Annual Report on Migration and Asylum Policy
FINLAND 2015
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Executive summary

In 2015, the number of foreign nationals who were issued a Finnish residence permit or who were registered with an EU citizen’s right of residence was 33,568 in line with the trend of recent years. Net migration also remained at the same level as in the previous years. Natural population increase declined for the sixth consecutive year, thus Finland’s population growth is currently based on immigration.

EU citizens1 accounted for 32% of these arrivals. The largest groups of third-country nationals who were issued with first residence permits were Russians (the Russian Federation). The second and third highest number of arrivals came from Asian countries with high population: China and India. The fourth largest group were Ukrainians. In addition to these top four countries that remained unchanged from the previous year, another significant group was Vietnamese whose number of residence permits issued exceeded 1,000 for the first time in 2015.

Changes in population 2011–2015

The most common grounds for issuing a residence permit were family ties, with studying as the second most common grounds and employment as the third. Decisions on asylum applications received in 2015 largely remained set for decision in 2016, so these asylum seekers are not yet included in the 2015 decision statistics.

Registrations of EU citizens and first residence permits issued to third-country nationals by grounds for application in 2015

![Chart showing changes in population 2011–2015](source)

Source: Finnish Immigration Service and Police.

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1 The registration of EU citizens encompasses all EU citizens that migrate into Finland on various grounds.
The year 2015 was exceptional for the Finnish Immigration Service due to the high number of asylum seekers. The number of asylum seekers who entered Finland (32,476) grew nearly ninefold from the previous year. The bulk of the influx occurred in the autumn. The month with the highest number of arrivals was September with 10,836. This represents a nearly 27-fold increase compared to September 2014. The extraordinary nature of the situation is also illustrated by the fact that the number of asylum applications filed during the year was higher than the total figure for the previous ten years combined. Also noteworthy is the large number of unaccompanied minors, which, at 3,024, was 15 times higher than the previous year.

The rapid growth in the number of asylum seekers was particularly reflected in the reception system for asylum seekers. The need to accommodate such a large number of arrivals meant that over a hundred reception centres were established in Finland over a short period of time in the autumn. The new situation also led to a considerable increase in the number of personnel at the Finnish Immigration Service, and the Service has established new regional offices. With the newly established reception centres and the new offices of the Finnish Immigration Service, the impact of the increase in the number of asylum seekers was reflected throughout the country, including locations that had barely any foreign residents previously.

During the year, immigration-related themes became constantly followed news topics and asylum seekers became closer to the everyday life of an increasing number of Finns, in an unprecedented way. Other phenomena that could be observed were the polarisation of climate around the public dialogue on immigration and more extreme views both in national politics and in civil society. On the other hand, during the peak in the asylum seeker situation in the autumn, Finns demonstrated great willingness to help both through voluntary work and with donations.

In absolute numbers, the European country to receive the most asylum seekers was Germany with 442,000 asylum seekers, 2.5 times the number in 2014. In Sweden, Hungary and Austria, the number of asylum seekers also increased by more than 50,000 when compared to the previous year. However, in Finland, the proportional increase in the number of asylum seekers from the previous year was the highest in Europe.

Asylum applications 2010–2015
Germany, Hungary, Sweden and Finland

Lähde: Eurostat / Asylum Statistics.
1. Introduction

The Annual Policy Report 2015 of the Finnish National Contact Point for the European Migration Network (EMN) gives insight into the most significant political and legislative developments, as well as public debate in the area of migration and asylum. It is the only annual report that presents compiled information on development trends in migration-related matters in Finland. The reference period of this report is from 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015.

The National Contact Points for the European Migration Network produce two-part annual reports on migration and asylum policy. In the first part of the report, the National Contact Points collect monitoring information on immigration and asylum policy for the European Commission which compiles an EU-wide comparison based on these national reports. The Finnish National Contact Point collected the monitoring information from official sources as well as with targeted queries to responsible authorities. The participants in the reporting included the Finnish Immigration Service, the Ministry of the Interior, the National Police Board, the Headquarters of the Finnish Border Guard, the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Office of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman and the Administrative Court of Helsinki. The Finnish National Contact Point was responsible for collecting statistical information.

This second part of the Annual Policy Report is primarily aimed at the national audience. The key content of the first part is also included in this second part of the report. In addition, the report describes public debate on immigration in 2015 and presents key trends in immigration and asylum statistics. The 2015 report focuses especially on reviewing gender impacts and fundamental rights. The European Migration Network also publishes a separate statistical review, Key figures on immigration 2015.

The sources used in the study include various Internet-based reports by authorities in the field of migration, studies, statements and press releases. Pending legislative projects have been monitored using the project websites and Parliamentary documents. In 2015, the National Contact Point also participated in various seminars related to migration in Finland and in other EU Member States in order to network with various producers of immigration research and to gather information on current national projects and international trends.

The terminology used in the study is based on the EMN Glossary published and maintained by the European Migration Network. The topics of the report follow the structure used by the European Commission.

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2 The reporting duty is stipulated by Council Regulation 2008/381/EC, which was also the basis for establishing the European Migration Network.

Structure of asylum and migration policy in Finland (2015)
1.1. Structure of asylum and migration policy

The Finnish Government directs immigration policy and its administration following the targets set in the Government Programme and approved Government Resolutions. The Prime Minister’s Office is in charge of the coordination of EU issues in general. According to the Government Programme, the Government will promote work-related migration that enhances employment in Finland, boosts public finances, improves the dependency ratio and contributes to the internationalisation of the economy. The Government will encourage open, facts-based debate about migration policy but will not tolerate racism. According to the Government Programme, Finland will participate in the international burden sharing and will be actively involved in EU-level discussions on migration policies. In addition, migration policy emphasises that migration should be well managed, measures should be taken to enhance integration and activities should be cross-sectoral.

The ministerial working group on migration\(^4\) compiles and maintains situational awareness of the asylum seeker situation and monitors integration. Prime Minister Juha Sipilä, Minister for Foreign Affairs Timo Soini and Minister of Finance Alexander Stubb are members of the group and State Secretaries will deputise for the Ministers as necessary. Other members of the migration group are ministers Anu Vehviläinen, Juha Rehula, Olli Rehn, Hanna Määttynä, Jari Lindström and Sanni Grahn-Laasonen.

The Ministry of the Interior, through the Migration Department, is in charge of immigration issues. Its tasks include preparing immigration policy and legislation related to immigration and nationality, supervising the activities of the Finnish Immigration Service and taking part in immigration and asylum cooperation in the EU, on other international forums and in national contexts. The Minister of the Interior affirms the main focuses, lines of operational forums and in national contexts. The Minister of the Interior’s budget proposal.

