Swedish as their mother tongue achieved better results across all skill sets in comparison to Finnish-speakers.

For both girls and boys, the relationship between the grade received in German and proficiency demonstrated in all skill sets was statistically significant. However, grades in German were not a very good indicator of the various levels of language proficiency in both girls and boys. The more time both girls and boys spent on homework, the more their language skills improved. Girls in Southern Finland had better listening comprehension skills than girls in other regions, while boys in Northern Finland showed poorer performance in reading comprehension than boys living in other regions. Girls living in cities and densely populated areas performed better in comprehension and writing skills than girls in rural areas.

For all skill sets, the background factors explaining the pupils' performance **the most** were their **gender, mother tongue, their parents' level of education and their plans for further study**. In girls, gender was the factor explaining spoken skills the most and comprehension skills the least. Mother tongue (Swedish-speakers performing better) explained reading comprehension skills, the parents' level of education (pupils with parents who had completed the matriculation examination performing better) explained spoken skills and the pupils' plans for further study (pupils planning to enter general upper secondary education) explained writing skills the most. In addition, factors explaining some sub-skills included independent practice of spoken language and the use of media in studying, as well as the pupil's opinions of their own language proficiency and the usefulness of the German language.

## **5. Comparison of the assessments and syllabuses**

Pupils studying German in accordance with the B syllabus demonstrated higher attainment of their respective target levels than pupils following the A syllabus. The share of pupils who failed to reach the target level was the highest in assignments measuring writing skills under the A syllabus (48 per cent) and the smallest in assignments measuring listening comprehension under the B syllabus (3 per cent). The target level was reached most often in listening comprehension under the A syllabus (44 per cent) and least often in reading comprehension under the B syllabus (12 per cent). The share of pupils who exceeded the target level was the highest in reading comprehension under

the B syllabus and lowest in writing under the A syllabus. On average, writing proved to be the most difficult skill for pupils studying in accordance with both syllabuses. Variation between schools explained a larger share of the differences in performance under the A syllabus than under the B syllabus. The parents' level of education explained the largest share of the variation between schools under both syllabuses.

On average, pupils studying in accordance with the B syllabus expressed more positive opinions about the German language and the study of German than pupils studying in accordance with the A syllabus. The greatest differences were found in their opinions regarding their own proficiency and the smallest differences in how much they liked the German language.

## **6. School-level results**

In listening comprehension skills, seven schools out of 108 schools (6.5 per cent) showed weaker than average performance and seven schools performed better than average. In reading comprehension, nine schools (8.3 per cent) demonstrated above-average performance, whereas 11 schools (10.2 per cent) remained below average. In speaking, a total of 16 out of 106 schools (15.1 per cent) remained below average, while 19 schools (17.9 per cent) performed better than average. In writing, eight schools (7.4 per cent) remained below average and 11 schools (10.2 per cent) were above average.

Variation between schools explained 13–30 per cent of the differences in learning outcomes, depending on the skill set. The greatest variation between schools was found in speaking skills. The parents' level of education explained 11–23 per cent of variation between schools, with the highest percentage of variation explained in listening comprehension.

## **7. Development suggestions**

Information on demand for German language skills and support for German studies should be particularly targeted at boys, pupils whose parents have not completed the matriculation examination, and pupils who are in Finnish-speaking schools and plan to enter vocational education and training. The pupils' ICT equipment and skills should be harnessed at school and in completing homework. This would also provide a natural way of promoting independent work by pupils and their learning strategies, step-by-step. Authentic multimedia materials and international contacts among pupils and teachers would deepen their encounters with the culture in a European context. Assessment should be based equally on both spoken and written skills and work, with each component accounting for a clearly defined share of the grade. The European Language Portfolio provides help in implementing all of these measures.