

**Ministry for Foreign Affairs**

**5.3.2024**

**Ministry of the Interior**

**All other relevant ministries**

**FINLAND**

## **FINLAND'S INPUT TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE REGIONAL REVIEW OF THE GLOBAL COMPACT FOR SAFE, ORDERLY AND REGULAR MIGRATION (GCM)**

The GCM sets the standards for safe, orderly and regular migration and provides us with commonly agreed language at global level related to all aspects of migration. Finland fully supports multilateral cooperation and rules-based international order and UN's key role in it.

The GCM emphasises that an effective approach to migration management in general requires a whole-of-government approach. In terms of implementation of the GCM, this approach is utmost important since many of the actions to reach the 23 objectives and 10 guiding principles, cross-governmental cooperation and stepping-up of policy coherence is clearly needed. Also in Finland, the different objectives fall into responsibility of several Ministries.

The implementation of the GCM is also an opportunity to emphasize the value of strengthening the whole-of-society approach to migration. By engaging all actors we can make use of all the skills and capacities of various stakeholders.

The Finnish national input focuses here on some of the objectives of the GCM.

### **Objective 1: Collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies**

In the negotiations on the European Union Pact on Migration and Asylum, Finland has emphasized the need that registration, statistics, storage and analysis of data are up-to-date, comprehensive and reliable. It is crucial that the entire system works, including detection of illegal entries at land and sea borders, identification of people, registration, necessary security checks and returns. Preconditions for effective action include fluent authority cooperation and exchange of information, including cooperation in preventing crime, operation based on risk analysis the use of biometrics and databases in identifying and registering people as well as preparedness ahead of changing situations.

At the moment, Finland registers those entering the country (both those seeking international protection and others). Finland welcomes the future amendments to the Eurodac Regulation, which increases the data to be stored and shared with authorities. The Screening and Asylum Procedures Regulation further add to ensuring that people are registered at the border. One

objective of the PM Orpo Government Programme in migration policy is to increase the exchange of data between authorities.

**Objective 2: Minimize the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin**

Finland emphasizes the need to adopt a holistic, whole-of-government approach to addressing the various underlying factors which cause forced displacement and irregular migration.

According to the current Government Programme adopted in June 2023, the readmission of nationals and support for the international rules-based order will be made conditions for Finland's development cooperation.

In its development policy, Finland will focus on its strengths where it has good opportunities to support sustainable development. A well-functioning democracy, the rule of law, human rights and a vibrant civil society are prerequisites for sustainable social development, which the Government will support.

Finland builds dialogue and cooperation on migration as part of a broader political dialogue.

**Objective 3: Provide accurate and timely information at all stages of migration**

Migration needs to be managed, also with effective measures in the countries of origin and transit. Finland participates in migration management at the EU level, where cooperation with third countries regional actors and the international community are crucial.

It is important to conduct cooperation bilaterally, regionally and internationally concerning migration trends. It is important to share information in the countries of origin on the risks of illegal entry and to address the root causes of migration. Aid should be provided as close to the country of origin as possible and to provide protection for those in real need. Taking dangerous routes to Europe should be prevented, for example, by providing accurate information for those planning to enter Europe through Finland.

**Objective 5: Enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration**

**Talent Boost**

Talent Boost is an intersectoral action programme to promote international recruitment and work-based and education-based immigration to Finland. The Programme was launched in summer 2020. The revised Talent Boost 2023–2027 complies with the priorities of the Programme of Prime Minister Orpo's Government and intensifies the measures already under way.

According to the Government Programme, in addition to boosting the employment of the unemployed jobseekers already in Finland, the Government will supplement the labour force primarily from the EU and the EEA. International recruitment from third countries is supported

in a targeted manner and aims to build cooperation particularly with India, Brazil, Vietnam, and the Philippines. The focus in work-based immigration from outside the EU will be on highly educated individuals and employees in sectors that are identified as suffering from a labour shortage.

Talent Boost has three objectives: 1) 1 Attractiveness of Finland: promoting availability of talents and country branding, 2) efficient and controlled residence permit processes with effective follow-up monitoring and prevention of abuses, 3) improving Finland's retention. Prevention of work-related exploitation is also an integral part of the programme.

During the last government term, a fast track for specialists, growth entrepreneurs and their family members was introduced. It enables them to receive a decision on an electronically submitted residence permit application within 14 days.