The expert group to manage the situation generated by the sharp increase in the number of asylum seekers in Finland operates in the Ministry of the Interior. The group cooperates with other ministries. The group maintains overall situational awareness of migration and decides actions to be taken and leadership assumed in this exceptional situation. Besides representatives of the Ministry of the Interior, the expert group has a representative from the Finnish Immigration Service, the National Police Board, Finnish Border Guard, the Finnish Security Intelligence Service and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The Finnish Immigration Service grants first residence permits, processes applications for asylum, guides the operations of reception centres, decides on refusals of entry and deportation, and is in charge of naturalisation applications and the granting of aliens’ passports. The Finnish Immigration Service operates under the Ministry of the Interior: Reception centres and detention units for persons detained by the Police or the Finnish Border Guard on the basis of the Aliens Act operate under the guidance of the Finnish Immigration Service and are responsible for the accommodation of asylum seekers and for reception services.

The Police’s field of operation includes monitoring compliance with the Aliens Act, accepting foreign nationals’ permit applications, establishing asylum seeker’s identity and travel route\(^5\), granting extensions to residence permits and registering EU citizens. The Police also enforce decisions on deportation and refusal of entry. The Ministry of the Interior’s Police Department is in charge of the strategic guidance and supervision of the police sector. The National Police Board plans, leads, develops and supervises practical police operations carried out at police departments.

The Finnish Border Guard monitors entry into and departure from the country and carries out passport control. Together with the Police, the Border Guard establishes an asylum seeker’s identity and travel route and makes visa decisions at the border, if necessary. The Headquarters of the Finnish Border Guard operates under the Chief of the Finnish Border Guard and also acts as the Ministry of the Interior’s Border Guard Department.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs is responsible for visa policy. Finnish diplomatic missions abroad grant visas and accept citizenship declarations and residence permit applications.

The Ministry of Employment and the Economy is responsible for directing integration matters. Together with the Ministry of the Interior, it monitors

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\(^4\) Government’s press release, 24 September 2015: Government set up a ministerial working group on migration.

\(^5\) On 1 March 2015, the responsibility for the establishment of asylum seekers’ identity and travel route was transferred to the Finnish Immigration Service.
the volume and structure of labour migration as well as develops monitoring tools. The Centre of Expertise in Integration operates as part of the Ministry of Employment and the Economy. Its tasks include the creation of cooperation networks among the actors involved in integration across occupational and geographical boundaries. In order to lay a foundation for the planning and execution of integration activities, the Centre of Expertise compiles research, statistical and monitoring information, with the aim of enabling the development of integration effectiveness evaluation.

The administrative sector of the Ministry of Employment and the Economy encompasses the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment that handle tasks related to immigration, integration and good ethnic relations on a regional basis as well as the Employment and Economic Development Offices. The work permit units of which make preliminary decisions on applications for a residence permit for an employed person before the Finnish Immigration Service processes and makes decisions on the applications.

The Ministry of Education and Culture is tasked with the development of education provided to immigrants at different levels. The Ministry of Education and Culture’s field of operation also includes matters related to immigrants’ culture, sports activities, youth work and religion. The Finnish National Board of Education, operating under the Ministry of Education and Culture, is responsible for immigrants’ education issues and recognition of foreign degrees.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is tasked with the promotion of immigrants’ health and well-being. Issues related to immigrants’ means of support fall within the responsibilities of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. It supports the integration of immigrants into Finnish society, e.g. by developing social and health services so that the needs of immigrants are taken into account in them.

Municipalities provide basic municipal services to immigrants living there permanently, in the same manner as to other residents of the municipality. In addition, municipalities decide independently on the reception of quota refugees and asylum seekers who have been granted a residence permit. Many municipalities have defined immigrant integration principles in their integration programmes.

Under the Ministry of Justice, there is the Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations. In addition, the administrative sector encompasses the Administrative Courts, the Office of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman and the National Non-Discrimination and Equality Tribunal.

The Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations ETNO is a broad-based expert body appointed by the Finnish Government. ETNO’s goal is to develop interaction between different groups and to assist ministries in developing a pluralistic society with ethnic equality.

The Administrative Courts and the Supreme Administrative Court rule on the appeals against the Finnish Immigration Service’s decisions on applications.

The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman promotes equal treatment and takes action to intervene in cases of discrimination. He is also responsible for promoting the rights and position of foreign nationals. In addition, the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman has a special task of monitoring the enforcement of removal decisions concerning foreign nationals and acting as the national rapporteur on trafficking in human beings.

The National Non-Discrimination and Equality Tribunal is an autonomous and independent legal protection body appointed by the Government. It monitors compliance with the Non-Discrimination Act and the Act on Equality both private activities and public administrative and business operations.

Non-governmental organisations produce various services, offer help and counselling to asylum seekers and contribute to integration activities. The immigration expertise of non-governmental organisations is needed in the development of legislative drafting and immigration policy.

Processes related to the entry into Finland, immigration and removal of foreign nationals are governed by the Aliens Act and the conditions for acquiring Finnish nationality are set out in the Nationality Act. The reception of persons seeking asylum and the identification of and assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings are regulated by a separate act, as are the treatment of aliens placed in detention and detention units. Similarly, the Register of Aliens and its use are governed by separate legislation, as are integration services and integration support.

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6 The Ombudsman for Minorities until 1 January 2015.
7 The National Discrimination Tribunal of Finland until 1 January 2015.
The following are key acts and decrees concerning immigration:

- Aliens Act (301/2004)
- Nationality Act (359/2003)
- Government Decree on Nationality (799/2004)
- Act on the Register of Aliens (1270/1997)
- Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1386/2010)
- Act on the Finnish Immigration Service (156/1995)
- Non-Discrimination Act (1325/2014)
- Act on the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman (1326/2014)
- Act on the National Non-Discrimination and Equality Tribunal (1327/2014)
- Ministry of the Interior Decree on Fees for Services Provided by the Finnish Immigration Service (1022/2014)
- Act on the Reception of Persons Applying for International Protection and on the Identification of and Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings (746/2011)
- Act on the Treatment of Aliens Placed in Detention and Detention Units (116/2002)
- Act on Home Affairs Funds (903/2014)
- Government Decree on Home Affairs Funds (351/2015)
- Sisäministeriön asetus säilöönottoyksikön virkasuhteisen henkilöstön voimankäyt-töväälineiden käyttöönoton virkasuhteiden henkilöstön voimankäyt-töväälineiden käyttöönoton koskevan koulutuksen toteuttamisesta (1560/2015) (available only in Finnish)

Websites of the key immigration administration authorities:

- Government  
  [www.vnk.fi/en](http://www.vnk.fi/en)
- Ministry of the Interior  
  [www.intermin.fi/en](http://www.intermin.fi/en)
- Finnish Immigration Service  
  [www.migri.fi/en](http://www.migri.fi/en)
- Police  
  [www.poliisi.fi/en](http://www.poliisi.fi/en)
- Finnish Border Guard  
  [www.raja.fi/en](http://www.raja.fi/en)
- Ministry of Employment and the Economy  
  [www.tem.fi/en](http://www.tem.fi/en)
- Ministry for Foreign Affairs  
  [www.formin.fi/english](http://www.formin.fi/english)
- Ministry of Education and Culture  
  [www.okm.fi/OPM/?lang=en](http://www.okm.fi/OPM/?lang=en)
- Finnish National Board of Education  
  [www.oph.fi/english](http://www.oph.fi/english)
- Ministry of Social Affairs and Health  
- Ministry of Justice  
  [www.om.fi/en](http://www.om.fi/en)
- Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations  
- Non-Discrimination Ombudsman  
- National Non-Discrimination and Equality Tribunal  
  [www.yvtltk.fi/en](http://www.yvtltk.fi/en)
- Supreme Administrative Court  
  [www.kho.fi/en](http://www.kho.fi/en)
- Administrative Courts  
2. Overview of asylum and migration policy developments

IMMIGRATION POLICY

Finland’s immigration policy is based on the current Government Programme, the Government migration policies, the Government action plan on asylum policy and the Future of Migration 2020 Strategy.

