

RUSSOPHONE IMMIGRATION TO FINLAND: NEW FORMS, TRENDS, AND CONSEQUENCES

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Until the 1960s, Finland was more often the country of origin than the country of destination. Once a depressed area, it soon turned into a welfare state, becoming with international migrants. Since Finland's labour market and society are beset with demographic problems, the country gladly accepts labour migrants, particularly those from neighbouring states. Most EU immigrants coming to Finland are Estonians. Immigration from without the EU — from Russia and other former Soviet countries — has, however, an even greater potential. Non-EU immigration falls into several categories — from seasonal labour migration to the relocation of top specialists and entrepreneurs. Currently, family reunions, marriages, and student and labour migration account for most migration from Russia to Finland. This article attempts to study immigration to Finland from neighbouring countries, primarily from Russia. The result of the study is an analysis of principal channels of international migration to Finland. These are family reunion, student migration, top specialist relocation, and the expansion of Russian business. Finland is in dire need of healthcare specialists, researchers, business development and IT specialists, and other professionals. For example, Russia-bordering Finnish regions lack upper and middle-level healthcare specialists. The focus of the study is on the professional and socio-demographic structure of labour migration to Finland and the country's migration policy on the adaptation and integration of Russian-speaking immigrants. The article gives a general picture of Finland's migration policy on labour migration from Russia and other countries. In collecting and processing materials, data from official websites of Finland's Migration Service and Employment Service, the database of Statistics Finland, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the Finnish National Agency for Education were used.

Keywords:

labour immigration, marriage immigration, student immigration, Finland, Russia, EU, integration of immigrants, migration crisis, immigration policy, Russian-speaking immigrants

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Introduction

Since the beginning of the 1990s, Russia's participation in world migration flows has been large-scale and diverse [1, p. 499–509]. Experts estimate the number of Russians who lived outside the CIS in the early 1990s at 20m.¹ Finland has become one of the most popular countries for Russians to emigrate to. Educational and particularly labour emigration constitutes the main channels of relocation from Russia to Finland. Other popular reasons for emigration are marriage and family reunions. Many Russians visit the Nordic country to do shopping, find a job, purchase real estate, and apply to universities.

Russophone immigration has received considerable attention from Finnish researchers. Anatoly Stikhin and Tatjana Rynkänen investigate the emigration of Russian-speaking teachers, their role and participation in school education in Finnish border towns and villages, and the difference between the educational systems of Finland and Russia [2]. Tatiana Tiaynen-Qadir writes about the priority of traditional family patterns in the life of Russian and Polish women in Finland and the connection between generations in their families [3]. Pirjo Pöllänen and Olga Davydova-Minguet focus on the everyday life of Russian immigrants in Finnish border regions, their life priorities, and the history of marriage immigration of Russian-speaking women [4]. Rolle Alho and Mika Helander explore the living and working conditions of seasonal migrants from neighbouring countries and the dependence of Finnish farms on seasonal workers [5]. Asteria Brylka, Tuuli Anna Mehonon, and Inga Jasinskaja-Lahti assess the extent of Russian-speaking immigration and explore the growing ethnocultural diversity of the country, along with the attempts to find a balance between the preservation of identity and the integration of immigrants [6]. Inga Jasinskaja-Lahti and Karmela Liebkind address the urgent issue of discrimination against and psychological adaptation of adolescents with a Russian migration background and their commitment to traditional values and national identity [7]. Elina Eskelä examines the globalisation of higher education and the growing number of qualified international personnel in Finland [8]. Driss Habi looks at what encourages Russian doctors to emigrate to Finland [9]. Helga Eggebø and Jan-Paul Brekke consider the relationship between family migration and integration [10].

This article explores the issues raised by Finnish and Russian researchers. The intensive migration exchange between the countries, primarily in border regions, is a product of a long shared border, historical and socio-cultural ties,

¹ See Lokosova, V.V., Rybakovsky, L.L. 2014, *Migration Processes in Russia*, Moscow, Econ-inform, p. 383 (in Russ.).

and family contacts. Demographic problems common to most European countries and Russia compels Finland to count on immigrants. This study reveals how Russophone immigration affects the socio-economic development of the country. To this end, it analyses the so-called ‘Russian-speaking economy’ and the emerging market for highly qualified Russophone specialists — two new phenomena in need of further investigation. This study aims to analyse the emigration to Finland of Russian citizens and Russian speakers from the former USSR and examine Finland’s labour migration policy. The work combines statistical, comparative, and formalised analysis. In particular, we collect and process information, study and compare facts, and identify causal relationships between them. The contribution presents our findings from field research conducted in Eastern Finland in Joensuu in December 2019.