One of the central aims of Talent Boost is to shorten the processing times for residence permits. In accordance with the Government Programme, the aim is for experts to receive a permit in one week's time while other work-based residence permits are issued within 30 days. A two-week fast track for specialists, startups and their family members is successfully up and running, and the shorter one-week fast-track will be established during year 2024. The overall processing time of 30 days will also be achieved during 2024. During 2019-2023, the processing times for work- and study based residence permits were shortened by 50 % on average, while the numbers of applications increased to record high figures.

International talents may contribute to addressing the shortage of personnel in healthcare and social welfare. In accordance with the Government Programme, wellbeing services counties will be supported in recruitment and in ensuring their personnel's language skills. Moreover, the Government will accelerate and streamline the process of granting practice rights to professionals trained outside the EU/EEA. In particular, during spring 2024 a working group will present its proposal for permanent training and qualification paths for third-country nurses, doctors and dentists.

### **Objective 6: Facilitate fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that ensure decent work**

#### **Strategy and action plan to prevent and combat labour exploitation**

Finland is committed to preventing and combating the exploitation of foreign labour. The Government adopted a resolution on a strategy to prevent and combat labour exploitation in March 2023. The strategy includes long-term objectives to help Finland respond more effectively to the exploitation of foreign labour. The aim is also to support cooperation between the authorities and the inclusion of immigrants in the Finnish society.

The strategy outlines following objectives:

- ensuring the operational preconditions for authorities involved in the prevention and combat of the shadow economy, financial crime and exploitation, and to improve cooperation between these authorities;
- promoting the identification and detection of exploitation and human trafficking, improve the position of victims of exploitation, and prevent the recurrence of exploitation,
- promoting the integration, settling-in and social inclusion of foreign workers arriving in Fin-land,
- strengthening corporate social responsibility of companies and contracting entities in preventing and combating the exploitation of foreign labour,
- improving the enforcement of criminal liability while ensuring the legal protection of the suspect.

The strategy was followed by action plan in February 2024. It includes 33 measures that respond to the objectives described in the strategy and ensure that the entries in the Government Programme on combating exploitation of labour will be implemented.

Several measures aim to increase cooperation and the exchange of information between authorities. The operating environment for the authorities involved in combating the shadow economy, economic crime and exploitation will be secured and inter-authority cooperation will be improved.

Different means will be used to better identify and detect exploitation and to prevent the recurrence of such abuses. Work-based residence permits will be better monitored both before and after their issuance so that discrepancies in pay, for example, can be detected more effectively. The line between entrepreneurship and employment relationship will be clarified and the position of victims will be improved.

#### Ethical recruitment

Work in Finland, state-level actor in international recruitment, is making efforts to support use of trusted international recruitment partners both domestically and in partner countries. Also guidance materials to employers have been prepared and services are offered to support recruitment in an ethical manner.

Recommendations for the international recruitment of healthcare and social welfare personnel were issued in 2023. The responsibility recommendations contain information on, among other things, the legislation to be taken into account, the selection of recruitment partners, employment agency fees, and the protection of workers' rights. The recommendations also provide guidance on how employers can support employees in settling and integrating in Finland.

## Law amendments

In relation to labour migration the legislative reforms are aligned in Prime Minister Orpo's Government Programme in order to tie the work-based residence permits more strongly to work and to enhance immigrants possibility to support themselves in Finland. To this end law amendments are being prepared to set the income limit for a residence permit for an employed person will be the sector-specific minimum of the collective agreement, however, to no less than EUR 1,600 per month. Also amendments are being prepared to set a time limit in which holder of work-based residence permit must leave Finland if the holder's employment relationship ends, and the holder has not entered into a new employment relationship.

As international recruitment becomes increasingly common in the healthcare and social welfare sector, responsibility recommendations have been prepared to support recruitment promote consideration of ethical aspects and combat risks of labour exploitation. The recommendations have been prepared as part of the work of The Programme to Ensure the Sufficiency and Availability of Healthcare and Social Welfare Personnel, coordinated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The objective is to promote consideration of responsibility aspects in international recruitment and to combat risks of labour exploitation. The recommendations are broadly intended for sector actors, such as health and social services organisers as well as public and private service providers. The responsibility recommendations contain information on, among other things, the legislation to be taken into account, the selection of recruitment partners, employment agency fees, and the protection of workers' rights. The recommendations also provide guidance on how employers can support employees in settling and integrating in Finland.

## Activities of the OSHA

The activities of the Occupational Safety and Health Authority (OSHA) in employment matters include providing advice and guidance, ensuring by means of supervision that employers comply with the law and, if necessary, providing official guidance to employers and notifying the police of any suspected occupational safety and health offences and violations. The specific objective is to identify and detect serious abuse involving breaches of minimum employment conditions.