Published in June 2013, the Future of Migration 2020 Strategy sets out long-term principles for immigration policy. The action plan prepared to complement the strategy includes concrete measures that can be monitored and are aimed at achieving the objectives laid out in the strategy. The action plan was published in March 2014. Listing approximately 170 different actions, the action plan provides an overall picture of the concrete actions that immigration administration plans to take in the coming years and of how these actions will be financed, which parties will be responsible and how monitoring will be carried out. As the migration strategy emphasises guidelines promoting immigrant employment, the majority of the actions focus on this particular area. The realisation of the strategy and the action plan is monitored annually in meetings of officials, led by the Ministry of the Interior.

According to Prime Minister Juha Sipilä’s strategic Government Programme, published on 29 May 2015, the Government will promote work-related migration that enhances employment in Finland, boosts public finances, improves the dependency ratio and contributes to the internationalisation of the economy. The Government will encourage open, facts-based debate about migration policy and promote a tolerant and humane national discussion culture. The Government Programme includes active involvement in EU-level discussions on migration policies. The Government Programme expresses a commitment to participation in the international burden sharing by maintaining the refugee quota at least at the same level as in the recent years. The Government Programme calls for managed migration and efficient official procedures both in the processing of applications and in return-related matters and the prevention of possible abuses. Furthermore, the Government Programme states that measures should be taken to enhance integration and family reunification criteria will be reviewed. The Government Programme also outlines the introduction of tuition fees for non-EU and non-EEA students, but at the same time, the employment opportunities of foreign students will be promoted in Finland.

On 11 September 2015, the Finnish Government approved the Government migration policies. They emphasise that uncontrolled migration must be brought under control and that people must be directed to legal and safe routes. Furthermore, comprehensive actions are needed in countries of origin and countries of transit, at the EU level and in Finland. The actions also highlight the need for quick practical measures to save lives and to manage migration as well as the need for long-term measures with which the situation is brought sustainably under control.

One of the background factors of the migration policies is the increase in the number of asylum seekers both in Finland and at the EU level. The policies are based on the framework of international law and the full protection of and respect for fundamental and human rights.

Highlighted international level actions include targeting development cooperation funds, as far as possible, at asylum seekers’ countries of origin and countries of transit, signing readmission agreements with Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia as well as combating climate change actively.

In the EU level policy, Finland advocates the establishment of reception centres in Southern Europe or outside the EU from where those who have been granted a residence permit would be transferred to EU Member States. Finland also favours the establishment of the EU’s joint information centres in countries of origin and countries of transit as well as the hotspot operating model in which joint European authorities quickly register immigrants arriving in the region. Finland emphasises the importance of preventing smuggling in human beings and addressing the fundamental reasons for forced migration. Finland also underlines the significance of the functionality of the Dublin system. Finland participates ac-

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8 Finland, a land of solutions – Strategic Programme of Prime Minister Juha Sipilä’s Government, 29 May 2015.
9 Hallituksen maahanmuuttopolitiikrit ja toimenpiteet, 11 September 2015. (available only in Finnish)
10 Government action plan on asylum policy, 8 December 2015.
12 Ibid.
13 Ministry of the Interior, Maahanmuuton tulevaisuus 2020 -strategia. Toimenpideohjelma. (available only in Finnish)
14 Finland, a land of solutions – Strategic Programme of Prime Minister Juha Sipilä’s Government, 29 May 2015.
15 Hallituksen maahanmuuttopolitiikrit ja toimenpiteet, 11 September 2015. (available only in Finnish)
16 Government’s press release, 11 September 2015: Valtioneuvoston maahanmuuttopolitiikkatöimenpiteit listattu. (available only in Finnish)
tively in the EU’s efforts to manage immigration flows by taking part in the relocation of asylum seekers on a voluntary basis, by being involved in the resettlement of refugees, by participating Frontex’s border control operations as well as by continuing its active participation in international crisis management.

Key national level actions include an expert group established in the Ministry of the Interior, managing necessary actions in the special circumstances resulting from the sharp increase in the number of asylum seekers. In addition, the significance of help provided by civil society is emphasised. Concrete measures identified include combating terrorism, improving the efficiency of border control and controlling entry bans, among other things. Countries of origin will also be informed of changes in migration policy. The efficiency of the reception, application and removal processes will be improved, bottlenecks related to legal aid in the appeal process will be addressed and the focus will be on efficient integration which activates immigrants. Due to the actions mentioned above, there are several legislative projects under way and reports being prepared.

On 8 December 2015, the Government published its action plan on asylum policy\textsuperscript{17}. Finland’s short-term objective is to stop the uncontrolled flow of asylum seekers into the country, to bring asylum costs under control and to integrate effectively those who have been granted asylum. In addition, Finland will increase the efficiency of its asylum and return processes and aim at exerting influence on the improvement of the EU’s external border management.

The main points of the action plan are the following:

1. Finland will participate by setting an example and in cooperation with EU Member States in implementing jointly-agreed decisions in third countries and in the EU area to manage large-scale migration. This includes, inter alia, the prevention of conflicts, efficient external border management and participation in Frontex-coordinated border control operations.

2. Finland will harmonise asylum practices with EU and Nordic countries.

3. Finland will enhance the asylum procedure to ensure fast decision-making and curb reception costs both by increasing resources and by changing legislation.

4. Finland will provide essential reception services only, while respecting asylum seekers’ human dignity. This means, among other things, establishing special return centres for those whose asylum application has been refused, arranging working tasks for asylum seekers and evaluating reception arrangements.

5. Finland will intensify returns and removals by cooperating with third countries and negotiating bilateral readmission agreements.

6. Finland will maintain security and enhance communication by maintaining the monitoring and preventive activity practised by the Police, the Border Guard and the Finnish Security Intelligence Service and by improving the security of reception centres and their environment.

7. Finland will support in diverse ways settling in municipalities and the cost-effective integration of those who have been granted a residence permit.

INTEGRATION POLICY

In June 2012, the Finnish Government approved an Integration Programme that contains key areas of focus regarding integration for 2012–2015\textsuperscript{18}. The general objective of the Programme is to support the inclusion of immigrants in all sectors of society. The key areas of focus include the promotion of employment among immigrants and support for immigrant children and young people as well as for families and women.

