

# Conclusions and recommendations of the National Audit Office

## Integration training

The audit covered integration training of immigrants over the age of 17. The training is arranged mainly as labour market training, but it can also be arranged as voluntary training.

The purpose of the audit was to assess effectiveness of integration training arranged by the TE administration and related language training. The effectiveness of integration training was assessed from the perspective of the economic efficiency and coverage of training, as well as from the perspective of how effectively immigrants were directed to training. Effects of training were assessed particularly on the basis of the language skills achieved by the participants.

The set target language skill level is not achieved in many cases. Between 2013 and 2016, a little less than 35% of all the persons who completed their integration training achieved the language skills required for work and further studies (level B1).

Effectiveness of integration training is monitored with the help of the participants' unemployment rate. As of 2017, annual national and regional target levels for the maximum number of participants who remain unemployed three months after the end of integration training have been set. However, using only the unemployment rate of the persons who completed their training cannot be considered a sufficient indicator for the effectiveness of integration training.

In the state budget proposals, on average EUR 82 million per year was reserved for integration training services between 2015 and 2018. As the number of immigrants increased, the appropriations for integration training in the budget were increased by 45% in 2016. The number of persons who completed integration training increased by some 35% from 2015 to 2016.

The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment is responsible for general development and planning of the integration policy. Furthermore, the Ministry steers the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centres) in all matters related to integration. The ELY Centres carry the responsibility for training arrangements in their respective areas. The Employment and Economic Development Offices (TE Offices) guide immigrants to integration training arranged as labour market training or encourage them to seek for voluntary training. The Finnish National Agency for Education sets the curriculum for integration training offered to adult immigrants.

## Integration training procurement is systematically arranged and adequately steered

Integration training procurement is systematically arranged and quality is emphasised during competitive bidding. The price of a student's working day somewhat decreased in 2016.

The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment steers the ELY Centres in integration training matters mainly through procurement guidelines and regulations. Such steering can be considered adequate. Appropriations reserved for employment and labour market training are distributed using criteria determined by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment to the ELY Centres as a total sum. The ELY Centres can

exercise discretion in the procurement of both vocational labour market training and integration training. Economic efficiency of procured training could not be reliably assessed on the basis of the information available.

### Immigrants are directed to training faster than before, but waiting times between TE Offices vary

According to employment service statistics, a total of 17,893 integration plans were prepared in the entire country in 2016. As there are no statistics on the number of immigrant customers and initial assessments, coverage of the integration plans could not be calculated.

The waiting time for both the initial assessment test and the training course itself shortened between 2013 and early August 2017. The waiting time for training decreased from a little over 160 days in 2014 to 80 days in 2016. Meanwhile, the number of persons waiting for an initial assessment and training has clearly increased. The waiting times between the different TE Offices vary, however, and the set goals have not been achieved in all regions. According to information from the Koulutusportti data system, training courses have become shorter, but the time used by immigrants for training has simultaneously increased.

The implementation of integration training is monitored by ELY Centres and TE Offices with the help of final reports, monitoring visits and regular meetings with teachers. Koulutusportti is used as a tool to monitor integration training and voluntary training by the TE Offices. On the basis of the audit, the operative monitoring of the training by the ELY Centres and the TE Offices has been appropriately arranged.

### Ministry monitors effectiveness of training with the help of participants' unemployment rate

Integration training effectiveness targets for each ELY Centre were set in 2017. The indicator used to assess the effectiveness is the participants' unemployment rate.

The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment uses employment service statistics based on a customer register to monitor how many integration training participants are employed or in further training three months after the end of their training course. The procedure is the same as for vocational labour market training. Furthermore, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment has annually studied the status of customers of the TE Services by using employment statistics maintained by Statistics Finland. This provides a better idea of how many immigrants have started work or further training, or received other assistance from TE Services, but it does not provide a comprehensive idea of the effectiveness of the actions, either. What is lacking is a comparison with persons who have not been subject to any actions. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment has also ordered an outside assessment based on long-term monitoring regarding the impact of the TE Services on the labour market status of immigrants. The assessment also covered integration training.

The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment has not assessed the development of the training participants' language skills, even though learning the language can be considered a prerequisite for employment or further training. The participants complete language tests, and the results of these tests are annually reported in statistics of Koulutusportti.

The audit revealed that the set target language skill level is not achieved in many cases. Between 2013 and 2016, a little less than 35% of

all the persons who completed their integration training achieved the language skill level B1. The level of language skills depended on the person's background, initial language skills and the training content. The training service provider was deemed to have an impact on the language skill level achieved by the participants even after the information about background and training period were taken into account in the analysis. People who participated in labour market training had a slightly better chance to achieve a higher language skill level than people participating in voluntary training.

On the basis of the audit findings, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment does not have at its disposal sufficient information about the impact of integration training on the development of immigrants' language skills or employment.

#### Recommendations of the National Audit Office:

1. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment should develop the monitoring of the effectiveness of integration training to ensure that information collected with nation-wide data systems is better utilised in the planning and steering of integration training, and in the assessment of its effectiveness.
2. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment should order an assessment on integration training practices and other integration measures on employment and the achievement of sufficient language skills.
3. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment should arrange testing of immigrants' language skills to ensure that the TE administration has at its disposal comparable information on the effectiveness of different language training providers in the achievement of immigrants' target language skill level.