

# INTERNATIONAL JOBSEEKER'S GUIDE



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# Contents

<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2 As an employee in Finland</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 Right to work in Finland	9
2.2 Language skills and qualification requirements	10
2.3 Salary, taxation, and social security	11
<b>3 Looking for work in Finland</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1 Career plan supports fruitful job search and lays the foundation for sustainable career choices	15
3.1.1 Self-knowledge – recognise your competence areas and motivation	15
3.1.2 Self-esteem – have confidence in yourself as an employee and take care of your well-being	18
3.1.3 Labour market awareness – map job opportunities widely	19
3.1.4 Act in a timely manner – do not rush into things, become passive, or adapt too much	21
3.2 Successful job search	21
3.2.1 Goal-oriented job search produces results – prepare a scheduled plan	22
3.2.2 Marketing of competence – make your competence visible	23
3.2.3 Selling your competence – find and contact employers	33
3.2.4 Employee selection – prepare for equal employment negotiations	36
3.2.5 Financial subsidies and incentives – jobseeker’s support forms	38
3.2.6 Job searching resources – take care of your coping and seek help in time	38
<b>4 Terms and conditions of employment and working culture in Finland</b>	<b>39</b>
4.1 Employment contract and terms and conditions of employment	40
4.2 Employee and employer’s rights and obligations	41
4.3 Working culture	42
4.4 Occupational health and safety	45
<b>5 Being an entrepreneur in Finland</b>	<b>47</b>
5.1 Right to operate as an entrepreneur in Finland	48
5.2 Many forms of entrepreneurship	49
5.3 Entrepreneurial readiness	50
5.4 Starting a business	51
5.5 Taxation and social security	54
<b>6 Job search and entrepreneurship support services and networks</b>	<b>56</b>
6.1 Public employment services	57
6.2 Educational institutions	57
6.3 Integration and settlement services	58
6.4 Trade unions	58
6.5 Advisory services for new entrepreneurs and entrepreneur networks	59
<b>7 Terms</b>	<b>60</b>

# 1 Introduction

## Welcome to Finland!

As a jobseeker with an international background, you have a lot to offer to Finnish working life. Your unique expertise and skills are valued in Finland. Finding a job in Finland as a newcomer can be challenging but is still very attainable. You may face obstacles in your job search, such as language barriers and a different working culture, but these can be overcome with information and persistence. Moreover, you will have resources at your disposal to help you with your job search. You can even go into entrepreneurship and start your own business, which is a readily available option for newcomers.

The International Jobseeker's Guide is here to help you by sharing useful information and resources on these topics. To use the guide, simply go to the chapters and subchapters that discuss your point of interest. You can read the guide from cover to cover or focus on the chapters that are relevant to your needs.

The Jobseeker's Guide is part of a series of helpful guides for newcomers created by International House Helsinki (IHH).

To learn more about living, working, and studying in the Helsinki capital region, read the [Newcomer's Guide](#).

To learn more about housing options and find a home in Helsinki, read [Housing in Helsinki](#).

To learn more about International House Helsinki and our services, [visit our website](#).





## 2 As an employee in Finland

As an employee coming to Finland or considering it, there are several things for you to take into account. This chapter provides a brief introduction to the right to work in Finland, language skills and qualification requirements, as well as salary, taxation, and social security.





**Tip:** International House Helsinki organises [Newcomer Information Sessions](#) for international newcomers, which provide advice and support on what steps to take before and after arriving in Finland.

## 2.1 Right to work in Finland

If you are a citizen of an EU Member State, a Nordic country, Switzerland or Liechtenstein, you have the right to work in Finland. As a citizen of an EU Member State, you can freely enter Finland to work, study, or look for a job. If you are planning on staying in Finland for more than 3 months, you will need to register your EU citizen's right of residence in Finland with the Finnish Immigration Service (Migri). You can do this at [International House Helsinki](#) or any other of Migri's service points. You can read more about EU citizens' right of residence [on Migri's website](#).

If you are a citizen of a country other than those mentioned above, you will need a residence permit in Finland. If you apply for a residence permit based on work, you must first find a job in Finland. Check the permits you need in [the Finnish Immigration Service's Application Finder](#) or [Guide for employed persons](#).

You can apply for a residence permit via the [fast-track service](#), together with your spouse and children, if you are coming to Finland to work:

- as a specialist
- as a specialist or manager with an ICT residence permit
- in top or middle management of a company
- with the EU Blue Card
- as a start-up entrepreneur.

When you apply for a residence permit based on work, you must receive an appropriate salary for your work and be able to make ends meet in Finland with the income you receive during the validity of your residence permit. Read more about income requirements on the website of [the Finnish Immigration Service](#).

The right to work in your residence permit defines how you can work in Finland:

For example, if you have been granted the right to work as a specialist, you can only work as a specialist. Similarly, an employee's residence permit allows you to work in the field of your profession for which the permit has been granted.

If you have received a residence permit based on, for example, family ties then you have an unrestricted right to work. In this case, you can work freely in Finland.

If, on the other hand, you have received a residence permit based on, for example, studies, you have a restricted right to work. In this case, you can only do a limited amount of work. [Read more about the right to work on the website of the Finnish Immigration Service.](#)

You will also need a personal identity code when coming to Finland, regardless of your country of origin. You need a personal identity code to take care of many things related to everyday life, such as opening a bank account or obtaining a telephone subscription. Your employer also needs these to fulfil their responsibilities as an employer.

When you are granted a residence permit or a residence card or your right of residence is registered by Migri, your personal information will in most cases automatically be registered in the Finnish Population Information System. [You will also be issued a personal identity code then.](#)

You can also receive a personal identity code by visiting International House Helsinki (IHH). At IHH, the Digital and Population Data Services Agency (DVV) issues personal identity codes and enters data into the Finnish Population Information System. [You can visit DVV's service desk at IHH to apply for a personal identity code and register your address as well as your municipality of residence.](#)

**Tip:** The City of Helsinki's [Spouse Program](#) is a network aimed at foreign spouses who have moved to the Helsinki region from abroad due to their spouse's work. The Spouse Program is a peer community that also offers support for employment in the local labour market.

## 2.2 Language skills and qualification requirements

In Finnish working life, knowing a local language is a great help. Jobs can often involve different language and qualification requirements. This chapter discusses these requirements and how you can have your prior learning recognised.

### Language skills

In Finland, working in English is often possible depending on the field of work and employer. International and technology companies generally have more English-language jobs than other employers. However, studying a local language is always useful. A working level of Finnish or Swedish greatly expands the pool of jobs open to you, and Finnish is also spoken in informal situations at most workplaces.

Employers should justify job-related language requirements in job descriptions (for example, Finnish language skills are needed in interactions with customers). If the language requirements are not directly justified in a job description, you

can ask the recruiter for more information about the tasks requiring language skills. This way, you can check whether your current language skills are sufficient for the job before sending your application.

**Tip:** Start your language studies with online courses already before you arrive in Finland. You can find online and local language courses for Finnish and Swedish in the [Finnishcourses.fi service](https://finnishcourses.fi).

## **Degree and qualification requirements and recognition of prior learning**

Some fields of work are regulated professions, meaning you will need to meet certain qualification requirements to be allowed to work in that profession. These requirements can involve specific education, work experience, or, for example, passing a certain exam. As a rule, you cannot work in a profession before your qualifications have been recognised.

Regulated professions can vary between industries. For example, many professions in the healthcare and education sectors are regulated. For a full list of regulated professions in Finland, [visit the Finnish National Agency for Education's website](#).

It is important to check whether your profession is regulated in Finland. If your profession is regulated, you must submit an application for a Finnish authority to recognise your professional qualifications. Apply for the recognition in good time, because the process can take a few months. Some employers may be able to assist with this process.

If you intend to apply for a post or job for which a university degree is required according to Finnish law, apply for the recognition of your degree from the Finnish National Agency for Education.

**Tip:** Read more about the recognition of prior learning and degrees on the [suomi.fi website](https://suomi.fi).

## **2.3 Salary, taxation, and social security**

This chapter discusses salary payment in Finland, taxation, and what social security benefits you may be entitled to while working in Finland or if you later become an unemployed jobseeker.

### **Salary**

Before starting a new job in Finland, the employer and employee agree on the salary in the employment contract. In the private sector, salaries are usually negotiated. In the public sector, they are often fixed.

It is important to know that Finland, like other Nordic countries, has no general minimum wage. Instead, baseline salaries are generally decided for individual industries and fields of work through union negotiations.

Discussions between unions and employers in individual fields decide on collective agreements, which determine the minimum wage provisions of those fields. Most Finnish employers have to comply with the collective agreement of their respective fields, which means that wages cannot be agreed below the established level of wages. Work must always be compensated with a salary that is considered usual for the industry and reasonable in terms of the difficulty of the task, and the employee must be provided with a payslip.

Read more about salary on the website of [the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in Finland](#).

## **Taxation**

The general rule is that when you arrive in Finland to work, you must pay Finnish income tax directly from your salary. How your earnings are taxed in Finland depends on a variety of factors including your length of stay, whether you belong to a special group, and whether your employer is Finnish or based abroad.

Typically, withholding tax is deducted from the employee's salary every month, the amount of which increases progressively as the salary increases. The employee must provide the employer with an up-to-date tax card so that the employer can take care of withholding tax.

As a worker or entrepreneur in Finland, you will need a Finnish tax card from the Finnish Tax Administration (Vero). To learn more about taxation and how to apply for a tax card in the Helsinki capital region, [visit International House Helsinki's website](#).

Some specific professions, such as construction and shipyard workers, need a tax number instead of a tax card. To learn more about tax numbers, [visit the Tax Administration's website](#).

