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Valtiontalouden säästöjen vaikutukset sivistyksellisiin oikeuksiin

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This report is an assessment of the impact of the Government's saving decisions made in 2011–2015 on the fulfilment of educational and cultural rights in early childhood education and in general education. The assessment has been performed based on the monitoring obligation set for the Government by the Parliament when it approved the Government's proposal on the revision of the Act on the Financing of Educational and Cultural Provision, and on some related acts (HE 258/2014), 30 December 2014. The assessment was commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Culture. In accordance with the commission, the assessment covers early childhood education, pre-primary education, basic education, general upper secondary education, basic education in the arts and liberal adult education. Vocational education was not included in the commission and has therefore also not been included in this assessment.

In this assessment, educational and cultural rights are defined as the rights prescribed in the constitution and in the legislation pertaining to education. The assessment presents an outline of the development of the costs and funding of early childhood education and general education, and the changes that providers of education have made in their operations.

The assessment has been carried out using existing statistics and a survey directed at providers of early childhood education and general education (hereinafter referred to as “providers”). A representative sample was achieved in the sectors of pre-primary education, basic education, general upper secondary education and liberal adult education. In the sector of early childhood education, the number of respondents remained slightly lower but was still representative at the national level. The total number of providers of basic education in the arts is not known. A total of 284 providers responded to the survey.

As a rule, the funding and resources of the early childhood education and general education provided by municipalities and other providers have not been reduced nearly as much as the saving decisions made by the Government would imply. The nominal costs used as the basis for central government transfers to local government have decreased continually when compared to actual costs.

The providers who have undertaken to save costs report that they have targeted the savings at personnel costs. Based on this assessment, savings have been achieved in early childhood education through working time and annual leave arrangements. Some providers of basic education, general upper secondary education, basic education in the arts and liberal adult education have reduced the number of lessons given. On the other hand, most of the providers of pre-primary education, basic education and general upper secondary education have not changed their substitute teacher practices, and the number of teachers participating in continuing education has increased to some extent. If an assessment of the impacts of savings targeted at personnel costs is considered necessary, the actions taken in pre-primary education, basic education and general upper secondary education should be analysed in more detail.

While the Government has made decisions on savings, the average costs for students in pre-primary education, basic education and general upper secondary education have remained the same or increased from 2006 to 2015. This means that municipalities and other providers have increased their own proportion of funding. The cost increases have not, however, resulted from teaching costs; the proportion of teaching costs of the total costs of basic education and general upper secondary education has changed very little. In pre-primary education, the proportion of teaching costs has clearly decreased. It must be noted that costs per student have not developed in a unified manner for providers of different sizes: for large providers, the cost per student has decreased, while for small providers, the opposite is true. Differences in available resources are reflected on the operations. For example, the average class size in the first grades of basic education is smaller by two pupils in rural municipalities than in urban municipalities.

In basic education in the arts, the number of students covered by the lesson-based system of central government transfers to local government has not changed between 2011 and 2015. According to estimates from providers and considering all basic education in the arts, one third of the providers has experienced a decrease in the number of students, for one third the number of students has remained unchanged, and for one third it has increased. Studies in all the subjects included in the basic education in the arts have become more expensive at providers covered by the system of central government transfers to local government. At the same time, the operating costs for the basic education in circus arts, crafts, architecture and literary art have decreased, which means that the development of student fees does not follow the development of costs. No commensurate data is available on the costs of basic education in the arts not covered by the system of central government transfers to local government.

Funding provided for liberal adult education within the system of central government transfers to local government has developed in different directions between 2011 and 2015, which means that increased inequality exists among organisers of different types of liberal adult education. The trends can be observed when looking at student fees. For example, the student fees for folk high schools have increased by 23 per cent on average, while the student fees for sports institutes have decreased.

Regional state administrative agencies play a central role in monitoring the organisation of education. However, regional state administrative agencies do not systematically gather information on complaints and claims for revised decisions concerning the organisation of pre-primary education

or general education. The monitoring and control of the fulfilment of educational and cultural rights and obligations could be rendered more efficient for example by targeting larger resources from regional state administrative agencies for the task. The agencies could systematically gather data of complaints, claims for revised decisions and other observations pertaining to the matter, and prepare an annual report of these to the Ministry of Education and Culture. More efficient monitoring of the long-term effectiveness of government aid directed at the development of general education should also be ensured.