

Finland

In 2007, a total of 26 000 persons migrated to Finland, a rise of 16% over 2006. Out of these immigrants, the share of foreign nationals was 17 500 (in 2006 about 13 900). The net immigration of foreign nationals was 14 400, up 29 % from the previous year. The main nationalities of immigrants were Estonia, Russia, China, Sweden, Somalia, Thailand, India, Poland and Iraq. 2008 saw an additional rise in immigration of foreign nationals, to 19 600, although data for the first 9 months of 2009 (12 300 new residence permits) suggest a return to the 2007 immigration levels.

At the end of 2007 a total of 133 000 foreign nationals lived permanently in Finland, representing 2.5% of the entire population, of whom an estimated 64 000 were in the labour force. At the end of 2007, the estimated unemployment rate of foreigners was 20% and the employment rate 50%: an average of 28 600 foreign jobseekers had registered in the Employment Offices, of which 12 900 were unemployed.

Labour migration rose sharply (59%) in 2007, to 6 179 applications for residence permits for employed persons in 2007 (3 895 in 2006). Applications rose again, less sharply, in 2008, to 6 879, of which 5 930 were approved (a 13% increase). In 2007, A total of 740 returnees came to Finland from the area of Soviet Union, mainly from Russian Federation and Estonia; this halved in 2008. The number of foreign students admitted increased in from 3 200 to 3 800 in 2007 and 4 500 in 2008. Most foreign students came from Russian Federation, China, United States and Turkey.

Finland fully opened its labour market for Romanian and Bulgarian nationals in 2007.

Asylum seeking in Finland has varied, falling to 1 505 in 2007 before climbing to 4 035 in 2008. Most asylum seekers arrived from Iraq and Somalia. The resettlement quota of refugees for 2007 and 2008 was 750. The largest groups were from Myanmar, Iran and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Finnish authorities interviewed most of the quota refugees in their first countries of asylum before granting them residence permits.

The Government Programme of Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen's second Cabinet (April 2007) includes migration policy guidelines, which were drafted and agreed during the first cabinet of Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen (October 2006). The goal is to pursue an active, comprehensive and consistent migration policy according to Finland's international obligations. The programme includes also initiatives to promote labour migration more intensively. The programme comprises altogether 34 proposals.

At the end of April 2009, a draft action plan for labour migration 2009-2011 was released. The Action Plan was prepared by the Ministry of Interior through an interministerial steering committee including consultation with social partners and civil society. The programme contains, on the one hand, principled policies for the development of work-based immigration and, on the other, proposed measures for their preparation and for taking effective action where necessary. Most measures proposed aim at preparation for the particular challenges brought by labour migration. Funding is expected to be through existing programmes rather than new expenditures.

The new Government (April 2007) nominated for the first time in Finland's history a Minister who is responsible for the Migration and European Affairs. The administration of migration issues was reorganised as from 1 January 2008. A new Migration Department has been formed in the Ministry of the Interior.

For further information:

<http://www.migri.fi/netcomm/?language=EN>

<http://www.intermin.fi>