On 27 November 2015, the ministerial working group on migration adopted the action plan on integration\textsuperscript{19} to take account of increasing immigration. The action plan emphasises the importance of identification of immigrants’ skills, their smooth assignment to municipalities and their employment. The plan includes over thirty actions, which also take account of the need to provide immigrants with basic municipal services and labour administration services. Immigrants are required to actively participate in integration measures.

The Ministry of Employment and the Economy is finalising the preparation of the Government Integration Programme (VALKO II) for

\textsuperscript{17} Government action plan on asylum policy, 8 December 2015.
\textsuperscript{18} Valtion kotouttamisohjelma, hallituksen painopisteet vuosille 2012–2015.
\textsuperscript{19} Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriön tiedote 27.11.2015: Kotouttamisen toimintasuunnitelma varauduttaan kasvavaan maahanmuuttoon. Kotouttamisen toimintasuunnitelma: turvapaikkahakemusten kasvu vaikutukset kotouttamista tueviin palveluihin.
The key operating methods of the Partnership Programme

1. The Round Table of Integration Partnerships that is a forum for exchanging information, sharing good practices and targeting joint activities among key actors.

2. The Integration Summit is a two-day event organised every other year that provides a joint platform for topical integration issues, key challenges, latest research and good practices.

3. #kumppanuusohjelma (#partnershipprogramme) is a brand under which each community or individual may support the Partnership Programme, if they wish to do so.

A major issue is how citizens’ volunteer-based activity could be channelled into the promotion of integration in a manner that is sufficiently coordinated and yields results. The basic idea of the Partnership Programme is to offer opportunities for introducing “bottom-up” ideas and initiatives. The new kind of network approach is not so much based on binding commitments, accountability or obligations as on appropriate and voluntary links between various actors.

The Finnish Parliament requires the Government to provide a report for its each term of office on aliens policy, migration policy and integration policy, as well as their effectiveness. Pursuant to this assignment, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Employment and the Economy published a report on migration and integration policy in February 2015: Maahanmuuton ja kotouttamisen suunta 2011–2014.22 Due to its high workload in the late stages of the 2011–2015 electoral period, the Parliament did not have time to discuss the report. The published report includes the data collected for the purpose of drafting the report.

According to the report, the overall goal of Finland’s immigration policy is a safe, inclusive and fair society. The focus of the integration policy is especially on the promotion of immigrants’ equality and inclusion. Inclusion may be strengthened with services that support integration and are founded on a needs-based and interactive approach and the utilisation of the immigrants’ own resources. A key success factor for immigration and integration policy is prevailing positive attitudes towards immigrants. The report also highlights per-

20 Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriön avoin kutsu 14.8.2015 Valtion kotouttamisohjelman ja siihen liittyvän kump-panuuosohjelman valmistelun käynnistämistilaisuuteen. (available only in Finnish)
21 Kumppanuusohjelma: aloitteita ja lupauksia, kotoutuminen on kumppanuutta – tule mukaan. (available only in Finnish)
22 Maahanmuuton ja kotouttamisen suunta 2011–2014. (available only in Finnish)
The focus areas for the development of integration-related competence and the development of the monitoring of integration activities, for instance. According to the report, in development activities it should also be emphasised, for instance, that all immigrant groups are guaranteed services at the beginning of immigration as decreed by the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration and that immigrants proceed from integration services to working life. Other important aspects are that the situation of children and young people with immigrant background should be given special attention and the role of non-governmental organisations in integration activities should be strengthened and clarified.

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION

The parliamentary election was held in April 2015. Immigration became one of the key themes in the election and also a dividing factor between political parties. A total of 48 per cent of the parliamentary candidates who answered the questions in the online election engine of the Finnish media company MTV, aimed at finding a suitable candidate to vote for, agreed fully or somewhat with the statement "Finland needs more immigrants". 31 per cent of the respondents disagreed fully or somewhat. The strongest support for the statement came from the Swedish People’s Party: 93 per cent of their candidates agreed fully or somewhat. Of Greens, 88 per cent supported the statement. In the National Coalition Party, the Left Alliance and the Social Democratic Party, too, at least half of the candidates agreed with the statement. The candidates that were most critical of the statement were those of Change 2011. The members of the Finns Party and the Independence Party do not generally think that Finland needs more immigrants. The theme has been visible in different ways, depending on the emphasis given by the parties. Some parties have highlighted the negative effects of immigration while other parties have emphasised the significance of labour migration or the values of multiculturalism or humanitarian protection.

The public dialogue on immigration that preceded the election was criticised as characteristically emotional, with background facts not always having been investigated. According to media monitoring, dialogue on critical approach to immigration was a relatively major theme in online media around the time of the election as well as from the end of July onwards. However, daily variation was great, which indicates that individual, emotive topics were brought up for discussion. It is worth noting that in printed media, "maahanmuuttokriittisyys" (critical approach to immigration) and "maahanmuuttokriittikki" (immigration criticism) as terms did not become major themes.

In the election, the highest support rate and the most seats were achieved by the Centre Party (49 seats; 21.1%). The second in the number of seats was the Finns Party (38 seats; 17.7%), while the National Coalition Party had the second-highest support rate (37 seats: 18.2%). These three largest parties also formed the Government. With its 34 seats and 16.5% support rate, the largest opposition party is the Social Democratic Party.

RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS ON MIGRATION DEBATE

The year 2015 was characterised by the increase of populist political activity and the polarised dialogue on immigration, among other things. Similarly, radicalisation is considered a larger threat than before also in Finland due to the terrorist attacks in France and the foreign fighters who have left Finland for Syria. These themes could be seen in the studies published in 2015. The studies show that these phenomena intertwine and feed one another.

The SYPONUR research project29, conducted by the University of Helsinki and launched in 2015, looks into discrimination, polarisation, youth and violent radicalisation. The project is based on the hypothesis that violent radicalisation results from a complex process of inequality, polarisation and social marginalisation as society diversifies. Research indicates that the foreign fighter phenomenon is a

23 Ministry of Employment and the Economy, press release, 6 February 2015: Maahanmuuttopoliittikan ta-voitteena turvallinen, osallistava ja oikeudenmukainen Suomi. (available only in Finnish)
24 MTV3.fi, domestic news, 21 March 2015: Maahanmuutto ja kehitysapu jakavat puolueita MTV:n vaaliko-neessa. (available only in Finnish)
25 Yle News, International, 6 April 2015: Maahanmuuttokeskelussa ulkomaalaiset pysyvät muukalaisina. (available only in Finnish)
26 Ilkka, 4 October 2015: Pelkkiä heittoja ei pidä hyväksy – Maahanmuutosta vaalien alla käytävä keskustelu viilsee ehdokkaiden ennakkoluloja ja yleistyksiä. (available only in Finnish)
27 STT’s media monitoring.
29 Creutz – Saarinen – Juntunen (available only in Finnish)
combination of many aspects in which the key motivator for leaving is the experience of discrimination and being an outsider, as expressions of the prevailing social climate, combined with personal factors, such as adversities in the person’s life.

