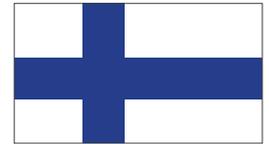


# Sexuality Education in the WHO European Region

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## FINLAND

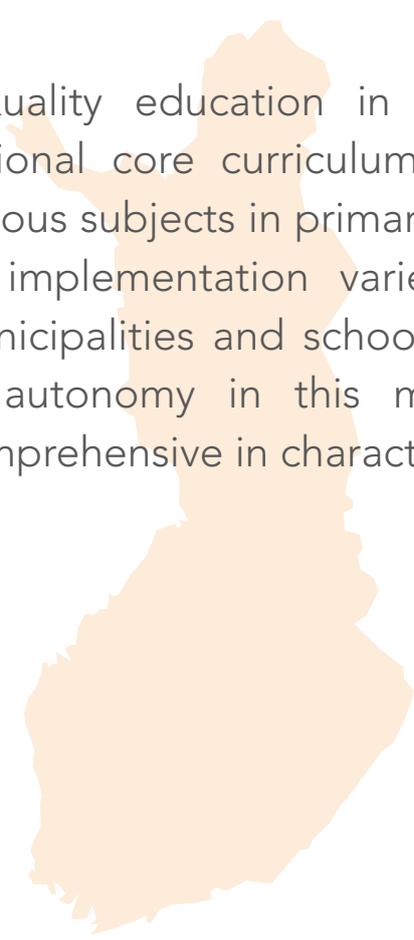


# FINLAND



## Status of sexuality education

Sexuality education in Finland is part of the national core curriculum and is integrated into various subjects in primary and secondary schools. Its implementation varies in practice, because municipalities and schools have a certain degree of autonomy in this matter, but it is always comprehensive in character.





## Laws and policies

National-level core curricula and qualification requirements were enacted by the Finnish National Board of Education. The primary-school core curriculum, which includes elements of sexuality education, was issued in 2014; the curriculum for secondary and vocational schools dates from 2015. The national core curriculum sets a normative framework, which is comprehensive and age-appropriate.

## Implementation of sexuality education

Sexuality education is a mandatory subject. In the current core curriculum for basic (i.e. primary) education, environmental studies include elements of sexuality education and is taught in the primary school grades 1–6 (7–12 years old). In the core curriculum for secondary education, sexuality education is integrated into health education in grades 7–9 (learners' 13–15 years old). The bulk of sexuality education is provided in grades 8 and 9.

The Ministry of Education and the Finnish National Board of Education are primarily responsible for national curriculum development; the municipalities and local schools are responsible for the local school curricula. Teachers and educational experts, healthcare professionals and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) also provide input to the curriculum. The *Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe* (2010)<sup>2</sup> provided the basis for developing a new and adapted version of the national core curricula for primary and secondary educational levels. Topics such as biological aspects, pregnancy and birth, contraception, sexually transmitted infections and HIV, access to safe abortion, and online media and sexuality are dealt with in detail. However, because the curriculum is adapted at the local level, schools and teachers ultimately decide how much time to allocate to the different topics.

## Training of teachers on sexuality education

All teachers are trained in sexuality education as a part of their university training programme. Health-education teachers often specialise in the subject. The specialisation includes 33 credits of university studies after a master's degree in health science studies. The National Institute of Health and NGOs active in the field develop educational materials for sexuality education.

## Sexuality education outside the formal school setting

Various educational activities take place outside the school setting. Youth centres run by municipalities may organise sexuality-education sessions on various topics. Specialised NGOs, such as 'Väestöliitto' (IPPF member association), 'SexPo' and 'Seta', mainly provide information on their websites. There are some educational radio and TV programmes. There are also programmes developed by several NGOs which are directed at underserved groups, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex and HIV-positive young people, young sex workers, out-of-school youth and young people living with physical or learning disabilities.



## Challenges

Until recently, there was no significant opposition to sexuality education in Finland. However, some resistance has emerged in the last few years.

## Good-practice example

An innovative initiative started in 2016 and run by the NGO Väestöliitto concerns a project in which youth actively take part in the development and implementation of a new model of sexuality education in schools. The name of the project is 'Planning Sex Education with Students'. Working with specialists, secondary school learners gather topics based on their interests and use this information to create the course content.

# Country facts



Finland

Total population <sup>3</sup>	5 451 000
Population aged 15–19 years (% of 15–19-year-olds in total population) <sup>3</sup>	313 000 (5.6 %)
Government expenditure on education (% of GDP) <sup>4</sup>	7.2
Youth unemployment rate (% of labour force aged 15–24 years) <sup>5</sup>	23.3
Gender Inequality Index rating <sup>6</sup>	0.056
Births per 1 000 women aged 15–19 years <sup>7</sup>	6
% of 15-year-olds who have had sexual intercourse <sup>8</sup>	boys: 25 % girls: 24 %
Average age of mother at birth of first child <sup>9</sup>	28.5

For references go to last page

## References / Definitions

- 1 **Learner:** a child or young person who is enrolled or attends classes in school, including primary (basic/elementary), secondary (middle) and high school.
- 2 Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe. Cologne: WHO Regional Office for Europe/BZgA; 2010.
- 3 Population by age, sex and urban/rural residence, 2016 [online database]. New York: United Nations Statistics Division; 2017 (<http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=POP&f=tableCode%3A22>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- 4 Human development report 2016: human development for everyone. New York: United Nations Development Programme; 2016 (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/2016-report>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- Government expenditure on education:** current, capital and transfer spending on education, expressed as a percentage of GDP. Range in the region is approx. 2.0–8.5.
- 5 Human development data, 2015 [online database]. New York: United Nations Development Programme; 2017 (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/data#>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- Youth unemployment rate:** percentage of the labour force population aged 15–24 years that is not in paid employment or self-employed, but is available for work and has taken steps to seek paid employment or self-employment.
- 6 Human development report 2016: human development for everyone. New York: United Nations Development Programme; 2016 (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/2016-report>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- Gender Inequality Index:** a composite measure reflecting inequality in achievement between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market. It varies between zero (when women and men fare equally) and one (when men or women fare poorly compared with the other in all dimensions).
- 7 Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1 000 women ages 15–19). Washington (DC): World Bank; 2016 (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.ADO.TFRT>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- 8 Growing up unequal: gender and socioeconomic differences in young people's health and well-being. HBSC 2016 study report (2013/2014 survey). Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2016 (<http://www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/growing-up-unequal.-hbsc-2016-study-20132014-survey>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- 9 Women in the EU gave birth to their first child at almost 29 years of age on average. Luxembourg: Eurostat; 2015 [2013 data] (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6829228/3-13052015-CP-EN.pdf/f7e9007fb-3ca9-445f-96eb-fd75d6792965>, accessed 25 March 2017).