## **Social security**

You can be entitled to Kela benefits both on the basis of permanent residence in Finland and employment in Finland. Your social security coverage is mainly affected by the country you come from and for how long you plan to work in Finland. If you are working in Finland or have moved to Finland on a permanent basis, you may be entitled to social security coverage under the Finnish social security system. Kela, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland, manages the Finnish social security system. You can be entitled to Kela benefits both on the basis of permanent residence in Finland and employment in Finland.

If you are an unemployed jobseeker, you are entitled to unemployment benefits as long as you register as a jobseeker and take care of the related obligations. The category of unemployed jobseeker also refers to laid-off persons and jobseekers in the inactive population.

As an unemployed jobseeker, you can be entitled to basic unemployment allowance, a labour market subsidy or earnings-related unemployment allowance. To learn more about how to register as a jobseeker, visit [International House Helsinki's website](#).

You can receive earnings-related unemployment allowance from your unemployment fund if you have been a member of the fund for more than six months. The earnings-related unemployment allowance is greater than the basic unemployment allowance or labour market subsidy. The amount of earnings-related unemployment allowance depends on your previous income from work. Read more about joining an unemployment fund on [the website of the Federation of Unemployment Funds in Finland \(TYJ\)](#).

If you apply for or receive unemployment benefits, you must seek full-time employment. The absolute requirement for receiving unemployment benefits is to have an active jobseeker status. Your jobseeker status remains active when you interact with the TE (Employment) Office or local government pilot on employment as agreed and at the agreed time and follow the instructions and deadlines given to you.

Read more about unemployment benefit on [the infoFinland.fi website](#) and about the rights and responsibilities of unemployed jobseekers in [the Job Market Finland service](#).

# 3 Looking for work in Finland

This chapter provides information and tips for preparing a career plan and a job search plan. They lay the foundation for goal-oriented actions. Employers value interaction when applying for a job. An honest description of your own interests and competence areas helps you in negotiations with an employer and in making sustainable career choices.





### **3.1 Career plan supports fruitful job search and lays the foundation for sustainable career choices**

A career plan supports your systematic search for work in the longer term. With the help of a career plan, you can identify your interests, competence areas, and values that you also expect from a potential job and employer. It helps you act rationally and be goal-oriented and timely whether you are employed or you are in between jobs as a jobseeker. A career plan crystallises your job-hunting efforts and helps you develop know-how to meet your own expectations and those of the labour market.

A long-term plan is a vision of work duties and earning opportunities years from now. A short-term plan is made for the coming months and years. Based on the career plan, you can prepare a job search plan with the goal of finding a full-time job directly or it can include the steps you need to take first, such as further training, apprenticeships, part-time jobs, or voluntary work. Prepare your career plan and update it from time to time. Avoid strict limits and making it too wide-ranging.

How do you succeed in preparing and updating your career plan? Explore the following four subsections. You can use them as a framework for your plan.

#### **3.1.1 Self-knowledge – recognise your competence areas and motivation**

Even if a job advertisement contains an endless list of skill requirements, in reality employers are looking for someone who knows the key tasks, wants to make a commitment and develop along with changing tasks.

##### **Motivation**

The most important skill in working life is to recognise your own motivation. Think about how you act and feel in the following situations, for example, constantly changing and unpredictable situations, challenging customer service situations, routine tasks, strictly scheduled tasks, teamwork, and self-directed tasks. You can recognise your motivation through tasks that are done in different ways, in different channels, with different services and products, and in different rhythms. What kind of work inspires you?

##### **Competence – skills and knowledge**

Education-derived skills and competence are often undervalued despite their relevance to the job market. Education provides many transferable skills that are widely used in working life across jobs and fields. List the skills, knowledge, ways of working or networks that you have acquired as a result of your education.

What else have you done? Go over your certificates or think back to your voluntary work assignments. Write down as many skills as possible under each of

your past work or other experiences and, if necessary, ask for help in verbalising them. Outside perspectives can also help you reflect on your skills or even provide references. Your friends or former colleagues can help identify useful skills you have which may be difficult to self-recognise. You can prepare a comprehensive list of your competence areas and skills, but you need to remember to use only the ones that are the most relevant to the job for which you are applying.

## **Do a competence analysis**

Divide your competence areas into professional skills and knowledge and personal skills, for example with the help of two vertical columns.

Mark ++ next to the competence areas that you master and find very interesting. Mark -+ next to those that still need a lot of work but you find interesting. Mark - next to those that you know how to do but do not find interesting.

You now have a list of your strong competence areas that inspire you (++) and of the ones that still require some work (-+). These competence areas help you build your career plan and speak honestly, based on your previous activities, about what you want to do and develop and why.

## **Identify competence development needs**

Skills, know-how, and ways of working learnt in a formal or informal setting and even by chance in everyday life are useful to you personally and in working life. Formal learning is goal-oriented learning to complete a degree. Informal learning includes courses, study groups, and similar. Everyday learning is not goal-oriented and often takes place by chance.

Identifying competence areas acquired through learning and competence development needs is an important career planning skill. Employers value employees' willingness and ability to learn, but at the same time, the forms of learning that support working life have changed. This is especially important since the forms of learning which support working life change regularly, as do identifying different learning difficulties.

Adaptability is a very valuable core skill for jobseekers. Competence needs to change quickly, and personal competence needs to be updated, supplemented, and renewed continuously. It is also important to identify your own learning style and skills. Employers are increasingly expected to adopt practices for the identification and recognition of prior learning. Learning needs need to be updated especially in transition phases, for example when moving on from studies, family leave, sick leave, or job-hunting to work.

Informal learning takes place as part of everyday life or work in the form of distance, multiform and virtual learning or as part of network cooperation. Competence badges help in identifying and documenting what has been learnt.



Competence areas and qualifications acquired abroad should be identified and recognised in cooperation with educational institutions and/or employers.

### **3.1.2 Self-esteem – have confidence in yourself as an employee and take care of your well-being**

High self-esteem is based on self-knowledge. Identifying your own strengths increases your faith in your abilities and gives you the courage to also step out of your comfort zone. Describing your self-esteem in your career plan helps in setting goals and allows you to see different options. Accept the fact that life situations change. The ideal career is does not have to be your past career.

Education and jobs do not necessarily form an uninterrupted continuum. There can be interruptions along the way, employment relationships, and studies that ended. High self-esteem helps you to see your career for what it is and to make the best of it.

Good everyday life improves your self-esteem and alleviates the burden of work. Well-being in daily life is affected by making an adequate living, having a general sense of security, satisfactory living conditions as well as good physical and mental health. Balanced time management is affected by the time spent commuting and appropriate working conditions. The location of the workplace, the flexibility of working hours, and the possibility to smoothly combine leisure and work vary in different life situations.

**Tip:** Write a job advertisement for your dream job and describe your dream workplace. Finish the following sentences: I want to, but... I can, but... I have the time, but... Think about how you can overcome these obstacles in job-hunting and how you can turn them into opportunities.

### **Values and value analysis**

To create a solid career true to your personality, it is important to recognise and follow your values. They can help you make sustainable career choices. Working in conditions or environments that do not match your values can lower job satisfaction. Values are more lasting goals than attitudes and generate strong motivation for action. As an international expert, you also have values that can diversify and enrich Finnish working life.

A value analysis helps you to compare your values with those of the industry, workplace, and work community. Many employers describe their values on their websites and in job advertisements. You can also discuss the company values in the interview and consider how well they match your values.

What values are important to you? Do you have values that leave room for compromise either permanently or in the short term?

Examples of values that can influence career choices and job search are the possibility to influence one's own work and self-direction, social relationships, financial well-being, equal treatment, honesty, values associated with people's well-being, and sustainable development.

### **3.1.3 Labour market awareness – map job opportunities widely**

When looking for jobs, it is important to explore the labour market and be aware of its different avenues and opportunities. The goal is for you to have a realistic and sufficiently diverse picture of job possibilities so that you do not limit your job search.

For example, browse jobs portals and compare jobs across industries and sectors. Identify typical, recurring job titles and search terms that can help you find interesting vacancies. Visit employers' websites and follow them on social media. Explore the websites of interesting trade unions and employers' associations, and browse vacancies there. Find out whether jobs you're interested in require a formal qualification. If you are not sure, you can contact an education institution or the employer directly.

### **Finnish labour market sectors**

Labour market awareness is an important aspect of career planning. The labour market is roughly divided into public and private sector jobs. The public sector includes municipalities, joint municipal authorities and unincorporated enterprises, well-being services counties, and government agencies and institutions. Generally, the public sector applies stricter Finnish and/or Swedish language requirement than the private sector, though as the proportion of international-background residents continues to grow, more municipalities are increasingly looking to employees from different language backgrounds.

As of 2023 the municipal sector employs 19% of the workforce. Municipalities are responsible for education and early childhood education, cultural, youth, library and sports services, city planning, land use, water and waste management, and environmental services. The municipal sector also has responsibilities related to the economy, employment, and housing.

As of 2023 the central government sector employs 6% of the workforce. The government administration is responsible for the fundamental tasks of society, including the rule of law and the safety and security of citizens, tasks associated with well-being, including science, culture, and social security, and tasks associated with supporting infrastructure, livelihoods, and sustainable development.

The private sector includes companies, cooperatives, independent entrepreneurs and self-employed persons, private persons acting as employers, churches,

parishes, organisations, and foundations. As of 2023 sector employs 75% of the employed. The largest branches of activity in Finland are trade and industry.

Private individuals and households also offer some employment. As a rule, it is more typical to work for private individuals and households as an entrepreneur than as an employee.