Niko Pyrhönen’s dissertation The True Colors of Finnish Welfare Nationalism30 (examined at the University of Helsinki) looks into the development of right-wing populist political activism into a neo-populist collective identity. The study focuses on the narrative that justifies immigration critical discussion to protect the Nordic universalistic welfare state principle.

The current climate of the public debate in matters related to immigration and multiculturalism has been discussed in literature in publications such as Mitä mieltä Suomessa saa olla – Suvatsevaisto vs. arvokonservatismi31 and Vihapuhe Suomessa32. The first of these publications discusses the polarisation of politics and social dialogue into a juxtaposition between people with conservative values and people with liberal values. The book consists of independent texts by several different authors, which aims at making social dialogue more analytic and understanding and at challenging the labelling associated with the concept of conservativeness.33 The latter publication is also a collection of writings and discussions, from the perspective of criminal law, what can be said in Finland and how it can be expressed. The question is interesting as there is no official definition of hate speech. In criminal law, hate speech offences consist of racist offences: ethnic agitation, discrimination and work discrimination. The official definition of hate speech. In criminal law, hate speech offences consist of racist offences: ethnic agitation, discrimination and work discrimination. The definition of the concept plays a key role in the criminalisation of certain practices and certain kinds of speech: what kind of speech is discriminating, what is considered immigration criticism and where is the dividing line between scientific information and research conducted from an ideological point of view.34

During 2015, the think tank Suomen Perusta35 published several immigration-related publications. This kind of publishing activity with a strong ideological and political background is a new phenomenon in Finland. Many of the publications are characterised by the fact that their source material is primarily based on news sources instead of a scientific literature review and they represent pamphlet-style political literature. Before the election, this think tank published the study Maahanmuutot ja Suomen julkinen talous36. The study calculates the effects on public finances caused by immigrants from different countries. The study invoked discussion in the media and was also criticised for citing assumption-based cost effects of immigration on public goods, for instance,37 Suomen Perusta also published an overview of topical issues called Siirtolais-kriisi – puheenvuoroja muuttoliiikkeen syistä ja seurauksista38. In the overview, three Finns Party politicians and researchers write about the migrant crisis, the role of the media in immigration-related news coverage and the economic effects of migration. The overview notes that Finland has no migration strategy, criticises the immigration policy implemented by Finland and the role adopted by the media and also takes a critical stand against the economic and cultural effects of immigration. Other texts published by Suomen Perusta in 2015 are: Punavihreä kupla – perussuomalaiset ja media39 by Marko Hamilo, Liberaalin dilemma – monikulttuurisuus ja vapaa yhteiskunta40 by Joona Räsänen and Kansankodin kuolinvuotelella – ruotsalainen hyvinvointivaltio ja maahanmuutto41 by Simon Elo.

**MEDIA VISIBILITY OF PUBLIC DIALOGUE ON IMMIGRATION**

During 2015, the polarisation of the public dialogue on immigration could be witnessed, with the dialogue being carried out at an abstract level without concrete proposals for solutions.42 Concepts created at the level of the ruling elite have trickled down to the dialogue among ordinary citizens and to the language used by the general public. The public dialogue on immigration has become a constantly present, permanent theme that everyone is expected to have an opinion of. Personal opinions are openly shared in social media, which is also a means of seeking a sense of solidarity in everyday interac-
tion with people who are assumed to be like-minded. While working as a taxi driver, Samu Pehkonen, Project Researcher at the Tampere Peace Research Institute has observed that hate speech has become more common in conversations in the taxi, for instance. It is worth noting that language use with indications of hate speech has become more mainstream during the year 2015, which can be seen in the type of links shared and liked on Facebook, for instance. Xenophobic views have become justifiable and accepted whereas earlier they were considered to be a sign of a restricted world view. On the other hand, arguments against hate speech have been expressed both in editorials and in letters to the editor. In printed media, hate speech has been a constant news topic from the beginning of August to the end of the year, while early in the year it made the headlines only occasionally. Instead, in online media, hate speech has been under discussion constantly since the beginning of February, declining slightly in early summer and re-emerging as a hot topic towards the end of July and remaining such until the end of the year. For instance, the Evangelical Lutheran Church’s Bishop of Helsinki, Irja Askola, condemned hate speech in her New Year’s speech and the President of the Republic of Finland Sauli Niinistö also commented the immigration situation. On the one hand, the President emphasised the obligation to help fleeing people in the name of humanity, on the other, he called for bringing migration under control and restricting assistance to those who really need it.

The dialogue on immigration has been characterized by the creation of images through the concepts chosen. On the one hand, the concept of refugee is often confused with asylum seeker or migrants in general. Many of the media have chosen to use the term “pakolainen” (refugee) instead of the term “siirtolainen” (migrant). On the other hand, terms like “elintasosurffari” (surfer seeking a higher standard of living), “toimeentulotukiturismi” (income support tourism), “monikulttuurisuuskritiikki” (multiculturalism criticism), “meritaksisipalvelu” (sea taxi service) and “pakolaisstulva” (flood of refugees) create a negative image of asylum seekers heading for Europe.

In the public dialogue on immigration, the most active political party has been the Finns Party. The immigration policy programme published by the Finns Party before the election invoked a great deal of public dialogue. For instance, Tuomas Oja-Välimäki, Professor of Constitutional Law at the University of Helsinki, considered the programme to contain “features that can be characterised as racist” and Kimmo Nuotio, Professor of Criminal Law at the University of Helsinki, regarded the programme as “xenophobic”. The key elements of the programme concern the restriction of asylum and family reunification policy and costs incurred by immigrants. The goal of the programme is to provide beneficial results from immigration but to prevent immigration from causing economic or societal damage to Finland. The programme also uses rhetoric that continued to play a key role in the public dialogue on immigration throughout 2015. Terms used in the Finns Party’s programme include, for instance, “elintasosiirtolaisuus” (migrants seeking high standards of living), “vaikeasti kotoutuva” (difficult to integrate), “gettuutuminen” (ghettoisation) and “jihad-turismi” (Jihad tourism).

In July, a great deal of attention was gained by a piece of writing, judged racist, posted on Facebook by a Finns Party Member of Parliament, in which multiculturalism was opposed. The intensive debate following the writing prompted demonstrations both for and against multiculturalism. According to media monitoring, multiculturalism became a recurring topic exactly in late July and remained such until the end of the year, to a slightly lesser degree, however.