Factors of immigration to Finland

Finland ranked first in the Good Country Index for several years — from 2017 to 2020.² The World Happiness Report names Finland the happiest country in the world with a score of 7.842.³ The country also moved up the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX). Today it is at the top of the ranking of 52 countries. MIPEX assesses national migrant integration policies in eight areas: labour market mobility, family reunions, education, political participation, long-term residence, access to nationality, anti-discrimination, and health.⁴

In Finland, like in most European countries, the birth rate is declining, the population is ageing, and qualified personnel is lacking. The natural replacement of the labour force is very unlikely, and attracting overseas workers seems the only way out [11, p. 472]. Finland welcomes young, educated, ambitious people, who can once become full citizens. Naturally, ‘Russia and the EU are competing for labour resources from CIS countries’ [12, p. 18].

Traditionally, Finns worked in agriculture. Finland did not immediately become a country of destination after industrialisation in the second half of the 20th century. Its unattractiveness was a consequence of its peripheral position [13, p. 133—141]. The economic problems of the 1960s and 1970s led to mas-

² *The Good Country index*, 2020, available at: <https://www.goodcountry.org/index/results> (accessed 19.10.2020).

³ The ranking of countries in the world in terms of happiness according to the United Nations, 2020, *Humanitarian portal*, available at: <https://gtmarket.ru/ratings/world-happiness-report/info> (accessed 09.10.2020).

⁴ *Migrant Integration Policy Index*, 2020, available at: <https://www.mipex.eu/finland> (accessed 10.19.2020).

sive labour emigration from Finland to Sweden, where the economy was growing and workers were in demand. Finland and its closest neighbour Sweden have a similar cultural and historical paradigm. This proximity played a part in the attractiveness of the country to Finnish migrants.

In the 21st century, Finland has become a post-industrial economy and a country of destination. Russia is Finland's principal partner in many areas. The countries are linked by a common history and share a long border. The states run a plethora of economic and cultural projects. Various immigration forms have developed between Russia and Finland, which is a major recruiter of migrant labour from the former USSR. The main channels for Russian citizens to emigrate to Finland are family reunions, including marriages, student migration, and various types of labour migration (that of highly qualified personnel, business relocation, seasonal migration, etc.). Family reunions are the most common reason to move to Finland. Table 1 shows the number of applications submitted by citizens of different countries from 2015 to 2018 and in the first six months of 2019. The data are from the Ministry of the Interior and the Finnish Migration Service. It is apparent from the table that more than a third (37%) of Russian immigrants have moved to Finland to reunite with their families.

Table 1

Applications for family residence permits in 2015-2019, people

Country	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 (first six months)
Russia	1 383	1 592	1 172	1 208	595
India	677	579	700	936	536
Iraq	558	1 100	1,689	846	364
Somalia	483	576	661	558	274
China	410	431	433	459	230
Thailand	552	516	422	441	223
Ukraine	268	278	310	382	192
<i>Other countries</i>	5,138	5,071	6,232	6,206	3,109
<i>Total:</i>	9 469	10 578	11 619	11 036	5,523

Source: International Migration 2018–2019 — Report for Finland, p. 32, *Valto: Etusivu*, available at: https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/161871/SM_2019_32.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (accessed 28.09.2020).

Table 2 shows the number of positive decisions on applications for family residence permits.

Table 2

Number of positive decisions on Finnish family residence permits, people

Country	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 (first six months)
Russia	1 281	1 472	1 012	1 052	527
Iraq	317	557	1,107	902	340
India	688	565	698	873	425
Somalia	411	410	448	469	192
Thailand	540	472	350	369	222
<i>Other countries</i>	4 802	4 695	5 474	5 434	2 922
<i>Total:</i>	8 039	8 171	9 089	9 009	4 628

Source: International Migration 2018–2019 — Report for Finland, p. 33, *Valto: Etusivu*, available at: https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/161871/SM_2019_32.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (accessed 28.09.2020).

Russians make up the main flow of migrants moving to Finland for family reasons. This trend is likely to continue in the years to come.

The structure of the immigrant flow to Finland

Non-EU countries account for most immigrants coming to Finland, whilst the bulk of immigrants coming to Finland from the EU are Estonians.⁵ There is a steady increase in the contribution of immigration to the Finnish population (Figure 1). Immigration from Russia and other states of the former USSR, such as Ukraine, can significantly change the demographic situation in the country.

Employment areas suffering the most from a shortage of specialists are transport and logistics, residential construction, welding, plumbing, metalworking, gardening and forestry, and cleaning. The demand for specialists in the service sector and IT has been steadily growing in recent years.

