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Business lobby: Finland should rethink university education

Finnish employers' lobby EK says Finland isn't educating the workforce of the future.

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Both Aalto University and business lobby EK say higher education should guide Finland toward its goal of carbon neutrality by 2035. Image: AOP

The Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK) says higher education in Finland should increasingly train tomorrow's environmental problem solvers and fewer arts majors.

Finland has said it wants to be [carbon neutral by 2035](#), which is why the country is in a hurry to guide the economy towards this goal, according to EK director **Riikka Heikinheimo**, who said she wants to overhaul higher education with this target in mind.

"Moving towards carbon neutrality affects all business areas," she said.

According to Heikinheimo, Finland risks not having enough interdisciplinary professionals.

Dreams and funding dilemmas

Institutes of higher education are in quadrennial funding talks with the Education Ministry through Midsummer. These discussions will also outline degree programme goals.

"This is when the goals for the coming years are locked in," Heikinheimo explained.

Finland has an oversupply of social science and arts programmes, according to the business lobby. Based on feedback from its members, the EK said it would like to see more students pursue courses in production engineering, marketing analytics, artificial intelligence and circular economies.

Aalto University president **Ilkka Niemelä** said Finland should open up more spots at universities for prospective students.

In 2019, some [100,000 applicants were turned away](#) by Finnish universities, amid calls to ease access to higher education. Finland is one of Europe's most highly selective countries for university admissions

"It's a question of where to add study positions," Niemelä said, adding that Aalto's findings show future education needs in line with those expressed by the EK.

He, however, didn't see resources flowing from the arts into technical programmes.

Projections to increase graduates

The government's *'2030 education vision'* sees 50 percent of each age group graduating from higher education. This figure now stands at around 40 percent.

Higher education now gets a 2.8 billion-euro slice of the annual state budget, with 1.9 billion euros earmarked for universities and 900 million going to the country's network of universities of applied sciences.

EK's Heikinheimo said Finland needs 'tens of millions more' to make a difference. Niemelä was on the same page, saying somewhat more could be achieved with current resources through scaling and digitalisation, but only 'marginally'.

SYL, the National Union of University Students, has meanwhile pointed out that additional study places can't be added to existing programmes without more funding to maintain the quality of education.

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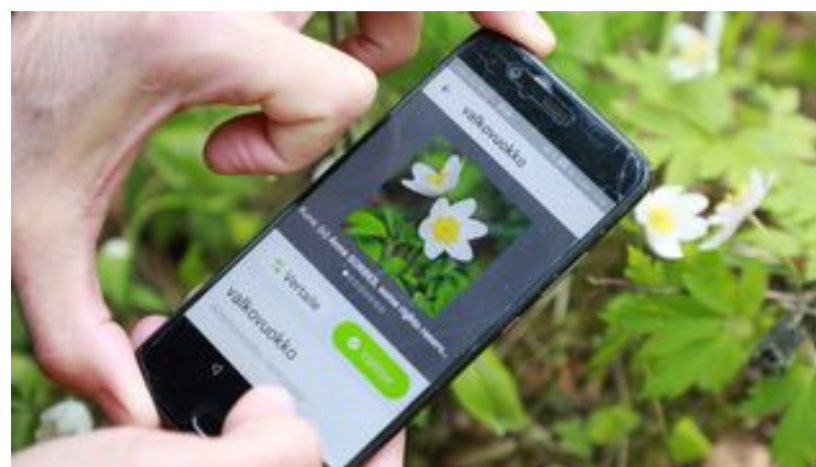
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- 15.5. Stockpile boss suspected of crimes in mask purchase, NBI seizes emails
- 15.5. Suicide in Finland up by nearly 15% this spring
- 15.5. Professor: Failing to join an unemployment fund is "the stupidest thing you could do in Finland"
- 15.5. Nearly one in ten Helsinki region children stay home from school
- 15.5. PM Marin: "Govt is not seeking herd immunity"
- 15.5. Helsinki preparing for second wave of Covid-19
- 15.5. VTT: Masks protect others, but not user
- 15.5. Friday's papers: Support for easing restrictions, exports suffer, few travellers
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- 13.5. Nobel laureate says coronavirus fears pose larger economic threat than restrictions
- 13.5. Wednesday's papers: Corona testing, school concerns, cool summer
- 12.5. Govt grapples with restaurant re-openings and support package
- 12.5. Dozens of staff diagnosed with Covid-19 at Helsinki hospital since March
- 12.5. Budget carrier Ryanair to resume flights to Finland in July
- 12.5. Waste firm linked to Tampere fire previously broke regulations
- 12.5. 25,000 youngsters pass corona-clouded exams, get white caps
- 12.5. Finnair: Passengers and crew must wear masks
- 12.5. Yle survey: Two in three people plan to see their friends more during the summer
- 12.5. Minister: Finland ready to close schools again if needed
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