

Regional Profile

Pohjois- ja Itä-Suomi

Key facts

Population (2020): 1 274.651

Territory (sq. km): 226.785

Regional GDP (2022) (€): 33.500

Pohjois- ja Itä-Suomi (northern and eastern Finland; NUTS2) comprises of seven NUTS3 regions. Pohjois- ja Itä-Suomi covers over 60% of the acreage of Finland, while its population represents only 23% of the country's total population. In terms of education, economy, and socio-demographic factors, **the NUTS3 regions of Pohjois- ja Itä-Suomi do not form a coherent entity** for examination as they represent clearly differing structural and social conditions. Thus, here the focus is also on the region Kainuu, which is the subject of empirical research in the CLEAR project.

Educational provision

In Pohjois- ja Itä-Suomi, there are **around 760 educational institutions** of which 585 are comprehensive schools, 122 general upper secondary institutions, 39 vocational education and training institutions, and 12 tertiary level institutions (three universities and nine universities of applied sciences).

In the Kainuu region, there are relatively **few educational opportunities** especially regarding **higher education**. There are no universities and only one university of applied sciences, which is located in Kajaani, the capital city of the region, which also hosts the only vocational institution in the region. The latter means that those **young people** who live in the regions' other municipalities and want to attend vocational education or more versatile educational opportunities after lower secondary school, **need to move away** from their home municipalities already at a young age.

Learning outcomes in Finland

Two main discourses dominate the contemporary Finnish debate on learning outcomes and educational (under)achievement. One may title the first as '*a national skills deficit discourse*' and the second as '*a differentiated learning outcomes discourse*'. There are two sides to the national skills deficit debate: on the one hand, there is the concern about the **deterioration of basic skills among young school leavers**, and on the other, **the issue of the falling level in educational attainment** among the working-age population.

The learning outcomes of the different parts of the national education system are regularly assessed by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC), and the Finnish Institute for Educational Research (FIER), which is a key player in analysing and reporting the international comparison of learning outcomes.

Socio-economic characteristics

The economy of the norther and eastern parts of Pohjois- ja Itä-Suomi is more reliant on **primary production and industry** than the rest of the country, **providing jobs that are better suited to men than to women**. Educated women with families and children who remain in the region may temporarily withdraw from the labour market when the employment situation deteriorates, and parental/family allowances become available.

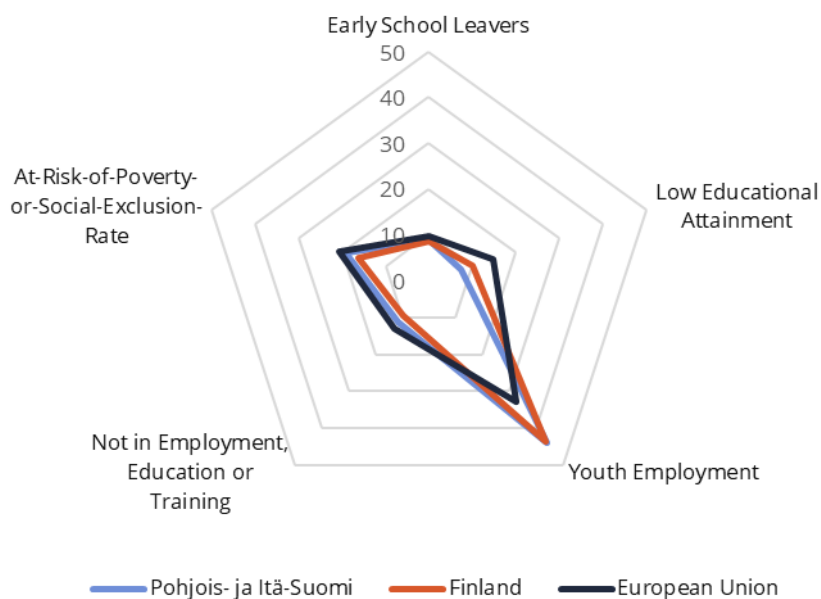
Kainuu consists of eight municipalities, which are **primarily rural**. The population of Kainuu is around 70,000, which makes it the second smallest region in mainland Finland. The dependency ratio is among the highest in the country, and **the educational level of the population is lower** than in the whole country on average. In Kainuu, the **main industries include technology, bio-based economy, mining, chemical industries, and tourism**.

In Kainuu, the most vulnerable groups of young people are those with prolonged NEET status, substance abuse problems, immigrant background, mental disabilities, and those belonging to gender and sexual minorities.

Regional performance

In **Pohjois- ja Itä-Suomi**, the Low Educational Attainment is satisfactory, and the Early School Leavers rate is still on the EU average. In comparison to the whole country, Pohjois- ja Itä-Suomi **generates less labour market opportunities for young people with various levels of qualifications**. The gross domestic product of Pohjois- ja Itä-Suomi is lower than in Finland on average. Pohjois- ja Itä-Suomi scores the highest rate of AROPE (at risk of poverty and exclusion), and is the second region of the country that struggles with low YLMI (youth labour market integration) and high NEET (not in education, employment or training) rates.

In **Kainuu**, the level of educational attainment is lower and the unemployment rate is higher than the national averages. Furthermore, the labour force is expected to face a net loss of 4000 people by the end of 2030. Thus, one of the main goals of the regional actors is to increase the attractiveness of the region for skilled workforce, young people, and families. The Kainuu regional programme highlights also the importance of **improving skills, competences, health, wellbeing, and participation** of region's inhabitants, while also fighting social exclusion and growing gender differences in, for instance, employment and wellbeing.



Source: Eurostat, 2023

Policy challenges



Further reading

Educational equality, regional and social segregation and opportunities for targeted support. Helsinki, Government Publications 2021:7

Bildung Review. Publications of the Ministry of Education and Culture, 2023:3. Helsinki



Project title: Constructing Learning Outcomes in Europe: a multi-level analysis of (under)achievement in the life course

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Project partners

- University of Münster
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- University of Vienna
- University of Lisbon
- University of Porto
- University of Genoa
- University of Urbino
- Codici Cooperativa Sociale
- University of Plovdiv
- Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

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