In 2019, 7,853 residence permits were issued to Russian citizens; 4,093, to Ukrainians; 300, to Belarusians.⁶ Citizens of post-Soviet republics such as Tajikistan (6), Kyrgyzstan (36), and Kazakhstan (196) also received Finnish residence permits, whilst only 8,533 EU citizens obtained ones during the period.

⁵ *Maahanmuuttovirasto Migratiosverket Finnish Immigration Service*, 2020, available at: <https://tilastot.migri.fi/index.html#applications/23332?l=en> (accessed 11.05.2020).

⁶ *Maahanmuuttovirasto Migratiosverket Finnish Immigration Service*, 2020, available at: <https://tilastot.migri.fi/index.html#decisions/21205?l=en&start=588&end=599> (accessed 11.07.2020).

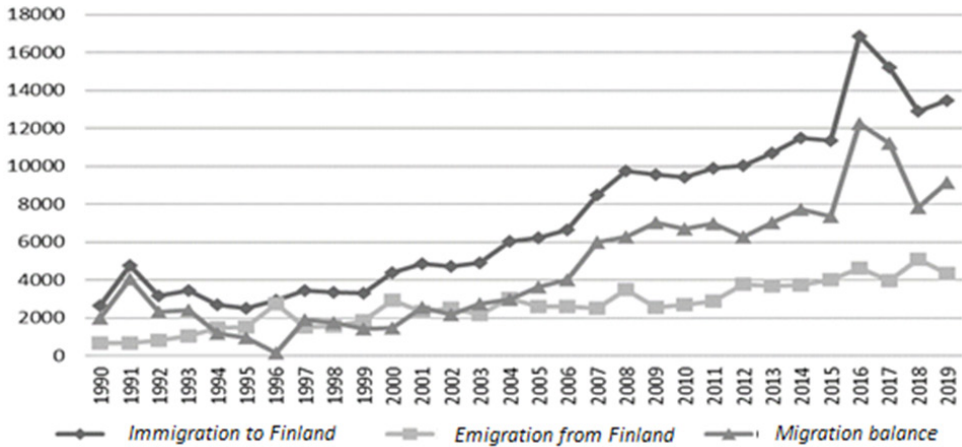


Fig. 1. Migration between Finland and non-EU countries, 1990—2019, people

Source: Statistics Finland Maahanmuuttovirasto Migratiosverket Finnish Immigration Service, 2020, available at: http://www.stat.fi/til/muutl/2018/muutl_2018_2019-06-17_kuv_001_en.html (accessed 11.05.2020).

The movement of migrant labour between border regions is growing. Many residents of the Leningrad region, St Petersburg, Karelia, and the Murmansk region wish to emigrate to Finland. ‘Border territories and cities are amongst the first to respond to the ongoing changes and challenges associated with massive movements of people and growing cultural diversity’ [14, p. 495]. Most of these changes affect national economic and political environments.

According to the International Labor Organisation, about 25,000 Estonian citizens, 8,400 Russians, 3,300 Swedes, and 1,700 Ukrainians worked in Finland in 2018.⁷ From November 2018 to October 2019 alone, 12,200 people arrived from Russia to Finland.⁸ Moreover, Russian citizens filed 8,800 applications for a residence permit in Finland, of which 7,800 were approved. Citizens of Ukraine also emigrate to Finland. Out of 4,500 applications for a residence permit submitted in 2019, 4,000 were successful.⁹

Many migrants come to Finland for less than 90 days. Workers arrive in Finland on a regular tourist visa, as no special permit is required for stays short-

⁷ International Labour Organisation, 2020, *II Ilostat*, available at: <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/> (accessed 15. 05.2020).

⁸ *Maahanmuuttovirasto Migratiosverket Finnish Immigration Service*, 2020, available at: <https://tilastot.migri.fi/index.html#applications?l=en§ion=nationalities> (accessed 20.10.2020).

⁹ *Maahanmuuttovirasto Migratiosverket Finnish Immigration Service*, 2020, available at: <https://tilastot.migri.fi/index.html#decisions/21205?l=en§ion=nationalities> (accessed 20.10.2020).

er than three months. Thus, it is problematic to keep statistics of visits that are not registered as migrant arrivals. There is strong demand for seasonal workers, mainly in gardening, forestry, and berry picking. Many seasonal workers come from Ukraine and Thailand. In 2019, most were citizens of Ukraine (817 people), Vietnam (91 people), Russia (65 people), and Belarus (35 people).¹⁰

Educational migration to Finland is encouraged by the country's free high-quality education. Finnish universities are amongst the best in the world, and Russophone immigrants value the opportunity to study at such institutions. They see education as the perfect way to embrace Finnish social norms [15, p. 404]. In 2017, a new law introduced tuition fees for English-language master's programmes. This change concerned only non-EU citizens. Students from outside the Union have to pay from 8,000 to 16,000 euros a year for a master's programme. Russian citizens and Russophones comprise the largest group of international students in Finland. Table 3 shows changes in the number of international students at Finnish educational institutions. The data are from the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI).

