



M O B I L I T Y   G U I D E

**FINLAND**





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## Content

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Part I: General country information	3
Part II: General information to prepare for mobility	3
Labour market information	3
Money earning and living costs	4
Looking for a job: where to start?	4
Working conditions	4
Maximum Number of Working Hours	4
Looking for accommodation	5
To be checked before leaving or upon arriving	5
Part III: Golden rules for intercultural understanding	6
Part IV: Everyday-life	6
Getting into contact	6
Language	6
Working environment	7
Manners/Etiquette	7
Invitations	7
Topics for conversation	7
Spare time	8
Midges	8
Public holidays	8
Eating & drinking	9
Part V: Vocational education & training	10
Part VI: Selected trades	11
Part VII: Links	12
Imprint	13



## Part I: General country information

Official name:	Suomen tasavalta
Capital:	Helsinki
Flag:	
Languages:	Finnish, Swedish
Government:	<p>Parliamentary republic.</p> <p>Head of state is the president, currently Tarja Halonen, and the head of government is the prime minister, currently Matti Vanhanen.</p> <p>The Finnish parliament (Eduskunta) has 200 deputies, elected for four years by the people according to the proportional representation election system.</p> <p>There are five provinces (South Finland, West Finland, East Finland, Oulu, and Lapland) and the autonomous province of Åland. The regions are administered by governors appointed by the state with a maximum period of office of 8 years.</p>
Inhabitants:	5,3 Mio. 93 % Finns, 6 % Finn-Swedes, minority of Laps, Roma and Tatars
Unemployment quota:	7,7 % (2006)
EU-Membership:	Since 1995
National holiday:	6 December
Currency:	Euro
Time:	MEZ +1
Prefix:	++358
Internet:	.fi

## Part II: General information to prepare for mobility

In preparation for a working stay in Finland it is advisable that you familiarize yourself with the country, its people and customs. This will help you to find your way in your new living and working environment, especially in the beginning of your stay.

### Labour market information

The demand for skilled workers is at its highest in South and West Finland, particularly in the area around the capital. Temporary contracts are widespread, which promises good opportunities for foreign workers. From the point



of view of tradesmen, the construction and the metalworking industries show great demand, but hairdressers are also being sought.

## Money earning and living costs

In Finland, even as a trainee, you are entitled to a minimum wage. Periods of work experience are regarded as employment. Accordingly, vocational knowledge is expected.

Wages and salaries are governed by collective wage bargaining agreements. The employer pays the required contributions on your behalf (except unemployment insurance).

Living in Finland can easily become expensive. Average prices for products are:

- ▶ Loaf of bread: 2 €
- ▶ Sandwich: 3,50 €
- ▶ Cup of coffee in a café: 2 €
- ▶ Pint of beer in a pub: 4,50 €
- ▶ Cinema ticket: 8 €
- ▶ Chocolate bar: 2 €
- ▶ Short bus journey: 2,20 €
- ▶ Packet of cigarettes: 4 €
- ▶ A two course meal in an average restaurant: 30 €
- ▶ A hamburger at McDonalds: 3–4 €

## Looking for a job: where to start?

Ministry of labour (työministeriö) with links for jobseekers:  
<http://www.mol.fi/mol/en/index.jsp>

## Temporary Work Agencies

Many of the large agencies work through international subsidiaries. Look in your home country to see which ones there are and enquire there about the relevant contacts in Finland. Private staff agencies are not allowed to demand fees from workers. The costs are borne by the companies.

Example: [www.stepstone.fi](http://www.stepstone.fi)

## Most important newspapers:

- ▶ Helsingin Sanomat: <http://www.hs.fi/>
- ▶ Ilta-Sanomat: <http://www.iltasanomat.fi/>
- ▶ Aamulehti: <http://www.aamulehti.fi/>
- ▶ Iltalehti: <http://www.iltalehti.fi/etusivu/>
- ▶ Yellow pages: <http://www.keltaisetsivut.fi>

## Working conditions

### Maximum Number of Working Hours

It is normal to work 8 hours per day and approximately 40 hours per week. There are agreements which depart from this, and the average is 37.5 hours.

According to the law, the employee must agree to the overtime (with 138 hours being the maximum for a period of 4 months) and, in return, he will receive a higher salary or time off in lieu of this.