After the Finns Party became a Government party, some elements of their immigration policy programme were also included in the Government Programme, the Government migration policies and the Government action plan on asylum policy. In early autumn, differing views on the Finland’s immigration policy could also be witnessed among the Government parties. In the media, Finland’s stricter immigration policy has also been criticised. For instance, the action plan on asylum poli-

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43 Samu Pehkonen / Politiikasta.fi, 9 November 2015: Vihapuheen kyydissä eli maahanmuutokeskustelu suomalaisessa takissa. (available only in Finnish)
44 STT’s media monitoring.
45 MTV.fi, 31 December 2015: Piispa Askola: Siirtykäämme valittamisesta välittämiseen. (available only in Finnish)
46 STT’s media monitoring.
47 Helsingin Sanomat, 25 September 2015: Monikulttuuria käsittämässä – Suomelta puuttuu kunnollinen maahanmuuttopolitiikka, sanoo Pasi Saukkonen. (available only in Finnish)
48 Helsingin Sanomat, 26 August 2015: Niinistö: Eurooppa elää nyt vaaran vuosia. (available only in Finnish)
49 Helsingin Sanomat, 23 August 2015: Hallituskeskuksessa muhi riita maahanmuutosta. (available only in Finnish)
The polarised public dialogue on immigration has also spread to the streets. **During the autumn, there have been numerous demonstrations** in which groups with different attitudes towards the asylum situation have expressed their views. **Violent extremist groups** have tried to utilise these demonstrations to promote their own agenda. Violent extremism and foreign fighters are also among the themes that have featured in Nordic cooperation and the adoption of stricter border control.

The Ministry of the Interior publishes a biannual situation overview on violent extremism. The situation overview published in the spring concentrated on the manifestation of extremism in educational institutions. The situation overview indicates that violent extremist thinking and signs indicative thereof can be observed in upper secondary schools and vocational institutions but only as separate isolated cases. The signs of violent extremist thinking are most visible in the students’ attitudes as ideology-based hatred and intolerance.

Leena Malkki, Research Director of the University of Helsinki Network for European Studies, has studied the manifestation of factors facilitating political violence in Finland during 2015. According to her, such factors include people’s experience of increasing injustice, the strengthening of dialogue that justifies violence as well as the inclusion of anti-refugee discourse in a larger and more organised political milieu. These factors establish silent approval and models for activity. In addition, the refugee crisis acts as a catalyst for activity. The opposing sides also have a radicalising effect on one another. Nevertheless, the radicalisation of activity against xenophobia and right-wing extremism as well as more extensive discourse that would approve of political violence have thus far not been observable in Finland.

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52 Tapio Juntunen / Politikasta.fi, 10 December 2015: Avoimuutta eristämällä? (available only in Finnish)
53 YLE News, 4 September 2015: Päätoimittaja: Vähemmän kiihkoa, emmenn ymmärrystä. (available only in Finnish)
54 STT’s media monitoring.
56 Ministry of the Interior, web news, 25 November 2015: Väkivaltaisen ekstremismin katsaus julistettiin. (available only in Finnish)
57 Ministry of the Interior, media release, 26 January 2015: Pohjoismaat viivistävät yhteistyötään väkivaltaisen ekstremismin ennalta ehkäyksissä. (available only in Finnish)
58 Ministry of the Interior, media release, 29 January 2015: Ministeri Räsänen: Rajatarkastuksia tehostettava vierastaistelijoin liittyvän ilmiön torjumiseksi. (available only in Finnish)
60 Ministry of the Interior, media release, 24 February 2015: Ministerit Räsänen ja Kiuru: Oppilaitoksilla merkittävä rooli alkavan radikalisoitumisen tunnistamisessa ja siihen puuttumisessa. (available only in Finnish)
61 Ministry of the Interior, media release, 27 September 2015: Väkivalta suurimmilla puolueilla. (available only in Finnish)
3. Legal migration and mobility

3.1. Labour migration

The majority of foreign labour enter Finland from the EU and EEA under the principle of free movement, or with a visa or on a visa-exempt basis for the purpose of seasonal work, for example. As such, the majority of those who enter Finland for the purpose of work do not need to obtain a residence permit.

In 2015, the Finnish Immigration Service issued decisions on 6,321 employment-based residence permit applications, showing a slight increase from the previous year. A total of 86% of decisions were positive and 14% were negative. The ratio of positive and negative decisions remained at the same level as in 2014.

A residence permit on the grounds of employment may be applied for in eight different categories (see the chart below), the most common of which is employment requiring a preliminary decision, that is: a residence permit for an employed person. A residence permit for an employed person is applied for primarily for manual labour, such as cleaning or construction work. The process consists of two steps: before the Finnish Immigration Service makes its decision, an Employment and Economic Development Office makes a local labour market test decision on whether domestic labour is available for the work in question. The majority of local labour market test decisions are positive. The second most common category in residence permits issued on the grounds of employment is specialists: for them, local labour market testing is not required but salary and special expertise requirements have been set for their employment. The third most common category is scientific research. There are differences in the application approval rates between different categories. Approximately 79% of applications for a residence permit for an employed person were approved, whereas in the case of specialists, the percentage of positive decisions is nearly 100% (99.7%). On the other hand, only 57% of self-employed persons are issued with a positive decision. Taking also into account the low number of applications for a residence permit for a self-employed person and the fact that

Decisions on first residence permit applications on the grounds of employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Positive decisions</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-employment</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>985</td>
<td>988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist, Blue Card</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainee</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other employment</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment requiring a preliminary decision</td>
<td>783</td>
<td>3,003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific research</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports and coaching</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Finnish Immigration Service.
In 2015, the number of residence permits for an employed person that were issued was declining slightly for the third consecutive year. The number of residence permits issued to specialists remained at the same level as in the previous years; however, there was a slight decline in their number when compared to 2014. With regard to specialists, it can be noted that more applications than in the previous years were submitted for the very rarely used EU Blue Card, intended for specialists, with the total number amounting to 23 applications, whereas the earlier annual number of applications has been 5–10. A subtle overall increase in the number of residence permits issued on the grounds of employment is mainly explained by the increase in the number of residence permits issued on the grounds of scientific research and on the grounds of sports and coaching.

When analysed by nationality, the largest group that was granted employment-based residence permits in 2015 was Ukrainians, the majority of whom were issued a residence permit for an employed person. Among all those who were granted a residence permit for an employed person, the share of Ukrainians was 17%. Ukrainians enter the country primarily for seasonal agricultural work. The second largest group in the number of employment-based residence permits was Indians, the most of whom came to work as a specialist; 65% of all residence permits granted to specialists were issued to Indians. In addition, some residence permits were issued to Indians for scientific research. When compared to 2014, the number of employment-based residence permits granted to Ukrainians increased somewhat while the number of those granted to Indians decreased. The third largest group was Russians (the Russian Federation) who were primarily issued with residence permits for an employed person but also with residence permits for specialists and residence permits for scientific research. The fourth group was Chinese, who were also primarily granted residence permits for an employed person but also a significant proportion (21%) of all residence permits granted for scientific research. In addition, Chinese were also issued with residence permits for working as specialists.

When analysed by gender, 69% of employment-based residence permits were granted to men and 31% to women.