## **Finding a suitable employer and job**

Jobs are divided into the open labour market and the so-called hidden labour market. In the open labour market, employers advertise their vacancies on their websites, job portals, and social media. It is estimated that less than half of all vacancies are announced through public employment services. Usually, these announcements describe the position and the related strategic competence needs.

However, the majority of positions are filled without a public application process in the so-called hidden labour market. The employer has not had the time to start the recruitment process or the employer has an acute need for an expert, so the employer looks for an expert through their networks or recruiters. You need to be proactive to find such hidden jobs. Contact companies and organisations that you find interesting and ask about their employee needs, even if the organisation does not currently have any publicly announced vacancies. Pursuing hidden jobs this way may not produce results immediately but can pay off in the long run. The employer becomes aware of your motivation and might get back to you at a later stage once a suitable position opens up.

Sometimes, the skill needs of employers and the skills offered by jobseekers do not match, or the employee and employer do not “find” each other. Verbalising and making your competence areas and development desires visible to employers are important. Changes in technology and customer needs change also job descriptions, and their contents can often be negotiated. You can apply for a job in different branches of activity and move between public and private sector positions.

Work that is done in networks and project-like style of working is increasing. Today, jobs that require a high level of expertise are rarely fully time- and place-bound. New positions open especially in small and medium-sized companies.

This change brings about opportunities for jobseekers. You can work for several employers with a zero-hours contract (without a predetermined number of working hours), as a temporary agency worker, send invoices for completed work through an invoicing service, or build your networks and work experience through fixed-term projects. An alternative to paid work is to employ yourself and possibly others through your own business, whether as a registered sole trader or as a limited company.



There is a demand for university-level expertise. According to the Finnish National Agency for Education's Osaaminen 2035 report (2019), the amount of management and specialist work, in particular, will increase. Multicultural work communities and tasks that require international expertise will become more common.

### **3.1.4 Act in a timely manner – do not rush into things, become passive, or adapt too much**

In terms of your career plan, taking action refers to ensuring a successful outcome. Taking good action refers to well-planned and active measures. It means avoiding drifting from one place to another and maintaining presence. Taking action is closely linked to the job search plan, which is discussed in more detail in a later chapter.

Preparing a network analysis guides your actions. Name as many parties as possible that can be of use in finding employment. As an employee, you have your own networks that the employer can utilise in the solicitation of customers, professional cooperation, or advocacy work. Networks are created in working life, education, voluntary work, hobbies, at events, on social media, and for example, through friendships. Your networks can include people who can serve as your referees. After meeting a person for the first time, you can ask them to be your contact on social media or send them a meeting request to help build your network.

#### **Two tips for ensuring good actions as part of the plan:**

- Make a realistic and feasible plan. Consider whether it supports other areas of life: for example, your livelihood, place of residence, health, family ties and friendships, job security, working hours and commuting matters, continuing education, and career opportunities.
- Identify potential career obstacles (hurry, panic, insecurity, hopelessness, health, etc.) and, if necessary, seek discussion help and counselling.

## **3.2 Successful job search**

Job search is goal-oriented marketing and sales of competence. The starting assumption is that the employer does not know enough about the potential of the jobseeker. It is the task of the jobseeker to find the target for marketing and sales, i.e. interesting positions and employers, then make their competence areas visible, and start a dialogue with the employer. Job-hunting often takes place in digital channels or through various networks. The recruitment process usually ends with an interview and possible aptitude assessments. In this chapter, you are given concrete help with the preparation and contents of your job search plan.

### 3.2.1 Goal-oriented job search produces results – prepare a scheduled plan

Job search is a project with a clear beginning and end. The desired outcome is to find employment, but the solution can also be something else, like entrepreneurship or postgraduate studies. You should set a measurable goal and schedule for your job search project. Job search usually involves marketing and sales measures as well as job search documentation and follow-up.

Job search begins with the definition of the goal, which refers to a concrete description of a relevant job at the time of job-hunting: the employer sector(s), the possible branch of activity, location, working hours, competence areas, etc. The contents of a job search are a set of measures related to marketing and selling your competence to the right target groups, in the appropriate channels, and at the right time.

Having a schedule sets the rhythm for the job search and helps in managing your resources. Seeking information and productising and selling your competence drain resources. You should schedule a suitable amount of daily and weekly work for your job search project. Keeping to a schedule is easier when you document your job search in the form of tasks, the progress, and the schedule which you can monitor.

The job search project is divided into two parts in this guide: 1. marketing measures, i.e. job search preparations and the related marketing of competence, and 2. competence sales, i.e. contacting employers in the open and hidden labour markets.



### **3.2.2 Marketing of competence – make your competence visible**

Marketing of competence refers to measures that help you to make your competence areas and motivation visible. These marketing efforts are linked to your career plan, specifying your strengths, values, and learning needs.

#### **CV**

A curriculum vitae (CV) is a summary of know-how and skills that you have used, developed and acquired in work, education, hobbies, positions of trust, or other activities in life.

A good CV is easy to read and its structure is clarified with the use of appropriate headings. Traditionally, a CV contains information about your qualifications, education, work history, and special skills. You can include a summary of your core competencies and professional interests at the beginning of your CV. Bullet points, simple sentences, and a clear font make reading easier. Your CV can be chronological or competence-based.

In addition to know-how and skills, you can briefly describe your way of doing things and achievements in connection with experiences. You can modify your CV according to the position being applied for and the organisation's competence requirements and valued skills. The length of a CV is typically 1 to 2 pages. If you wish, you can add a good-quality photo of yourself and links to your social media profiles. The employer appreciates easy-to-find contact information and information about referees. You can find many different CV templates online that you can utilise. Nowadays, a visual CV is fairly common in Finland. You can also make your CV in video format. In a video, your competence areas are described with the help of examples and you can make use of, for example, PowerPoint slides.

**Tip!** Below is a list of typical competence areas needed in all sectors and branches of activity.

- Digital skills: use of remote and virtual services, technical applications, problem-solving
- Personal skills and traits: flexibility, willingness to learn, critical thinking, creativity, ability to adapt, self-motivation
- Cooperation skills: listening, working with others, accepting diversity, being part of a team
- International competence skills: establishing new networks and ways of working, product and service development, customer relationships, innovativeness, language skills, understanding of cultures.

## Recommendations and references

A referee is a designated person who can provide additional information about the jobseeker in the context of the job, for example about the jobseeker's role, responsibilities, or achievements in a past job or apprenticeship. In addition to know-how and skills, employers are interested in, for example, a potential employee's way of working, interaction skills, and willingness to learn.

The referee is usually a former manager, client, or colleague. The referee can also be an acquaintance from leisure activities, a voluntary work partner, or a thesis supervisor. There is no official description of the referee's qualifications.

Employers appreciate a referee who honestly and impartially describes the jobseeker in terms of the matters that support the jobseeker's self-description and are significant in terms of the job being applied for. Permission must always be asked separately from referees and they must be kept up to date on the progress of the job search process.

Recommendation information provided to employers must include the referees' organisation or other links. It is advisable to ask referees how and when they are best available and to communicate this information to employers. However, it is not necessary to provide the name and contact details of referees during the job application phase. You can simply write, for example, "Referee's contact information is available upon request" in your CV. According to the law, employers cannot inquire about recommendations without the permission of the jobseeker.

A reference is a description of work done in connection with work, studies, or leisure activities. It is linked to a specific event, assigned responsibility or project. References can also be requested from partners with whom or to whom the work has been done. A reference should be requested in writing, and you can prepare a ready-made proposal to the reference provider for approval and possible further editing.

## Open job application and targeted job application

An open job application is a marketing message sent to potential employers. In an open job application, you indicate your interest in the organisation and certain types of positions. The organisation may not have open vacancies at the time, but sending an open application proves your interest and motivation to the employer and can pay off long-term. Before submitting an open job application, do the following:

- specify an ideal job description and write down your related competence areas and the need for competence development
- provide learning contexts and use case examples of your different competence areas
- think about the practical limitations of the job you are applying for (location, working hours, start date, minimum level of pay and desired duration)
- list a few employers whose processes could benefit from your expertise
- find out the right contact person through the telephone exchange or website of the organisation or fill in an open job application form provided by the organisation
- write a descriptive job application heading
- state that you are applying for a certain type of position in the organisation and describe your related competence and interest in it
- propose a short 15-minute online meeting or call to establish possible future needs.

A targeted job application is made when an employer has published a job advertisement. It is a tailor-made response to the competence requirements and wishes of the job advertisement. The application can be a PDF-format email attachment, a completed online form, or for example, a video presentation.

Before submitting a targeted job application, do the following:

- outline in a separate document the competence areas and abilities related to the know-how, skills, ways of doing things, industry, and/or personality traits needed in the job
- call the employer or recruiter and tell them about your interest in the job and ask whether your competence matches the position in question and whether any missing competence is an obstacle to getting the job
- if you contacted the employer, indicate the date and the person with whom you spoke at the beginning of your application
- start the application by directly responding to the employer's competence requests without an introduction, in which you express your interest in the position

- elaborate on the requested competence areas with the help of examples and, if necessary, mention results and achievements
- if you lack a requested competence area, bring it up and explain how you intend to master it either by learning by doing or through training
- provide an answer to the salary request
- the application length is approximately half an A4 page.

## Social media profiles

Make a profile on the social media platforms where you think you can reach the most interesting employers. A profile that supports the job search project is business-like and sufficiently informative. Upload a high-quality photo of yourself.

LinkedIn is a popular networking and information search media among specialists. Choose the profile language according to the working language and customer network language of potential employers. On LinkedIn, many people with a Finnish background also describe their competence areas in English, so you can also use English in your profile.