Table 3

**Changes in the number of international students
at Finnish educational institutions (people)**

Top 10	2016	2017	2018
Russia	772	457	502
Vietnam	1005	419	478
China	491	304	426
Bangladesh	228	150	287
Nepal	301	282	233
Germany	149	195	219
India	204	168	213
Estonia	152	169	163
Pakistan	203	148	162
Nigeria	186	129	148
Proportion of international students, %	61	51	53

Source: Finnish National Agency For Education, 2020, available at: <https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/tilastoja-korkeakoulujen-ulkomaalaisista-tutkin-to-opiskelijoista-ja-uusista-opiskelijoista-2018.pdf> (accessed 25.02.2020).

¹⁰ *Maahanmuuttovirasto Migratiosverket Finnish Immigration Service*, 2020, available at: <https://tilastot.migri.fi/index.html#decisions/21205/59/2/488002?l=en&start=588> (accessed 20.10.2020).

An interview given by a Russian Karelian confirms many of the above trends.

I grew up in a small village near Petrozavodsk. My mother was a teacher at a local school. After graduating from the university in Petrozavodsk, I received a grant for a master's degree at the University of Joensuu. After completing the programme, I was offered a research position at the university. Today I teach Karelian at the University of Eastern Finland and work as a researcher. My decent command of Finnish helped me adjust to life in the country. I have friends, many of whom are from Russia. Do I want to go back? Probably, under certain conditions, yes. I really like my job. I'd like to cooperate with Russian universities.

Amid COVID-19 restrictions, Finnish universities expected 2,300 exchange students to come to the country in winter term 2020. This number is about 36 per cent that of students who arrived a year ago.¹¹

Trends in emigration from Russia to Finland

In the first years after the collapse of the USSR, emigration from Russia was in essence repatriation of ethnic Finns (the Ingrian people). The Ingrian Finns settled on the territory of present-day St Petersburg in the 17th century and took part in building the city. Finland's repatriation law granted privileges to indigenous Finns.¹² The repatriation programme ended on 1 July 2016. In June 2016, at its very end, the Finnish Immigration Office received a record number of repatriates' applications, 244, whilst only 61 were submitted in May 2016. Most ethnic repatriates come from Russia to Finland from the northwestern regions of the former, namely the Republic of Karelia, St Petersburg, and the Leningrad region. This skew is explained by the border position of the areas, linguistic proximity, similar mindset, and family and friendship ties. There are about 10,000 native speakers of the Karelian language in Finland; another 20,000 understand but do not speak it.

For comparison, about 25,000 residents of Karelia are native speakers of Karelian.¹³ The language is on the curriculum of some schools and universities in Finland.

The annual growth in immigrants from Russia to Finland ranges from 1,500 to 2,700 people (Table 4).

¹¹ Finnish National Agency For Education, 2020, *Opetushallitus*, available at: <https://www.oph.fi/en/news/2020/higher-education-institutions-estimate-number-student-exchanges-autumn-semester-be-much> (accessed 01.11.2020).

¹² Those who lived in the area of St Petersburg before the foundation of Russia's northern capital, 2020, *Bumaga*, available at: <https://paperpaper.ru/photos/ingria-facts/> (accessed 01.11.2020).

¹³ Karelian in Finland Eldia Case-Specific Report, 2020, *University of Vienna Phaidra*, available at: <https://services.phaidra.univie.ac.at/api/object/o:471733/diss/Content/get> (accessed: 13. 11.2020).

Table 4

Migration from Russia to Finland in 2009–2018, people

2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
2445	2353	2852	3096	2901	2467	2155	2640	1811	1781

Source: Statistics Finland's free-of-charge statistical databases, 2020, Tilastotietokannat, available at: http://pxnet2.stat.fi/PXWeb/pxweb/en/StatFin/StatFin__vrm__muutl/statfin_muutl_pxt_11a9.px/ (accessed 15.10. 2020).

Closer contacts between the two countries have encouraged Finnish eastern border municipalities, such as Joensuu, Lappeenranta, and Imatra, to introduce Russian language and literature lessons in schools. Particularly, ' [i] n 2013, the Finnish parliament supported establishing a foundation for the Russian language and culture. The organisation will award scholarships for studying the Russian language in Finland and allocate funds for advanced training of Russian teachers. The government has allocated 10m euros' [16].