The OSH authorities carry out approximately 2000 inspections of the use of foreign labour annually. In these inspections, OSH inspectors supervise that employers comply with the minimum terms of pay and conditions, especially the working hours, of foreign workers. The OSHA also monitors the obligation of employers to ensure the right of foreign employees to work in Finland, and the retention of this information at the workplace.

In the case of trafficking in human beings and related crimes, labour inspectors work closely with the authorities, for example with the police. They also cooperate with organisations assisting victims of trafficking. If labour inspectors detect signs of human trafficking, potential victims will be referred to the assistance system.

## **Objective 7: Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration**

### **Resettlement**

Finland emphasizes the role of resettlement as a safe and dignified way of offering protection to the most vulnerable refugees. Under the refugee quota, Finland admits persons recognised as refugees by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and other foreign nationals in need of international protection. Finland has been admitting quota refugees since the 1970s.

Finland's annual resettlement quota is 500. As a part of the annual resettlement quota, Finland prioritizes the needs for resettlement of persons with serious protection concerns, such as women and girls at risk as well as children at risk and persons with disabilities. About ten per cent of the annual quota has been reserved for refugees resettled on an emergency or urgent basis.

### **Temporary protection**

The EU activated the Temporary Protection Directive for the first time to help people fleeing Ukraine. The Directive is designed to address events of mass influx of third-country nationals to the EU when war, violence or human rights violations prevent them from returning to their home country.

The Council decision was prepared and its contents adopted in the EU exceptionally quickly and with an extensive political consensus. The directive offers the Member States a unified and functional tool to rapidly help people fleeing the war without the people having to undergo individual asylum procedures.

In all Member States, the decision applies to the following categories of people:

- Ukrainian citizens and their family members
- Beneficiaries of international protection in Ukraine and their family members

For other permanent residents of Ukraine who cannot return to their country of origin, the Member States may choose between temporary protection and a corresponding national permit category. Finland decided to apply temporary protection.

The requirement for all of the groups is that the person must have been resident in Ukraine and fled when Russia's invasion began, i.e. on 24 February or thereafter.

By February 2024, Finland has granted temporary protection to more than 65,000 people fleeing the war in Ukraine.

### **Social and health care**

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has strengthened the guidance of wellbeing services counties on the organizing of services for vulnerable immigrants (i.e. unaccompanied minors and victims of human trafficking). The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare has received funding for development projects concerning vulnerable groups in different ways. The aim is to

improve the detection of vulnerabilities and organize appropriate services according their needs. The development projects have focused on improving the mental health of persons with refugee background, improving services for victims of human trafficking and improving services for immigrants in wellbeing services counties.

**Objective 10: Prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration**

Finland has promoted the detection of human trafficking, improved the position of victims and enhanced the enforcement of criminal liability. Finland has also strengthened the mainstreaming of anti-trafficking work as part of broader Government activities and intensified cooperation with civil society. The coordination of the Government's anti-trafficking work has been established and a national human trafficking investigation team has been established within the police. A network of prosecutors specialising in human trafficking offences has also been established. Awareness of human trafficking among key authorities and other actors has been increased and expertise has been strengthened. Work against human trafficking has been included, for example, as part of the fight against the shadow economy and economic crime, work against violence against women and children, and work to promote gender equality. In addition, awareness of trafficking in human beings has been improved among companies and public procurers, and research and studies have been carried out, which has strengthened the knowledge base of anti-trafficking measures and promoted practical work against trafficking in human beings. Finland has also intensified international cooperation to prevent and combat human trafficking.

**Objective 11: Managing borders in a uniform, safe and coordinated manner**

Measures has been taken at the EU-level, for example in the context of the European Integrated Border Management. However, member states are primary responsible for the security of their external borders. In 2022, Finland passed a law, which authorizes the Finnish government to close border crossing points or limit traffic, as well as centralize application of international protection to one or more border crossing point, if it is a necessary in order to prevent serious threat to national security, public order or health. This measure was adopted in autumn 2023 when Russia started to instrumentalise migrants at the eastern border of Finland.

Finland is planning to introduce a border procedure, which involves swift processing of asylum seekers' applications in the vicinity of the border. In accordance with the PM Orpo Government Programme, the aim is to introduce a border procedure with an approach that will fully exploit the scope of the Asylum Procedures Directive as required by any given situation. The border procedure will also become obligatory, in certain situations, in all EU member states along with the New Pact on Migration and Asylum.

