

## Chapter 5

### Vulnerable migrants in Finland – women and children

*Migrant women, in particular, are struggling to integrate in Finland; many are locked into inactivity, and face incentives to stay in the home. Early integration support in Finland sends the inactive, including many immigrant women, down a separate track from those who are actively seeking employment. This is unusual among OECD countries and risks increasing the distance between the inactive and the labour force, locking them into inactivity. On top of this, women eligible for the Child Home Care Allowance may find that staying at home is as financially advantageous as engaging in training or paid employment. If immigrant mothers stay at home for many years there may be long-term consequences for their children; in terms of reduced enrolment in preschool during the critical early years, limited exposure to the Finnish language, and the concomitant implications for their chances of succeeding in school. As in many OECD countries, the children of immigrants do worse in school in Finland than children with native-born parents. In Finland, however, these differences are particularly striking. This chapter examines the integration challenges facing women and children and the extent to which Finnish integration policy supports them in overcoming these challenges.*

As highlighted in Chapter 2, in Finland, as across the OECD, the foreign-born tend to experience more difficulties on the labour market than native-born individuals. Among those that appear to struggle the most, however, are women and children – both those migrants that arrive in Finland as children and, more worryingly, those that were born in Finland with migrant parents.<sup>1</sup>

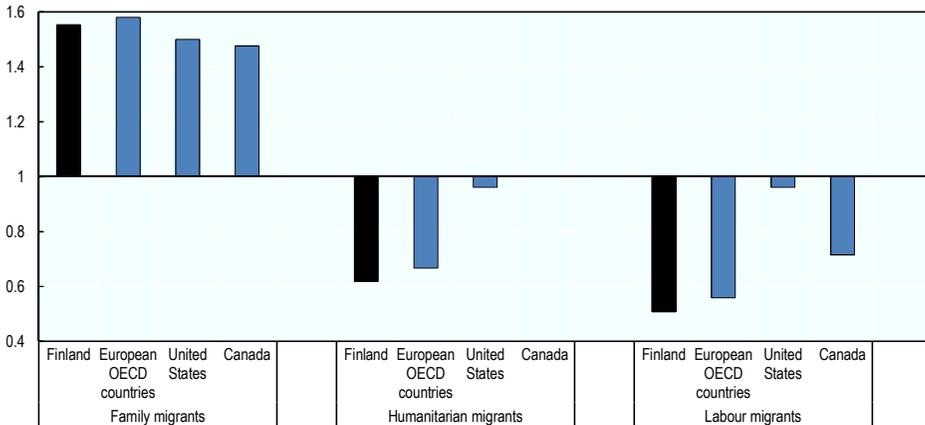
**Women**

***The organisation of integration activities may lead to lock-in of early inactivity among female migrants***

Migrant women, many of whom arrive as family migrants with no direct ties to the labour market (see Figure 5.1), often experience more difficulties integrating than do their male counterparts. Many of these women must also juggle childcare responsibilities which can compromise their involvement in early integration activities. As time passes, these women risk becoming increasingly distant from the labour force.

**Figure 5.1. Female migrants are more likely to migrate for family reasons**

Ratio female to male migrants by reason for migration, around 2014



*Notes:* Figures for family migrants in the United States refer to the family class (2003 cohort) and do not include family members of labour migrants, diversity migrants or refugees. For Canada, the 2014 figures refer to the 2010 cohort and the 2008 figures refer to the 2004 cohort. Figures for European OECD countries are for 2014. European countries: 15-64, United States: 18 and older, and all ages for Canada.

*Source:* For Finland, UTH; for European countries, European Labour Force Survey (Eurostat) ad-hoc module 2014 on the labour market situation of migrants and their immediate descendants; for the United States, the New Immigrant Survey (US Immigration and Naturalization Service), and for Canada, the Longitudinal Immigration Database (Statistics Canada).

In many OECD countries, family migrants are outside the spotlight of integration and activation measures, even if they are far from the labour market. This is because the requirement that family migrants have a sponsor, able to guarantee their living expenses, means that they rarely claim social assistance. Beyond social assistance payments, however, failure to integrate family migrants represents a significant lost resource and risks having long-run consequences on the integration success of their children. In Finland, while family migrants are not the explicit target of integration measures, they are eligible to sign up for an integration plan. Such publicly-funded integration measures available and open to family migrants are somewhat unusual in an OECD context – particularly in the case of intra EU migrants. However, concrete numbers on the number of family migrants – or even women – undertaking integration courses are not collected and there is some evidence that take-up of the integration plan is limited (Saukkonen 2017).

Women who arrive on humanitarian grounds are also vulnerable to becoming distant from the labour market. Indeed, the integration trends discussed in Chapter 2 illustrate that female migrants from Somalia and Iraq – countries from which migrants are most likely to arrive on humanitarian grounds – experience limited progress towards the labour market even after many years in Finland. These women are less likely to have a spouse that is able to fully support them financially and, as a result, they are more likely to depend upon social assistance. This makes them more likely to be a target of activation measures. It is important, however, that these women receive intensive and continual support from arrival, to avoid state dependence and ensure they have time to build the skills necessary for the labour market in a coherent manner.

Whether their migration was prompted by family or humanitarian reasons, it is important that these women do not become isolated from Finnish society and are also given the opportunity and support to find their place in the labour market (see Box 5.1 for a discussion of support measures employed in other OECD countries). Monitoring who participates in integration activities will be an important first step in understanding the extent to which family migrants – many of whom are women – are failing to access these courses. Such monitoring could be done through the Koulutusportti database which collects information on integration course participants. Extracting data on the sex of participants – from the social security information already incorporated in the database would be a relatively straightforward exercise and should be a priority, but is currently not done.

Childcare responsibilities can often mean that migrant women find it difficult to participate in full-time integration activities at the time of arrival. Without the opportunities and incentives to participate in integration programmes, such women can become increasingly isolated – both socially, and from the world of work. In Finland, the approach to these additional hurdles has been to direct women, along with the inactive, to a separate stream of activities organised by municipalities that

is not oriented at labour market entry (see Chapter 3). Indeed, the Integration Act suggests that a ‘Family Integration Plan’ should be crafted for families in order to grant a smooth integration for all family members. While such a family approach is an important asset, it need not be necessary that the primary – and only – link to the family be female migrants. Defining the integration focus of women solely by their status within the family may act to the detriment of their labour market integration and, paradoxically, in the long run that of their children as well. This early separation between migrants who are seeking work at the time of arrival, and those who are not, may be intuitive to the extent that only those who are seeking work tend to enrol themselves with the PES. However, the approach has the effect of limiting the labour-market-orientation of the integration training these women have access to. As a result, such early separation between the active and the inactive may have long lasting consequences, and women whose childcare duties place them temporarily outside the labour force at the time of arrival may struggle to find their way back to employment.

In theory, women on maternity leave at the time of their arrival in Finland are able to delay their integration plan for the duration of their leave. There are, however, no data regarding the number of women that take integration training organised by the PES after returning to active participation. And many of those that remain at home to look after their children subsequently struggle, and take many years, to return to active participation.<sup>2</sup> If women undertake only limited integration activities organised by the municipality and unrelated from the labour force, and if they are left to drift following the end of these activities, skills can atrophy and, upon return to active job search, these women may struggle even to meet the language requirements of other employment and job search trainings organised by the PES.

### **Box 5.1 Employment Support for foreign-born women in OECD countries**

Realising that family migrants can be an important resource and that supporting the employment search among this group can benefit the economy as well as the individuals concerned, a number of OECD countries have begun to develop programmes particularly targeted at this group.

The Expat Spouses Initiative, which began in 2014 in Eindhoven, the **Netherlands**, aims to help the partners of expatriate workers to make better use of their qualifications and realise their potential as international professionals. The Expat Spouses Initiative in its current form comprises of a network of professionals working together to help men and women start their own business or find a job that matches their unique qualifications.

