



Talent Boost 2023–2027

Programme for international recruitment and
work-based and education-based immigration



Publications of the Finnish Government 2024:4

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Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment,
Ministry of Education and Culture

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Abstract

Talent Boost is an intersectoral programme for international recruitment and work-based and education-based immigration coordinated by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Education and Culture. The programme seeks to build a Finnish ecosystem across organisational boundaries in which different parties can work towards common goals in a customer-oriented manner. The previous Talent Boost programme was adopted in summer 2020 and a roadmap for education-based and work-based immigration was completed in autumn 2021. 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.

The programme will target the central government's international recruitment measures more clearly at specific countries and sectors in line with the Government Programme. Talent Boost has three components: 1) Finland's attractiveness: promoting experts and availability and carrying out 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 package, for which an action plan will be drawn up.

The main purpose of Talent Boost is to ensure consistent progress among intersectoral programme partners. The preparation and implementation are directed, coordinated and monitored by an intersectoral steering group chaired alternately by the Permanent Secretaries of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Education and Culture. Steering group members include representatives of ministries and agencies that are essential for work-based and education-based immigration as well as representatives of municipalities, cities and higher education institutions. The participants will draw up a mid-term report on the programme implementation and effectiveness for the ministerial working group on employment and entrepreneurship. In addition, programme monitoring and reporting indicators will be created in spring 2024.

Keywords work-based immigration, labour migration, migration, foreign labour, labour market, students, higher education institutions, universities, work

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Talent Boost 2023–2027

Työ- ja koulutusperusteisen maahanmuuton toimenpideohjelma

Valtioneuvoston julkaisu 2024:4

Julkaisija Valtioneuvosto

Yhteisötekijä Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö, Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö

Kieli englanti

Sivumäärä 32

Tiivistelmä

Talent Boost on työ- ja elinkeinoministeriön sekä opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriön koordinoima poikkihallinnollinen kansainvälisen rekrytoinnin sekä työ- ja koulutusperusteisen maahanmuuton toimenpideohjelma. Ohjelman lähtökohtana on rakentaa Suomeen organisaatorajat ylittävä ekosysteemi, jossa eri toimijat työskentelevät yhteisten tavoitteiden eteen asiakaslähtöisesti. Edellinen Talent Boost -ohjelma hyväksyttiin kesällä 2020 ja lisäksi syksyllä 2021 valmistui koulutus- ja työperusteisen maahanmuuton tiekartta. Uudistettu Talent Boost -ohjelma vuosille 2023–2027 noudattaa pääministeri Orpon hallitusohjelman painopisteitä ja tehostaa jo käynnissä olevia toimia.

Valtion kansainvälisen rekrytoinnin toimenpiteitä kohdennetaan aiempaa selkeämmin tiettyihin kohdemiin ja tietyille toimialoille hallitusohjelman mukaisesti. Talent Boost -ohjelmassa on kolme osa-aluetta: 1) Suomen vetovoima: osaajien ja saatavuuden edistäminen ja maakuvatyö, 2) sujuvat ja hallitut oleskelulupaprosessit sekä toimiva jälkivalvonta ja väärinkäytösten ehkäisy, 3) Suomen pitovoiman vahvistaminen. Kokonaisuuteen liittyy olennaisesti myös työperäisen hyväksikäytön torjunta, jolle laaditaan oma toimenpideohjelmansa.

Talent Boost -ohjelman keskeinen tarkoitus on varmistaa poikkihallinnollisten kokonaisuuksien johdonmukainen edistyminen. Ohjelman valmistelutyötä ja toimeenpanoa ohjaa, koordinoi ja seuraa poikkihallinnollinen ohjausryhmä, jota puheenjohtavat vuorotellen työ- ja elinkeinoministeriön ja opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriön kansliapäälliköt. Edustajina ryhmässä on työ- ja koulutusperusteisen maahanmuuton kannalta olennaisia ministeriöitä ja virastoja sekä kuntien, kaupunkien ja korkeakoulujen edustus. Ohjelman toimeenpanosta ja vaikuttavuudesta laaditaan väliraportti työllisyyden ja yrittäjyyden ministerityöryhmälle hallituskauden puolivälissä. Lisäksi ohjelman seuranta ja raportointia varten laaditaan mittaristot kevään 2024 aikana.

Asiasanat työperäinen maahanmuutto, maahanmuutto, ulkomainen työvoima, työmarkkinat, opiskelijat, korkeakoulut, työelämä

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Referat

Talent Boost är ett förvaltningsövergripande åtgärdsprogram för internationell rekrytering och arbets- och utbildningsrelaterad invandring som samordnas av arbets- och näringsministeriet och undervisnings- och kulturministeriet. Utgångspunkten för programmet är att i Finland bygga upp ett ekosystem som överskrider organisationsgränserna och där olika aktörer arbetar kundorienterat mot gemensamma mål. Det föregående programmet Talent Boost godkändes sommaren 2020 och dessutom färdigställdes hösten 2021 färdplanen för utbildnings- och arbetsrelaterad invandring. Det förnyade Talent Boost-programmet för 2023–2027 följer prioriteringarna i statsminister Orpos regeringsprogram och syftar till att effektivisera de pågående åtgärderna.

Statens åtgärder för internationell rekrytering riktas tydligare än tidigare till vissa målländer och vissa branscher i enlighet med regeringsprogrammet. Talent Boost består av tre delområden: 1) Finlands dragningskraft: främjande av kompetens och tillgång till kompetent arbetskraft samt främjande av Finlandsbilden, 2) smidiga och kontrollerade processer för uppehållstillstånd samt fungerande efterhandsövervakning och förebyggande av missbruk, 3) stärkande av Finlands kvarhållningskraft. En viktig del av helheten är också bekämpning av arbetsrelaterat utnyttjande, i fråga om vilket det utarbetas ett separat åtgärdsprogram.