Write a description of the type of work you are looking for and describe your core competencies in a few words. List your core competencies with keywords. Add a note to your profile stating that you are open to new job opportunities. Add your education, work history, projects, voluntary work, competence badges, and other qualifications to your profile.





Do not be afraid to ask for references and new contacts. Include a short message to contact requests, indicating how you know the person or why they would be an interesting addition to your network. Follow interesting organisations.

Choose other media if they improve your visibility among your target group. Instagram and Twitter are also popular platforms. Share and comment on other people's posts to get followers and visibility for your profile.

## **Video presentation**

A video presentation can replace or supplement an open or targeted job application and a CV. The video tells the employer about your personality and how you interact.

Plan your video in advance. Write a script and practice. Do tests to get the best possible lighting and audio. Make sure that the camera is at the right distance, level with your eyes, and on a stable tripod. Give thought to your clothing, hairstyle, and jewellery so that they do not detract from your message and support your personality.

If you receive questions from the employer in advance, review them carefully and write down the key components of your answers in a bullet-point list to support your memory. A good length for a video presentation is 1 to 2 minutes. Remember to start and end on a positive note. Start and end with a small break and look at the camera the whole time, also in the end.



## **Portfolio**

A portfolio is a good personal branding tool. In a portfolio, competence areas are described through actions and demonstrated with concrete examples. In a portfolio, you can informally describe your role and merits, for example, in work projects. Your portfolio can also highlight your personality, personal values, and interests.

A portfolio contains contact information and usually a photo. It can be a physical item or a digital online file. You can include links to publications, videos, speech samples, competence badges, or diplomas. It can be monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual.

The presentation form of a portfolio is free. It is essential to think about the goal of the portfolio and to consider its purpose and target audience. It can be an extended and personalised CV or it can describe you more broadly as an employee, team member, or an independent worker in different work environments and channels.

## **Elevator or sales pitch**

An elevator pitch is a pre-prepared description of your skills and personality in a few sentences. It is concise and contains carefully thought things that you expect to be relevant to the potential position and organisation.

The elevator pitch is a self-assured and truthful message about your professional ambitions. Tailor your elevator pitch to the target audience and be prepared to elaborate on it according to additional questions. Be prepared to ask questions yourself in the discussion that may arise after your pitch.

The elevator pitch aims to get the employer to make a follow-up proposal, and in sales slang, you are one step closer to “closing the deal”. End the pitch with a proposal or question that leads to the next level of interaction.

You need to have your elevator pitch ready when you call employers or meet people unexpectedly. You can use it to formulate the introduction to your CV.

You can prepare your elevator pitch in English, but you can include words and phrases in Finnish or Swedish if you feel that it could present you as easier to approach in workplaces where English is not the company language.

## **Other electronic marketing materials in different channels**

Digital platforms allow you to highlight your competence in different ways. Writing blog posts is a way to share your know-how and areas of interest. Blogs can be published separately or they can be incorporated into, for example, a newsletter, which can also be shared through social media.

You can make a professional site on Facebook and invite people to follow it. You can upload your video presentation to YouTube and share the recording. Employers are interested in jobseekers who have a genuine interest in the sector, services, or products in addition to the required skills.

Informational interviews allow you to find out more about an organisation's positions and competence expectations from people already working there. You can set up opinion polls on social media, the results of which can be shared with your marketing materials. Permission must always be asked before publishing any interview responses and people's names.

## **Different job search channels and methods**

Most often, electronic channels play a key role in spreading information about vacancies and hidden jobs and contacting employers. Information about channels and methods that you can use to acquire information about the labour market and positions is given below. As stated at the beginning of the career planning section, act calmly. Decide what information you need and how you are going to get it. Make a plan for what channels you intend to use and when. Identify your international networks and consider whether they are useful to employers.

### **Job advertisements**

An ideal job advertisement describes the position, the related responsibilities, and competence needs that correspond to the organisation's strategic competence needs and ways of working in different channels. However, it is advisable to read the announcements critically and, if possible, to find out from the employer the skills that are given the most weight. The announcement is often an ideal listing of the job-related requirements formulated by the recruiter. Rarely does anyone meet all the requirements, so it is worth applying for a position even if your competence areas and experience do not match the requirements in all areas.

### **Job portals**

Job portals are websites through which you can search for vacancies by their location, duration, job title, and keywords. Common job portal maintained by public sector operators are [the Jobs in Finland website](#) which lists English-language jobs and [the Job Market Finland website](#).

There are also other private portals in Finland that are maintained by companies and educational institutions. For example, common job portals include:

- [Duunitori](#)
- [Jobly](#)
- [Oikotie](#)

You may also be able to find additional job sites that are specific to social media.

## **HR services companies**

HR services companies offer fixed-term contract work where the work is carried out at a customer company and the HR services company is responsible for the administration of the employment relationship, salary payment, and possibly further training.

Temporary agency work is most common in industry, services, administration, IT, commerce, and construction. Temporary agency work can be carried out regularly or occasionally in employment relationships of different durations.

Temporary agency work accumulates your work experience and can lead to employment by the customer company. HR services companies also look for employees to be directly employed by their customer companies as so-called recruitment assignments. As of 2022 over 2% of all jobs are temporary agency work-based jobs.

## **Recruitment events**

Employers organise in cooperation with educational institutions and public employment services various recruitment events where people can meet employers electronically or in person. Trade unions and various employment projects also organise events for different target groups.

You should prepare for recruitment events in advance. Make sure you have your elevator pitch, social media profile(s), and CV ready. Map the participating organisations in advance, list the parties that you want to talk to, and itemise the discussion objectives.

## **Hidden jobs**

Hidden jobs refer to job opportunities that have not been publicly announced. It is estimated that the majority of job opportunities are in the hidden labour market. A need for an employee can arise suddenly, for example, due to sick leave, a change in customer needs, or a large customer order.

For jobseekers, hidden jobs are an opportunity to be the only applicant and there can be more room for negotiation in the contents of job descriptions than in publicly announced jobs. Hidden jobs are applied for by mapping potential organisations and sending open applications to them.

## **Social media and the Internet**

The information search possibilities on the Internet help to identify potential employers. Organisations' websites often contain contact information, vacancies, a description of values, existing personnel and services, and products. If the

contact information on the employer's website contains only a contact form, it is advisable to call the telephone exchange to get the correct contact information.

You can use social media to send direct messages to employers. Such messages should be straightforward, and you can ask upfront about work opportunities or propose, for example, a video call meeting. Websites or social media profiles of interesting organisations can contain personnel news or other information that you can use when making contact.

## **Company and organisation registers**

Company and organisation registers are a good resource for mapping potential hidden jobs and valuable contact information. For example, [Suomen Yrittäjät](#) is the largest organisation representing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Finland, and their register of members is a good tool to find SMEs according to their branch of activity and location. [The Finder.fi service](#) allows you to browse companies across Finland using keywords. Social sector organisations can be found on [the Soste.fi](#)). The website of [the Finnish Family Firms Association](#) offers contact information for its member organisations. Additionally, many employers' organisations and trade associations also have their own member sites.

## **Networks**

Networks are formed by human connection. A compact network can be used for exchanging confidential information and a larger one for sharing information for the common good. Mapping your networks can help in the selection of the target group and the marketing of your competence. Network operators know each other on some level. They are so-called warm contacts.

A network map can be drawn up as nested zones. The innermost zone includes your compact and nearest core network. It can include your family, friends, and leisure activity acquaintances. The middle zone can include your professional contacts, such as colleagues, customers, and student colleagues. The outermost zone is for people who share the same interests.

## **Vocational groups**

Professionals in vocational fields often group to gain networking, information exchange, or financial benefits. At its broadest, the group can be a trade union or trade association, or it can be a social media group that anyone interested can join. Following vocational groups improves your understanding of the field and can give you access to interesting events or trade fairs.

## Alumni networks

An alumnus refers to a person who has studied in an educational institution. An alumni network is composed of alumni. Educational institutions often organise alumni activities aimed to improve the networking of alumni and students. Alumni can act as a link to working life and benefit from continuing education offered by educational institutions. Alumni can also market their organisation to graduating students.

You can start compiling your own alumni network on social media. For example, on LinkedIn, you can search for alumni as follows:

- find your educational institution
- select alumni at the bottom of the front page
- search for alumni by title, employer, or search term
- join possible alumni networks and participate in alumni events.

## Informational interviews

Informational or information-collection interviews are about gaining information on jobs, organisations, ways of working, and the career paths leading to the field in question from various networks and specialists in the field. Interviews can be utilised in making your career plan and refining your job search documents.





You can send interview invitations by email or through social media. Tell the person being interviewed the purpose and duration of the interview, typically 15 to 20 minutes, for example, by videoconference. You should prepare questions in advance and, if the interviewee agrees, the conversation can be recorded.

Some good example questions: Could you describe your career path and background? Could you describe your typical workday? What digital tools and software do you use in your work? What personality traits does the job require? What are the future prospects of the sector and job?

### **3.2.3 Selling your competence – find and contact employers**

Selling your competence means contacting employers directly, for example, by telephone or indirectly by sending an application. You can work more efficiently when the target group is right and correctly proportioned. Sometimes a missing or too broad target group can prolong the job search. Sell your competence in a systematic, goal-oriented, and measurable manner. This may force you out of your comfort zone and require you to increasingly take charge of what you do to achieve your goal. Therefore, set a target number for making contacts and try to stick to your plan.