### **Box 5.1 Employment Support for foreign-born women in OECD countries** (cont.)

To this end the network organises events, training sessions, language classes, and community-building projects with the dual goals of:

- Encouraging more interaction between internationals and locals in Eindhoven.
- Supporting the employment search and professional development among the spouses of expatriated workers settling in the region of Eindhoven.

The initiative as received the support of local government which views supporting the employment potential of family migrants as an important component, not only in enhancing the employment outcomes of family migrants, but also in attracting international talent to the region.

In **Denmark**, the Danish Centre for Information on Women and Gender (KVINFO) has created a mentor network for migrant women with the aim of facilitating integration into the Danish labour market. *The Mentor Network* is a professional woman-to-woman network matching women that are well established in the Danish labour market and in Danish society, with refugee or migrant women that need new inspiration and different forms of support. Since its establishment in 2002, more than 7 500 women have participated in KVINFO's mentor network and more than 3 200 mentor-couples have been matched. An evaluation of the Mentor Network carried out between 2010 and 2014 has found that 38 % of the mentees have found a job after being part of the project.

In addition to mainstream integration and employment support, a few countries have developed specific low-threshold options targeted at low-educated female migrants.

An example is the **Norwegian municipality, Levanger**, where local authorities, employers and the public employment service (NAV) have worked with the adult teaching centre to run a pilot scheme that assists low educated migrant women in obtaining a qualification and accessing regular work. Between 2014 and 2016, the 'Levanger Arena Work' scheme helped 24 participants to obtain a qualification and subsequently eased their entry into lower-skilled occupations in health, cleaning, kindergarten and gastronomy, following an intensive six-step model. A curriculum was developed jointly with professionals from the relevant sectors. Participants were divided in small groups and attended training courses before moving into employment. At first they were closely supervised. Then, accompanied by a mentor, migrants were given greater autonomy. The scheme also incorporated an online learning platform.

**Australia**, too, has developed programmes helping migrant women build new skills and increase their labour market participation. An example is the *New Futures Training Program* run by the Victorian Cooperative on Children's Services For ethnic Groups (VICSEG). The programme, which has been successful in increasing labour force participation and employment for women, trains predominantly women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to become certified childcare workers. In so doing, it equips them with skills that are valuable in the workforce and diversifies the childcare sector to meet the needs of families from various backgrounds. Besides training towards a childcare certificate, the *New Futures*

### **Box 5.1 Employment Support for foreign-born women in OECD countries** (cont.)

*Training Program* provides pre-employment training to familiarise participants with the Australian labour market, mentoring from community members currently in the childcare sector, and follow-up supervision in the workplace.

Source: <https://www.brainport.nl>; <http://expatspousesinitiative.org/Integration>: activities aimed at low-skilled women in Norway and Australia and OECD (2017), *Making Integration Work: Family Migrants*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264279520-en>.

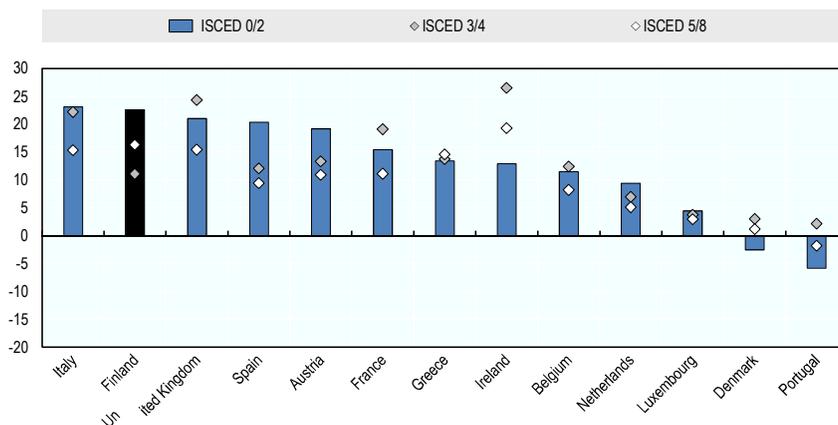
### ***Policies to maintain female participation have limited success among the foreign-born***

Female labour market participation varies to a considerable degree across OECD countries and while individual characteristics and choices play a role in determining participation rates, policy measures can play a significant role in shaping these choices. There is wide variation in the prevalence of different forms of public childcare support across the OECD, including cash benefits (e.g. childcare subsidies), public in-kind services (e.g. public provision of childcare and out-of-school-hours care) and fiscal support (e.g. tax deductions for formal childcare). Relevant policy measures can be largely classified into the following categories (i) labour market policy measures; (ii) childcare support measures (e.g. direct or indirect support for the costs incurred in the provision of childcare); (iii) parental leave policies and finally (iv) policies facilitating flexible work (see OECD 2017b, Eurofund, 2016). By altering the childcare support women can access, as well as the financial incentives they face, these policies can bring women closer to the labour market, while removing the barriers that might impede them. Finland is often highlighted as a good practice example in this respect and high participation among Finnish women with children is, to some extent, testament to the success of these policies.<sup>3</sup>

However, it is important to bear in mind how the effects of policies designed to support the labour market participation of women may differ for women born outside of Finland. In general, the negative effects of motherhood on labour force participation are particularly pronounced for women with low levels of education (see OECD 2017) and low wages and this is particularly pronounced in Finland (Figure 5.2). While it is challenging for most parents (both mothers and fathers) to balance a career with childrearing, low wages tend to reduce the financial incentives even further. And, given the concentration of the foreign born among low wage workers they are particularly likely to face poor financial incentives to join the labour market.

**Figure 5.2. The employment rate penalty associated with young children is high in Finland**

Percentage point difference in the employment rates of women with and without children, by level of education 25-54 year olds, 2015/16 or latest available year



Notes: Data organised according to the magnitude of the influence of children on the gender gap. Data for Finland rely on 2014 data.

Source: Eurostat Labour Force Survey Data 2015/16 and ad hoc module (EULFS AHM) 2014.

Additionally, generous employment-protected paid leave around childbirth and when children are young is important for ensuring that women have income security around these life events and have a job to return to when their child is older. However, these leave policies, alongside policies facilitating flexible work, may have a more limited impact on the participation rates of foreign-born women who, often, have not had a stable job to which they can return following maternity leave.

### ***High take-up of the Child Home Care Allowance risks compromising the integration of both foreign-born women and their children***

Children who attend day-care are often better prepared for school and the labour market by virtue of the social and human capital that such day-care confers. The long-term benefits both for the child – in terms of improved health outcomes, stronger future labour incomes, and more education – as well as for the mother, have been widely documented (see for example Garcia et al, 2016, Conti et al, 2016). Furthermore, the accrual of these benefits has been found to be particularly pronounced among disadvantaged families (see, for example, recent work by Cornelissen et al, forthcoming). Indeed, recent work by Johnson et al (2014), found a significant improvement in school readiness (measured using reading skills) among children that had been cared for outside the home among children of

immigrants, while no such effect was found among the children of native-born parents.

Given these findings, the use of subsidised home care, that incentivises parents to stay at home with their children, has been controversial (see, for example, Rønsen and Kitterød, 2010). In Finland, however, the use of subsidised home care is widespread under the Child Home Care Allowance (CHCA) (see Box 5.2 for further details). Indeed, close to 90% of all children born in Finland in the 2000s were cared for at home under the subsidy (Tervola, 2015).<sup>4</sup>

### Box 5.2 Finnish policy at a glance: Costs of child care

#### Child Home Care Allowance (CHCA)

The Child home care allowance is granted when a child, less than three years of age, is looked after at home. The allowance can also be paid for the siblings of the under three-year-old child if these siblings are themselves under school age and looked after at home. The allowance is ended when the child reaches three years of age or if the birth of another child renders the parents eligible for maternity and parental allowances

The care allowance comprises of a fixed care component as well as a means-tested supplement and is adjusted annually according to an index.