Det centrala syftet med Talent Boost-programmet är att säkerställa att de förvaltningsövergripande helheterna framskrider konsekvent. Beredningen och genomförandet av programmet styrs, samordnas och följs av en förvaltningsövergripande styrgrupp, som leds turvis av kanslicheferna vid arbets- och näringsministeriet och undervisnings- och kulturministeriet. I gruppen ingår företrädare för ministerier och ämbetsverk som är väsentliga med tanke på arbets- och utbildningsbaserad invandring samt företrädare för kommuner, städer och högskolor. En halvtidsrapport om genomförandet och effekterna av programmet utarbetas i mitten av regeringsperioden för ministerarbetsgruppen för sysselsättning och företagande. Dessutom utarbetas under våren 2024 indikatorer för uppföljningen och rapporteringen av programmets genomförande.

Nyckelord arbetskraftsinvandring, invandring, utländsk arbetskraft, arbetsmarknaden, studerande, högskolor, arbetslivet

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1 Introduction

Finland's success and international competitiveness are based on excellence. However, there is a shortage of skilled labour in the Finnish labour market. According to the Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's Government, 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. The focus in work-based immigration from outside the EU will be on highly educated individuals and employees in areas that can be genuinely identified as sectors suffering from a labour shortage.

Work-based immigration is needed to ensure Finland's economic growth, innovativeness and vitality as well as the provision of services, and it contributes to the achievement of the Government's employment target. In accordance with the Government Programme, work-based immigration must strengthen Finland's general government finances. It is also envisaged in the Government Programme that the conditions for the world's best start-up and growth company ecosystem will be created in Finland. Work-based immigration is also needed to safeguard the availability of talents so that Finland can attract foreign investments. At the same time, education-based immigration can support the availability of talents and boost Finland's growth, internationalisation and innovation activities. To further increase the number of international higher education students, the Government will create more incentives for them to stay in Finland after graduation.

Talent Boost is an intersectoral action programme to promote international recruitment and work-based and education-based immigration, and it is coordinated by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Talent Boost programme and the added value that it creates arise from building an ecosystem in Finland in which different actors work towards common goals in a customer-oriented manner and across organisational boundaries. This will also be the basis for the Talent Boost programme 2023–2027. The previous Talent Boost programme was approved in summer 2020, and a long-term roadmap for education-based and work-based immigration was also finalised in autumn 2021. The following sets of measures have been carried out within the framework of the roadmap and the Talent Boost programme implementing it: (1) speeding up and streamlining work-based and education-based residence permit procedures, (2) introducing additional measures to attract international talents

and their families to Finland so that they settle in and remain in this country, 3) promoting the employment of international students and researchers in Finland, (4) creating a set of services for international recruitment and the Work in Finland function, (5) supporting the growth and internationalisation of companies and RDI activities and attracting investments by employing international talents, (6) preventing the exploitation of foreign labour, and (7) increasing the receptiveness and diversity of working life. Students, researchers, specialists and other highly educated professionals, skilled labour, entrepreneurs and growth entrepreneurs, returnees and other groups (such as foreign spouses) are the groups identified in the programme.

The new Talent Boost programme for the period 2023–2027 follows the priorities set in the Programme of Prime Minister Orpo's Government while at the same time, many of the measures listed in the roadmap will be continued and intensified. It is envisaged in the Government Programme that central government will focus its international recruitment on specific target countries and sectors. At the same time, wide-ranging measures to improve Finland's ability to attract and retain foreign labour will be continued and developed during the programme period. Risk-based streamlining of residence permit procedures will continue and more effective follow-up monitoring will be introduced to ensure the meeting of the permit conditions while at the same time, effective action will be taken to prevent abuse. It is important that any abuses identified will lead to a re-examination of the residence permit conditions and, if necessary, to the end of residence in the country.

The substantial RDI inputs of the Government will make Finland's RDI ecosystems more attractive and competitive. At the same time, achieving the target set for research and innovation funding and new investments will also require that international talents are available and that Finland remains attractive. Measures will be taken to further boost the number of international higher education students and to encourage them to stay in Finland after graduation. At the same time, it will also be ensured that education-based immigration is on a controlled basis. To respond to the shortage of talent, measures will also be taken to strengthen the competence required for practising professions regulated in Finland and the teaching of national languages required in the professions. The measures set out in the programme will be implemented within the limits of the appropriations available to the administrative branches.

2 Situation picture of work-based and education-based immigration

2.1 Attractiveness of Finland for international talents

Finland is competing for international talents on a global basis. In 2023, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published its latest report on the attractiveness of its member states for international talents. The previous report had been published in 2019. The indicators used in the report include quality of opportunity, income and tax, future prospects, family environment, quality of life, inclusiveness, and visa and admission policy. For specialists, Finland was ranked 14th (18th in 2019), and the top positions were held by New Zealand, Sweden and Switzerland. Of the other Nordic countries, Norway was ranked 5th, Denmark 11th and Iceland 16th. For entrepreneurs, Finland was ranked 11th (8th in 2019), with Sweden, Switzerland and Canada holding the top positions. For international higher education students, Finland was ranked 16th (4th in 2019) among the OECD countries, with the United States, Germany and United Kingdom holding the top positions.

2.2 Number of residence permits granted

The number of applications for several work-based and education-based residence permit categories and the positive decisions made on their basis have increased over the last five years (2018–2022), which means that there has been an overall increase in work-based and education-based immigration. Changes in work-based and education-based immigration over the last five years and the situation over the last 12 months are examined below. Changes in the number of decisions is examined for individuals entering the country (individuals receiving the first permit).