## Allocation

A successful job search requires good self-awareness and self-esteem, sufficient knowledge of open and hidden labour markets, and taking timely action in the right channels, and targeting the right people. The correct allocation of job searches requires background work. A carefully selected and dimensioned target group saves time and is most effective. In a hurry, target group selection is distorted, hindered, or retarded.

## Mapping jobs and employers

It is a good idea to map out positions and employers so that you can contact them and find out more about job requirements. Schedule time for this line of work in your job search plan. While mapping, itemise interesting jobs and organisations so that you contact them in the hopes of discovering hidden job opportunities.

Good sources of information include vacancies outside your job search scope and social media job sites. Document the results of your mapping work and select a time period, for example, two weeks, during which time you need to discover 2 to 4 organisations or jobs per working day.

## Active sales of know-how and negotiations with potential employers

Effective competence sale is based on your career plan and preparatory marketing work. Schedule and document your sales work. The sales process includes the following phases:

- contacting the customer electronically or in person, for example by phone
- introducing yourself with the help of your elevator pitch
- mapping employee needs at the moment and in the near future
- proposing follow-up actions (a meeting, sending additional information, agreeing on making contact later).

### Tips

- Set up a schedule and specify the number of contacts.
- Document your contacts and the related content.
- Thank your contacts afterwards and confirm any agreed follow-up actions.
- Selling is hard work and you are not always successful. Do not give up. Days and situations vary.

## Managing, documenting, and monitoring your job search process

Time management, good documentation, and monitoring of the results make job searching more efficient. Job search is a project for you to manage as a jobseeker. Employers are the target group of your project. Prepare a project work plan where you realistically resource your work efforts on a day-by-day basis. For example, you can schedule contacting employers in the mornings and meetings in the afternoons. Job search is well-managed when you have a plan and goal for each day. At the end of the day and week, you need to check the achievement of those goals and make possible adjustments to your plan.

You can utilise, for example, free-of-charge project management tools in the management, documentation, and follow-up of your actions.



### **3.2.4 Employee selection – prepare for equal employment negotiations**

The employer evaluates the suitability of the job applicant for the job and work community through an interview and related tests. In Finnish working culture, interviews involve the mutual exchange of information. In this phase, you need to make sure that the job and work community meet your expectations and that you want to commit to them. Get advance information and think about your suitability and the added value you bring. As a jobseeker, you need to listen to yourself first and then to the employer. Show your motivation. Employers want to hire someone who is genuinely interested in the job.

#### **Job interview**

In the best case, a job interview is an equal interaction in which the job applicant and the employer's representative exchange information to enable informed decisions. The number and implementation manner of interviews varies. Aptitude and personality tests can be used to support decision-making.

The most common type of interview is the structured interview, in which the employer asks the same questions from all applicants. Interviews usually have three phases. The first phase is about warming up and getting to know each other. In the middle phase, the focus is on job-related matters. In the last phase, practical matters can be discussed and any possible follow-up measures agreed upon.

It is important to familiarise yourself with the organisation's values, strategy, services, and products. It is recommended to study the job description carefully and reflect on your own interest and competence areas in relation to it. You should justify your competence areas with practical examples in terms of previous work experience, education or other activities.

The employer has usually planned the course and time frame of the interview. The interviewer also tests the suitability of the job applicant for the work community and team. It is a good idea to think about examples of situations that have involved teamwork and, on the other hand, the ability to manage oneself and organize one's own work.

#### **Aptitude tests and assignments**

Aptitude tests and assignments are used when the job involves competence requirements that are difficult to assess during an interview. Such tests can help in decision-making when job applicants are equally good.

Aptitude tests are most often a psychologist's assessment and interpretation of the job applicant's individual capabilities and resources. Aptitude assignments aim to assess competence and performance. Typically, the aptitude assignment

is closely linked to the job being applied for. Whether you get the job or not, it's good to request a personal copy of the final aptitude assessment to keep for yourself for future reference.

## **Video interviews**

Video interviews can be conducted regardless of place, and they are often used in the initial selection process. Video interviews can involve independently completed preliminary assignments or aptitude assignments. When preparing for a video interview, it is important to consider the following:

- Make sure that the technology works and that you know how to use it.
- Take into account possible time zone differences.
- Listen and pause, and avoid interrupting the other person.
- Do not be afraid to speak up and take initiative.
- Remember that gesture language can be difficult to see through a video connection.
- Keep the camera on.
- Find a quiet, well-lit place and test that your equipment works.
- Have a pen and a notepad close by and make a checklist of the things you want to ask.
- Be prepared for technical challenges and remain calm if such challenges come up – you can re-contact or call the employer.

## **Agreeing on terms and conditions of employment**

When entering into an employment relationship, the terms and conditions of employment are determined. Although an oral or electronic agreement is valid, it is recommended to conclude the agreement in writing. The employment contract is reviewed together with the employer. Usually, the employment contract is non-fixed-term. There must be a good justification for a fixed-term employment contract, such as substitute or project work. Key terms and conditions to be included in the employment contract are the job description, salary, working hours, annual leave, and the applicable collective agreement. You can search online for a salary calculator in your field or for information on typical salaries, which will help you in salary negotiations.

You can find additional information and assistance with employment and salary conditions by using [International House Helsinki's employment coaching service](#) and [employee rights advisory service](#).

### 3.2.5 Financial subsidies and incentives – jobseeker’s support forms

An unemployed jobseeker who has registered as a jobseeker with the public employment services (TE Offices and municipal employment services) can find out whether, for example, a fixed-term pay subsidy can be utilised in their salary payment. The discretionary pay subsidy is granted to the employer. It is important to inform the employer of the possibility to receive the pay subsidy before the start of the employment relationship.

An unemployed jobseeker can also apply for a so-called work trial. In a work trial, the jobseeker works for compensation equal to their unemployment benefit at a workplace, familiarising themselves with work duties. The trial aims to improve the jobseeker’s professional self-awareness and ability to assess the suitability of different kinds of jobs.

The jobseeker can apply for a so-called commuting and relocation allowance from Kela if the job lasts for at least two months and the daily commute takes more than three hours. Learn more about commuting and relocation allowance on [Kela’s website](#).

A subsidy for arranging working conditions is available for employers who employ a person whose disability or illness requires acquisition of new work equipment or alterations to be made at the workplace. You can learn more about these subsidies and working condition arrangements on [suomi.fi’s website](#).

More information on the forms of support and the different services is best obtained through the public employment services, municipalities, and educational institutions described in [Chapter 6](#) of this guide.

### 3.2.6 Job searching resources – take care of yourself and seek help in time

Finding a job takes time, energy, and your personal resources. At some points it can feel like a lonely daily grind with no immediate reward. It is always important to take care of both your mental and physical resources. Take time to take care of yourself throughout your job searching process. If you start to feel that resources are depleted, consider the things that restore and improve them. Taking time to maintain and take care of yourself is an important part of looking for work. It is also important to seek help when need. Mental health support and resources are available in Finland.

- [Mental Health Services on InfoFinland](#)
- [Finnish Institute for Health and Wellness \(THL\) Mental Health](#)
- [Mental Health Services – City of Helsinki](#)
- [Western Uusimaa Wellbeing Resources](#)
- [Wellbeing Services County of Vantaa and Kerava](#)
- [Crisis Helpline Suomi.fi](#)



# 4 Terms and conditions of employment and working culture in Finland

This chapter covers the most important issues concerning terms and conditions of employment and working culture in Finland. This information can help you in your job search and working in Finland. Remember that as a jobseeker with an international background, you can also have a lot to offer to Finnish working life.



## 4.1 Employment contract and terms and conditions of employment

This chapter briefly describes the most important aspects of the employment contract and the terms and conditions of employment. The terms and conditions of employment in Finland are based on various laws and agreements.

**Tip:** Read more about the terms and conditions of employment in the guide [As a Foreign Employee in Finland \(available in 15 languages\)](#) or on the [Fair Play at Work website](#) available in over 20 languages.

**Tip:** You can find more information and help about employment contracts or employment-related matters using [International House Helsinki's employee rights advisory service](#).

### Pay

The employee receives remuneration for the work performed and it can include goods or fringe benefits in addition to the salary. Finnish law does not define a general minimum wage. The employer is obligated to pay the minimum wage set out in a field-specific or generally-applicable collective agreement. If the employer is not obligated to comply with any collective agreement, the amount of pay must be reasonable and typical for the job and sector. More information on salary is available on the websites of field-specific trade unions.

### Working hours

In Finland, typical working hours are around eight hours a day, and generally 37.5h per week for the private sector, and 36,25h per week for the public sector. The Working Hours Act specifies the maximum working hours and the duration of overtime and the rest periods in between work shifts. Working hours refer to the time during which the employee is obligated to be available to the employer. Working hours do not include the time spent commuting, which is not a work task, nor the time spent on breaks if the employee has the right to leave the workplace.

Flexible working hours refer to an arrangement where the employee has the right to decide their arrival and departure times within agreed limits. Overtime refers to work that is done at the initiative of the employer and with the employee's consent, and its duration exceeds the maximum number of regular working hours laid down in the Working Hours Act.

### Conclusion of an employment contract

The terms and conditions of employment are agreed upon in the employment



contract. It can be verbal, written, or electronic. Usually, an employment contract is written. Matters agreed upon in the employment contract must comply with the Employment Contracts Act, the Working Hours Act, and the Annual Holidays Act.

Read the employment contract carefully. If you do not understand something, you can call, for example, the [SAK employee rights hotline](#).

## **Trial period**

A trial period with a maximum duration of six months takes place at the beginning of an employment relationship, during which time either the employee or employer can terminate the employment relationship. A trial period must always be agreed upon separately. The purpose of a trial period is to facilitate the termination of the employment relationship by both parties in situations where the work or the work performance does not meet mutual expectations.