### Entitlement to (paid) Leave

Depending on the period of employment and length of service, this is two or two and a half days/month.

The normal working day lasts from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. which, of course, depends on the line of work and the work coming up.

## The National Minimum Wage covering workers:

Minimum wages for individual industrial sectors are governed by collective wage bargaining agreements.

## Social security system

As a rule, as an EU citizen you remain insured via the social security system of your country of origin. If you transfer your residence to Finland and you take up a job, you must be registered with the social security institution (KELA). You are only entitled to obtain benefits after working for more than 4 months.



You require a health insurance card from the social security institution (KELA) in order to be able to take up the services of the branch offices of the social security institution, pharmacies and health centres.

### **Looking for accommodation**

In the area around the capital you can expect high prices and accommodation costs. In order not to have to accept the most expensive offers locally, it is advisable to arrange accommodation even before the start of your departure. A “preparatory visit” (e.g. using accommodation in a youth hostel) and a search via the internet make this possible. It is also possibly worthwhile enquiring at the universities about a place in a hall of residence.

Depending on the length of your stay and your financial resources, you have different options to find accommodation.

#### **1. Room/Flat**

Look for local classifieds, contact real estate agents or ask in Cafes and supermarkets. Or ask your employer in advance if he has any tips. Perhaps he, or a colleague, has a room for the duration of your stay. Living in private accommodation has the advantage that you have a so-called “family connection”, you settle in more quickly and are able to learn the language more quickly.

Also, on the notice boards of the universities you can often find offers of cheap accommodation or a room within a flat-sharing community – not just for students – a widespread option for obtaining cheap accommodation for a couple of months.

You pay a proportion of the ground rent and the heating/energy costs. In addition, these offer a good opportunity to make contact quickly since the other tenants have also often

travelled in from other towns or regions and thus find themselves in the same situation as you.

#### **2. Youth hostels**

Youth hostels are probably the cheapest accommodation you can find (from €8/night up to €20/night). Therefore, stay in youth hostel may be a good option for the time you look for “real” accommodation.

To stay in a youth hostel, you need to be a member of the International Youth Hostel Federation. By contrast, access doesn’t depend on your age, but you do get a discount if under 26. For more information go to: <http://www.hihostels.com/dba/continent-EU.de.htm>

### **To be checked before leaving or upon arriving**

Before moving to your new country of residence make sure you have:

- ▶ (Temporary) accommodation.
- ▶ Sufficient financial resources for the first month.
- ▶ The right documents:
  - A valid EU passport/ID card;
  - A European Health Insurance Card;
  - An E301 or 303 form.
- ▶ General knowledge of your new country of residence.

As soon as you arrive in Finland:

- ▶ Register with the municipality in which you will be living.
- ▶ Apply for a tax card with the Tax Office of your living area. ([www.vero.fi](http://www.vero.fi))



## Part III: Golden rules for intercultural understanding

A society's hidden rules form the basis of smooth everyday interaction – at home as well as abroad.

Any host will certainly be lenient towards a guest who – despite good manners – behaves differently from a fellow countryman. For instance, think of a guest smoking at table, something quite natural in that person's home country, but unthinkable in others, and this not only for legal reasons. Or think of the visitor from Paris, who barely knowing you, gives you a kiss on the cheek.

There is no written law on how to behave correctly in another country, and even within a country, rules will vary from one region to another. Any foreign visitor may therefore unconsciously drop a clanger.

Only living in a country for some time, being attentive and interested, will help you to learn the unwritten rules and see the clangers. However, if you as a guest stick to some basic rules, your stay will run smoothly.

- ▶ Don't be afraid of the unknown. Remember that in your home country you also meet strangers and usually you manage the situation without problems.

- ▶ Let situations sink in. Note the common ground as well as differences, and try to not immediately assess everything in terms of good and bad, better and worse. Things are just different!
- ▶ Confronted with new situations: wait and observe. You may be surrounded by cooperative people, however, be aware that they might never have thought about why things are done this or that way.
- ▶ Get into contact! Nobody expects you to be perfect in the foreign language. So make an effort. Even a few words can open doors.
- ▶ For conversation at your workplace, reflect on your job, your future plans and train the relevant vocabulary before you leave. Also: Read about your home as well as about your target country and region. A country guide of your home region in the hosts' language might make a nice present.