The **fixed component** of the care allowance currently amounts to approximately:

- EUR 340 per month for one child under three years of age
- EUR 100 per month for each additional child under three years of age
- EUR 65 per month for each child over three years of age but under school age

The **means-tested supplement** can reach a maximum of approximately EUR 180 per month and is paid for one child only. The income threshold is determined by family size.

In addition to the fixed and means-tested components, depending on the home municipality, there may also be a variable **municipal supplement**. These supplements are primarily paid in urban municipalities – where migrants are concentrated – and, in 2014, the average municipal supplement was EUR 148 per child. Through the use of these supplements, municipalities can influence the relative use of day care and home care.

#### Public Day Care

Fees for public day care are income-related such that the higher the family income, the higher the fee. The fee, which is capped, is calculated as a percentage of the family income that exceeds an income floor, where both the level of the floor, and the percentages, depend on the size of the family.

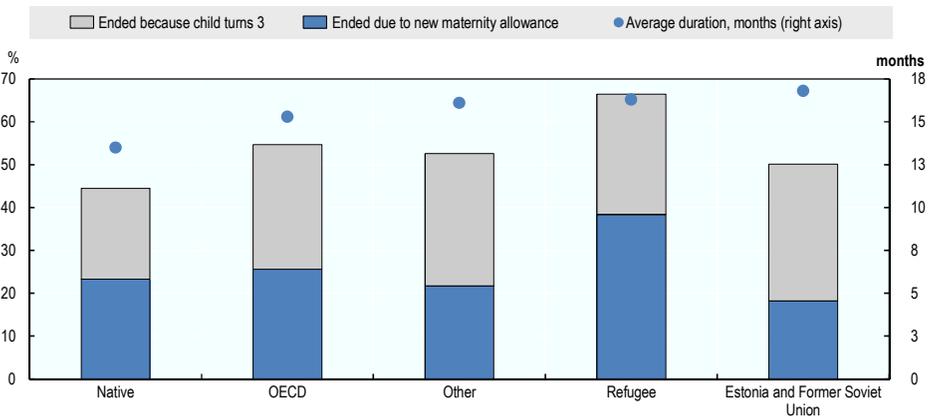
Source: KELA ([www.kela.fi](http://www.kela.fi)).

Though the benefits of day care, such as language and social learning, tend to be particularly pronounced among children from disadvantaged or immigrant families, in Finland, the children of foreign-born women are more

likely to be cared for at home and for longer spells (Figure 5.3).<sup>5</sup> In addition to undertaking longer spells, the CHCA spells of foreign-born carers – and particularly those from refugee sending countries – more frequently come to an end as the result of the arrival of another child (enabling a return to paid maternity leave).

**Figure 5.3. The foreign-born tend to claim Child Home Care Allowance for longer spells**

Reason for end of Child Home Care Allowance. % (left axis), months (right axis), 1999-2007



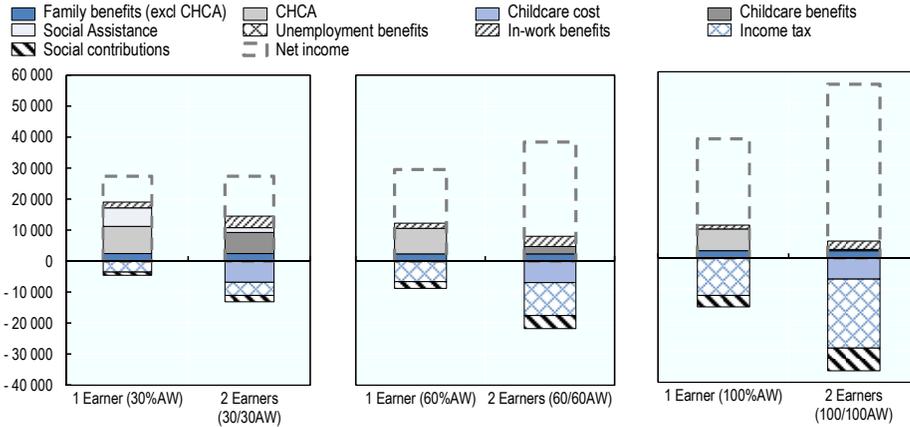
*Notes:* Immigrant children divided into four groups based on mother's country of birth. Refugee sending countries are defined as those countries for which more than 15 % of the population residing in Finland had reported refugee status in the social assistance database held by KELA (see using Tervola and Verho, 2014). Short spells do not necessarily describe the actual duration of home care, if the spell has ended due to new maternity allowance spell.

*Source:* Tervola, J. (2015) 'Use of child home care allowance among immigrants (*Maahanmuuttajien kotihoidon tuen käyttö 2000-luvulla*)' *Yhteiskuntapolitiikka* 80 2015:2.

The heavy use of the CHCA among foreign-born women – and particularly those from refugee sending countries – can be partially explained by the concentration of these women at the lower end of the income distribution.<sup>6</sup> The low wages these women are able to command on the labour market means that the opportunity cost of providing home care, in terms of forgone earnings, is lower for these women. And indeed, for households with young children on low incomes, the movement of a second earner into work has a limited impact on the net income (Figure 5.4).

**Figure 5.4. Second-earners have a limited impact on household net income at lower income levels**

Breakdown of the net income of a one/two-earner couple, with two children aged two and three



Source: Secretariat calculations on the basis of OECD tax-benefit models, administrative data and OECD education financing data.

***Short run savings on public child care provision imply long run costs***

The costs of providing universal early childhood education are substantial, yet so are the benefits. Yet given that costs must be expended in the short term, while the savings will be reaped over the lifetime of the child, short-term savings offered by child home care subsidies can be tempting from a policy perspective. However, such short-term savings are likely to be inefficient over a longer policy horizon.<sup>7</sup>

Beyond the foregone benefits of early childhood education for the development of the child, subsidised homecare may also create incentives that compromise the integration of foreign-born women. Thus while public provision of early childcare may appear expensive, it is important to put these expenses in the context of the welfare savings that moving these caregivers into employment entails. Net replacement rates for the long-term unemployed are relatively high in Finland, as such, moving an individual into employment – even if this implying additional childcare costs are paid from the public purse – is less costly than it might initially appear, even in the short term.

While homecare subsidies may appear attractive in order to save some of the costs associated with publicly provided childcare and may also be attractive to women facing difficulties in accessing employment. In the long-term, such subsidies can entail substantial costs. Long spells outside the

labour market may be particularly detrimental to the future employment prospects of immigrant women – particularly those who arrived as refugees and lack the contacts to the host country that other migrant groups may have. These women, who are in most in need of integration support, are those most frequently isolated in the home taking care of children at home.

## Youth

Young migrants, and native-born children with foreign born parents, also face particular integration challenges. Those that arrive at a young age must learn the language and integrate into the school system in time to catch up with their native-born peers. Those that arrive later – or even after the age of compulsory education – often face difficulties in qualifying for further education and may have lifelong difficulties gaining durable employment.

The integration outcomes of migrant women and their children should not be considered in isolation. Indeed, integration failures among female migrants that are left unaddressed, risk leaving a lasting impact on the integration outcomes of their children. If native-born children are raised without access to spoken Finnish, and little guidance and support to navigate their education and career pathways, there is a risk that disadvantage is transmitted from one generation to the next. This will have long-term consequences – both for the individuals concerned, and for Finnish society (OECD (2017c)).