According to Prime Minister Juha Sipilä’s Government Programme, the Government’s aim is to promote work-related migration that enhances employment in Finland, boosts public finances, improves the dependency ratio and contributes to the internationalisation of the economy. In the government formation talks it was also noted that availability testing for non-EU labour migration will be eased up when this supports employment and

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63 Finland, a land of solutions – Strategic Programme of Prime Minister Juha Sipilä’s Government, 29 May 2015, p. 38.
public finances, enables businesses to employ highly skilled people more quickly, improves labour availability at the regional level and for different sectors, and facilitates practical processes. Later on, local labour market testing has been discussed at the political level with social partners.65

In order to attract highly qualified foreign workers to Finland, a joint project is planned to be carried out by the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Employment and the Economy. The need for highly qualified workers has also been emphasised in the Government Programme, government formation talks and the Future of Migration 2020 Strategy.66

LEGISLATIVE PROJECTS RELATED TO LABOUR MIGRATION

The Finnish Aliens Act was amended on 1 February 2015 to specify the national implementation of the so-called Employer Sanctions Directive. The directive applies to third-country nationals who have resided and worked in the country illegally. The aim of the directive is to prohibit the employment of persons residing illegally in the EU and thus prevent irregular migration. The amendment makes it possible to extend the temporary residence permit of a third-country national until wages due to the person in question have been paid, to the extent it has been possible to collect them. This extension of the residence permit applies to those third-country nationals who have been minor when working or have worked in conditions indicating particular exploitation.67

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has an amendment to the Act on Occupational Safety and Health Enforcement under way, to expand an occupational safety and health authority’s right to receive confidential information from other authorities. Information would be received for the use of foreign labour, the minimum conditions for employment relationships and the compliance with the Act on the Contractor’s Obligations and Liability when Work is Contracted Out. Information would be received especially from the Tax Administration but also from other authorities. Furthermore, occupational safety and health authorities would be allowed to give one another confidential information in all of their different supervision tasks, including the supervision of occupational safety, for instance. The draft Government Bill was submitted to circulation for comment in January 2016.68

RESEARCH AND PUBLIC DIALOGUE ON LABOUR MIGRATION

According to the Tulevaisuuden tekijät69 analysis published by Finnish Business and Policy Forum EVA in 2015, the net migration into Finland should be 34,000 persons per year instead of the current 18,000 in order to stop the decrease in the number of working-age people and to increase the employment rate from 69% to 75% which is the level sufficient for economic sustainability. The analysis states that at the moment, the number of working-age population decreases by approximately 10,000 persons per year and the number of over-65-year-olds increases by roughly 35,000 persons per year. In order to stop the decrease in the number of working-age people, the current net migration should double. According to the analysis, Finland’s most important labour reserve is immigrants, approximately two thirds of whom are of working age. The development trend has been moving in the right direction: the number of employed foreign-language speakers has increased by 80,000 since the beginning of the 2000s while the number of employed persons who speak domestic languages has decreased by 7,000.

In its first focussed study of 2015, Determining labour shortages and need for labour migration from third countries in the EU70, the European Migration Network looked into the determination of labour shortage and the need for labour migration in the EU. According to the Finnish National Contribution, the challenge for Finland seems to be the problem of balancing the supply and the demand in the labour market: even within the same field, there can be simultaneously both unemployed job seekers and labour shortage. Nevertheless, the development of labour migration is considered important in Finland.

In October, the European Migration Network organised a seminar about attracting highly-qualified specialists and investments to Finland. The seminar brought together specialists to contemplate how im-

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65 Ministry of Employment and the Economy.
67 Ministry of the Interior, media release, 30 October 2014: Suomessa tutkintonsa suorittaneiden työnhaku-mahdollisuuksia parannetaan. (available only in Finnish)
68 A memorandum prepared by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health on 16 December 2015 as a result of EMN’s request for information, STM/4332/2015.
69 Myrskylä – Pyykkönen (available only in Finnish)
70 Kiuru / EMN focussed study 1/2015.
migration policy could help in attracting highly-qualified labour to Finland. After the seminar, the topic was widely discussed in different media.\textsuperscript{71}

In her dissertation \textit{Ulkomaisen työvoiman rekrytointi}, Susanna Sakko studied municipalities’ preparedness to recruit foreign workforce. The study focuses on finding out which sectors need workforce in the future and by which means an employer can hire the most suitable foreign employees. The key findings of the study reveal that Finnish organisations do not have a sufficiently methodical approach to reacting to labour migration while at the same time, there is a clear recruitment need for foreign workforce as the Finnish population structure is changing. Organisations that had already recruited foreign nationals or considered it expressed a need for orientation targeted at foreign nationals as well as for an integration model. As a topical issue, the study was also covered by Finland’s main media.\textsuperscript{73}

In his dissertation \textit{Inclusion or Exclusion? Trade Union Strategies and Labor Migration}, Rolle Alho analyses the immigration-related strategies of two trade unions, the Finnish Construction Trade Union and Service Union United PAM. On the one hand, the unions try to restrict labour migration and on the other hand, they strive to include migrants as trade union members. A key strategy is to guarantee that migrants’ working conditions do not differ from those of the natives. The study points out that migrants are still underrepresented as union members and officials, which some of the migrants interviewed for the study saw as a problem. Migrants and temporary foreign labour encounter specific problems in terms of working conditions more frequently than domestic labour does. The study invoked interest and the topic was discussed in different media long after the study was published.\textsuperscript{75}

\textbf{Ministry of Employment and the Economy has published two research reports on labour migration.} One of the reports, \textit{Maahanmuuttajaryrittäjien palvelutarpeet ja yrittäjyyden edistämi-}
\textit{nen}, discusses immigrant entrepreneurs and the other, \textit{Innovaiotatalouden maahanmuuttopoliitikka – Kansainvälinen muuttoliike, maahanmuuttajat ja innovaatiopoliitikka}, focuses on immigration policy in innovation economy. The starting point for the latter of these studies is that earlier research has already indicated that \textbf{immigration and immigrants are an asset for Finland.} The aim of the study is to formulate, on the basis of empirical evidence and international examples, proposals about how the role of immigration policy and immigrants could be increased in innovation economy. One of the key results of the study is that immigration policy should support the generation of added value through immigration. Immigrants should be placed into positions that generate added value and utilise and complement their skills instead of being channelled primarily into low-paid jobs.\textsuperscript{76} According to the report on service needs of immigrant entrepreneurs and promotion of entrepreneurship, immigrants do not require new services directed at immigrants as such but information about existing services in order to fully utilise them in their business activities. In addition, immigrant entrepreneurs were especially looking for integration with their business peers and consequently, support in building the trust and credibility needed in business activities.\textsuperscript{79}