## Part IV: Everyday-life

### Getting into contact

Calling people by their first name and using the familiar form of address is very widespread – this reveals the fondness the Finns have for keeping things simple. Titles are quoted along with the surname when addressing people. A handshake as a greeting is normal, a kiss (on the cheek) less so.

### Language

Finnish and Swedish are the official languages, and around 1,700 inhabitants of Lapland speak Sami. As a small country with a mother tongue that is not very widespread throughout

the world, the people in Finland are dependent on a good foreign language. Most of them speak English. Here some vocabulary to start with:

Hello ▶ Hyvää päivää

Good morning ▶ Hyvää huomenta

Good night ▶ Hyvää yötä

Goodbye ▶ Näkemiin

My name is ... ▶ Nimeni on...

Thank you ▶ Kiitos

Please ▶ Ole hyvä

Sorry ▶ Anteeksi



Yes ▶ Kyllä

No ▶ Ei

Very good ▶ Oikaein Hienoa

I don't speak Finnish ▶ En puhu suomea

## Working environment

If you have been successful in finding a job, you will be warmly welcomed and you will be helped to settle into an unfamiliar working environment. Every business “ticks” differently. Therefore, the following recommendations are only to be understood as providing food for thought.

Democracy and equality are also rated very highly in the everyday life of businesses. The hierarchy is mainly flat and everyone is taken seriously. Here, too, it is a case of not attracting unnecessary attention to yourself or your work. Of course there is team work, but you will often come across “single combatants”. Fit in and rather show what you can do, without talking too much about it.

Work and family tend to be kept apart, and it may take a while until colleagues become friends. Allow yourself and your hosts time.

## Manners/Etiquette

Finns like things to be kept simple and are tolerant of strange behaviour. They dress in a rather casual manner, except when it comes to business meetings, in smart restaurants or at company events. There, rather formal dress is appropriate. It may also happen that, as a guest visiting someone in private, you are asked to remove your shoes.

Mobile telephones are very widespread (the number of mobile telephones and internet connections per head of population is greater than in any other country). However, they are banned or disapproved of on planes, in hospitals, in the theatre or at church.

Smoking is banned in public places and at the workplace. Otherwise, the best thing to do is to ask if and where it is possible to smoke.

In Finland, a tip is only expected by porters. In restaurants, people give the cloakroom attendant between 1 and 2 euros. Service is included, but you can, of course, give a tip, if you were satisfied with the service.

## Invitations

Private invitations are not unusual in Finland – people are even invited to the sauna. Showing up on time is important. You can bring along a bunch of flowers or a good bottle of wine.

As a guest, wait until your host invites you to have a drink. As a rule, no alcoholic drinks are served at lunch, whilst wine, beer and schnapps are, in fact, normal at dinner, when in company. Sometimes there is a toast or even a drinking song to begin with, and the accompanying schnapps is downed in one go.

In summer, many Finns visit their cabin which is situated in the country. If you are invited there, do not expect too much comfort and be open-minded. The simple life, fishing, chopping wood and collecting berries are all a very Finnish experience which you are able to enjoy as such.

## Topics for conversation

As a small country which is a little out of the way, the Finns do not expect a visitor to know a lot about their country, and are therefore highly delighted if you know a little about it. At the same time, criticism of it is not welcome.

Small talk, as a rule, is not a Finnish thing. Words are carefully chosen and you should spare yourself any “prattle” or long-winded compliments. Listening is regarded as an important skill and to butt in on someone is regarded as being very impolite. People expect you to keep your word



and they will do this too. There is a saying: „Take a man by his words and a bull by its horns“.

Finland is among the top countries in the world for people who read the most. Accordingly, the majority of Finns are well-informed and interested in the customs of other countries. Even your private hobbies or art and culture lend themselves well to conversations.

Equality of the sexes is very marked and has a long tradition – in 1906, Finland was the first European country to introduce the right to vote for women. Sentences such as “even women exercise the trade here” are most likely to be met with incomprehension. Besides, women make up 48 % of those in gainful employment.

## Spare time

Sports activities (skiing, rambling, (ice) hockey, swimming) and spending time in the outdoors (angling, picking berries and collecting mushrooms) are included when it comes to planning people’s leisure time. People can move very freely since the “everyman right” applies. However, you should use this right with all due consideration and politeness.