**Objective 15: Provide access to basic services for migrants**

Finland is in the process of reforming the organization of health and social services. The aim of the reform is, among other things, to reduce inequalities in well-being and health, and to

ensure equal and high-quality social and health services for the population. The structural change and on-going service reform in healthcare and social welfare aims to take into account accessibility and non-discrimination in the availability of services. New wellbeing services counties will co-operate with other authorities to promote integration. More detailed provisions on this will be included in the integration legislation that will enter into force in 2025.

From 1 January 2023 onwards, the wellbeing services counties must provide necessary non-urgent healthcare services for undocumented persons and persons whose status resembles that of an undocumented person. Undocumented adults have the right to receive certain necessary non-urgent healthcare services in addition to urgent care. The purpose of the amendment is to improve the position of vulnerable persons staying in Finland for a longer period from the perspective of access to health care services. The legislative amendment will better safeguard the right to indispensable care and adequate healthcare services under the Constitution and the human rights treaties that are binding on Finland under the UN human rights treaties, states have an obligation to safeguard the right to health equally for all persons in their territory.

Moreover, the PALOMA Center of Expertise, coordinated by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, provides support and information to professionals and organizations working in the field of mental health with people with refugee backgrounds and other similar backgrounds who have moved to Finland. The purpose of the Center of Excellence is to coordinate information, training and cooperation networks in order to spread knowledge and support nationwide.

### **Objective 16: Empower migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion**

The Programme of the Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's Government (6/23) outlines that Finnish integration policy is being based on language learning, work, familiarisation with Finnish society and compliance with its rules. The Government will ensure that there are opportunities for integration by increasing immigrants' own responsibility for integration and by introducing obligations into the system. Provisions on the rights and obligations of immigrants are laid down, for example, in the Act on the promotion of immigrant integration, the comprehensive reform of which will enter into force at the beginning of 2025. The objective of the Act is to promote employment, integration and good relations between population groups, thus strengthening the realisation of equality and non-discrimination among immigrants. Particular efforts have been made to improve the reach of immigrants outside the labour force, such as parents caring for children at home, and their access to services promoting integration and employment.

The integration Act ensures initial integration services for immigrants. Minimum services must include assessment of skills and the need for integration services, integration plan, knowledge of the society, guidance and counselling, and training that promotes integration and employment. The general guidance and counselling services for all immigrants have been



developed, and the services will be made permanent from the beginning of 2025. Also Centres of expertise for immigrants have been established to biggest municipalities to support services that combines the integration activities of municipalities, employment and economic development administration and educational institutions. The centres of expertise provide individual services like guidance, mapping periods, teaching of Finnish/Swedish, strengthening skills needed for jobseekers whose language and other working life skills are inadequate.

The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment launched in March 2021 an action plan to promote diversity and inclusiveness in working life from the perspective of immigrants. The programme's goal was that companies and organisations benefit from diversity and that immigrants can more easily find employment that corresponds with their skills and advances their careers. The programme supported the objective of the Talent Boost action plan to make Finland an internationally attractive place to work, study, do research and invest. The programme was finished in March 2023.

### **Objective 18: Invest in skills development and facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competences**

Learners with a migrant background are not a homogeneous group. Some children and young people progress smoothly in their studies along with the native population after learning Finnish or Swedish, while others need more support.

Early childhood education and care affects children's learning abilities, linguistic capabilities and the creation of a safe everyday life.

Children within the scope of temporary protection or seeking asylum are entitled to early childhood education provided by the municipality in cases where the child's parent or other guardian is employed or is enrolled in studies or for some other similar reason. Early childhood education and care must also be provided in urgent situations or when circumstances make it otherwise necessary. However, the best interests of the child must always be a primary consideration in the provision of early childhood education and care, and the provision of early childhood education and care must be based on an individual assessment of the child's needs.

Municipalities have a duty to provide advice and guidance on the services in early childhood education and care available in their municipality.

Once asylum has been granted to a family and a child, the child has the same right to municipal early childhood education and care as other children whose place of residence is in Finland.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has launched an Action Programme for 2022-2026 together with the Finnish National Agency for Education to support the learning and schooling readiness of pupils with a migrant background in basic education. The Action Programme aims to strengthen education preparing for basic education, mother tongue instruction and Finnish/Swedish as a second language and develop measures specifically aimed at pupils with a migrant background in grades 7-9 in basic education. Measures include, among other things,

strengthening the language skills, readiness for schools, as well as basic skills, and ensuring smooth transitions, from preparatory education to general education.

