

## Good Practice: FIN GP1

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## "Preparatory Education for VET"

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
VET (transition phase training)	Various types of educational organizations offer the programme	VET education, adult education (varies between organisations)	National, altogether 51 ed. providers have the right to offer the programme in Finland	<u>Maximum</u> duration is one academic year. Flexible pathways to other programmes anytime is a key feature.	Continuous, intake annually & flexibly during semesters	State funding backed by legislation

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)

As a transition phase programme, which aims to facilitate entry to vocational education and training, VALMA has been designed to suit different types of learners in various life situations. The flexible design of the programme renders it possible for educational providers to offer educational pathways that cater to individual needs of their students. All courses are optional. The education includes Finnish or Swedish language; mathematics; information technology; natural sciences; social studies; and cultural knowledge. The students will also improve their study and career skills during the studies and get to learn about different occupations and vocational studies (Opintopolku.fi).

## 2. For whom – Target group(s)

The primary target group of the programme is, “youth who have completed compulsory education and need to strengthen their studying capabilities and are in need of guidance and support in choosing education and occupation” and “youth who, for one reason or another, are outside of education and have not found a suitable study place.” The emphasis of the programme is on youth, but adults are also welcome to participate, “adult target groups could especially be immigrants, people changing careers, or people in need of re-education who have deficiencies in their studying capabilities.” (FNBE regulation 5/011/2015 )

## 3. Requirements and access

VALMA is meant for those who have not completed an upper secondary qualification, academic degree, or any other preparatory training in Finland or abroad. This rule is flexible however. People who have some of the aforementioned qualifications can participate - on the condition that it can be justified on specific grounds related to acquiring capabilities for further studies. Although student selection is made according to a broad criteria defined in the Act on Vocational Training and Education, providers are free to define their own more specific criteria. Most providers also require a minimum Finnish or Swedish language proficiency of A2.2.

## 4. Elements of good practice

VALMA provides a loose national framework for the education. The approach gives educational providers much freedom to organise the education according to their own (local) profiles and the needs of their students. Students’ individual choices are at the core of the programme, but at the same time, emphasis is laid on communality.

Guidance, counselling and flexibility of the services is one of its key elements. Teacher’s role is versatile in VALMA. Teachers try to answer different individual needs and they use available support structures and networks in diverse ways. In addition, other types of professionals (career guidance counsellors, social workers, special education teachers etc.) provide support for the students.

One of the most valued elements of the programme is the possibility for flexible transitions between programmes. Transitions are not restricted to purely educational programmes. Students may move to VALMA from rehabilitative programmes, work trials etc. and vice versa. Many transitions take place within the same organisation but also between different organisations. The educational provider's networks are an important factor in enabling these transitions.

One asset of participation in VALMA is that students who complete more than 30 competence points receive an extra six points when they apply to upper secondary vocational education and training.

Development of APC in the programme (empirical findings from EduMAP):

- Socio-cultural: dealing with social anxiety, learning to speak in public, creating friendships, communication in different contexts, self-assurance in social interaction; language skills, understanding of local and other cultures, personal wellbeing, self-knowledge, overall social skills
- Socio-economic: working life skills, how to claim benefits, applying for jobs and traineeships, personal income and spending, finding further education, ICT skills, knowledge of occupations
- Political-legal: rights and responsibilities in the society and at work, understanding public services and individuals' rights to them, understanding of local politics

## 5. Perceived challenges

In a flexible "revolving door" programme like VALMA, it is difficult to keep track of things. In addition, the same features that make up the programme's strong points can become its weak points, namely, flexibility of participation and heterogeneity of learners. There are also some structural issues and challenges that relate to the novelty of the programme. One of the programme's major challenges and advantages relates to its take on inclusion. When four previous preparatory educations were combined into one in 2015, it did not go without some hiccups. One of the core issues in the case of VALMA is how to combine the dynamic elements and flexibility with a calm and stable learning environment for all.

## 6. Testimonials

"I got into the VALMA School. There my language level has grown. There they have Finnish working life, culture and then I got into Vocational School to study. That's why I think VALMA education is good." (Former VALMA student with a migration background)

"I have quit drugs and stopped drinking. And then maybe gotten self-confidence again and [I'm] a bit more open. Before this I was like...how to say it...a lonely soul...like I didn't talk to anyone and I was basically 24/7 by myself." (VALMA student with history of serious substance abuse and mental health problems)



## 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.)