Table 5 shows changes in the size of the Russian-speaking population in Finland. Over 79,000 residents of Finland consider Russian their native language, which is 21 per cent of foreign language speakers in the country. About 145 public organisations in Finland use Russian in their day-to-day operations or are targeted at the local Russian-speaking community. Yet another proof of the interest the Finnish state has in the Russian language and Russophone immigrants is that the 2013 State Prize of the Ministry of Culture and Education of Finland went to the Finnish Russian scholar Arto Mustajoki for a book about the Russian language [17].

Table 5

The number of foreign speakers in Finland, people

Language	2015	2016	2017	2018
Finnish	4,865,628	4,857,795	4,848,761	4,835,778
Swedish	290,161	289,540	289,052	288,400
Sami	1,957	1,969	1,992	1,995
Other languages, total	329,562	353,993	373, 325	391, 746
Russian	72,436	75, 444	77, 177	79, 225
Estonian	48,087	49, 241	49, 590	49, 691
Arab	16,713	21, 783	26, 467	29, 462
Somali	17,871	19, 059	20, 007	20, 944
English	17,787	18, 758	19, 626	20, 713
Kurdish	11,271	12, 226	13, 327	14, 054
Persian, Farsi	8,745	10,882	12, 090	13, 017

The end of table 5

Chinese	10,722	11, 334	11, 825	12, 407
Albanian	9,233	9,791	10, 391	10,990
Vietnamese	8,273	9,248	9,872	10,440
<i>Total:</i>	5,487,308	5,530,297	5,513,130	5,517.919

Source: Statistics Finland, 2020, available at: https://www.stat.fi/tup/suoluk/suoluk_vaesto_en.html#foreignersinfinland (accessed 20.10.2020).

The Russian M., interviewed on 24 November 2019 at the University of Eastern Finland (Joensuu), commented on many of the above aspects.

I moved because I wanted my children to have a good education and bright prospects. I have two kids. One of them is in a private school (it's free like public ones), the other is in kindergarten (the fee depends on the parents' income and ranges from 0 to 350 euros). Kindergarten is free for us. Our family is on the programme for immigrant integration. The first stage of integration is language courses, state-funded; my wife is taking one. She has a higher education and is registered with the employment service. How does an unemployed person receive an allowance (about 500 euros)? The courses are run by organisations that have won a tender. Five-hour classes are held five days a week during one and a half semesters. A small cash allowance (about 200 euros) is paid to stimulate course attendance.

Immigration through marriage comprises a considerable proportion of the migration flow from Russia to Finland. Finnish men and women often marry Russians and citizens of other post-Soviet countries (Table 6). There are many mixed marriages in border towns and settlements.¹⁴ Russians enter into both traditional and same-sex marriages in Finland. But the latter are so few (nine cases in ten years) that they will not be considered here because of their little effect on the overall picture of immigration through marriage.

Table 6

Changes in marriage migration from Russia to Finland in 2010–2018, people

Gender	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Women (brides with Russian citizenship)	372	414	385	365	315	302	303	321	186
Men (grooms with Russian citizenship)	77	78	85	66	107	104	84	91	95

Source: Statistics Finland's free-of-charge statistical databases, 2020, Tilastotietokanta, available at: http://pxnet2.stat.fi/PXWeb/pxweb/en/StatFin/StatFin__vrm__ssaaty/statfin_ssaaty_pxt_121h.px/table/tableViewLayout1/ (accessed 20.12.2020).

¹⁴ Statistics Finland's free-of-charge statistical databases, 2020, *Tilastotietokanta*, available at: http://pxnet2.stat.fi/PXWeb/pxweb/en/StatFin/StatFin__vrm__ssaaty/statfin_ssaaty_pxt_121h.px/table/tableViewLayout1/ (accessed 20.12.2020).

Impact of immigration on the social and economic development of Finland

Immigration to Finland follows several routes. These are labour immigration, seasonal work, executive employment, business relocation, and immigration through marriage. Seasonal work, which is usual in agriculture and tourism, is done at specific times of the year. It is needed in crop harvesting, forestry, live-stock farming, and related services. Hiring migrant labour is essential for businesses to make up for the shortage of workers. 'Although the foreign pickers are in a marginal position in the Finnish society and the Finnish welfare state, paradoxically they are of central importance as providers of labour to the berry and vegetable picking industry, which these days depends on non-native seasonal workers from Russia, Ukraine and Estonia' [5, p. 148–157]. Seasonal work includes ski resort jobs, short-term employment by tour operators, booking services, guide services, and passenger water transport. People from neighbouring countries partly fill these positions. In the near future, Finland will calibrate its migration policy to attract qualified specialists. New tools will encompass a grant system, academic mobility programmes, and long-term contracts. A special target group is entrepreneurs. Starting a business in Finland is not particularly difficult, but one must prove that it is responsible and potentially profitable. Russian-speaking immigrants, who constitute Finland's largest non-native community, own many small businesses in the country. Finland has a conducive environment for small businesses, and the regulatory framework is the same for all entrepreneurs. The path to small business ownership is open to everyone in the country, including non-natives.

