



ADVICE & TIPS – FINLAND



Once, Finland's attitude to newcomers and immigrants was cautious, but now they offer a warm welcome. As the younger generation will be unable to fill the labour shortage once the post-war baby-boom age group retires, Finland is welcoming people from abroad to fill the gaps.

- *Typical problems encountered:* unemployment in Finland is higher than in the UK but has reduced in recent years. Competition from home graduates may be high due to the fact that many Finnish graduates are often fluent in several languages, including English, Swedish, German, French and Spanish.
- *How to improve your chances:* relevant work experience is usually required and graduates are expected to have professional experience before being hired for more advanced jobs. It may be necessary to gain this experience before moving to Finland.
- *Language requirements:* there are very few jobs where it will be possible to work without any knowledge of the Finnish language. Swedish is also an official language, spoken by a minority (just over 5%). Requirements vary depending on how far from Helsinki you are and the type of job you are looking for. As English is often the language of business for companies in the international market, it may mean that English language skills are required, but a working knowledge of Finnish is still extremely important.

The Curriculum Vitae

In Finland choose between Finnish or Swedish for the cover letter and the CV. Stick to one language once chosen.

Write your Finnish CV in a reverse chronological order - detailing your most recent activities first. The CV in Finland is seen as a basic document that shows exactly what somebody has done and should never be sent out without a cover letter.

The aim of your Finnish CV should be to persuade recruiters to invite you for an interview. Therefore, your CV is a marketing tool, which should be adapted to the market in which you intend to use it.

Begin with your name, address, date of birth, nationality, marital status and the position for which you are applying. Often CV are kept on file for long periods, so any contact details you give have to remain accurate in the long term. A daytime phone number, with the international access code and e-mail are most important.

Below state your education. Mention examination grades giving dates of attendance, study emphases, diplomas and degrees. List additional courses and training, and special skills such as computer programs in which you are proficient. Include information on your military service (obligatory for males in Finland) and your duties.

Under practical experience list responsibilities you had in each job with dates, their locations and your titles. Include special skills, your publications if applicable and foreign language fluency skills with reference to the spoken and written levels.

Make your CV more effective by providing examples to illustrate your achievements. Use power words and action verbs such as contributed, organized, demonstrated, trained, managed, developed, coordinated etc. Bullet point these at the start of a sentence for maximum impact.

Carefully consider what to leave out of your CV and exclude anything that might give prospective employers a chance to discriminate against you.

CV are often scanned by employers, so make your CV scannable by avoiding for example lines or italic fonts etc.

The application procedure

Apart from *global techniques** for success, consider the Finnish culture and try the following:

- Be direct and state facts
- Show confidence, but don't show off
- Be concise - Finns think "babbling" is ridiculous
- Do not exaggerate - to a Finn it's the same as lying
- Use Finnish language if you can - even a little is good

Where can I work?

- Major industries: agriculture and forestry, engineering, manufacturing, IT and communications, public and other services.
- Recent growth areas: the private services sector.
- Industries in decline: manufacturing.
- Shortage occupations: labour shortages occur across all labour sectors, particularly in healthcare and construction.
- Major companies: Kesko (wholesale retail chain), Metsaliitto (forest industry), Neste Oil, Nokia (electronics), Outokumpu (metallurgy), Sampo (finance and investment), SOK (wholesale retail chain), Stora Enso (forest industry), Tamro (pharmaceutical wholesaling), UPM (forest industry).
- Major cities: Helsinki (capital and largest), Espoo, Tampere, Vantaa, Turku, Oulu.

What's it like working in Finland?

- Average working hours: 8am-5pm, five days a week (approximately 40 hours a week).
- Holidays: A new employee is entitled to two days' holiday for every month of employment, which increases to two and a half days per month when the job continues for a full year. The majority of annual holiday days are taken over the summer, leaving about one week for the winter.
- Average graduate starting salary: Wages are about the same in Finland as in the UK. Graduate starting salaries will be on a par with the industry average in the UK.

- Tax rates: Everyone, including immigrants, pays taxes to the state and local authority. This is based on a fixed percentage of your income. Taxation is quite high in comparison with many other European countries. More details are available from the Ministry of Labour Finland.
- Working practices and customs: Finns tend to be rather reserved and introverted people. Physical communication (patting on back, kissing) remain unusual and Finns enjoy periods of silences in conversations. Work and business conventions are more formal than in the UK. Business dress is typically very smart and a firm, formal handshake is a usual greeting. Meetings are formal situations and discussions are straight to the point. Strict adherence to agreements and schedules is highly valued.