



Country Facts

Official Name: Republic of Finland

Form of State: Parliamentary Republic

Total Area: 338,000 sq km, which makes Finland the seventh largest country in Europe

Neighbouring Countries: Sweden, Norway, Russia, Estonia

Capital: Helsinki

Main Cities & Population: Helsinki (555,000), Espoo (213,000), Tampere (195,000), Vantaa (178,000), Turku (172,000) and Oulu (120,800). Approximately one million people live in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area.

Population: 5,2 million

Population Density: 17 inhabitants per square kilometer, 62 % of the population lives in towns and cities.

Major Exports: Electronic and electrical products, pulp and paper, machinery and equipment, metal products, transport vehicles, timber and wood, chemicals.

The Finnish Foreign Ministry's information pages (<http://virtual.finland.fi>) provide information on a broad spectrum of issues.

Before arrival in Finland.

It is advisable to contact the Finnish diplomatic mission (Embassy/Consulate) abroad for advice regarding the rights of employment and residence in Finland. A list of these can be found from the website of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs <http://formin.finland.fi/english/>

Citizens of the EU/EEA member states may also contact their nearest **EURES-adviser**. EURES-advisers are trained specialists who provide the three basic EURES services of information, guidance and placement, to both jobseekers and employers interested in the European job market. The EURES services are presented on the Internet at <http://europa.eu.int/eures>

Population registration.

For residence of longer than three months, it is necessary to apply for a residence permit. Residence permits can be obtained through the local police authorities. The local magistrates office (www.maistraatti.fi/en/index.html) should then be notified of your permanent residence. Persons entered into the population register are then given their own social security number for Finland. See also the website of the Population Registration Centre at www.vaestorekisterikeskus.fi

Social Security & Pensions.

If you are unemployed and entitled to unemployment benefit in your home country (within EEA) before leaving to Finland, and if you have been claiming the benefit for at least four weeks, you may continue to receive it for up to three months while you look for work in Finland. You should inform the employment office in your country of your intention to look for work in Finland well in before your departure. Your employment office will give you a form E303 to be handed into the public employment office (työvoimatoimisto) in Finland. Do it as soon as possible, no later than seven days after your arrival in Finland. This form secures the payment of your unemployment benefit in Finland.

The Social Security Institute in Finland (KELA) and the benefits system are explained on the following Internet pages: www.kela.fi

The Finnish Centre for Pensions assists, gives advice and provides service to those insured within the earnings-related pension scheme (www.etk.fi)

Taxation.

State income tax varies progressively depending on a persons income. When starting work in Finland, it is important to apply to the local tax office for a tax card which the employer will need. More information about taxation can be found from the website at www.vero.fi

Employment issues.

Many of the open vacancies in Finland are advertised through the public employment service (www.mol.fi). Most major newspapers also carry job advertisements and the Sunday edition of the Helsingin Sanomat contains an employment supplement. Using the internet as a recruitment channel is very common; many companies recruit with the help of their internet pages. A growing number of vacancies are also advertised through private recruitment agencies.

In years to come, the labour shortage is expected to increase due to the availability of jobs when a large percentage of the population reach retirement age. As a result of this reduction in the workforce, it is expected that the labour pool will need further specialised expertise in the social services and health sectors, the services sector, and in manufacturing and building construction. It is expected that employment growth will lead to more demand for labour both in the social services and health sector, and in the services sector.

Contracts – When making a contract of employment, check the terms and conditions to ensure that what has been agreed has been fully understood. The salary is likely to be paid directly into a bank, so a bank account will need to be opened.

Trade Unions - Most employees are members of trade unions (<http://www.sak.fi/englanti/working.shtml?347>). Trade union membership brings several advantages, including advice and help in problematic situations. Membership of an unemployment benefit society is also connected to a membership of a trade union, meaning that when a person joins a trade union, he/she joins at the same time an unemployment society. A person can, however, become a member of an unemployment benefit society directly without becoming a member of a trade union. See the following website: www.ytk.fi

Salary - Although there is no universal statutory minimum wage in Finland, most employees are covered by collective agreements specifying minimum pay rates for various sectors. These legally binding minimum pay rates must be applied equally to Finnish and foreign workers. More information can be found from: <http://mol.fi/migration/tyoelamaopaseng.pdf>

Accommodation.

The majority of Finns (60%) own their home. The availability of rented apartments varies from one locality to another; in the capital area and in other bigger cities it can be difficult to find suitable accommodation, at least at a reasonable cost. The rents in Helsinki, especially in the city centre, are considerably higher than in the rest of Finland.

Recognition of Qualifications.

If your degree was obtained within the EU or the EEA, you can request the recognition of your degree from the Finnish National Board of Education (www.oph.fi/english). The recognition and recognition of degrees are subject to a fee.

Studying Finnish.

Finland has two official languages: Finnish and Swedish. Finnish is the main language with Swedish being the mother tongue for about 6% of the population. A knowledge of Finnish forms a vital part of becoming familiar with the culture, norms and functioning of Finnish society. Most employers also require a basic knowledge of Finnish for the positions which they offer. Many local educational institutes offer Finnish language courses and links to some of these can be found from the following website: <http://finland.cimo.fi/studyingfinnish/>

Establishing your own business.

Enterprise Finland (www.enterprisefinland.fi) is an online service which provides information on the obligations towards public authorities that need to be taken into account when setting up an enterprise.

Company information resources.

Contact Finland 2004 is a directory providing companies and investors interested in Finland with information, contact details, business services and partners. The directory also provides the reader with information on major Finnish companies in different fields of business. <http://www.contactfinland.fi/intro.html>

An independent media service unit of Finnish industry and business can be found from: www.finnfacts.com

Useful resources.

'Finland in Figures' is a resource provided by Statistics Finland (www.stat.fi) which contains key statistical data about Finland on 25 different statistical topics including wages and salaries. International comparison data are also included.

The Centre for International Mobility CIMO (www.cimo.fi) is an organisation operating under the Finnish Ministry of Education offering services and expertise to encourage cross-cultural communication. CIMO runs several EU programs and operates bilaterally with many of the EU countries. 'Living in Finland' is a practical guide for international students and trainees and is available through their website.

The Internet pages of the MultiCultural Library (MCL) is a web service updated by Helsinki City Library and Cable Book Library. The aim of the Central Multilingual Library Service is to enhance library services for foreigners, to establish connections with domestic and international organisations, to provide information and guidance, as well as to purchase materials in rare languages for the interlibrary use for the ethnic minorities in Finland. <http://pandora.lib.hel.fi/mcl/english/index.html>

The website of the International Cultural Centre 'Caisa' (http://kulttuuri.hel.fi/caisa/index_en.html) contains a link to their Info Bank (<http://www.caisa.hel.fi/>) which provides important basic information on the functioning of Finnish society and opportunities in Finland. The links take you to information on the services of authorities and organisations.

Finnguide (<http://www.finnguide.fi/>) is an English language gateway providing useful information for anyone planning to visit or live in Finland. The site also includes forums and notice boards for discussion on various topics.