There are about 260,000 companies in Finland; 93 per cent of them are small firms employing one to nine people. Firms founded by foreigners or non-natives (approximately 6,500) account for 3 per cent of all Finnish enterprises.

According to Toivo Utso, a specialist at the Helsinki Enterprise Service (Yrityshelsinki), young professionals are often willing to start their own business. He stresses that to do so, young immigrants should begin with studying the market and the demand in it. The Finnish consumer will not necessarily seek after what sells well in Russia. Most non-natives launch startups in commerce and services. Many immigrants purchase an existing business — a factory, a transport company, or commercial real estate. The number of such deals is rising. Russian businesspeople flock to Finland to live and work. Some, however, stay in Russia, running their Finnish businesses from afar.¹⁵ Table 7 shows statistics of the Finnish Migration Service on the number of entrepreneurs with Russian citizenship.

¹⁵ Practical advice for aspiring entrepreneurs. Your business in Finland, 2020, *thisisFINLAND*, available at: <https://finland.fi/ru/biznes-i-innovatsii/svoj-biznes-v-finlyandii-prakticheskie/> (accessed 20.10.2020).

Table 7

Entrepreneurs with Russian citizenship in Finland, people

2017	2018	2019	2020 (six months)
34	84	91	53

Source: Statistics of the Finnish migration service, 2020, Tilastot — Maahanmuuttovirasto, available at: <https://tilastot.migri.fi/#applications/21205/59/2/10?l=en&start=600> (accessed 05.11.2020).

Russian businesspeople are active in tourism, logistics, legal services, and catering. Russian-owned businesses are particularly widespread in the eastern regions. In Savonlinna and Laapenranta, there were over 60 registered Russian enterprises in 2015. They accounted for 15 per cent of all enterprises in the two territories. In Kotka-Hamina, Russian-run companies comprised 12 per cent of the market. Most of them operate in commercial real estate and service sectors. Immigration is the only source of population increase in many Finnish regions. The proportion of foreign citizens varies across the country. It is the largest on the Aland Islands (11.1 per cent), in Uusimaa (including Helsinki, 8.5 per cent), and Pohjanmaa (5.3 per cent). Northern Finland and Lapland have the lowest proportion of foreigners (2.3 per cent). The 2014–2016 massive immigration to Finland was accompanied by a rise in unemployment amongst foreign citizens living in the country (Table 8).

Table 8

**Unemployment amongst the foreign population of Finland
in 2000–2018, %**

2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
31.7	19.3	23.1	18.1	14.8	13.6	14.2	16.8	17.6	14.1

Source: Foreign-born unemployment, 2020, OECD, available at: <https://data.oecd.org/migration/foreign-born-unemployment.htm> (accessed 20.10.2020).

In 2019, about 73 per cent of Finns aged 15 to 64 had a job. This proportion is above the OECD average of 68 per cent. About 74 per cent of men and 72 per cent of women had a job in the country (Fig. 2). The immigrant employment rate is much lower. It was 45.2 per cent in 2000 and 62.2 per cent in 2018. i. e. 54.9 per cent of females and 70 per cent of males had a job.¹⁶

¹⁶ Foreign-born employment, 2020, OECD, available at: <https://data.oecd.org/migration/foreign-born-employment.htm> (accessed 19.11.2020).