The employer must justify the termination during the trial period for certain reasons. Inadequacies related to work performance, late arrivals, and unauthorised absences, poor overall suitability for the work, or poor suitability for the workplace conditions. An employer cannot terminate an employment relationship on discriminatory grounds (age, origin, religion, gender, etc.).

## **Collective agreements**

Labour legislation is the basis for regulating the terms and conditions of employment in the labour market. Trade unions and employers' associations conclude collective agreements and collective bargaining agreements on civil servants' salaries that specify the terms and conditions of employment in more detail. A collective agreement can be binding on an employer operating in the field of a particular union, even if the employer is not a member of the union if the field has a so-called generally-binding collective agreement. There are approximately 160 generally-binding collective agreements in Finland.

## **4.2 Employee and employer's rights and obligations**

Finnish working life has many rules that the employee and employer must follow. The rights and obligations of employees and employers are based on laws and collective agreements.

**Tip:** Install the Work Help Finland mobile app on your phone. It contains information in 26 languages about your rights and obligations as an employee in Finland. If you suspect that you have been mistreated, you can also find help through [the Work Help Finland app](#).

## **Employee's rights and obligations**

The employee has the right to a salary in accordance with the collective agreement and to other minimum provisions, the protection provided by acts and agreements, to membership of a union, and a healthy and safe working environment. When an employee's contract of employment expires they are entitled to a written testimonial of service from their employer.

An employee is obliged to be a diligent, loyal, and trustworthy employee. A diligent employee does their work as well as possible according to instructions and regulations. A loyal employee reports any deficiencies in workplace conditions or equipment. A trustworthy employee does not harm the employer, for example, by disclosing professional or business secrets.

## **Employer's rights and obligations**

The employer has the right to employ an employee, manage work and give instructions and orders as part of work management as well as to terminate or cancel a contract of employment within the limits provided by law.

The employer is obligated to comply with laws and agreements, treat employees equally regardless of their origin, religion, gender, age, or political views, take care of employees' safety and health at work, provide employees with a written account of the key terms and conditions of their work in an understandable language and to promote a good working atmosphere, employees' work performance and occupational development.

The employer must take into consideration the employees' physical and vocational prerequisites in relation to work performance. If an employee's status is substantially changed, negotiations must be held with the employee in accordance with a specified co-operation procedure. The employer cannot violate an employee's right to privacy and can only process personal or health information that is directly relevant to work performance.

## **4.3 Working culture**

The employer's working culture is based on the organisation's values and both written and unwritten rules and practices that are followed at the workplace. The culture is reflected in the way job applicants and employees are treated with respect and equality.

Before applying for a job, the job applicant can seek information about the organisational culture and in an interview about the following matters:

- the basic task and values of the organisation
- the contents and relevance of the job description, competence requirements

- ways of organising work, such as division of tasks and meeting practices
- the clarity and understandability of the terms and conditions of employment from the employee's perspective
- maintenance of well-being at work and recreation
- clear instructions related to rules and expectations.

The Finnish way of communicating is direct and quite familiar. Mainly, the employer expects that the employee complies with the terms and conditions agreed upon in the employment contract. In changing situations, the employer and employee can negotiate solutions on equal ground. The culture varies according to the organisation, depending on the nature of the jobs.

Below is a list of characteristics typical of Finnish working culture:

- Working hours and leisure time are kept completely separate (Working Hours Act).
- Employees are not late for work and meetings start at the indicated time. It is impolite to be late.
- Diligence, self-direction, and taking initiative are expected at work.
- Interactions within the work community are informal and direct. Employees are allowed to ask questions and the supervisor's task is to enable smooth working.
- Verbal communication is respectful and at the same time informal, for example, calling people by their first names is common.
- Wearing religious symbols is allowed, provided that they do not reduce occupational safety or otherwise affect work duties. Breaks can be used for praying.
- In customer and stakeholder interactions, a formal distance is maintained at first. When a confidential relationship has been formed, interactions can be more familiar. Phone calls and making contact directly are allowed, but it is a good idea to check whether the time of making contact is suitable for the other person. After making contact, it is customary to send a thank you message.

**Tip:** Take part in a free-of-charge [Finland Works online course](#) and learn more about the Finnish working life.

## **Equal work community**

According to the Non-discrimination Act, the employer must treat job applicants and employees equally. No one must be discriminated against based on age, origin, nationality, language, religion, conviction, opinion, political activity, unionism, family ties, health, disability, sexual orientation, or other reasons linked to a person. Other such reasons can include the employee's place of residence, wealth, social status, or participation in association activities.

In equal recruitment, jobseekers are not excluded from employment based on discriminatory criteria. The job advertisement does not include things or characteristics that have no impact on job performance. In the application process, the employer does not collect unnecessary information about, for example, the jobseeker's family or marital status. The employer offers non-discriminatory working conditions and operating methods.

An equal work community ensures equal career paths, work resourcing, and competence development. Organisations with more than 30 employees draw up a plan of measures to promote equality.

## **Work community languages and learning local languages**

Language barriers are one of the most common challenges international newcomers face when looking for jobs in Finland, especially regarding the Finnish language. Although English has become a common working language, many employers wish that employees can communicate to an extent in Finnish or Swedish. In working communities, the language of internal communications can vary, but usually, it is Finnish. Employers justify the language competence requirement from the perspectives of customer service, external, and internal communications and occupational safety. For these reasons, gaining proficiency in a local language can be very helpful when looking for jobs.

International jobseekers should first assess and verbalise their language skills and then seek organisations and positions where those skills can be put to use. It is recommended to start learning Finnish already when looking for a job. Learning the basics of the language and using the basic skills, for example when looking for a job search, gives a motivated impression of the jobseeker. Language skills can be developed as part of the job by doing simple tasks that allow practicing the language skills. You can discuss with the employer which tasks require a good or flawless command of the Finnish language and which ones allow you to freely practice your language skills. For example customer-facing external communications may require a high level of language skills. Discuss the development of your language skills with the employer and draw up a learning plan together with the employer.

**Tip:** Start your language studies with online courses already before you arrive in Finland. You can find online courses and locally organised courses in the [Finnishcourses.fi](https://finnishcourses.fi) service. Information about language studies is also available from your city's employment or immigration services.

## Continuous learning opportunities

The culture of continuous learning is valued in Finland, meaning that new things are learnt and skills developed throughout life. There is a wide range of free-of-charge and paid training sessions and courses available in Finland. Below, the different opportunities are described briefly. More information is available directly from educational institutions.

Workplaces provide internal staff training. Informal ways of know-how development alongside work include mentoring, job rotation, seminars, conferences, competence-based qualifications, and development discussions.

Higher education institutions organise multiform studies that combine face-to-face and distance learning. In apprenticeship learning, learning is linked to practical work and it allows you to complete a vocational basic degree, further vocational qualification, or specialist vocational qualification.

Adult education institutions and operators organise training in the form of courses and lectures. They also allow you to complete competence badges that serve as proof of competence.

**Tip:** For more information on different educational opportunities and costs, call the TE Services advisory service, tel. +358 295 020 713, Mon–Fri 9.00–16.15.

## 4.4 Occupational health and safety

In terms of occupational safety, Finland is one of the safest countries in the world. Occupational health and safety aims to prevent occupational accidents, health hazards, illnesses, and injuries. Working must be safe both mentally and physically. An employer is obligated to ensure the safety and health at work of its employees.

The employer and employees must, in cooperation, maintain and improve occupational safety. An occupational safety and health manager is responsible for occupational health and safety cooperation at the workplace. The occupational safety and health manager is a person appointed by the employer if the employer does not want to carry out these duties itself. In addition, the workplace can be required to appoint an occupational safety and health representative to represent the employees in occupational health and safety cooperation.

There are dedicated regulations on occupational health and safety in different sectors. The employer must keep the Occupational Safety and Health Act and other provisions concerning the workplace visible to the employees. They can be visible either in printed form or in an electronic online service to which employees have free access.

Factors affecting occupational health and safety:

- Duties, working hours, and working area are safe.
- The employee is not subjected to external distractions or harassment.
- The employee can take breaks.
- The employee can discuss with occupational health care about work matters that give rise to stress.
- Agreeing on the terms and conditions of remote work in writing, for example, working hours and amounts suitable for remote work, monitoring the work results, sick leave practices, data security matters, and possible costs and their distribution.

Read more about occupational health and safety on [the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's website](#).



# 5 Being an entrepreneur in Finland

Entrepreneurship is a way of working, of employing oneself and possibly others. There are approximately 300,000 enterprises in Finland, nearly 200,000 of which are self-employed without employees. This chapter provides a brief overview of the right to operate as an entrepreneur in Finland, the forms of enterprises, entrepreneurial skills, starting a business, taxation, and social security for entrepreneurs.

**Tip:** Download the comprehensive Guide to Entrepreneurship of the Finnish Enterprise.



## 5.1 Right to operate as an entrepreneur in Finland

### As an EU citizen

As an EU citizen, you can start a business in Finland if you have permanent residence in a country belonging to the European Economic Area (EEA). A foreign company can also start business activities in Finland.

Make a start-up notification of starting a business to the Trade Register of the Finnish Patent and Registration Office and the Tax Administration.

If you know that your residence in Finland will last for more than three months, you will need to register your EU citizen's right of residence at the Finnish Immigration Service (Migri) as soon as possible. You can do this at [International House Helsinki](#) or any other of Migri's service points. You can read more about EU citizens' right of residence on [Migri's website](#).