In addition to performing well in winter sports, in particular, three Formula 1 champions come from Finland alone: Keke Rosberg, Mika Häkkinen and Kimi Räikkönen.

In summer, when the days are long, it is the time for all sorts of festivals in Finland. The high standard and the reasonable prices of these lead to record visitor numbers. Finland is, as are the other Nordic countries, famous for, among other things, an extensive heavy-metal scene.

It is hard to imagine daily life without the Finnish sauna – it is alleged that there is one sauna for every three Finns. Many private households have their own and people meet up to share a sauna. If there is a lake nearby (and in Finland there is almost always one nearby), people cool down

there – no matter how cold it is. On public mixed sauna days people wear a pair of swimming trunks or a swimsuit.

You can obtain more information at <http://virtual.finland.fi>.

## Midges

Finland is the land of the many lakes. This also attracts the midges for a few weeks at the height of summer. In Northern Finland protection against midges is called for, whereas, in Southern and Central Finland, it is only required in damp areas where there is no wind. The best thing to do is to purchase this protection locally. There are tried and tested preparations (frequently plant-based) available in chemist’s shops and pharmacies. For spending time in the open air, burning incense spirals which give off smoke is recommended.

## Public holidays

Differences between the customs in other European countries are often to be found in areas where, at first, you would not expect to find them. The way in which Christian festivals are celebrated reflects a great deal of the culture of a country. Finding out about the customs observed on public holidays contributes to the understanding of a culture and offers good material for conversations.

Public holidays (some of them are moved to a Saturday, if they should actually fall on a working day):

- ▶ New Year’s Day: 1st of January
- ▶ The celebration of the Three Wise Men (festival of epiphany): 6th of January
- ▶ Good Friday
- ▶ Easter Monday
- ▶ May Holiday: Labour Day, 1st of May (the “Vappu” Night, a student and spring festival, begins as early as the previous evening. In university towns, there is an almost carnival-like hustle and bustle in the air.)
- ▶ Ascension



**Here, by way of an example, is some information with regard to:**

**Christmas (“joulu”) in Finland (according to tradition, Father Christmas comes from Lapland):**

*With the proclamation of the peace of Christmas on the 24th of December at 12 midday in Turku, the oldest town in Finland, the most important day of the Christmas period begins. Many Finns listen in to the proclamation, which has its origins in the 13th century, on the radio and on television. The Finns spend the 24th having a Christmas sauna and preparing traditional foods: pickled herring, beetroot salad, salmon, roe, potato, carrot and turnip bakes as well as Christmas ham, iced plum soup and gingerbread. There are lots of Christmas carols, and people like singing them at home, too. In the evening, Father Christmas comes and brings presents. Later on, people’s thoughts turn to the departed by lighting candles and paying a visit to the cemetery. The first day of the Christmas holiday is used for rest and relaxation, but on the 2nd day, the Feast of St. Stephen, people pay visits to one another.*

**Midsummer “Juhannus” (Feast of St. John the Baptist)**

*Midsummer is the high point of the “bright season” when, even in the south, the sun scarcely sets. Midsummer bonfires represent fertility, spiritual cleansing and the driving out of evil spirits. Midsummer poles are decorated with brightly-coloured ribbons, whilst others are decorated with willow twigs and flowers. Many Finns spend this day, or the weekend following the summer solstice on the 21st of June, in the country and hold wild parties with lots of dancing and music.*

**Further public holidays**

- ▶ Whitsun
- ▶ the winter solstice at the end of June (see below)
- ▶ All Saints
- ▶ Independence Day: 6th of December (proclamation of Finnish independence)
- ▶ 1st day of Christmas (joulu): 25th of December
- ▶ 2nd day of Christmas: 26th of December

The main period for holidays is in July. During this time it will perhaps be the case that you will receive no reply at all to job enquiries or the chance of somewhere to stay.

**Eating & drinking**

Breakfast is between 6.30 and 10 o’clock, lunch is from 11 o’clock to 1 p.m., dinner from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., and supper is between 7 p.m. and midnight.

In restaurants, alcohol is no longer served from half an hour before closing time. Otherwise the serving and selling

of alcohol is restricted to over-18s. Spirits with a high percentage of alcohol, such as strong beer, wine and schnapps are rather expensive due to the taxes. You can only obtain them in off-licences. Also, many foodstuffs are really expensive due to the taxes.