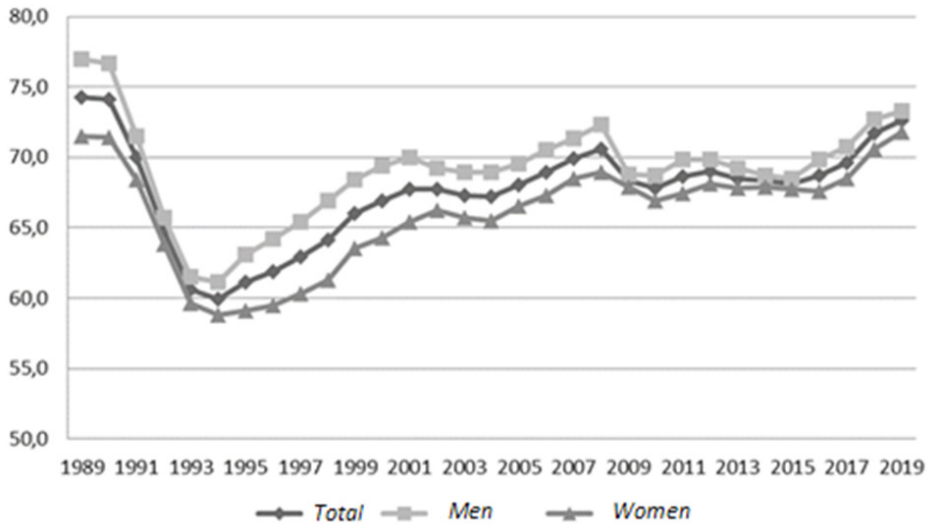


Fig. 2. The employment rate for the Finnish population aged 15 to 64,%

Source: Labour Market, 2020, Statistics Finland, available at: https://www.stat.fi/tup/suoluk/suoluk_tyolama_en.html#employmentrate_personsaged15to64 (accessed 20.10.2020).

Jobs for immigrants are at the core of the Finnish integration policy. In October 2006, the Finnish Ministry of Employment adopted a migration policy agenda that encourages labour migration to the country. At the same time, Finnish laws never mention the term ‘labour migrants’. A principal organisation working with immigrants is the Employment Exchange (Työnvälitystoimisto), which deals with migrant recruitment. The Ministry of Employment provides information on jobs, work permits, and working conditions in Finland.

Integ of immigrants into Finnish society

Maria Pitukhina and Svetlana Sigova write that ‘immigrant integration efforts are targeted at education, professional and personal competencies in Finnish and Swedish, regular employment, healthcare, welfare, and struggle against discrimination. The latter concerns the use of unskilled labour, job search problems, and the sense of national belonging’. [18, p. 35–38]. Russian-speakers are often better educated than members of other immigrant groups [2, p. 233–242]. The Russophones who moved to Finland with their parents at preschool age are well-integrated into Finnish society. As a rule, they have few contacts with Russian-speaking peers, and their command of Russian is not perfect. Those who moved at school age think of themselves as bilinguals, yet their Russian is usually better than Finnish, and they may have difficulty communicating with their Finnish peers. Both groups tend to have a dual identity. At home and in their ethnic environment, they stay in touch with Russian culture and the Russian language.

Interactions with Finnish culture occur outside the family: at school, through the media, and in communication with peers. Those who moved to the country at an older age feel they are part of the Russian community. They communicate with their compatriots and celebrate Russian holidays together. Their circle of acquaintances is rather limited and is not likely to grow. Finnish is crucial for education, work, and social mobility, and a poor command of the language significantly reduces integration opportunities.

The Russian N., who moved to Finland (Joensuu) at pre-retirement age as part of the repatriation programme (her husband's grandmother was born in Finland), comes to similar conclusions in her interview taken in early December 2019.

Upon arrival in the country, I had to take integration courses. The language course was quite a challenge, probably because of my age. After that, I received my residence permit.

According to Finnish laws, I am not yet a pensioner (retirement in Finland is at 65, regardless of gender). I'm having huge problems with finding a job. Russians are reluctant to hire, and, of course, a local will have much greater chances of filling any job vacancy. My profession is not sought-after in a small town. I am a primary school teacher. It's difficult for me to find friends amongst the locals because my Finnish is not great. We have different mindsets and perceive many things in different ways. We have no mutual acquaintance or friends. We don't share memories. I mostly communicate with immigrants from Russia. We hold meetings in clubs where we celebrate holidays, birthdays, etc.

The best solution to the integration problems of the Russian-speaking population of Finland is bilingual education. The Finnish-Russian School, the Myllypuro Basic School in Helsinki, the Puolala School in Turku, the School of Eastern Finland in Imatra, Joensuu, and Lappeenranta offer programmes delivered in two languages [19, p. 46].

A Finnish language test is compulsory to acquire citizenship. However, it is not necessary for those who have obtained a secondary vocational education in the country. Many Russian-speaking immigrants choose the latter option, even when they have a degree from a Russian university.

Globalisation has blurred boundaries; this holds both for the movement of people and for national identities [20, p. 133]. 'Entirely new socio-cultural conditions have forced the "old" native Europeans to raise questions that previously seemed unnecessary or even inappropriate' [21, p. 179]. Russophons in Finland have many integration problems, one of which is finding one's identity. Davydova-Minguet concludes: 'migration from post-Soviet countries in the 2000s, growing cultural diversity of Finland, and shifts in public attitudes towards Russia (the subsiding fear of the "big neighbour") have made "Russianness" acceptable for immigrants as a cultural self-identification' [22, p. 26–39]. Olga Gurova stresses in her empirical research that Russian-speaking immigrants living in Finland build their ethnic identity by dressing in a particular way and using the so-called 'style repertoires' [23, p. 17–41].

