



BALTIC
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REGION

Talent Retention in the Helsinki Region: Overcoming the Language Barrier



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Fluent Finnish Required

For the international talents finding employment in Finland is often hindered by a lack of Finnish language skills.

- Many high-skilled graduates and other knowledge workers are forced to leave Finland, and the country loses their talent as a result of the brain drain.
- Language is not an issue in big companies and universities, but paramount in many SME's – and the great majority of new job openings are in SME's.
- The project coordinated by the University of Helsinki aims to increase regional cooperation in the Helsinki region in order to provide solutions for this challenge.

Action Group Steering the Project

Triple Helix Cooperation

Project is steered by an actively working action group of 10 specialists from the

- University of Helsinki (2 members)
- Aalto University
- Aalto University Student Union
- Metropolia University of Applied Sciences
- City of Helsinki
- Employment and Economic Development Office (Uusimaa region)
- Culminatium Innovation Oy Ltd.
- Helsinki Region Chamber of Commerce
- Confederation of Finnish Industries

Thematic Workshops: Promoting the Finnish Language Skills and Employability of International Talent

- Four thematic workshops were arranged in the spring 2013 involving both substance specialists and policy makers representing the HEI's, public administration and the corporate sector
- Combining the views and ideas on how to boost high-skilled immigrants' employability in the Helsinki region by improving their Finnish language skills
- Outcome: Policy recommendations based on the workshop discussions

Workshop Themes

1. Do We Prepare Students for Local or Global Labour Market? (21st of March 2013)

- When are the Finnish language skills needed? Should the Finnish language instruction focus on training programmes which prepare students especially for local labour market?

2. Language Instruction for the Local Labour Market (16th of April 2013)

- What is the adequate level of Finnish language skills in different professions? How could the language skills be improved on the job?

3. How to Teach and Learn Finnish? (27th of May 2013)

- How to activate Finnish for everyday use? Best methods of teaching occupational Finnish.

4. Sum Up: Goals, Cooperation and Responsibilities (7th of June 2013)

- Voting on the main questions regarding the Finnish language instruction and shaping a shared vision how to coordinate this regional cooperation in the future.

Policy Recommendations

- Targeted for the HEI's, employers and public sector in the Helsinki region
- Main topics:
 1. Labour market relevance in the language instruction
 2. Adequate language skill levels to the degree requirements
 3. Support for the employers in recruiting high-skilled immigrants
 4. Coordination and cooperation in the Helsinki region

Main findings of the workshops

- Concentrated coordination is needed in the Helsinki region
 - The development projects regarding the Finnish language instruction should be included in the HERIEC's (Helsinki Region Immigrant Employment Council) agenda.
 - If HERIEC is implemented, it gathers partners in order to promote high-skilled immigrants' integration to the Finnish labour market.
- Teaching the substance and language should be combined in order to increase the students' motivation and to gain better learning outcomes.
- The instruction in degrees in health and social sector should always be partly in Finnish in order to improve the language skills required in the labour market.
- Expectation management is essential: the students need to know the level of Finnish skills needed in their professional field in the Finnish labour market.
- Improving the high-skilled immigrants' language skills benefits the employer. The role of the employer in enabling language learning on the job should be strengthened.

Stepping Stones

The Helsinki Case in Language training is a small stepping stone in a major regional attempt to fully engage the potential of international graduates and other knowledge workers in the regional economy and society.

- Number of immigrants is rapidly rising in the region – now ca 10%, in 2025 ca 20% of the population
- Finnish population is aging rapidly
- Finnish economy is under paradigmatic structural changes

These parameters suggest that the problems in employability are temporary, but with the international fierce competition of the best skills, we can not wait another few years – the talents will go elsewhere.

The region is building an umbrella organisation HERIEC to increase dialogue among the actors, to bring together the existing services, and to create new necessary services for international talents.

Developing the Degrees

Higher education diplomas should develop the employability of immigrants into positions corresponding to their skills.

Including a certain competence level in Finnish within the degree requirements should be considered, especially in fields where a knowledge of Finnish is required and where the Finnish labour market needs skilled labour.

HEI's

Degree programmes wholly in English should not be offered within the fields of welfare and health.

HEI's

Study guidance and marketing should concentrate on creating realistic expectances of the Finnish language requirements of the field in the students of a certain field.

HEI's in cooperation with employers

Students should be offered opportunities to improve their language skills even after completing their degrees

HEI's and other education institutions, employers, ministries

Supporting the employers

Information and services should be created to support employers:

- Website with information on recruiting immigrants and the contact details of service providers (e.g. Finnish language instructors)
HERIEC (cf. Cooperation and Coordination)
- Training (e.g. training in mentoring and internationalisation, language courses)
Training organisations
- Campaigns on recruiting highly-educated immigrants and best practises
HERIEC, Helsinki Region Chamber of Commerce, EK Confederation of Finnish Industries, trade unions, entrepreneurship organisations

Incentives to develop language learning in conjunction of the employee training programmes should be canvassed
HERIEC

Cooperation and coordination

Cooperation for developing Finnish language studies for highly-educated immigrants and increasing their employment within the capital region should be established and deepened.

The public sector, higher education institutions and industry and commerce of the capital region should create *Helsinki Region Immigrant Employment Council - HERIEC* with the purpose of bringing together stakeholders in order to improve the employment of highly-educated immigrants

Cities and HEI's of the region, Helsinki Region Chamber of Commerce, Uusimaa Regional Council, Companies, Government Agencies

The Ministry for Education and Culture should create guidelines and incentives to develop higher education. The different ministries should improve cooperation in strengthening the employment of highly-skilled immigrants

Ministries of Education and Culture, of the Interior, of Employment and Economy

The higher education institutions of the capital region should fulfill the existing contract on organising common language courses

HEI's

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