



**Akava
students**

Akava students'

**Parliamentary
election goals
2027**



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We look at issues from the intersection between higher education and working life.

Akava Students promotes the interests of students and recent graduates of universities and universities of applied sciences. We represent the over 127,000 student members of Akava affiliates.

Our activities are not limited to any particular field of study or educational institution; rather, we highlight the common national interests of all higher education students. Our supervision of interests focuses mainly on education, labour force and sociopolitical matters.

This programme sets out the Akava Students' parliamentary election goals for the 2027 elections.

The document is divided into two parts: working life goals and educational goals. All the objectives focus on improving



the future prospects of students and recent graduates and on preventing fears associated with working life: uncertainty about employment, the realisation of employee rights and benefits and the adequacy of one's skills. Students must have a secure livelihood without being forced into debt. An adequate livelihood creates a foundation for peace of mind to study, and securing it will benefit not only individuals but also society as a whole by strengthening competence acquired during education and by building future growth.

Young people's optimism about the future has significantly weakened in recent years. The MY MENTAL HEALTH #ImportantPartOfMe campaign showed that students are burdened by many employment-related concerns caused by problems in education and the labour market. This is reflected in students' fear of transitioning to working life and making major life decisions, such as settling down and starting a family. These decisions involve significant financial investments and many lack the confidence or ability to make them. In order to be able to focus on building their skills, careers and lives, students need to believe in their prospects. Akava Students is working towards a future where education and competence levels are high, the value of education is recognised and the transition to working life is smooth.



Working life

Working life skills

Finland needs a skilled labour force that is able to meet the needs of a rapidly changing working life. Technological development, declining population and the transformation of work put pressure on both the education system and individuals who find it increasingly important to learn and evolve throughout life. In order to maintain competence and enable individuals to move flexibly from education to working life and vice versa, continuous learning must be supported in concrete ways.

The strengthening of working life connections already during studies at all higher education levels increases students' readiness to enter the labour market and meet the demands of work. At the same time, it is important to address the uncertainties and fears associated with entering working life, which may appear already in the early stages of education.

- Higher education institutions should make the transition to working life smoother by developing conversation, teamwork and other working life skills and by promoting awareness.
- Language and culture courses that further enhance working life shall be developed, and it shall also be made possible for employees to complete the courses during working hours.
- The State and social partners shall work together to develop solutions that effectively promote quality employment opportunities for highly educated young experts, as well as for international talent.

International talent

Approximately half of international students leave Finland after graduation. Employers do not value skills acquired abroad and participation in local networks is often difficult. The number of international students who intend to stay in Finland declined by 7% between 2024 and 2025. The reasons cited included unemployment, stricter immigration legislation and the general economic downturn. Of the international students who do an internship, write their thesis or have a summer job in Finland, 80% stay in the country after graduation, while without such experience, the corresponding figure is only 20%. Therefore, we propose the following:

- As part of their degree, international students shall be offered high-quality and continuous national language studies that aim at a high level of competence.
- The resources for language teaching in higher education shall be increased to ensure its availability to those who need it.
- All those who have completed a higher education degree in Finland, including a first-cycle degree from a university of applied sciences, and who meet the required language criteria, shall be granted a permanent residence permit to aid their integration into society.

- Tuition fees paid by international students shall be tax deductible after graduation when they find employment in Finland.
- Structural racism shall be actively eliminated in higher education institutions, working life and student communities through realistic job search and language requirements, increased anonymous recruitment and guidelines against harassment and discrimination that align with the Government's action programme.
- The degrees of international students must include working life skills and studies in national languages.

Fixed-term contracts

Fixed-term employment contracts are becoming the new norm for employers and employees in private and public sectors alike. For students and recent graduates, this means accepting a fixed-term contract in an already unstable life situation, which makes it difficult to plan for the future and settle down.

Fixed-term contracts are detrimental not only to students and graduates, but also to society, which suffers when students and young people are unable to find permanent employment and build their lives. Fixed-term contracts also add to the risk of discrimination in the workplace, particularly during pregnancy, making the decision to start a family that much harder.

- There must be a legitimate reason for all fixed-term contracts in order to reduce the chaining of fixed-term contracts common in many sectors.
- Employees shall also have the right to resign from a fixed-term employment relationship.



Education

Raising the level of competence

The skills of the next generation are built by placing education and competence at the top of the priority list. The number of students in higher education in Finland has grown by 12% between 2015 and 2022, which is well above the OECD average (5%). At the same time, however, per-student expenditure has fallen by 13.5%, while in other OECD countries it has grown by an average of 8.6%. Finland must invest more in higher education in order to regain its position as a leading country in education. Without high-quality and long-term investments, Finland will not be able to reform, increase its expertise or maintain its position as a competitive and knowledge-intensive economy. The possibility for students to concentrate full-time on studies is a prerequisite for their well-being and learning and for raising the level of education.

- More than 60% of the 25–34 age group shall have a higher education degree by the 2040s, and Finland shall endeavour to be among the top countries in education.
- Each student shall have equal access to quality education regardless of their region of residence and the higher education institution in question.
- The previously abolished adult education allowance shall be replaced with solutions that enable continuous learning and retraining in working life.
- Internships available to students in higher education and the resources boosting their creation must be increased to avoid situations where graduation is delayed due to a lack of internships.

Resources

The proportion of young adults with a higher education degree in Finland (39%) is still lower than the OECD average (48%). The gap between Finland and the other Nordic countries is growing wider. We must continue to increase the number of people in education and ensure adequate resources. In addition to increasing the number of graduates, we need high-quality degrees and professionals with adequate working-life skills. This requires more funding and resources for education. Increasing the number of starting places without increasing the resources means that the current resources – personnel, facilities, services and teaching materials – must cater for a growing number of students. Akava aims to increase the funding for higher education institutions to around 10 billion euros to safeguard the level and quality of education.

- Higher education leading to a degree must be free of charge for all students.
- Open universities should not have the right to award degrees.



- The resourcing of education shall be based on a parliamentary agreement for a plan that extends beyond government terms, enabling long-term planning and predictability for higher education institutions.
- When increasing the number of starting places, higher education institutions and the State must take into account the financial resources needed to ensure and develop high-quality education. Increasing the number of starting places should not lead to cuts in spending per student. Sector-specific differences, completion rates and labour market needs must also be taken into account.
- We support Akava's goal of increasing the level of funding for higher education institutions to around 10 billion euros. We emphasise the importance of core funding to ensure the autonomy of higher education institutions.

Access to higher education

The 2025 joint higher education application round closed with almost 150,000 applicants, but just 55,000 study places available. Streamlining access to higher education would enable a sustainable increase in the level of education and ensure the availability of a skilled workforce far into the future. With shrinking age groups, we must aim to ensure that a larger proportion of each group graduates from higher education institutions. Current working life requires the continuous development of skills and adaptability to changes. Continuous learning facilitates career changes, retraining and the acquisition of new skills.

The current quota for first-time applicants ties students to their chosen path, and decisions about the future career and specialisation must be made at a very young age. Flexible educational paths in the early stages of studies would alleviate the considerable pressure on young people to make the correct decision almost immediately after completing their upper secondary education.

- There shall be equal opportunities for higher education applications regardless of educational background.
- A trial of sufficient duration shall be conducted where unemployed people are allowed to study while unemployed on a much broader basis or even without restrictions.
- Students should not lose their first-time status in their first degree programme until they have completed 60 credits. If a student accepts a second place of study within the first-time quota, their previous right to study expires.



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