

# Finland

## Good Practice: FIN GP3

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## "Virtual School"

Main features of the GP programme:

Type of programme	Type of organisation	Field of practice for organisation	Programme scope	Programme duration	Programme occurrence/frequency	Type of funding for GP
Second chance education. Virtual learning environment programme for adults lacking ISCED 2 level education.	Folk high school owned by a municipality.	Adult education	National (not limited)	Not limited	Continuous, non-stop	State funded

Adult Education as a Means to Active Participatory Citizenship (EduMAP) is a Horizon 2020 research project focusing on adult education among young adults at risk of social exclusion. Particular attention is paid to educational policies and practices needed to foster active citizenship among vulnerable young people.

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## 1. What – Focus (theme, orientation)

The programme is designed to enable the completion of basic education for adults and to qualify for entering upper secondary education. AE practitioners include teachers, student counsellors, product owners and other technical staff. Courses and communication are provided through a tailor-made virtual learning environment. The students follow individualised study plans. The student counsellors monitor and encourage the students' progress throughout the programme.

## 2. For whom – Target group(s)

Adults without comprehensive school diploma. (Separate programmes have been designed for youth still in compulsory school age.) Due to the highly textual format the programme may not be well suited for non-native Finnish speakers, dyslexics or visually impaired.

## 3. Requirements and access

Most of the applicants receive information about the programme from other social or educational service providers. The programme also advertises publicly. Anyone over the age of 16 and without a comprehensive school diploma can enrol. A student can participate in the Virtual School either for the entire curriculum or choose to take courses one at a time. The students enrol independently through the programme's web page. At least one face-to-face or phone call meeting with a student counsellor in the beginning is advised.

## 4. Elements of good practice

The programme helps learners from (partial) social exclusion to active citizenship through basic formal education required in the Finnish society. Failing compulsory school often leads to unemployment and dependence of benefits. Thus, resuming basic education is seen as the first and necessary step towards inclusion and active citizenship.

Development of APC competences is integrated into the programme, focusing on independence, critical reflection and information retrieval skills as natural aspects of operating in a virtual learning environment. Students are encouraged to increase their chances of societal participation through group work and phenomenon based courses.

The programme offers a solution for those who are unable to participate in regular education programmes. Separate programmes for students under 16 act against early social exclusion of those not able to physically attend school.

Sharing expertise and mutual learning among the staff is viewed essential to programme development. Student feedback is collected regularly. The programme collaborates with other service providers to increase information flow and supportive measures.

The Virtual School aims to develop further towards overcoming more barriers:

language, home/school, global north/south or reaching students in geographically distant areas. The gender aspects are not specifically covered in the programme design since general laws concerning general and gender equality are present in all educational programmes in Finland.

## 5. Perceived challenges

Despite positive feedback on student guidance, it is recognised that students often opt not to reach out for help. The teachers' challenges are to reach the students in general, to enhance peer learning and communication, and thus develop students' socio-cultural competences.

The required independence may cause some students, to whom the programme might otherwise be the only realistic study option, to postpone finishing their studies or to cancel altogether.

Currently there is no follow-up from the programme after the students have completed their degrees.

The staff aims to improve the programme to better serve dyslexics, visually impaired and non-native Finnish speakers.

## 6. Testimonials

"And to get myself a professional degree, like before it wasn't possible no matter how I tried. To get it different ways. So that's the [most important thing the programme has enabled], that now, finally, you get a profession and you can really move on in life towards something you want and not just to accept choices you've been given by chance." (A learner who recently finished basic education)

"Because I'm on this basic [education] and well. I've been able to move around freely. Which means I can take part in these, [voluntary programme] and other projects. Which in a sense gives practical experience. And this wouldn't be possible if I was physically at school or at work. And well, the papers [comprehensive education diploma] are of course needed in the modern society pretty much everywhere." (A learner who had finished the basic education programme)

## 7. More Information

EduMAP project's publications:

[Books and articles](#)

Academic publications that address key themes of the EduMAP project

[Deliverables and reports](#)

EduMAP's official deliverables, related reports and publications

[Good practice cases](#)

Key features from 40 'good practice' cases from 20 countries

[Working papers](#)

A selection of findings from desk and field research in 20 European countries

[Other resources](#)

Other types of resources made for the project (illustrations, comics etc.)