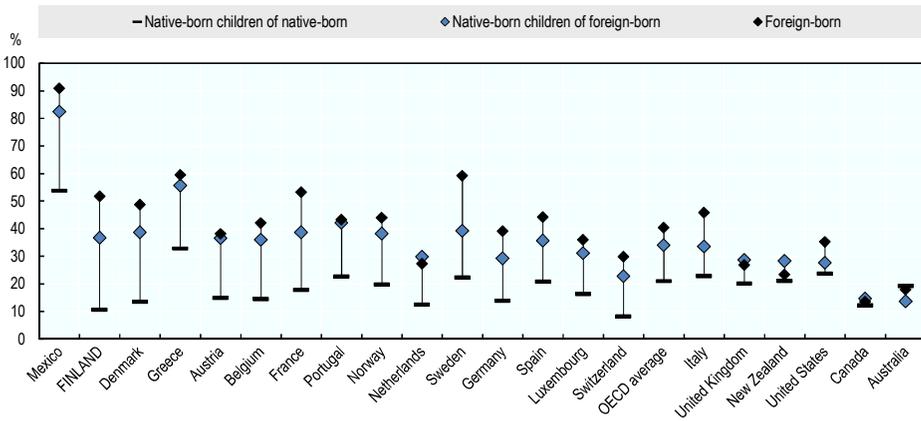
### ***The number of youth with a foreign background is increasing and many are struggling in school***

In the vast majority of OECD countries, the educational outcomes of foreign-born students tend to lag behind those of the native-born students. The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), tests literacy and mathematics skills among children at age 15. The results highlight that, in the vast majority of countries – with the exception of countries with large-scale highly skilled labour migration and fewer language barriers, notably Australia, Canada and New Zealand – foreign-born students underperform their native born peers. In Finland, the score difference in mathematics is close to 100 percentage points – a disparity equal to approximately two and a half years of school. Over half of surveyed foreign-born students fall below basic proficiency in mathematics, compared to just one in ten native-born students such that the disparity in Finland is among the largest of all surveyed countries (Figure 5.5). While this large attainment gap among foreign-born children can be partially explained by grade placement (new arrivals are frequently placed in a grade lower than their age group, while PISA is tested at age 16 irrespective of school grade), such a caveat

cannot explain the poor results of the children of migrants (see Portin 2017).<sup>8</sup> Standing at 70 PISA points (equivalent to close to two years of school) the disparity between native born children with native born parents and those with foreign-born parents is, alongside Mexico, the highest in the OECD.

**Figure 5.5. Foreign-born students are more likely to underperform in tests of mathematics**

Proportion of population falling below level 2 in PISA mathematics test, 2015



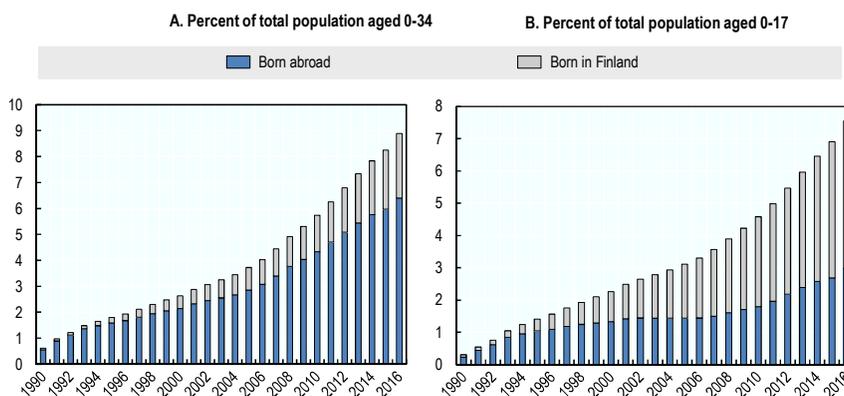
Notes: Data ordered according to disparity between native born with native-born parents and native born with foreign born parents.

Source: OECD Programme for International Student Assessment.

These large disparities in educational outcomes represent an increasingly urgent challenge as young people with a foreign background – those who were themselves born abroad, or those whose parents were born outside Finland – make up a growing proportion of the youth population in Finland. This trend is driven partially by the concentration of youth among new-arrivals and partially by the demographics of Finland's resident foreign-born population – who, having largely arrived since the 1990s, are now seeing their children grow up and make their way through the Finnish school system. Figure 5.6 (Panel A and B), below, illustrates the results of these trends. The total proportion of young people aged below 34 who were born abroad, or whose parents were born abroad, has grown from just 0.6% of under 34 years olds in 1990, to close to 9% in 2016.

**Figure 5.6. Finland's youth population with a foreign background is growing rapidly**

Evolution of youth population, foreign-born and native born with foreign-born parents 1990-2016

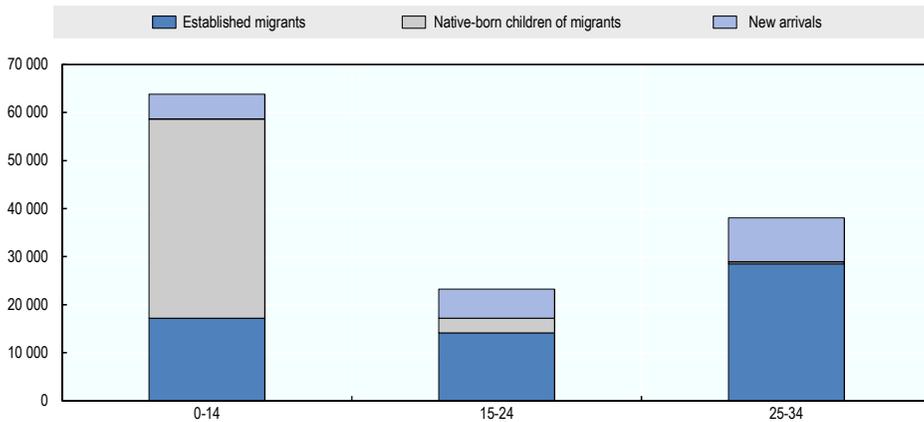


Source: Statistics Finland.

Over the course of 2015 and 2016, close to 72% of all immigrants to Finland, or close to 46 000 individuals, arrived under the age of 34. Of these young migrants, 44% were between 25 and 34 when they arrived, 32% were between 15 and 24 and 25% were younger than 15. Alongside these new arrivals, recent years have seen particularly strong growth among native-born children of migrants. Until 1994 this group accounted for fewer than 1.5% of the total population below the age of 35, however, since 2016, they have accounted for over 6.8%. The majority of these children with migrant parents are still relatively young. Indeed they account for four in every five children aged 0-6 with a foreign background as compared to fewer than 1 in every 100 of those with a foreign background aged between 25 and 34 (Figure 5.7). While these young people will often face challenges on their path to integration, the nature of these challenges will depend heavily upon whether they arrive before, or after, compulsory school leaving age.

**Figure 5.7. Native-born children of migrants are a relatively new population in Finland**

Breakdown of youth population aged 0-34 by background, 2016



Source: Statistics Finland.