In addition to imported beer and strong beer, there is “kotikalja” (home-made beer), a soft drink, with scarcely any alcohol, “brewed” from water, malt, sugar and yeast, which should not fail to be included in any buffet held in the country.

A typical Finnish breakfast nowadays looks like it does in many other European countries. One exception is, perhaps, the really dark rye bread.

What is out of the ordinary for people who are not Northern Europeans are “poronkäristys” (reindeer meat that has been cut into strips) and “poronpaisti” (roast reindeer meat). The wide variety of fish dishes and their preparation using berries and mushrooms also conceals lots of surprises. The countless number of lakes and forests offer a wealth of food,



e.g. fish: salmon (lohi), rainbow trout (kirjolohi), vendace (sii-ka), pike (hauki) and Baltic herring (silakka) as well as perch (ahven) and small white fish (muikku) belonging to the vendace family to be found in the Baltic sea, and all types of well-known berries.

### Fish Dishes

- ▶ Graavi lohi (pickled salmon), also popular grilled over an open fire
- ▶ Graavi kirjolohi (pickled rainbow trout)
- ▶ Rosolli (herring salad)

- ▶ Rapu (freshwater crayfish, from the 20th of July)
- ▶ Mäti roe (caviar from Finnish fish), yellow or orange in colour, served with chopped onions and smetana (crème fraîche).

Further typical preparation methods vary from region to region, many of them with a hint of international, Scandinavian and Russian influence.

## Part V: Vocational education & training

People working abroad obviously speak often about their profession and everyday working life in their home country. It is therefore important to realise that school, vocational education and ways to learn a trade vary distinctively between States.

In Finland, the state is responsible for education and training. It ensures equal right of access to education and training for all, and is, according to OECD standards, a world leader in this respect. In the case of the all-day comprehensive school this means that lessons, the textbooks and the remaining learning materials are free of charge. All Finnish schoolchildren receive free school meals.

The Opetushallitus (OPH) is the national reference office with regard to the transparency of vocational qualifications. Its internet site, [www.oph.fi](http://www.oph.fi), offers information on the vocational, professional and technical level of Finnish qualifications.

You can find further information on vocational training in Finland on the website [www.internationale-kooperation.de](http://www.internationale-kooperation.de) and on the site of the German training server <http://bildungssysteme-international.dipf.de>.

### 1. First level of education

All-day comprehensive school: compulsory for all children for 9 years, from the age of 7 to the age of 16.

### 2. Second level of education

#### 2.a General Secondary School

Similar to a sixth-form college, it comes to an end after three years with an examination approximately equivalent to A levels (valtakunnalliseen ylioppilastutkintoon = general baccalaureate). The pupils, both boys and girls, gain hardly any experience of practical vocational work.

#### 2. b Training at a vocational secondary school

Young people who wish to start vocational training (oppisopimuskoulutus) after the period of compulsory education can opt for training either in the form of the traditional apprenticeship or for full-time training at school. The overwhelming majority of young people opt for full-time training at a vocational school.



The training can last from one and a half years to six years. A distinction is made between schools for training in a trade, company-owned schools for specialist subjects, and technical colleges for the purpose of specialising in specific subjects.

### 3. Further basic information

With a few exceptions, admission to an educational establishment is through a central admissions system. The terms and conditions of the training are agreed by means of a written contract between the company and the institution responsible for the training.

At the start of the training, students choose one of the basic training courses in the first year. In the second year they can specialise or opt for further training.

All vocational training courses also include a practical vocational element, the length of which depends on the vocational training in each case. The 3-year training period consists of 120 performance units. It contains a practical vocational training section, which consists of at least 20 performance units and 100 days spent at a workplace within a company. The practical vocational training must be completed at a workplace outwith the school.

The practical vocational sections are mainly suited to familiarising the trainee with the world of work within a business. He only learns his professional know-how and vocational specialisms as an employee following his training.

### Leaving Certificates

Training at a vocational school or company training leads, after a two to three-year training period, to a vocational leaving certificate, and after a two to five-year training period to a higher, non-university leaving certificate.

Following an apprenticeship in the dual system the students receive a certificate of attendance and a certificate based on the standard of their skills. This also gives entitlement to further study in the same way as the corresponding qualifications gained at a vocational institution.