The key to integration is the knowledge of Finnish. A poor command of the language complicates integration, along with discrimination (often latent) in the labour market and the uneasy attitude of the locals to Russians preserving their identity. In 1999, Finland adopted the Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers (*See: Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers*).¹⁷ In 2005, the growing number of immigrants necessitated significant amendments.

In 2011, the Act on Integration (KotoL) entered into force. Its primary aim is intersectoral cooperation for integration. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment is responsible for immigrant integration and employment. The Minister of Integration is the Minister of Employment, Tula Haatainen.

Priorities of the country's integration policy:

- a. *support for immigrant families;*
- b. *jobs and housing for immigrants;*
- c. *civil society participation in immigrant integration;*
- d. *cooperation between the state and municipalities.*

In 2019, the Ministry of the Interior of Finland even started to accept applications from organisations and individuals to take part in the Immigrant Integration Program of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). Overall, the Ministry planned to receive¹⁸ about 4m euros, of which about 1m (966,418 euros) was to be spent on an immigrant integration programme.¹⁹

The AMIF was established for 2014–2020, totalling 3.137bn euros. Its priority initiatives are:

- fight against irregular migration;
- strengthening solidarity at all levels with EU countries affected by migrant crises;
- supporting regular migration to EU states in accordance with market needs and promoting the integration of non-EU citizens.

Integration policy facilitates the involvement of immigrants in all areas of society. Equal opportunities for all and a welcoming atmosphere that motivate immigrants to become full-fledged members of Finnish society are crucial for immigrant integration.

Young immigrants arriving in Finland need support at the early stages of integration. Not having enough resources, the authorities look for new creative

¹⁷ Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers (493/1999; amendments up to 324/2009 included), 2009, *Legislationline*, available at: https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/6235/file/Finland_act_on_integration_of_immigrants_1999%20as%20of%202009%20ENG.pdf (accessed 15.10.2020).

¹⁸ Potential beneficiaries of programmes supported by the fund are national authorities, local government bodies, non-governmental and humanitarian organisations, private and public law firms, and educational and research organisations.

¹⁹ *Kotouttaminen.fi*, 2020, available at: https://kotouttaminen.fi/artikkeli/-/asset_publisher/amif-haku-kaynnistyy-marraskuussa-rahoituksesta-noin-miljoona-euroa-kotoutumistoimiin (accessed 30.10.2020).

solutions to enhance integration. One of them was the Guider mobile game.²⁰The game focuses on housing, work, healthcare, money, education, society, and culture. Immigrants can find answers to their questions while playing. The app provides general and specific information by teaching the rules and introducing the player to Finnish laws and political organisation. It has Finnish, Russian, Arabic, English, Somali, and Kurdish versions. The game is an effective language learning aid.

Finland's integration policy has become more active and efficient. Many immigrants who moved to the country some time ago believe that if such conditions for integration had existed earlier, their adaptation would have been faster and they would have avoided many problems when integrating into a new society.

Conclusion

With the growth of immigration in Finland, the country was forced to 'make some changes to its migration policy' [24, p. 136]. In securitising their migration policy, the Finns embraced the principle of selective migration. They welcome skilled labour, including that from outside the EU. The securitisation of migration policy is a necessary condition for 'maintaining an optimal level of security in the recipient country' [25, p. 38–42]. Amongst other things, this means safeguarding national security interests when recruiting labour migrants.

Seventy-five thousand Russian speakers live in Finland, and their number is increasing every year. The Russophone population of Finland is quite diverse: there are asylum seekers, returnees, labour migrants, students, and family members seeking reunion. Yet the chief motive for immigration, along with family reasons, is economic. Dezhina et al. confirm this conclusion: '... for the countries with catching-up development patterns, for instance, Russia, economic factors, including salary, are a major motive for emigration' [26, p. 119].

The Russian-speaking population of Finland usually has a good education. Their employment rate is close to that of the locals. Nevertheless, they earn less than the Finns, despite a comparable quality of life [27]. Still, 'Russophones living in Finland often fall victims to prejudices and everyday discrimination...' [28].

Finland is interested in an influx of labour migrants, especially those from bordering countries and regions: their decent education, acquaintance with the traditions of Finnish society and, most importantly, their desire to adapt reduces integration costs. The country's migration policy aims to create favourable conditions for immigrant integration. It engages the mechanisms of civil society, whilst the state is set to take important decisions.

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²⁰ *Guider Game*, 2020, available at: <https://gamu.fi/guider-game> (accessed 20.05. 2020).

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