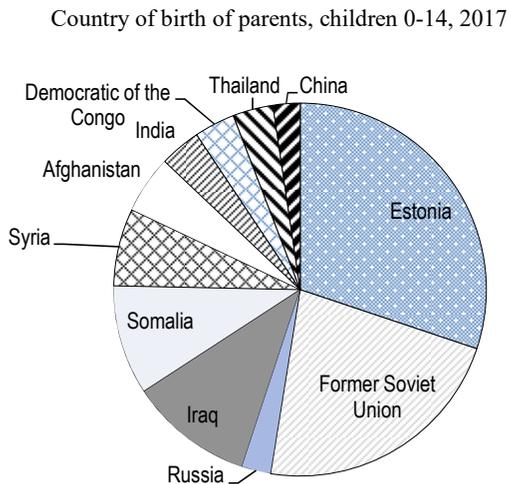
### ***Early identification of language difficulties is central to addressing problems early***

For those young people who are born in Finland with migrant parents, or who arrive before the end of compulsory schooling, one of the major challenges they face is adapting to a language of instruction that is often different from the language they speak at home. Recent research indicates that while it takes children approximately two years to acquire communicative language skills, they can take up to seven years to develop the academic language used in school environments (OECD, 2015). Furthermore, due to the complexity of the Finnish language, these findings are likely to represent a lower bound for children arriving in Finland. Language learning can prove a particular obstacle for those migrants who arrive late in the school system and whose language may impede their abilities in high-stakes tests or drive important educational choices soon after arrival. However, language difficulties are not confined to those arriving late in Finland and can also compromise the learning of those that arrive at a young age, and even the children of migrants born in Finland. If these language difficulties are not identified and addressed at a young age, they will have long-run consequences for the education of the child.

Yet language difficulties are not limited to those children that arrive in Finland during their childhood. Indeed the native-born children of immigrants also often experience language hurdles when making their way through the school system. In 2017, the majority of the native-born children of immigrants

are the children of earlier immigration waves; hence the majority are from Estonian or Russian speaking homes (Figure 5.8). As the children of more recent arrivals, who have a greater linguistic distance to travel, increasingly move into the education system, identifying and addressing language and other learning difficulties from a young age will become increasingly urgent.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 5.8. The majority of children of immigrants currently in the education system have Estonian or Russian parents**



Source: Statistics Finland.

***For those arriving during compulsory education, municipalities may offer preparatory education but are not obliged to do so***

Given the need for language learning and adaptation to a new education system, and the potential delays this can cause for the learning of content, the Ministry of Education and Culture has allocated additional funding to incentivise municipalities to offer preparatory education courses (see Box 5.3). As a result, children that arrive in Finland below the age of 17 should be directed, in the first instance, into *Preparatory Instruction for Basic Education* (PEVA). These preparatory courses are designed to strengthen the language skills and abilities of those who it is deemed will struggle to enter mainstream pre-primary and basic education classes. Prior to the commencement of PEVA training, the teacher, in collaboration with the parents, draws up an individual study plan designed to build upon the pupil's earlier education and experience. Integration into mainstream classes should then begin immediately in subjects where the knowledge of language is not

particularly essential, and should proceed in a gradual way, through collaboration between the preparatory teacher and the recipient teacher thereafter. Where a student's Finnish/Swedish knowledge insufficient to attend regular language/literature courses in compulsory school, courses in Finnish/Swedish as a second language may be offered.<sup>10</sup>

However, while Finland's Basic Education Act suggests that municipalities may organise preparatory basic education, they have no legal obligation to do so. Indeed, in September 2015 only 3 480 students were participating in preparatory studies (Ministry of Education and Culture 2016). This accounts for little more than one in three of the young migrants between the ages of 5 and 19 that arrived in Finland over the course of 2014/2015.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, municipalities are not obliged to organise Finnish/Swedish as a second language courses (though they receive financial compensation for doing so). Thus, while 92 % of foreign-language speaking students participated in second language courses in 2016 access was uneven and many smaller municipalities did not offer such courses (see Portin 2017).<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, many of those young migrants that do receive preparatory training have been unable to attain the language and content objectives necessary for progression into mainstream classes within the number of instruction hours provided. While study plans are individualised to account for the educational background of each child, in practice, heterogeneous teaching groups that incorporate children of differing ages, backgrounds and skills often compromise the efficiency of learning. Alongside this, the arrival of new pupils throughout the academic year can render the design of a coherent teaching plan difficult.

### **Box 5.3 Finnish policy at a glance: Preparatory Instruction for basic education PEVA**

Preparatory instruction for basic education (PEVA) is intended both for childhood migrants and for those pupils with migrant parents whose Finnish or Swedish language skills and/or other abilities are not deemed sufficient to study in mainstream pre-primary or basic education. When needed, PEVA can also be organised to youth and adults with an immigrant background. Taking part in the instruction does not require a residence permit.

**Funding:** PEVA instruction is funded on a per student basis through a statutory government transfer equivalent to 2.49 times the transfer for regular pupils.

**Duration:** Children between the ages of 6 and 10 are eligible for a minimum of 900 hours, while older children are eligible for a minimum of 1000 hours. However, if a pupil is deemed to have sufficient capabilities to thrive in a standard teaching group he/she may be transferred

### **Box 5.3 Finnish policy at a glance: Preparatory Instruction for basic education PEVA (cont.)**

prior to the completion of this allocation. Transferring to a standard teaching group is discussed among parents, teachers, and the school's student welfare service.

**Individual study plans** are drawn up by the teacher in collaboration with the parents. These plans outline the scope and content of courses and are designed to build upon the pupil's earlier educational and other experiences.

**Integration into mainstream classes** can be started from the beginning of the instruction and usually begins in subjects where the knowledge of language is not particularly essential. The instructive teacher is responsible for the integration, but collaboration with the recipient teacher is important during both the design and evaluation stages.

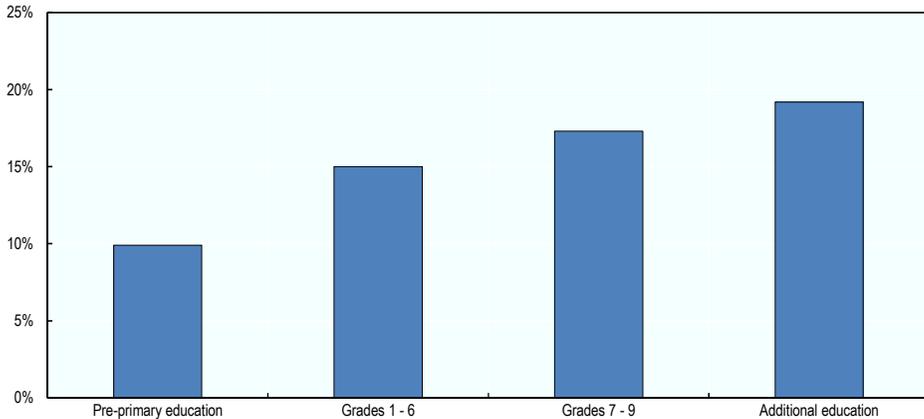
**School autonomy** is substantial and the education provider is responsible for defining class sizes and drawing up the curriculum – including the goals and organisation of instruction as well as the co-operation between pre-primary and basic education, homes and other agents.

**Teacher training (VALMO):** Supplementary training for teachers giving instruction preparing foreign-born children, and native-born children with foreign-born parents for basic education is currently being provided (by the University of Turku and the University of Oulu) for teachers who have recently begun teaching such pupils as well as to teachers with an immigrant background. The training, which is free of charge and is conducted over 16 weekend sessions, provides information, methods and tools for instruction, and works to increase the teacher's knowledge of learning a second language, mother-tongue learning, and of Finnish where necessary.

In Finland, rather than tracking or streaming students into ability groups, school is organised around the provision of differentiated instruction tailored to meet individual learning needs. Indeed, students' characteristics, including their abilities, orientations, but also their personalities are taken into account when choosing pedagogical methods in schools (Väljjarvi and Sahlberg, 2008). As part of normal schooling, therefore, every child has the right to individualised support, and schools are encouraged to intervene at the first signs of learning difficulties. As a result, a relatively high proportion of pupils receive special needs education in their early years, with the proportion decreasing as their needs are addressed and they progress through primary and secondary education. The majority of those receiving special support are identified during pre-primary education, indeed 10% of students receive special support at this stage in their schooling (Figure 5.9). This accounts for more than half of all pupils that receive such support at some point during their school career.

**Figure 5.9. Pupils tend to receive special support early in their educational careers**

Share of pupils having received intensified or special support in basic education, 2016



Source: Statistics Finland (*Vipunen*).