If you move to Finland permanently for at least one year and want a municipality of residence, notify the Digital and Population Data Services Agency of the move. If you have a municipality of residence in Finland, you are usually entitled to use the services of that municipality.

### As a non-EU citizen

If you want to move to work as an entrepreneur in Finland and you are a citizen of a country that is not an EU member state, one of the Nordic countries, Switzerland or Liechtenstein, you need an entrepreneur's residence permit. If you want move to set up a start-up in Finland, you need a start-up residence permit. To learn more about the start-up residence permit go to [section 2.1](#). A start-up is a young, growth-oriented company. You must apply for a residence permit before you come to Finland.

International House Helsinki provides startup soft landing support for growth oriented international entrepreneurs. Learn more about [International House Helsinki's startup soft landing services](#).

Your business operations must be profitable, and your livelihood must be ensured by earnings from these business operations. If your company is a start-up company with no turnover as of yet, you must prove that you have sufficient livelihood from other income.

You cannot get a residence permit only because you own a company. You must work for your company in Finland yourself to be eligible for a residence permit.

Read more and [apply for an entrepreneur](#) or [start-up entrepreneur's residence permit](#) on the Finnish Immigration Service's website.



## 5.2 Many forms of entrepreneurship

You can be either a full-time or part-time entrepreneur. Full-time entrepreneurship means that it is the entrepreneur's main job and source of livelihood. As a full-time entrepreneur, you focus 100% on your company's operations. Your business operations should be profitable so that you can pay yourself a salary.

You can also work as a part-time entrepreneur in all company forms. Starting a business as a part-time activity in addition to, for example, paid work or studies is recommended if you are unsure about the profitability of your business activities. As a part-time entrepreneur, you have the opportunity to test your business idea to see if you can find enough customers and how your business activities develop.

In addition to coming up with your own business idea, you can become a franchisee or purchase a company. Franchising refers to acquiring a ready-made business idea and operating model. By signing a franchising agreement, you get a proven concept, such as a restaurant.

You can also become an entrepreneur by purchasing an existing company or a part thereof. In the near future, there will be many retiring entrepreneurs in Finland looking to sell their businesses.

You can also be a full-time or part-time entrepreneur as a freelancer or a light entrepreneur. As a freelancer, you usually work independently for several customers without a permanent employment relationship. As a light entrepreneur, you offer services or sell products to your own customers, for example through a platform business or an invoicing service.

Compare and explore the different forms of enterprises in [the suomi.fi online service](#).

### Examples of common light entrepreneurship services:

- [Euroconter \(English, Finnish & Russian\)](#)
- [Eurowork \(Finnish, Estonian & Russian\)](#)
- [Free.fi \(English & Finnish\)](#)
- [OP Light Entrepreneurship \(Finnish\)](#)
- [Ukko.fi \(English, Finnish, Swedish & Russian\)](#)

## 5.3 Entrepreneurial readiness

If you are considering entrepreneurship, take a moment to consider whether you have an entrepreneurial character and other necessary qualities and skills. Entrepreneurial readiness helps you succeed as an entrepreneur alongside your business idea. Your business idea defines the service or product that your company intends to offer to its customers.

Entrepreneurship comes with its responsibilities and risks. As an entrepreneur, you have to be determined and also tolerate uncertainty. You need a solid business idea as well as know-how and the ability to put it into practice and run the business in order to earn your living.

Ask yourself the following:

- Are you determined?
- Are you hard-working, creative, and bold?
- Do you dare to take risks?
- Do you take the initiative?
- Can you withstand uncertainty?
- Do you believe in your business idea and personal abilities?
- Does your life situation allow you to become an entrepreneur?

Even though your entrepreneurial readiness is very important to business success, as an entrepreneur you also have the opportunity to acquire business partners, employees, and other partners whose skills meet the needs of your business. You do not need to know everything yourself.

**Tip:** Take the Entrepreneur Test in the Enterprise Finland online service.

### Business plan

A good business plan is vital for every new entrepreneur, as it is the foundation of the entire business. A written business plan helps you structure your business idea and tells how you intend to put it into practice. Creating a plan and carefully evaluating the business is beneficial first and foremost to yourself, but you also need a business plan for financing and business partners as well as for applying for a start-up grant or other forms of support.

A carefully prepared business plan and the related calculations give an outsider an idea of the company's profitability and future prospects. As a new entrepreneur, it allows you to show, before starting your business, that your business has a chance of success.

The amount of text is irrelevant in a business plan. The plan can include the following:

- basic information about the company
- description of the business idea
- competence
- analysis of the company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
- products and services
- customers
- market and competitors
- sales and marketing
- business goals
- risk management
- your enterprise
- financial management and contracts
- calculations.

There are many ready-made templates for making a business plan. You can find different templates through search engines, for example, by using “business plan template” as a search term.

**Tip:** When you are planning to start your own business, you can map out in advance everything that needs to be taken into account. You can make use of the [Business Planner Wizard of the suomi.fi service](#) even before you start to prepare an actual business plan for your company.

## 5.4 Starting a business

In Finland, the most common forms of enterprise are sole proprietorship and limited company. As an alternative to starting your own business, consider also buying an existing business.

As a good starting point, your city's business services can provide support for new entrepreneurs. These can range from help with business plans and steps on starting a business, to startup grants and business advisory services. You can explore the Helsinki capital region's municipal business services below.

[Helsinki](#), [Espoo](#), [Vantaa](#)

## Starting a business

When you are starting a business, think carefully about which form of enterprise suits you best. The decision is important because the forms of enterprise differ from each other in many ways. Business advisors and specialists of the Finnish Enterprise Agencies or your city can help you find the best form of enterprise for you.

Factors to be considered when choosing the form of enterprise:

- number of people setting up the business
- need for capital and its availability
- responsibilities and decision-making
- attitude of investors
- taxation.

When you set up a business, there are some obligatory matters you will have to take into account. For help with this, [the business start-up wizard on the suomi.fi](#) service guides you in answering questions about your future company, such as its form of enterprise, financing and industry.

## Buying an existing company

You can also become an entrepreneur by buying a company. It is a good option also for a new entrepreneur. According to statistics, a change of ownership often leads to growth.

The most important thing is to find a company that suits your life situation, goals, and wealth and one that you can run.

It is advisable to use a broker in company acquisition. You can also give an assignment to a broker concerning a company you are interested in. A skilled business broker guarantees reliability on both sides. When the deal has been professionally concluded, there are no surprises and business operations can begin right away.

[Read more about concluding a company acquisition on the suomi.fi website.](#)

**Tip:** Explore companies that are for sale in the following services:

[Finnish Company Acquisitions LTD](#)

[Firmakauppa](#)

## Business licences

There is freedom of trade in Finland, which means that usually being a self-employed person does not require any licences. However, some business activities are subject to licensing. For example, restaurant activities require a hygiene passport, alcohol passport, alcohol serving licence, and notifications to the health inspector, Rescue Department, and Building Control Services.

Usually, licences are granted for a fixed term and some need to be renewed after a certain period of time. Typically, applying for a licence is subject to a fee. Licences are granted by municipal and city authorities, the Regional State Administrative Agencies, ministries, municipal environmental protection authorities and other licence authorities. In some cases, a licence is needed from several authorities.

Establish the needed licences with the help of [the suomi.fi service](#).

## Business subsidies and grants

Your company can be eligible for public subsidies and grants at different stages of its operations under certain conditions. You can apply for subsidies for starting a business, investments, and developing your business. There are RDI (Research, Development and Innovation), competence and innovation subsidies, and grants for various experiments. Grants and subsidies do not usually have to be paid back, but they often require the company to have some of its own funding as well.

Your company can be eligible for business development aid from an ELY Centre (Centres for Economic Development, Transport, and the Environment). It allows you to develop your existing business or create completely new business activities for your company.

Business Finland can grant various aids and funding for internationalisation, innovations, and certain themes, such as tourism.

If your business is located in a rural area, you can be entitled to rural area business aid. The aid aims to increase rural business activities and jobs, and thereby improve the dynamism of the countryside. Agricultural activities are not a requirement for the aid.

You can apply for Finnvera's funding for your company's acquisitions, investments, and working capital needs. Finnvera is a state-owned specialised financing company that supplements a bank's financing with loans and provides security for the company's bank loan.

You can receive a pay subsidy for the salary costs of hiring new employees.

Read more about company subsidies and grants on [the suomi.fi website](#).

## 5.5 Taxation and social security

This chapter briefly discusses company taxation in Finland and what social security benefits you may be entitled to as an entrepreneur in Finland or if you later become an unemployed jobseeker.

### Company taxation

Your company's taxation consists of payments and declarations. Company taxation is affected by the form of enterprise. If you have a limited liability company or cooperative, business income tax is paid by the company. In other forms of enterprise, you pay your company's income tax in your personal taxation.

Your company must make certain declarations and payments to the Tax Administration on its own initiative on a tax period basis, usually monthly. Your company's result is subject to income tax and value-added tax, if applicable. Salaries are subject to withholding of tax and health insurance contributions. Excise duty is payable on the manufacture and importation of certain goods.

Read more about company taxation in [the suomi.fi service](#).

Invoicing services usually pay the taxes of so-called light entrepreneurs. However, in certain cases light entrepreneurs must also pay taxes themselves. [Explore the Tax Administration's instructions for light entrepreneurs](#).

Small and medium-sized accounting businesses can often assist with the range of business financial and social security administration needs, whether you are a limited company or sole trader. Searches on the Internet produce a wide range of choices for entrepreneurs in Finland.