A total of 53,165 positive work-based decisions have been made over the past five years. The largest permit categories in these decisions are residence permits for employees (51%), specialists (15%) and seasonal workers (10%). Positive decisions account for about 80% of all work-based decisions. In the same period, a total of 27,893 positive decisions on students' residence permits were made and the positive decisions account for about 90% of all decisions made

on the basis of studies. The number of all work-based decisions slightly more than doubled between 2018 and 2022. As the number of positive decisions has increased, particular attention has also been paid to preventing abuses and labour exploitation by introducing risk criteria in the permit procedure. This is done with the help of automation, interviews and other risk checks.

In the period 2018–2022, Ukrainians, Russians, Indians, Filipinos and Chinese were the largest nationality groups in all work-based decisions. Russians and Chinese in particular have been strongly represented in many different permit categories. During the same period, the largest nationality groups in study-based residence permits were Russians, Chinese, Vietnamese, Indians and Bangladeshis. From the largest countries of origin, Finland also receives applications involving an increased risk of abuse and on the basis of which no residence permits are granted.

The trend in the **residence permits for employees (TTOL)** has been similar to that in all work-based decisions. The number of positive decisions has almost tripled over a period of five years and the numbers have also risen steadily during the coronavirus pandemic. Ukrainians, Filipinos and Russians have been the largest nationality groups in the employees' residence permits.

The number of positive decisions for **specialists** has also increased over the past five years but the growth has been significantly more moderate than in employees' residence permits. Russia and India have been major countries of origin for specialists' residence permits. However, the number of Indians decreased in 2020 (the year of the coronavirus pandemic) and their numbers have not yet reached the pre-pandemic levels; in fact, in India, restrictions on movement remained in effect until recently.

The number of residence permits granted to **entrepreneurs** is considerably lower than the permits granted in other categories and most of the decisions are negative because all applications are carefully screened during the procedure. Despite the low numbers, the number of permits granted to entrepreneurs has increased by slightly more than 70% over the past five years. When comparisons between nationalities are made, it should be noted that in the case of entrepreneurs, the number of individual nationality groups are very small.

The number of permits granted to **start-up entrepreneurs** is also fairly small but most of the decisions are positive. This is partially explained by the fact that a positive Eligibility Statement on the company's operations and growth prospects must be obtained from Business Finland before the application procedure. About one quarter of all applicants receives a positive Eligibility Statement because, as

the applications for entrepreneurs' residence permits, the applications for start-up entrepreneurs' permits are also carefully screened for non-credible applications. There has been a considerable increase in the number of residence permits granted to start-up entrepreneurs: in 2020, the permit was granted to 53 persons and in 2022, to 252 persons. In 2023, the largest nationality groups have been Russia, Iran and Türkiye.

For **researchers**, the number of positive decisions has remained fairly steady and there have not been any major fluctuations over the past five years (except for 2020). As a whole, the number of researchers has increased by almost 20% over a period of five years. The Chinese have been the largest nationality group each year but Iranians in particular have started to catch up with them during the last years of the review period.

The number of **students** has increased substantially (by 60%) over the five-year review period. There have also been changes in the nationalities represented by the students over the years: Even though China and Russia have remained the most important countries of origin, Bangladesh and India have caught up with them over the past two years.

Over the **past 12 months** (8/2022–7/2023), the number of positive decisions in different permit categories and the most common nationalities have remained more or less the same as during the previous five-year period. The number of decisions on employees' residence permits has been close to 10,000 and about 80% of the decisions have been positive. Kosovo has joined Russia and the Philippines as a major country of origin whereas as a result of the Russian military aggression, Ukraine is no longer even close to the top. The number of permits granted to Filipinos almost tripled between 2021 and 2022.

Specialists have been granted a total of 1,726 residence permits over the past 12 months. This is slightly below the total number of permits granted to specialists during the whole of 2022. The estimate is that the number of specialists' residence permits granted this year will remain below the total for 2022 (about 2,300). Slightly more than 10,000 study-based residence permits have been granted over the past 12 months. This means that the numbers are still on the increase and 94% of the decisions have been positive. Compared with the previous years, there have been some changes concerning the countries of origin: Bangladesh has become the largest country of origin when measured with the number of permits granted, while Sri Lanka has reached the top-three group, overtaking India and Russia.

2.3 Observations of the National Audit Office of Finland on work-based immigration

At the end of 2022,¹ the National Audit Office of Finland issued an audit report on work-based immigration. Effectiveness and customer orientation of the processes and the functioning of the cooperation between the authorities were the key issues examined in the report. The focus in the report was on the healthcare and social welfare sector, which suffers from a severe shortage of workers. It was noted in the report that already since 2003, Finnish Government Programmes have referred to promoting work-based immigration as a means of improving the demographic dependency ratio, bolstering the economy, and alleviating the situation in sectors suffering from labour shortages. In 2020, the administration of work-based immigration was transferred to the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, which has improved overall steering and facilitated the achievement of targets. However, there is still room for improvement in the effectiveness and customer orientation of immigration administration.

The key observation in the report was that the authorities responsible for work-based immigration should, in addition to specialists, also focus on streamlining the permit processes of employees and entrepreneurs and their family members and to make the permit system more customer oriented. The conclusion was that the processing times had shortened but that more work is needed in this respect. At the same time, immigrants should be provided with more advice and guidance. Measures should also be taken to ensure closer cooperation between the authorities and to improve immigrants' language and professional skills. To achieve this, integration and settling-in services offered to work-based immigrants should be strengthened and they should also be available outside large cities on an established basis. These services also play a role in preventing labour exploitation. The National Audit Office stressed that instead of projects, the focus should be on actions and structures ensuring the prerequisites for work-based immigration on a permanent basis. There is also room for improvement in the knowledge base of

1 <https://www.vtv.fi/app/uploads/2023/02/NAOF-Audit-13-2022-Work-based-immigration.pdf>

work-based immigration, in particular to ensure that the information describing the reason for the residence permit can be combined with the other data kept in national registers.