Special needs education is mostly given for a short period of time – for just a few lessons, or a few weeks – and is often given by specialised teachers. Three levels of support are available: general, intensified and special support, with students on special support eligible to have their compulsory education lengthened by an additional school year. The curriculum for this additional year may include: core and elective subjects, vocational orientation studies and/or periods of work experience. There is, however, no nationally defined syllabus or distribution of lesson hours for this tenth year, and organisation is at the discretion of education providers. Only approximately 2% of those who complete basic education currently participate in the additional year.

#### Box 5.4 Recognising risk factors using predictive data in the Netherlands

Many young people who end up dropping out of education struggle with, or disengage from, school for a number of years before they drop-out. As a result, most drop-outs are identifiable, predictable and preventable. In the Netherlands, the *Personal Identification Number* (PGN), which follows students from school to school as they progress through the education system, enables the system to monitor pupils' school careers, school attendance and dropout risk. The PGN offers complete and reliable figures nationally, regionally and at municipal and district levels and all schools in secondary education are expected to register absenteeism, disengagement and dropout. A monthly report is available to municipalities and schools to allow them to give priority to those at risk. In addition, these data are linked to socio-economic data (including demographics, native Dutch citizens, ethnic minorities, unemployment, people entitled to benefits, etc.) by region, city and district, providing a wealth of information for implementing and adjusting policy. This monitoring of results enables the authorities to assess what works and what does not and therefore to disseminate good practices.

Source : Akkerman, Y. et al (2011).

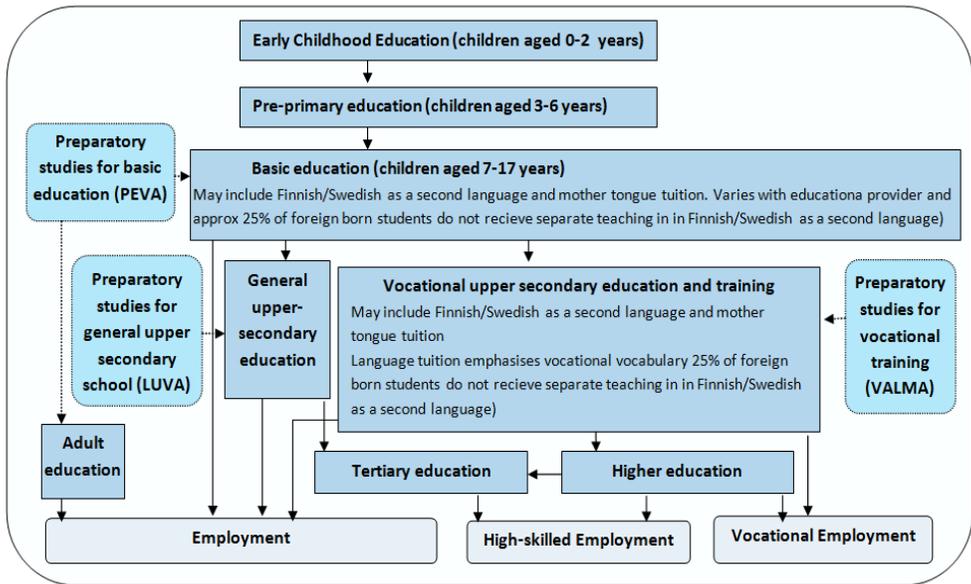
The number of foreign-born students varies substantially from class to class with significant implications for the ease of offering preparatory classes and tailoring these classes to the ages and abilities of attending students. As a result, it is up to the individual school to decide whether preparatory classes will be offered to newly-arrived students, and it is up to the individual teacher to design the content and syllabus of these courses. This large degree of school autonomy in the extent of integration support and the provision of preparatory classes alongside the lack of data linking participation in preparatory classes with educational pathways render the drivers of poor outcomes among young migrants hard to evaluate. And it is important that such local autonomy is supported by careful monitoring of outcomes and the provision of national guidelines on minimum requirements. Further efforts should be made to harmonise the availability of additional support, monitor the integration support tools employed, and the outcomes these achieve. This will enable schools to identify where insufficient support is being offered as well as helping national authorities to and scale-up those interventions found to be effective.

***Foreign born youth, and those with foreign-born parents, are at risk of self-censoring their aspirations***

Following compulsory basic education, school-leavers may opt for general or vocational upper secondary education (Figure 5.10). Both forms usually take three years and, in theory, both give eligibility for higher education. And, while Finland stands out among OECD countries in the lack of high-stakes tests (indeed, the first national assessment is the matriculation examination at the end of general upper-secondary education) the selection of students for upper secondary school is based on their grade point average for the theoretical subjects in the basic education certificate.<sup>13</sup>

Following the completion of basic education, however, the proportion of young people who go on to enrol in upper-secondary education is substantially lower among those born outside Finland and those with foreign-born parents, than in it among their native-born peers with native-born parents. While 96% of Finnish children with native-born parents successfully enrol in upper secondary education at 16/17, following the completion of their basic education, among the foreign-born this figure stands at just 67% while among the native-born children of migrants enrolment in upper-secondary education at age 16/17 stands at 87%.

Figure 5.10. The path to integration in the Finnish school system



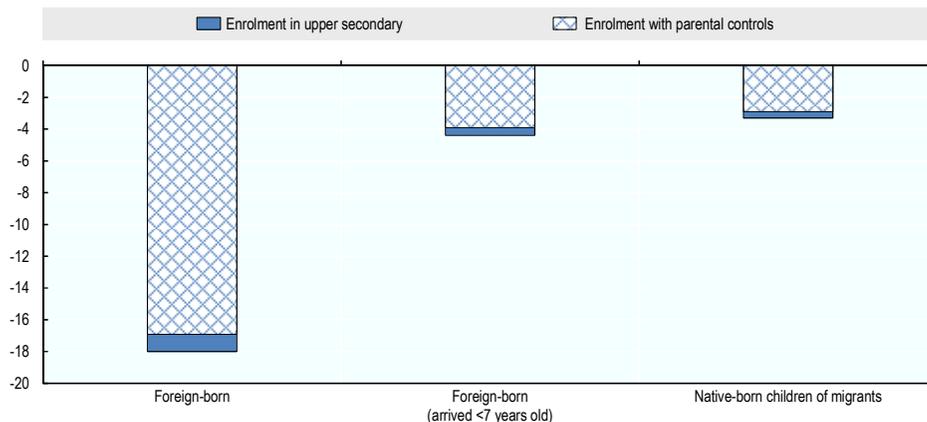
Source: OECD Secretariat based on national legislation and regulations.

Disparities in enrolment in upper secondary education are to be expected to some extent among those foreign-born children who arrive beyond the start of compulsory schooling. These young migrants may find that their struggles with language learning, and other early integration challenges, initially compromise their ability to take on new subject content. Allowing time for newly-arrived migrants to overcome the initial setbacks that, in the presence of age-related hurdles, can constrain their educational options will be important for these late arrivals.

More worrying, from the perspective of integration in education, however, is the low proportion of those that arrived prior to the start of compulsory school who enrol in upper secondary. After nine years in the Finnish education system these young migrants still face enrolment rates that lag over 10 percentage points behind their native born peers (Figure 5.12). This disparity is more than twice as large as the comparable figure in neighbouring Sweden (OECD 2016). These enrolment differentials point to an educational challenge that must urgently be addressed as the numbers in this situation rise.