### Entrepreneur's social security

As a full-time entrepreneur, you are obligated to take out YEL insurance (a self-employed person's personal pension insurance) if you meet the required criteria. The amount of insurance contribution is based on your income. YEL determines how much pension you accumulate and, to a great extent, also the level of all other statutory social security.

If you arrive in Finland from another EU or EEA country, Switzerland or the United Kingdom, have been engaged in business activities for at least four consecutive months, and have taken out insurance in accordance with the Self-Employed Persons' Pensions Act (YEL), you are entitled to benefits as an entrepreneur from the moment you started your business.

If you move to Finland from a country other than an EU or EEA country, Switzerland or the United Kingdom to be an entrepreneur, you are entitled to benefits as an entrepreneur when your move and residence in Finland are

considered permanent. In addition, you must also have insurance in accordance with the Self-Employed Persons' Pensions Act (YEL).

Read more about social security on [Kela's website](#).

According to the Unemployment Security Act, you are an entrepreneur when you operate in a company in which you or you together with your family own a share determined by law. You are also an entrepreneur when you work without an employment relationship either in the private or public sector, i.e. you are a freelancer or work through a light entrepreneur service.

As an entrepreneur, you are entitled to an unemployment allowance if your earned income, used as the basis of your pension insurance, is at least €14,033 per year (in 2023). You are only entitled to labour market subsidy if your earned income is lower than this.

You cannot receive unemployment benefit when you are a full-time entrepreneur. Your entrepreneurial activities must be terminated before you can receive the benefit. According to the Unemployment Security Act, you are unemployed when your business activities have been demonstrably terminated or your work in the company has ended as determined by law.

To be able to receive an earnings-related unemployment allowance from an unemployment fund for entrepreneurs, you must have been an entrepreneur and a member of the fund for a required period of time before becoming unemployed. The earnings-related unemployment allowance is greater than the basic unemployment allowance or labour market subsidy. The amount of earnings-related unemployment allowance depends on the amount of earned income you have registered as the basis of the unemployment insurance. Read more about joining an unemployment fund the [website of the Federation of Unemployment Funds in Finland \(TYJ\)](#).

As a new entrepreneur, you may be eligible for a start-up grant. The start-up grant is not a business subsidy. It is meant to cover your personal living expenses. If you are thinking about starting a business, contact the employment services well in advance and find out whether you are eligible for the start-up grant. One requirement is that you have not started full-time business activities before the decision is taken to grant the start-up grant.

# 6 Job search and entrepreneurship support services and networks

This chapter briefly discusses providers of job search and entrepreneurship support services and networks.





## 6.1 Public employment services

Public employment services are offered by the Employment and Economic Development Office (TE Office) cities, and municipalities. There is a wide range of services available so that you can find the right ones to support your employment and career development. The largest cities typically have the most extensive services for international newcomers.

Contact International House Helsinki or employment services in your place of residence for more information.

At International House Helsinki you can [register as a jobseeker and learn more about employment services in the capital region.](#)

International House Helsinki (IHH) provides international professionals with early-stage personalised [employment coaching](#) designed to fit their individual needs.

[Helsinki employment services](#)

[Employment Espoo](#)

[Vantaa and Kerava employment services](#)

In the electronic services of the TE Services, you must take care of authority matters, such as registering as a jobseeker, notifying the authorities of a change in your employment situation, or applying for a start-up grant.

[Further information on the TE Services](#)

## 6.2 Educational institutions

Services suitable for international newcomers, such as counselling, language, or other training and services related to integration, can also be obtained from higher education institutions, vocational institutions and operators of liberal adult education.

SIMHE (Supporting Immigrants in Higher Education in Finland) services aim to streamline the identification and recognition of the prior learning of highly educated migrants arriving with different statuses as well as to facilitate their access to higher education, completion of degrees, and employment in the Finnish labour market at national and regional levels. To see which higher education institutions in Finland are involved with SIMHE, check [the Finnish National Agency for Education's website.](#)

Explore the educational institutions, adult education centres, and their services in your area.

## 6.3 Integration and settlement services

Cities, municipalities, and the TE Services have various integration services that help you with integration and settlement. Any family members who move together with you can also be entitled to integration services.

[International House Helsinki](#) (Helsinki, Espoo, and Vantaa) provides a wide range of information and public authority services to meet the needs of international newcomers in the Helsinki capital region.

**Tip:** Learn more about moving to the Helsinki capital region and working, studying, living, and housing there: [Newcomer's Guide](#) and [Housing in Helsinki](#)

**Tip:** Also explore the multilingual [InfoFinland](#) website that provides vital information to people planning to move to Finland and to immigrants already living in the country. The website also contains city-specific information.

## 6.4 Trade unions

There are approximately 80 trade unions in Finland. Trade unions represent employees and every employee has a legal right to belong to a trade union. The same trade union usually involves people from the same field or with the same education.

Trade unions negotiate on behalf of employees, for example, on collective agreements, terms and conditions of employment, working hours, and salaries with associations representing employers.

The members of a trade union can participate in training and leisure activities organised by the union. They receive support from the union's shop steward in conflict situations at work. When needed, the union also provides advice and help in negotiations.

If you want to join a trade union, you can find a suitable one through three central organisations:

- [The Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions \(SAK\)](#)
- [The Finnish Confederation of Professionals \(STTK\)](#)
- [The Confederation of Unions for Professional and Managerial Staff in Finland \(Akava\)](#)

## 6.5 Advisory services for new entrepreneurs and entrepreneur networks

There are [30 enterprise agencies in Finland](#) that offer free-of-charge and confidential business advice to all those interested in entrepreneurship.

Often, cities also offer their own advisory and other services for entrepreneurs, such as [Business Helsinki](#), [Business Espoo](#), and [Business Vantaa](#).



# 7 Terms

This chapter lists key terms related to this guide. The equivalent term in Finnish is provided in brackets.

- Apprenticeship relationship (**Oppisopimussuhde**): a fixed-term employment relationship based on an apprenticeship between a student and an employer
- Bonus (**Bonus**): a one-time bonus pay, the amount of which is determined by how well the targeted work result is achieved
- Career plan (**Urasuunnitelma**): a plan aimed at improving the client's professional development or labour force status
- Certificate (**Todistus**): consisting of various completed study units illustrating competencies. Some of the completed study units comply with authority requirements and some comply with requirements specified by other parties. Certificates issued in Finland for education, studies, and degrees completed in accordance with the requirements established by the authorities include the basic education certificate, general upper secondary education certificate, certificates of completed studies (i.e. transcript of records), and degree certificates.
- Certificate (**Sertifikaatti**): a certificate of a certain demonstrated competence based on requirements set by a party other than an authority
- Commissioner (**Toimeksiantaja**): an ordering party who offers a commission relationship or who has entered into a commission (paid) employment relationship
- Degree certificate (**Tutkintotodistus**): a certificate issued for a completed degree
- Education (**Koulutus**): leading to a degree (for example Master of Philosophy) or not leading to a degree (for example, a study module at a higher education institution or preparatory education for vocational training, specialisation at an higher education institution or voluntary additional basic education)
- Employee (**Työntekijä**): a person in an employment relationship in the private or public sector or working on the basis of an executive employment contract who is not an entrepreneur
- Employer (**Työnantaja**): an operator who has one or more employees at their service or who has a need for its first employee

- Employment relationship (**Työsuhde**): a type of employment relationship governed by civil law and established by making an employment contract
- Employment situation (**Työllisyystilanne**): the individual situation of a jobseeker client, which can affect their public employment services and their service process
- Entrepreneur (**Yrittäjä**): a person who carries out economic activities on their own account
- Flexible form of working hours (**Joustotyötyöaikamuoto**): an employee carries out at least half of the work at a time and place of their choice
- Franchise relationship (**Franchising-yrittäjäyys**): a relationship between two independent companies governed by civil law in which one company transfers the right to use its business model to the other in exchange for payment
- Full-time work (**Kokoaikatyö**): paid work wherein the working hours correspond to the full regular working hours
- Integration plan (**Kotoutumissuunnitelma**): an individual plan prepared to promote integration, in which the authority agrees with the immigrant on the integration objectives, services, and participation in services suitable for the immigrant
- Job advertisement (**Työpaikkailmoitus**): a description of work to be done in an employment relationship in the private or public sector, in a paid relationship or as an entrepreneur
- Job search area (**Työnhakualue**): a geographical area in which a jobseeker wishes to find a workplace or a commission performance place
- Job search discussion (**Työnhakukeskustelu**): a discussion that is part of the service process of a jobseeker client, in which an employment specialist assists the client in job search and guides them to suitable public employment services and, if necessary, to other services.
- Job search profile (**Työnhakuprofiili**): information about the person's job-related aspirations and interests, for example
- Language skills (**Kielitaito**): language proficiency that can be demonstrated by using a language proficiency test or self-assessment
- Part-time work (**Osa-aikatyö**): paid work wherein the working hours fall short of the full-time regular working hours
- Provision (**Provisio**): a continuous bonus pay, the amount of which has been agreed in the employment contract, which forms a part of the permanent salary
- Seasonal work (**Kausityö**): paid work performed periodically over a similar period of time

- Shift work (**Vuorotyö**): paid work that is carried out in shifts
- Starting job search (**Työhaun käynnistäminen**): a person's action to start a registered job search
- Temporary agency work employment relationship (**Vuokratyösuhde**): an employment relationship between a temporary agency and an employee in which the parties are the employee, the temporary agency, and a user company.
- Type of employment relationship (**Palvelussuhde**): the legal relationship between an employer and an employee
- Voluntary work (**Vapaaehtoistyö**): work that a person does of their own free will without pay or remuneration
- Work experience (**Työkokemus**): paid work done by a person so far and of relevance to a certain competence area





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