2.4 Employment of international students in Finland

About one half of all international students have found work in Finland one year after graduation. There are sector-specific differences in employment and not all fresh graduates find work corresponding to their education. According to the surveys conducted among international students, a significantly larger number of them are interested in staying in Finland and would like to find work in this country. Receptiveness of Finnish working life, inadequate skills in Finnish and Swedish and limited contacts with Finnish working life are the most serious obstacles to employment.

Talent Boost projects are under way in all higher education institutions to support the working life connections of international students, new ways of learning Finnish and Swedish, the identification and strengthening of competence as well as integration.

3 Administration and implementation of the Talent Boost programme and provision of information as part of the programme

The preparation and implementation of the intersectoral Talent Boost programme is steered, coordinated and monitored by a steering group chaired alternately by the Permanent Secretaries of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Education and Culture. The steering group consists of the representatives of ministries and government agencies playing a key role in work-based and education-based immigration as well as representatives of cities, municipalities and higher education institutions. The steering group meetings are thematically prepared by a preparatory network under the auspices of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Education and Culture.

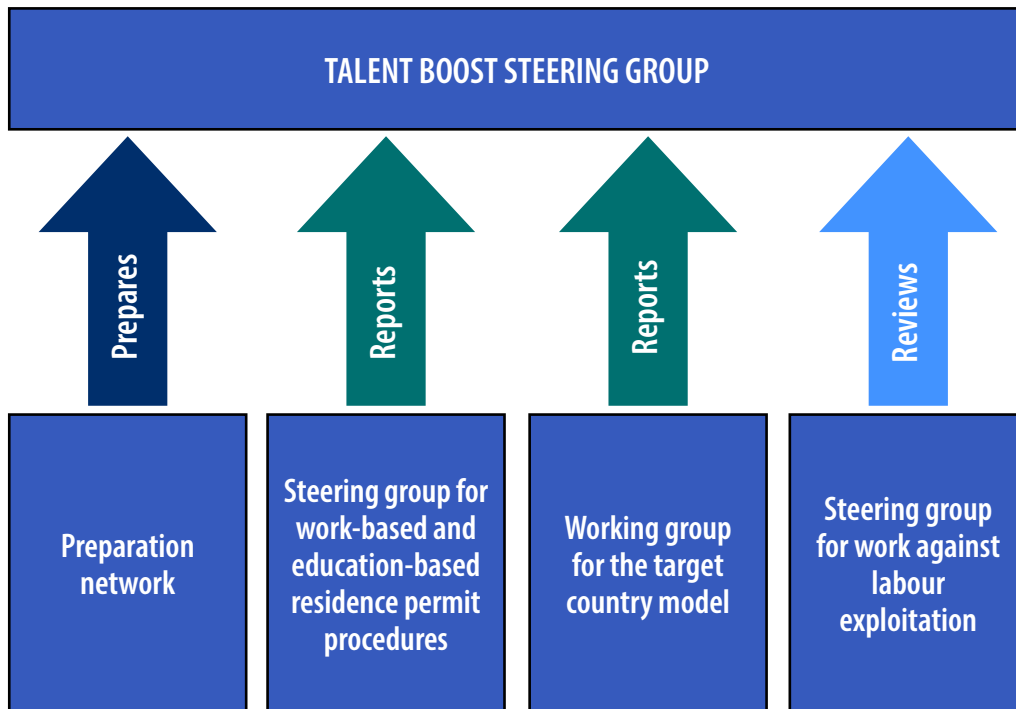
The programme is implemented on an intersectoral basis, and information on it is provided at the events attended by representatives of government agencies and stakeholders such as the monthly Talent Boost Newsroom, the biannual Talent Boost Network Day and the annual Talent Boost Summit. The implementation of the programme is regularly discussed with a more extensive stakeholder network, taking particular care of the inclusion of immigrants. To support the provision of information, a communications plan will be jointly prepared by the steering group actors by the end of March 2024.

A steering group consisting of the representatives of the authorities has been appointed for the programme part concerning smooth and controlled residence permit procedures and the development of follow-up monitoring. It reports to the Talent Boost steering group. A steering group has also been appointed for the work against labour exploitation, and reviews on its activities are presented to the Talent Boost steering group. A working group has been appointed for the target country model of international partnerships. It is expected to complete its work by spring 2024 and reports on its progress to the Talent Boost steering group. The steering of the target country model will be evaluated and developed during the implementation process on the basis of the lessons learned.

The Talent Boost programme will be approved by the Ministerial Working Group on Employment and Entrepreneurship. During the programme implementation stage, the political processing of each matter will be carried out as separately agreed. The focus in the Talent Boost programme for the period 2023–2027 is on the measures envisaged in the Government Programme the main responsibility for which can be assigned to a central government actor. In fact, the main purpose of the programme is to ensure consistent implementation of the intersectoral sets of measures. Nevertheless, the ecosystem structure described above is essential for the effective implementation of the programme. In addition to central government, implementing the programme is primarily the responsibility of large cities where the majority of the individuals who have moved to Finland to work or study have their residence as well as higher education and other education institutions, which are responsible for the functions of education-based immigration. Cooperation will mainly continue within the framework of the Talent Hub service model and the cooperation alliance model between central government and C6 cities (Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Turku, Tampere and Oulu). Cooperation between central government and cities and municipalities in international recruitment will also be prepared as a key part of the TE services reform.

An interim report on the implementation and effectiveness of the Talent Boost programme will be prepared for the Ministerial Working Group on Employment and Entrepreneurship in the middle of the government term. Indicators for monitoring and reporting will be prepared during spring 2024.