**Figure 5.11. Foreign-born children are less likely to apply to upper-secondary education**

Percentage point difference in enrolment in upper-secondary education, by migration status, aged 16, 2009-13



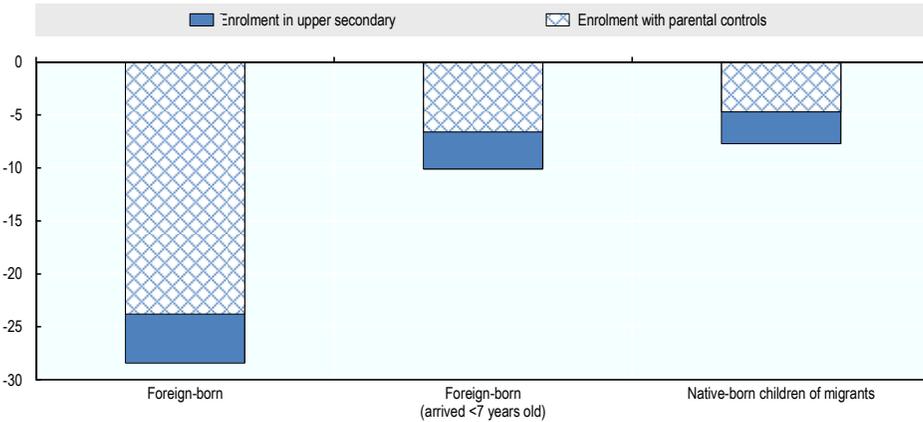
*Notes:* 1. Results show the coefficients of an OLS regression with municipal year fixed effects and controls for parental background characteristics. Parental background variables include: parental income (mean taxable income in the family unit), parental occupations, and parental age. Municipal year fixed effects are included. 2. Parental variables are constructed by linking all persons observed in *FLEED* (15-70 year olds between 1988 and 2013) to a family unite identified by their building, apartment and family code. Parents are defined on the basis of their status in the family, as well as the family type. That is they are defined as household heads and spouses in households that also contain children. This is because information on biological is considered to be less reliable among the migrant families. Given that the definition is not based upon biological relationships it may change from year to year, however, given that the aim is to depict the relationship between childhood conditions and educational outcomes, this should not be regarded as problematic.

*Source:* Secretariat calculations on the basis of administrative data (*FLEED* database).

Lower enrolment in upper-secondary education among migrants, and among those with foreign-born parents, is partially a result of lower applications to upper-secondary education among these groups. Indeed, while 99% of native born students apply to upper-secondary education, one in every five foreign-born students chooses not even to apply. When parental variables that may have some explanatory power over educational aspirations are controlled for – including parental income, occupation, and age – these results remain largely unaffected. Application rates among the foreign-born continue to lag 17 percentage points behind those among the native born (Figure 5.11).<sup>14</sup>

**Figure 5.12. Foreign-born children are less likely to be enrolled in upper-secondary education**

Percentage point difference in enrolment in upper-secondary education, by migration status, aged 16, 2009-13



*Notes:* 1. Results show the coefficients of an OLS regression with municipal year fixed effects and controls for parental background characteristics; 2. Parental background variables include: parental income (mean taxable income in the family unit), parental occupations, and parental age. Municipal year fixed effects are included.

*Source:* Secretariat calculations on the basis of administrative data (*FLEED* database).

Difficulties in the education system can quickly translate into difficulties on the labour market and, as in many OECD countries, the foreign born in Finland are more likely than their native-born peers to fall outside both education and employment, and into so-called *NEET* (Neither in Employment nor Education and Training). The numbers who are in NEET are particularly elevated among young foreign-born women particularly those aged between 29 and 34, 33% of whom are neither in education nor employment (compared to 19% of the native born). Working with these young women – and their families – to build their aspirations and knowledge of what they can accomplish in the Finnish labour market is a pressing priority.

Native-born children of the foreign-born have not, until now, represented a sizeable population in Finland. Thus, while recent policy change has focused on improving the integration outcomes of those born abroad, little has been done to address the needs of those with a foreign background that are born in Finland. These young children, born and educated in Finland, are an important resource in Finland's aging economy. As they grow, enter and navigate the school system and begin their career in Finland, challenges that have already begun to manifest – such as language difficulties and poorly informed career choices – risk becoming more conspicuous. If these challenges are not

addressed in the near future they risk compromising the potential of these young children and the Finnish economy.

The finding that the proportion of children of foreign-born parents who apply to upper-secondary school falls significantly short of the proportion of children of native-born Finns is worrisome. Career choices tend to be shaped by stereotypes and built upon expectations.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, recent research has found that students more likely to self-select into fields in which they expect more success on the labour market (Arcidiacono *et al.*, 2013; Wiswall and Zafar, 2015).<sup>16</sup> These expectations can easily become self-fulfilling as students with low expectations will have a smaller incentive to perform well academically (Jacob and Wilder, 2011; Beaman *et al.*, 2012; Stinebrickner and Stinebrickner, 2014). If entrenched stereotypes about which careers are suitable for those with a foreign background are allowed to impact upon educational decisions, these stereotypes will perpetuate.

Informing and guiding these young migrants, and their families, about the different options offered by the Finnish educational system is a first step of central importance. Both the pupils and the parents need to know what consequences different educational choices have in terms of further education. Career guidance is relatively strong in Finland and, curriculum guidelines require career education to be included into basic education with two hours per week provided in grades 7-9.<sup>17</sup> However, to the extent that young migrants, and those with foreign-born parents, have more limited expectations about what they can achieve in the Finnish education system, targeted support for educational aspirations will be an important tool in addressing educational disparities. The degree to which this is actually the case in Finland is not, however, known.

### ***Access to formal schooling is limited for those who arrive post compulsory education***

While helping young arrivals and native-born children with foreign-born parents to thrive in school is clearly a challenge in Finland, providing support for those who arrive just before adulthood is yet more challenging still.

Young migrants arriving in Finland beyond the age of compulsory school have two available options in order to enter mainstream formal education.<sup>18</sup> The first is to enter preparatory studies for vocational training (*VALMA*), and the second, since 2014, is to enter preparatory studies for general upper-secondary education (*LUVVA*). Neither of these preparatory courses, however, is particularly well adapted for new-arrivals. Preparatory studies for vocational training (*VALMA*), provides 6-12 months of language and content-based education. *VALMA* is not targeted at the foreign-born but also supports

the smooth transition to qualification-oriented studies for youth with special needs, and those outside the education system.<sup>19</sup> Tuition, however, is conducted entirely in Finnish/Swedish, and it is only once they have accessed vocational upper-secondary education, that foreign-born students may study Finnish/Swedish as a second language or, possibly, remedial education. Preparatory studies for those choosing to enter general upper-secondary education (LUVA), on the other hand, take one academic year and, alongside language studies, incorporate subject-based study, knowledge of society and culture, and student counselling. Basic education subjects can also be incorporated as part of LUVA to improve grades. However, numbers are limited and, in 2015 just 200 students participated in preparatory studies for general upper secondary education.

Those for whom the language requirements of VALMA are prescriptive may pursue a modular competence-based qualification (*OPVA*) as discussed in Chapter 4. Indeed, just 55% of all foreign born who gained vocational qualification in 2015 did so in the school system – compared to 76% among the native-born population and a full 13% of all competence-based students are foreign-born (Figure 5.13). The assessment procedure, upon which competence-based qualifications are based are well adapted to the needs of those who arrive in Finland after the end of compulsory education. Substantial language support is provided during the assessment process to ensure that linguistic deficiencies do not impede the participant’s performance. And, depending on the subjects covered, vocational upper-secondary qualifications can even be obtained as competence-based qualifications. Importantly, as discussed in Chapter 4, the qualifications obtained in this manner are comparable to those obtained within the school system. As a result, potential employers are easily able to assess the level and standard of competence-based qualifications. Furthermore, through the competence-based qualification system students can gain eligibility for further studies at universities of applied sciences in the field.