The qualifications to be obtained are comparable to the vocational qualifications of higher secondary education and offer the same entitlement.

### The levels

Vocational training is split according to a credit system. It is possible to obtain a certificate for the credits achieved or the partial qualifications obtained at any time.

## Part VI: Selected trades

Finland has no specifically pre-defined skilled crafts sector. However, according to information from the Labour ministry ([www.ammattinetti.fi](http://www.ammattinetti.fi)) 19 trades belong to the sector:

Find below some Swedish and English names:

Batbyggare ► Boatbuilder

Dekorationsmalare ► Decoration painter

Dekorsnickare ► Decor joiner

Guldsmed ► Goldsmith

Instrumentmakare ► Instrument maker

Konservator ► Conservator

Körsnär ► Furrier

Modist ► Modist

Möbelrestaurerare ► Restaurator for furniture

Möbelstapetsare ► Upholsterer

Pälsmakare ► Furmaker

Sadelmakare ► Saddlemaker

Skomakare ► Shoemaker



Snickare ► Joiner

Urmakare ► Clockmaker

Vapensmed ► Weaponsmith

## Urmakare – Clockmaker

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**Feature:** Clockmakers are specialised in repairing watches and other measurement and precision instruments. Apart from their technical activities, customer service is an important feature of their work. While today modern watches are made of electronic devices, reparation of special mechanic clocks is a particular feature of Finnish watchmakers. Clockmakers can specialise in antique clocks, also they can cooperate with goldsmiths.

**Training:** The clockmaker exam is a traditional exam to prepare for repair and retail activities. They need a basic exam in clock- or microtechnology. In Finland a clockmakers school is situated in Esbo.

## Dekorationsmakare – Decoration painter

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**Feature:** Decoration painters are specialised painters. Among the typical activities are restauration, painting, varnishing, staining, marbeling and gold painting. The fields of activity

are manifold. Decoration painters brighten up interiors with models, figures and texts using paintbrushes and patterns, they can be involved in gold plating, but they may also work on furniture, for instance upholstery.

**Training:** Decoration painters do their vocational training in the painting, wood and restauration trades. After the basic exam it is possible to take a further exam to become a journeyman in gold plating, joinery, restauration or upholstery and even to take a master examination in the gold plating, painting and restauration trade.

## Snickare – Joiner

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Joiners produce furniture made of wood and timber materials. This involves the manufacturing of small series and one-off productions. They carry out interior work, do repair work, assembly and fitting. Joiners can specialise, for instance in antiques or in “industrial” joinery. Depending on their specialisation, they work in workshops or factories.

Joiners take a basic exam in a wood trade. Different to other countries there are various learning pathes to becoming a journeyman in the joinery trade.

## Part VII: Links

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### EURES

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- European Job Mobility Portal (EURES): <http://europa.eu.int/eures/main.jsp?countryId=UK&acro=living&lang=en&parentId=0>

### European guidance

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- Euroguidance centres in all EU-member and accession states and Switzerland inform on the advisory systems in your home country, if you intend to work or study in another EU-member state. <http://www.euroguidance.net>
- <http://www.fitforeurope.info>



- ▶ If you have difficulties regarding the recognition of diplomas you can turn to the EU directory service for citizens, which gives advice free of charge. <http://ec.europa.eu/citizensrights/>
- ▶ Further information on countries and their (business) etiquette is available on <http://www.executiveplanet.com>

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### Free online-translation can be found at:

- ▶ <http://babel.altavista.com/tr> (All languages)

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### EUROPASS

- ▶ [http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/europass/preview.action?locale\\_id=4](http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/europass/preview.action?locale_id=4)

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### Newspapers online

- ▶ Helsingin Sanomat: <http://www.hs.fi/>
- ▶ Ilta-Sanomat: <http://www.iltasanomat.fi/>
- ▶ Aamulehti: <http://www.aamulehti.fi/>
- ▶ Iltalehti: <http://www.iltalehti.fi/etusivu/>

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### Guides:

- ▶ <http://virtual.finland.fi>

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### Further information, e.g. accommodation:

- ▶ Fremdenverkehrsverein: <http://www.visitfinland.com>
- ▶ Yellow pages: <http://www.keltaisetsivut.fi>

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