Figure 1. Talent Boost steering structure



4 Strategic programme objectives and measures

4.1 Attractiveness of Finland: promoting availability of talents and country branding

In accordance with the Programme of Prime Minister Orpo's Government, international recruitment to Finland will be promoted in a targeted manner with focus on both the countries of origin and specialist groups. India, Philippines, Brazil and Vietnam are the target countries for the recruitment of labour force and the partnerships with these countries will be developed as part of the target country model. The purpose of the partnerships is to ensure smooth and ethical international recruitment, and the risks of abuse, illegal immigration and exploitation can also be managed more effectively within the framework of cooperation. The emphasis is on highly educated individuals, healthcare and social welfare workers, export industry workers and seasonal workers. A range of advisory and support services for international recruitment will also be offered more extensively within the framework of the Work in Finland function launched during the previous government term to meet the needs of Finnish employers, and inputs will be made in country branding.

Cooperation between the private sector and the public Talent Boost network will be strengthened. The aim is to ensure that the central government support measures to streamline international recruitment are effective and of high quality and provide a better operating basis for other authorities and private actors. In this manner, Finland can attract workforce suited for its needs, and the individuals coming to Finland can find work corresponding to their skills. The aim is also to increase the number of international students in a controlled manner and to provide them with better opportunities for employment in Finland. As envisaged in the Government Programme, measures will be taken to introduce full costing of tuition fees for non-EU and non-EEA students. The Government will examine the introduction of a national system of grants and a nominal application fee.

Measure	Implementing actors	Timetable
<p>Creating a model for determining and anticipating demand for international recruitment by sector and region; the model should provide a knowledge base to support political decision-making and a steering tool for the daily needs of Work in Finland</p>	<p>Responsible parties in central government: KEHA Centre, ELY Centres (vitality centres), Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Finnish National Agency for Education</p> <p>Key stakeholders: cities and municipalities</p>	<p>Autumn 2023, continuously updated tools</p>
<p>Putting the activities of Work in Finland on a permanent basis and making the nationwide international recruitment services available in accordance with the Work in Finland action plan for 2023–2024 and for the period after the TE services reform in cooperation with the employment authorities; in the focusing of the services, consideration will be given to the priorities set in the Government Programme (highly educated individuals, healthcare and social welfare, export industries and seasonal work). Strengthening cooperation between the public and private sectors in the development of international recruitment in central government and promoting joint service production.</p>	<p>Responsible parties in central government: KEHA Centre, Business Finland, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, ELY Centres (vitality centres), Finnish Immigration Service; the Work in Finland steering group will be appointed in autumn 2023</p> <p>Key stakeholders: cities and municipalities, Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, private recruitment actors</p>	<p>Continuous work; the Work in Finland action plan will be approved in autumn 2023 and will be updated after that as necessary</p>
<p>Preparing and implementing the target country model for labour immigration with the countries specified in the Government Programme; monitoring the impact of the model on general government finances</p>	<p>Responsible parties in central government: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry for Foreign Affairs and foreign missions, Finnish National Agency for Education, Business Finland, KEHA Centre, Finnish Immigration Service; in the preparation phase</p> <p>Key stakeholders: private recruitment actors, cities and municipalities</p>	<p>The target country model will be presented for approval in autumn 2023, followed by implementation and monitoring</p>

Measure	Implementing actors	Timetable
<p>Strengthening the partnership between central government and municipalities to support international recruitment and to develop regional ecosystems for international talents.</p>	<p>Responsible parties in central government: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Business Finland, KEHA Centre, ELY Centres (vitality centres)</p> <p>Key stakeholders: cities and municipalities, Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities</p>	<p>Continuous work as part of the TE services reform (the basis for the partnership to be finalised by the beginning of 2025) and with large cities as part of the planning and implementation of the strategic cooperation alliance (planning of the operating model began in autumn 2023)</p>
<p>Carrying out targeted actions to streamline international recruitment in the healthcare and social welfare sector, in particular to establish the legalisation procedure and the qualification path preceding it, to provide uniform national language training and to strengthen partnerships with the countries of origin</p>	<p>Responsible parties in central government: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (each within its own sector), National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health</p> <p>Key stakeholders: wellbeing services counties, private recruitment actors, cities and municipalities</p>	<p>International recruitment will be discussed as part of the Good Work Programme to be launched in autumn 2023 to ensure the adequacy and availability of healthcare, social welfare and rescue service personnel; the expert group chaired by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health will present its recommendations for the legalisation procedure and the qualification path during the first half of 2024; The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health will launch a review on uniform language training for the healthcare and social welfare sector in autumn 2023; the healthcare and social welfare sector will be treated as a priority area in the target country model, which will be approved in autumn 2023</p>

Measure	Implementing actors	Timetable
Strengthening Finland's country brand and making Finland more attractive by utilising Team Finland networks and by developing Nordic cooperation. Developing digital services in attracting talents and in country branding.	Responsible parties in central government: Ministry for Foreign Affairs (overall responsibility for country branding), Business Finland (coordination and development of country brand communication directed at talents, TFK network)	Continuous work; also as part of the target country model
Developing a service path for international students to support their recruitment, with focus on attracting individuals to Finland, making Finland better known as a country of study, and building uniform services in cooperation with higher education institutions	Responsible parties in central government: Finnish National Agency for Education (Study in Finland) , Business Finland Key stakeholders: higher education institutions, cities	Continuous work; also as part of the target country model
Making EU and EEA labour better available	Responsible parties in central government: KEHA Centre, Business Finland, EURES network , Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment Key stakeholders: cities and municipalities	Continuous work; Work in Finland action plan in autumn 2023, target country model in autumn 2023
Facilitating return migration to Finland; developing communications specifically aimed at returnees and the targeting of Work in Finland services	Responsible parties in central government: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment , Ministry of the Interior, KEHA Centre, Business Finland, TE Offices, relevant Finnish missions Key stakeholders: cities and municipalities, Finland Society	Planning of the measures will be launched under the leadership of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment in autumn 2023, and returnees will also be taken into account in the Work in Finland action plan where applicable