In connection with the legislative reform, financing for positive discrimination has been put on a permanent footing. These actions will improve the education system's prerequisites for evening out the impacts of social inequalities and support the learning and equitable learning paths of learners with migrant background, also giving young migrants the opportunity to grow to their full potential in the school system.

Students with a migrant background are currently underrepresented in upper general education, however in vocational education and training their participation is common. Adequate teaching, guidance and support are particularly important for these students with migrant background. The aim of the Government Programme is to clarify support for learning and to harmonise the chain of support for learning from early childhood education and care to upper secondary and vocational education and training. For students with a migrant background, an educational institution that offers positive experiences of togetherness, communality and inclusion is a vital resource. Such experiences should be secured for all students in general upper secondary education and vocational education and training.

Students with a migrant background are currently underrepresented in higher education. Access to higher education will be supported by integrating service activities related to identifying migrants' competence and providing them with guidance into the higher education system and by adding provisions on preparatory education for immigrants to the Universities Act. Higher education institutions' accessibility plans, which concern all underrepresented groups, will also support students with a migrant background in accessing and completing higher education.

The government added EUR 5 million to the government fiscal plan for 2022-2025 for the education of literacy and other integration education in the Finnish / Swedish languages in liberal adult education. The funding for such education was separated from the funding system for liberal adult education. The amendment 912/2021 enabling this change was adopted on 5 November 2021. The law entered into force on 1 January 2022. As a result of the reform, a total of EUR 11.83 million has been set aside in the budget for this particular education. To meet the language training needs of those arriving from Ukraine, EUR 3.3 million has been added to this appropriation in 2022, EUR 5 million in 2024, EUR 4 million in 2025 and EUR 3 million in 2026. In addition, in accordance with the Government Programme adopted in 2023, the aim is to increase the number of people integrating into the second national language. For this purpose, EUR 1 million has been added to the appropriation for 2024 and 2025 and EUR 0.5 million for 2026.

There is an established system for recognition of foreign qualifications in Finland. Responsibility for recognition of qualifications rests with the Finnish National Agency for Education EDUFI, a field-specific authority, an employer, a higher education institution or some other educational

institution, depending on the purpose for which recognition is applied. Furthermore, EDUFI issues advisory statements on foreign vocational qualifications for which it is not possible to issue a decision. A statement can be drawn up on a completed qualification that falls within the official system of education in the country in which the qualification was completed.

There are also some rules for identification and recognition of competence that can be taken into account when designing individual study paths in vocational education and training in Finland.

**Objective 21: Cooperate in facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration**

Developing and implementing bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation frameworks and agreements, including readmission agreements and arrangements, ensuring that return and readmission of migrants to their own country is safe, dignified and in full compliance with international human rights law, is a key objective. Returns are a priority for the Orpo Government, and the Government programme includes numerous measures related to enhancing return policy.

The EU and Member States have in recent years developed and expanded their instruments and frameworks for migration cooperation with external partners. This should advance building balanced, sustained and mutually beneficial partnerships. Partnerships are pivotal when aiming in preventing irregular migration and forced displacement and enhancing the cooperation on return and readmission. There is a need to further strengthen readmission cooperation with key countries of origin.

In addition to the EU cooperation, Finland has intensified its return cooperation with the Nordic countries. In their meeting in October 2023, the Nordic ministers responsible for migration agreed to enhance their return cooperation in three projects: in strengthening reintegration projects in countries of origin, in coordinating joint Nordic return operations in collaboration with Frontex and providing return assistance to stranded irregular migrants in North Africa.

Voluntary return should always be the preferred means of return, as it is the most sustainable alternative in view of the reintegration of migrants. In 2024, the Ministry of the Interior provided a new Decree on Assistance for Voluntary Return. The new decree harmonises the system of assistance for voluntary return; instead of country groups, all returnees regardless of their country of return receive the same reintegration assistance. At the same time, the assistance system adopted a so-called degressive model, where assistance is reduced if a person does not return within 30 days of their return decision. Finland is heavily developing return counselling both for voluntary and forced returns so that all returnees would have enough knowledge about their options, responsibilities and opportunity to apply for reintegration assistance.

**Objective 23: Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration**

Finland will promote a rules-based world order and work actively to reform the UN so that it can respond to the global challenges of the 2020s. The Finnish government aims to supplement the labour force primarily from EU/EEA countries while also supporting international recruitment from third countries, aiming to build cooperation particularly with India, Brazil, Vietnam, and the Philippines. The focus is on attracting those with higher education and employees in sectors that are identified as suffering from a labour shortage.