Preparatory training for competence-based qualifications is offered, primarily, by adult education providers. While this system works well for some migrants, it may not provide sufficient structure and support for the most vulnerable youth – particularly for those young migrants who arrive without the support of a family and who make up the vast majority of those arriving beyond the age of compulsory school.

***Unaccompanied minors, in particular, may need more structure and support than is offered by the competence-based qualifications***

Unaccompanied minors - young migrants, under the age of 18, who have been separated from both parents - represent a particularly vulnerable group when it comes to access to education. These vulnerable young people

represent the vast majority of young migrants arriving beyond the age of compulsory schooling. Indeed, of the 3 000 asylum-seekers that arrived in Finland between the ages of 16 and 18 in 2015, approximately 2 800 were unaccompanied.

Alongside the hurdles faced by all migrants – language hurdles, unrecognised credentials, discrimination etc. – unaccompanied minors face additional hurdles resulting from the lack of financial and psychological support provided by a family. The structure provided by a formal education, and the peers that accompany it, are likely to be particularly beneficial to these young arrivals who may not find the same benefits within the competence-based system. However, the age profile of unaccompanied minors, the majority of whom arrive at 16 or 17 years of age means that these newly-arrived children have very little time with which to learn the host country language and take on new content before they must face high-stakes tests that determine eligibility for further education.

In addition to a lack of familial support during the integration process, unaccompanied minors are often expected to support the family they left behind through sending remittances. As a result, these children often feel substantial pressure to start work as soon as they can and may not feel they afford to spend time in education. This drive to begin work immediately means that job search intensity is often high among unaccompanied minors. It can, however, undermine long-term employment prospects, as those unaccompanied minors who find employment, often find themselves in low skilled and unstable work. Arriving with little prior education, limited language skills, a lack of understanding of host country labour markets, and a strong incentive to find work, few unaccompanied minors are able to attain the necessary education to prepare them for a resilient career. Many OECD countries have made additional efforts to smooth their integration into the formal school system (see Box 5.5).

### Box 5.5. Integrating those who arrive late in OECD countries

**Extending compulsory school age.** In **New Zealand** compulsory school is age 6-16 but most children start at age five and education is free until age 19. If need be, refugees are allowed to stay in high school beyond that age – until they are 20 or 21. Policy in **Sweden** has been moving in a similar direction and, in 2016, the age at which schooling is compulsory was prolonged by one year. Discussion is now focused on the age limit before which eligibility for upper-secondary must be achieved. Currently, after 20, young people should enter the adult education system which is generally considered to be a less supportive environment.

**Basing class assignment on skills and knowledge assessments.** In **Sweden**, recent changes have ensured that, since 2016, the grade in which newly-arrived students are placed is determined by a skills mapping assessment. These assessments, which are based upon the new student's knowledge, age and personal circumstances, are carried out in the first two months of a new student's arrival in school. Prior to the change, grade mapping was left to the discretion of the municipality but grades were frequently determined independently of the student's abilities. **Norwegian** municipalities and schools have a large degree of autonomy regarding the support they offer to new arrivals. However, changes to the Education Act will open the possibility to assign students to classes based on their skill level and not only on their age.

**Providing orientation classes or courses.** While some countries choose to immerse newcomer students who are young enough to enter school into mainstream classes right away, others provide intensive language instruction first. This divide exists largely between mainly English-speaking traditional migration countries where migrant students are generally integrated straight away, and non-English speaking European countries, which tend to favour separate introductory classes. In **New Zealand**, for example, young migrants are integrated immediately into regular classes but may receive special support for up to five years. Students can also receive support from bilingual tutors in order to follow the mainstream curriculum. These tutors play the dual role of supporting the students' adjustment while at the same time supporting the teacher with building bilingual assessments and removing other barriers to learning. Similarly, Canada supports young arrivals to orientate themselves within the school system through its *Settlement Workers in Schools* (SWIS) programme. In **Switzerland**, the speed with which students are integrated into mainstream classes depends upon the canton. In areas where there are few new arrivals, students are integrated directly into mainstream classes with the support of special education teachers. In areas where there are sufficient new arrivals to support introductory classes, students are allocated to these classes for a maximum of one year, where they are taught by regular teachers with an additional qualification in German or French as a second language. In **Sweden**, since 2016, children are offered a phased transition such that, alongside preparatory classes, they are placed in regular classes in subjects where this is possible. In **Belgium**, a nine-week integration course is offered during the summer in Brussels, it is tailored to 16-17 year olds new comers who are not yet eligible for regular integration courses for adults. The programme provides these new arrivals with an opportunity to practice their Dutch and attend lessons about life in Belgium even though school is not in session.

## Notes

1. While, clearly, refugees are particularly vulnerable, discussion of the challenges facing Finland's refugees is integrated throughout the entirety of the report.
2. Indeed, a 2015 report published by the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Employment and the Economy acknowledges that it is difficult to obtain information on integration plans drawn up for minors and for families.
3. In Finland, as in Norway, and Sweden, the gender gap in the employment rate is lower than 3 percentage points for highly-educated men and women, and even among those with a low level of education, gender gaps are among the smallest in all OECD countries (OECD 2017).
4. In some cases, parents may receive care allowance and maternity/parental allowance concurrently if the total care allowance they receive for other children under school age exceeds the maternity/parental allowance. However, care allowance is not paid for children for whom maternity, paternity or parental allowance are received. Maternity allowance is paid for 105 working days during maternity leave, after which parental leave begins. Either the mother or the father can take a parental leave, or the parents can take turns. During the parental leave, KELA pays a parental allowance for 158 working days.
5. Refugee countries include those from which over 15% of arrivals in Finland report refuge/displacement as a reason for migration in their benefit application for KELA (This group includes Somalia, Sudan, Iraq, Iran, former Yugoslavian countries, Burma and Viet Nam).
6. Over 64% of Finland's foreign-born population is concentrated in the lowest three income deciles.
7. Indeed recent work by Garcia et al, (2016) has estimated that the ABC/CARE early childhood development programme in the US generated a benefit, in terms of improved earnings, but also reduced life-cycle

medical costs and improvements in the quality of life, of 7 USD for every 1 USD spent on the programme estimate.

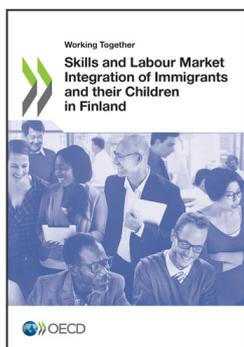
8. The National Audit Office of Finland estimates that more than half of foreign-born children are placed in a grade lower than their age group.
9. See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the role of linguistic distance.
10. In practice, students often participate in a mixture of both Language/Literature courses and Swedish/Finnish as a second language.
11. A further 50 new preparatory education groups were opened over the autumn of 2015 to accommodate the large number of young-asylum seekers arriving during this period.
12. National Audit Office of Finland found in 2015, that by the end of the compulsory school, 87 % of students gained a minimum of good level or fluent level (B1.1 –B1.2) in Finnish as a second language.
13. Entrance and aptitude tests may also be used, and students may be awarded points for hobbies and other relevant activities.
14. Foreign-born children who arrived before that start of compulsory education, and children born in Finland with migrant parents are approximately 4% less likely to apply to upper secondary education.
15. In Finland, for example, boys are over four times as likely as girls to expect a career as an engineer, scientist or architect (OECD, 2015b).
16. There is also a wide literature using subjective expectations to understand decision-making under uncertainty (see Manski, 2004 for a review).
17. One hour per week in the optional tenth grade and in upper secondary education. Vocational school students receive 1.5 weeks of career guidance and counselling.
18. Alternatively, young migrants arriving after the end of compulsory school may join adult education life-long learning institutions (*aikuisten perusopetus*), or subscribe directly with the PES for an integration plan.
19. This support is also available to foreign-born adults, who may access VALMA alongside integration training or shortly thereafter.

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