Measure	Implementing actors	Timetable
<p>Examining and promoting the following economic incentives to support attractiveness and retention power:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tax incentives for foreign key personnel • making costs arising from the entry process a tax-free employee benefit for companies • national grant programme for higher education students to which the payment obligation applies • incentives to remain in Finland after graduation, including student loan compensation for individuals that have graduated in Finland 	<p>Responsible parties in central government: Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment</p> <p>Key stakeholders: cities, higher education institutions</p>	<p>In accordance with the Government Programme, taxation at source of key foreign personnel will be extended from four to seven years. Government proposal 34/2023 has been submitted to Parliament.</p> <p>The question of costs of the entry process will be examined in 2024.</p> <p>A working group has been appointed to prepare an increase in tuition fees, and to examine the launching of a national grant programme and the introduction of incentives to encourage foreigners to seek work in Finland. The working group's proposals on incentives will be finalised by 30 June 2024.</p>
<p>Where possible, utilising joint actions and resources of the EU (such as AMIF, talent partnerships, pools of experts) to promote international recruitment from third countries in accordance with the priorities set in the Government Programme</p>	<p>Responsible parties in central government: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of the Interior, Business Finland, KEHA Centre</p> <p>Key stakeholders: cities, higher education and other education institutions</p>	<p>Continuous work; planning will also be carried out as part of the target country model in autumn 2023</p>

4.2 Smooth and controlled residence permit processes and effective follow-up monitoring and prevention of abuses

The work-based and education-based residence permit procedure has been updated in recent years so that the number of data transfer interfaces has been increased and partial automation is now used more extensively. At the same time, with the introduction of the risk-based model, officials are using more time to deal with the most difficult cases. Partially as a result of these changes, processing times have been shortened and more resources can now be used to prevent abuses on a focused basis. In addition, the two-week service promise for specialists and growth entrepreneurs and their families (fast track) has been in successful use since summer 2022.

In 2022, the processing times of work-based residence permit applications were on average more than 50% shorter than in 2019. This is mostly due to quicker processing of the applications for employees' residence permits, the largest permit category in quantitative terms: the processing times have been cut from an average of 146 days to 67 days. The most significant shortening of processing times (74%) has taken place in the applications for entrepreneurs' residence permits in which processing times have been cut from 328 days to 85 days. In the applications for study-based permits, the processing times in 2022 have on average been 28% shorter than in 2019: they have been cut from an average of 32 days to 23 days. The processing has been speeded up even though the number of decisions increased significantly between 2019 and 2022. During the same period, the number of decisions on work-based applications (applications for the first residence permit) has increased by 60% and for study-based applications by 51%.

It is envisaged in the Programme of Prime Minister Orpo's Government that work-based residence permit applications should on average be processed within one month. The fast-track procedure will also be speeded up to seven days for specialists earning more than EUR 4,000. The processing time target of one month envisaged in the Government Programme will be extended to cover both work-based and education-based residence permits. In recent years, funding from the Recovery and Resilience Facility of the EU (RRF) has been used to develop the technical and communicative aspects of the residence permit procedure. The

main objective (and thus also the requirement for full funding) is that the average processing times for all work-based and education-based residence permit categories are shortened to one month by the end of 2024.

In addition to a smooth procedure, it is important to ensure that abuses will also be effectively addressed in the future as part of the risk-based processing model and its continuous development, taking into account changing immigration situations. In addition to adequate ex-ante monitoring, follow-up monitoring must also be improved, in particular by utilising the opportunities provided by information system development and closer cooperation between the authorities. The purpose of the follow-up monitoring is to ensure that work with a work-based permit continues in accordance with the stated terms and conditions. Similarly, the meeting of the requirements for a study-based residence permit will also be monitored. The follow-up monitoring will be carried out as smoothly as possible utilising partial automation. Effective measures will be taken to combat abuses. After 2024, it will be assessed how successfully the objectives of smooth processing of study-based residence permits and combating the abuse of such permits have been coordinated, and any necessary changes in the operating practices will be implemented.

In accordance with the Programme of Prime Minister Orpo's Government, the existing labour market testing for employees' residence permits will be retained. However, partial decisions will become the responsibility of the Finnish Immigration Service in 2025 as part of the TE services reform, which will strengthen the agency's role as a process owner.

Measure	Implementing actors	Timetable
<p>Maintaining an intersectoral situation picture of work-based and education-based permit procedures and acting in a proactive manner (bottlenecks, queues, processing times, prevention of abuses) to focus the required measures</p>	<p>Responsible parties in central government: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education and Culture, Finnish Immigration Service, TE Offices and Uusimaa ELY Centre (partial solutions), Business Finland (Eligibility Statements for start-up entrepreneurs' residence permits)</p>	<p>Continuous work monitored by the steering group for work-based and education-based residence permit procedure (to be appointed in autumn 2023).</p>
<p>Reducing the average processing time of all work-based and education-based residence permits to a maximum of one month and creating a one-week fast track for top talents earning more than EUR 4,000/month, and at the same time ensuring high quality of processing and effective identification of risk cases</p>	<p>Responsible parties in central government: Finnish Immigration Service, TE Offices, Uusimaa ELY Centre, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Business Finland</p>	<p>Continuous work monitored by the steering group for work-based and education-based residence permit procedure (to be appointed in autumn 2023). The RRF funding will only be available if the average processing time of 30 days is reached during 2024. After this, the coordination of the objectives of smooth processing of study-based residence permits and combating the abuse of such permits will be assessed, and any necessary changes in the operating practices will be implemented.</p>
<p>Promoting the use of partial automation and digitalisation in the residence permit procedure to streamline procedures and to effectively identify risk cases and prevent abuse and labour exploitation</p>	<p>Responsible parties in central government: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (work-based and education-based residence permits), Ministry of the Interior (general), Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finnish Immigration Service, TE Offices</p>	<p>Continuous development of operating practices and information systems, monitored by the steering group for work-based and education-based residence permit procedure (to be appointed in autumn 2023); the Ministry of the Interior will be responsible for determining the need for separate automation legislation on immigration</p>

Measure	Implementing actors	Timetable
Utilising digitalisation and other means to develop the identification of individuals applying for a work-based and education-based residence permit and other measures in the early stages of the procedure in Finland's foreign missions to ensure that the activities are both smooth and reliable.	Responsible parties in central government: Ministry for Foreign Affairs , Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Ministry of Education and Culture, Finnish Immigration Service, Ministry of Finance, Digital and Population Data Services Agency	Continuous development of operating practices and information systems, which will be promoted by an operational development working group to be appointed in autumn 2023 under the steering group for work-based and education-based residence permit procedure
Ensuring the smooth transfer of the tasks concerning the partial decision on employees' residence permits to the Finnish Immigration Service from the start of 2025	Responsible parties in central government: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (steering) , Finnish Immigration Service (implementation) , KEHA Centre	Continuous work in a project set up by the Finnish Immigration Service, to be completed by early 2025
Preparing and implementing the legislative amendments setting the income limit for an employee's residence permit at EUR 1,600 and enabling the setting of income limits by decree	Responsible parties in central government: Working group led by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment Stakeholders' views will be taken into account as part of the legislative drafting	The Government proposal will be submitted to Parliament in spring 2024
Preparing and implementing legislative amendments for the situation where a person's employment relationship ends and the person in question has not entered into a new employment relationship within three months. In the same Government proposal, it is proposed that the right to work with a work-based residence permit should in addition to the original sector also cover the sectors where genuine labour shortages have been identified.	Responsible parties in central government: Working group led by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment Stakeholders' views will be taken into account as part of the legislative drafting	The Government proposal will be submitted to Parliament in autumn 2024

Measure	Implementing actors	Timetable
<p>Preparing and implementing legislative amendments for a situation where a student has resorted to social assistance. In the same connection, it will be examined whether restrictions on students' and researchers' residence permits in security-critical areas should be introduced and, if necessary, the restrictions will be put into effect.</p>	<p>Responsible parties in central government: Working group led by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment</p> <p>Stakeholders' views will be taken into account as part of the legislative drafting</p>	<p>The Government proposal to Parliament will be submitted in autumn 2024 at the earliest</p>
<p>Preparing and implementing legislative amendments for granting permanent residence permits to persons who have taken a Master's degree in Finland and have sufficient skills in Finnish or Swedish</p>	<p>Responsible parties in central government: Working group led by the Ministry of the Interior</p> <p>Stakeholders' views will be taken into account as part of the legislative drafting</p>	<p>The amendments will be prepared as part of a more extensive reform of the permanent residence permit. The project timetable will be specified in autumn 2023.</p>
<p>Launching enterprise architecture work covering the digital operating environment of work-based immigration to better anticipate and take into account information system development in legislative and policy drafting</p>	<p>Responsible parties in central government: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Ministry of the Interior, Finnish Immigration Service</p>	<p>The working group to build the enterprise architecture will be appointed in autumn 2023, and it will report to the steering group for the work-based and education-based residence permit procedure</p>
<p>Harmonising intersectoral customer advice for persons and employers applying for a work-based or education-based residence permit. The aim is to improve the quality of the applications, reduce the proportion of requests for further information and speed up the processing of permit applications.</p>	<p>Responsible parties in central government: Finnish Immigration Service, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, KEHA Centre, Business Finland</p> <p>Key stakeholders: employers, applicants for a residence permit</p>	<p>Continuous work, which will be launched in autumn 2023 in the cooperation group to develop permit procedures led by the Finnish Immigration Service. The group will cooperate with Work in Finland when necessary. In autumn 2023, the focus will be on the guidance package prepared for employers.</p>

Measure	Implementing actors	Timetable
Examining the raising of the income limits for work-based residence permits and family reunification, and the impacts of both measures on the availability of labour will be taken into account	Responsible parties in central government: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (work-based permits) and Ministry of the Interior (family reunification) Stakeholders' views will be taken into account as part of the legislative drafting	For work-based permits, the report will be finalised in spring 2024, after which the need for legislative amendments will be considered. The legislative project for family reunification is expected to be launched in autumn 2023 and the Government proposal would be submitted in autumn 2024. The VN TEAS report to be finalised in spring 2024 will be used as knowledge base.

4.3 Strengthening Finland's retention power

The inputs in attractiveness and smooth residence permit procedures will be useless if international talents do not want to stay in Finland. Diversity and equality in Finnish society and working life also play a key role in the employment of immigrants already living in Finland and in Finland's attractiveness as a country of destination for skilled labour, international students and investments. During the previous government term, the employment rate among individuals with foreign background living in Finland almost reached the levels of persons with Finnish background but there are still significant differences between countries of origin. The employment of immigrants should be further strengthened, and the measures will be carried out as part of the Government action to boost employment and to ensure more effective integration.

Åtgärd	Genomförare	Tidsplan
<p>Determining the factors impacting the retention power for international talents and their families</p>	<p>Responsible parties in central government: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Ministry of Education and Culture</p> <p>Key stakeholders: cities and municipalities, employers, higher education institutions, education providers, immigrant communities</p>	<p>Preliminary report on the results of the surveys on retention power conducted in recent years will be prepared under the auspices of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment during 2023, after which the need for further reviews and other measures will be considered in close cooperation with stakeholders</p>
<p>Boosting the employment of international students who have graduated in Finland for positions corresponding to their education in cooperation with employers, and higher education and other education institutions</p>	<p>Responsible parties in central government: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Ministry of Education and Culture, KEHA Centre, Business Finland</p> <p>Key stakeholders: cities and municipalities (Talent Hubs and employment authorities), higher education and other education institutions</p>	<p>The measures concerning employment and business services will be included in the Work in Finland action plan to be approved in autumn 2023</p> <p>Continuing the Talent Boost projects in higher education institutions to strengthen the working life connections of international students and to support the learning of Finnish and Swedish, until the end of 2024. To be taken into account in the steering of higher education institutions in the new agreement period 2025–2028</p>

Åtgärd	Genomförare	Tidsplan
<p>In addition to Finnish and Swedish, the provision of English-language education will be promoted at different levels of early childhood education and care and other education. At the same time, opportunities to study Finnish and Swedish will be promoted to facilitate integration and transition to early childhood education and care and basic education provided in Finnish or Swedish.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing a report on the actual obstacles to English-language early childhood education and care, pre-primary education and basic education in municipalities. • Introducing the option of taking the matriculation examination in English on the basis of limited criteria. • Increasing English-language study contents in vocational education and training and opening commissioned education. 	<p>Responsible parties in central government: Ministry of Education and Culture</p> <p>Key stakeholders: cities and municipalities, education institutions and education providers</p>	<p>The preparation will take place as part of the working group preparation of general upper secondary education and vocational education and training as envisaged in the Government Programme. The term of the monitoring groups and working groups expires at the end of 2024, and the aim is to submit the necessary legislative proposals in autumn 2024.</p>

Åtgärd	Genomförare	Tidsplan
<p>Ensuring smooth basic banking services for individuals moving to Finland on the basis of work. Banking services for international students, companies and individuals moving to Finland to establish a business will also be taken into account.</p>	<p>Responsible parties in central government: Ministry of Finance, Financial Supervisory Authority, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Ministry of Education and Culture, Business Finland</p> <p>Key stakeholders: banks, employers, immigrant communities</p>	<p>Continuous dialogue with banks through the Financial Supervisory Authority on problems concerning the opening of accounts. The Ministry of Finance is preparing a report on the availability and usability of basic banking services, and the assessment memorandum will be ready at the end of 2023. In addition, a process review of opening a bank account will also be carried out in 2024, and it will involve all relevant parties.</p>
<p>Developing the receptiveness of working life</p>	<p>Responsible parties in central government: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, KEHA Centre, Business Finland, ELY Centres (vitality centres)</p> <p>Key stakeholders: employers, immigrant communities</p>	<p>The Government statement on equality was adopted in August 2023; development work will also be carried out in accordance with the Work in Finland action plan, which will be approved in autumn 2023</p>
<p>Providing better opportunities to study Finnish and Swedish. The work will be carried out in cooperation with employers</p>	<p>Responsible parties in central government: KEHA Centre, Business Finland, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment</p> <p>Key stakeholders: employers, cities and municipalities</p>	<p>Continuous work; to be taken into account in the Work in Finland action plan in autumn 2023 and in the performance management of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment's administrative branch</p>
<p>Supporting career development and re-employment of individuals arriving in Finland the basis of work</p>	<p>Responsible parties in central government: KEHA Centre, Business Finland, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, TE Offices</p> <p>Key stakeholders: municipal experiments, (in the future) employment regions (parties operating at the customer interface)</p>	<p>Continuous work; to be taken into account in the Work in Finland action plan in autumn 2023 and in the performance management of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment's administrative branch</p>

Åtgärd	Genomförare	Tidsplan
<p>The digital service path of international talents will first be developed up to the employment service and entry stage as part of the Virtual Finland project (piloting on the Work in Finland website). After this, it may be developed as a tool for the post-entry period. Among the options considered is an arrangement in which migration to Finland is funded during the government term as a life event in accordance with the Government's digital compass. The national digital one-stop shop model can be utilised in this development work.</p>	<p>Responsible parties in central government: Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Ministry of Finance, Business Finland, KEHA Centre (the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is responsible for the pilot phase of the Virtual Finland project until its conclusion in 2024; further responsibilities will be determined after the project)</p> <p>Key stakeholders: cities, municipalities, employers</p>	<p>The decisions on the continuation of the Virtual Finland project after the end of RRF funding will be taken in autumn 2023.</p>
<p>Promoting the attachment of international talents to RDI ecosystems and the utilisation of international expertise to support the growth and internationalisation of companies and investments in Finland</p>	<p>Business Finland, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Ministry of Education and Culture, Academy of Finland</p>	<p>Continuous work; to be taken into account in the Work in Finland action plan in autumn 2023, in the performance management of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment's administrative branch and in the preparation of agreements between higher education institutions and the Ministry of Education and Culture.</p>
<p>Introducing a scheme in which skills obtained outside Finland would allow smoother access to corresponding tasks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quicker recognition of qualifications and degrees • developing alternative models for supplementing foreign qualifications and degrees 	<p>Ministry of Education and Culture, Finnish National Agency for Education, National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health</p>	<p>Continuous work; preparations for amending the Foreign Studies Act will be launched during 2024.</p>

4.4 Combating labour exploitation

One of the key objectives set out in the Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's Government is to strengthen Finland's labour market. While international recruitment is promoted in a focused manner, abuses taking place in the labour market must be actively and proactively addressed. Work-based immigration can only be developed in a sustainable manner if effective measures are taken to combat the exploitation of foreign labour. This can only be made if the measures against exploitation are extended to cover all areas of the Talent Boost programme: international recruitment and attraction work, streamlining of residence permit procedures and the promotion of retention power and integration. Measures against exploitation will be carried out in close cooperation with the networks combating human trafficking established by the authorities and stakeholders.

The Government Programme lists concrete measures to introduce harsher penalties for abuses and to improve enforcement. An action plan coordinating these and other measures to combat exploitation will be prepared during 2023 and a separate steering group has been appointed to monitor the work. The action plan will address issues such as the development of cooperation and sharing of information between the authorities, increasing the likelihood of detecting exploitation, improving the status of victims and the implementation of social responsibility and criminal responsibility. The action plan against labour exploitation will serve as a parallel document to the Talent Boost programme and both must be implemented together to achieve a balanced set of measures for work-based and education-based immigration. Reports on the work of the steering group against exploitation will be presented to the Talent Boost steering group on a regular basis.



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