For years, media has each autumn covered \textbf{foreign wild berry pickers} arriving in Finland. In late 2014, the Ministry of Employment and the Economy and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs signed a letter of intent concerning the picking of wild berries with several berry industry companies. The purpose of the letter of intent is to strengthen the legal position and opportunities for earning money of foreign berry pickers and to provide a more level playing field for companies in the berry industry.\textsuperscript{80} Government Counsellor Olli Sorainen from the Ministry of Employment and the Economy commented that the letter of intent has improved operating methods and that problems related to berry picking have not featured extensively in public dialogue like they did in some of the previous years.\textsuperscript{81}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{71} Helsingin Sanomat, 13 October 2015: Suomi ei houkuttele huippuosaajia EU:n ulkopuolelta – eniten erityisasiantuntijaita tulee Intiasta. (available only in Finnish) MTV3.fi News, 13 October 2015: Mikä mättää, kun Suomi ei houkuttele ulkomaislaista sijoittajaa ja asiantuntijaa? (available only in Finnish) Talouselämä, 13 October 2015: Tutkimus: Suomi on huono houkuttelemaan kansainvälistä osaajia. (available only in Finnish)
\item \textsuperscript{72} Sakko, p. 118. (available only in Finnish)
\item \textsuperscript{73} Helsingin Sanomat, 25 September 2015: Ulkomaisen työvoiman tarve kasvaa. (available only in Finnish)
\item \textsuperscript{74} Alho, pp. 8–10.
\item \textsuperscript{75} Helsingin Sanomat, 24 August 2015: Väittös: Ammatillisestiissa ristiriitaa maahanmuutosta. (available only in Finnish) Keski-Uusimaa, 21 October 2015: Ammatillisesti löysivät maahanmuuttajat. (available only in Finnish)
\item \textsuperscript{76} Aaltonen – Heinonen – Valtonen. (available only in Finnish)
\item \textsuperscript{77} Raunio. (available only in Finnish)
\item \textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{79} Aaltonen – Heinonen – Valtonen. (available only in Finnish)
\item \textsuperscript{80} Ministry of Employment and the Economy, press release, 18 December 2014: Letter of intent improves operation in the wild berry picking sector. Aiesopimus viisumavelvollisten maiden kansalaisten metsämarjanpoimintaan liittyvistä toimintatavoista. (available only in Finnish)
\item \textsuperscript{81} Helsingin Sanomat, 25 September 2015: Marjanpoiminta on sujunut pääosin hyvin. (available only in Finnish)
\end{itemize}
3.2. Family reunification

In 2015, decisions were issued on a total of 10,057 applications for a residence permit on the grounds of family ties. A total of 8,057 decisions, or 80%, were positive. The number of residence permits granted on the grounds of family ties decreased somewhat when compared with 2014 with its 8,609 residence permits granted on the grounds of family ties. The Finnish Immigration Service makes decisions on all other first residence permit applications filed on the grounds of family ties except for residence permit applications submitted in Finland by a family member of a Finnish citizen and the family member’s minor unmarried child – decisions on these applications are made by the Police. In 2015, the Finnish Immigration Service made decisions on a total of 7,914 residence permit applications on the grounds of family ties, with the Police making decisions on 2,143 applications.

First residence permits issued on the grounds of family ties, broken down by sponsor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family members of Finnish citizens (Finnish Immigration Service)</td>
<td>986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members of Finnish citizens (Police)</td>
<td>898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members of other foreign nationals</td>
<td>2,021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members of persons granted international protection</td>
<td>4,152</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Finnish Immigration Service and Police

Between different categories, there are small differences in the approval rates of residence permit applications on the grounds of family ties. In 2015, the highest approval rate was that of applications submitted by a family member of a Finnish citizen: a positive residence permit decision was made for 87% of applications. The lowest approval rate, 71%, was that of residence permit applications on the grounds of family ties submitted by beneficiaries of international protection. When it comes to family members of other foreign nationals, a residence permit was issued in 78% of cases. The term “other foreign nationals” refers to foreign nationals who have been issued with a residence permit on the grounds of employment, for instance. The approval rate for residence permit applications on the grounds of family ties submitted by the family members of beneficiaries of international protection is impaired by, *inter alia*, residence permit applications submitted by relatives other than spouse, child or guardian, accounting for approximately 13% of the applications of the category. In other categories, the proportion of residence permit applications submitted by other relatives is 1–3%. In 2015, only 14% of residence permit applications on the grounds of family ties submitted by other relatives were approved.

When analysed by nationality, the largest group to which the Finnish Immigration Service issued residence permits on the grounds of family ties in 2015 was Russians (the Russian Federation), altogether 947 residence permits, which shows a 20% decrease year-on-year and is in line with the decrease in the number of residence permits issued to Russians on the grounds of employment. The second highest number of residence permits on the grounds of family ties was issued to Indians (671 residence permits), which is roughly the same number as in the previous year. The third largest group was Somali nationals, with 405 residence permits issued on the grounds of family ties. With regard to Somali nationals, it is worth noting that in 2015, decisions on their residence permit applications on the grounds of family ties were more frequently positive than before. In 2014, 38% of decisions on Somali nationals’ residence permit applications on the grounds of family ties were positive, whereas in 2015 the corresponding figure was 63%. This change results, among other things, from the decision by the Supreme Administrative Court described in more detail below, as a consequence of which the Finnish Immigration Service changed its decision-making policy, especially with regard to residence permit applications on the grounds of family ties submitted by Somali nationals.

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82 The total number of first residence permit applications filed on the grounds of family ties on which decisions were made by the Finnish Immigration Service and the Police.
83 Including residence permits issued to a family member of a Finnish citizen by the Finnish Immigration Service and all first residence permits issued by the Police.
84 The figures do not include first residence permits issued by the Police.
Gender distribution among persons who have been issued with a residence permit on the grounds of family ties

42% of residence permits on the grounds of family ties were issued to men and 58% to women.

The increase in the number of asylum seekers did not yet manifest itself as an increase in the number of residence permit applications on the grounds of family ties in 2015. In 2015, a total of 770 residence permit applications on the grounds of family ties were filed by beneficiaries of international protection whereas in 2014 the corresponding figure was 671. However, the Finnish Immigration Service and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs have started preparations for the increase in the number of applications by establishing an informal working group to consider, for instance, how the efficiency of the filing of applications and the arrangement of oral hearings could be improved.

LEGISLATIVE PROJECTS RELATED TO FAMILY REUNIFICATION

In September 2015, the Ministry of the Interior set up a legislative project for reviewing family reunification criteria to comply with the EU’s Family Reunification Directive. The tightening of family reunification criteria is part of the Government Programme approved in the spring of 2015. The related Government Bill is scheduled to be submitted to the Parliament in the spring of 2016. The EU directive lays down the basic conditions for family reunification as well as additional conditions, the application of which is decided on by the Member States. Finland has not implemented all additional conditions laid down in the directive. Family reunification criteria would be tightened on the basis of these additional conditions. In the draft Government Bill, the requirement for secure means of support as a prerequisite for a family member’s residence permit would be expanded to also cover groups of people to whom the requirement for means of support is not applied due to more favourable treatment according to the legislation currently in force. In the future, beneficiaries of international protection would be required to have secure means of support, as generally defined in the Aliens Act, before the family reunification application could be approved. In cases where the sponsor has refugee status (he/she is a quota refugee or has been granted asylum), secure means of support would not be required if the family members apply for a residence permit within three months of the granting of refugee status to the sponsor.

The aim of the legislative amendments is that in the future, the family member’s livelihood could not be based on social assistance. With regard to beneficiaries of international protection, the goal is especially to promote the sponsor’s ability to see to his/her family’s livelihood. If the sponsor were more prepared to assume the financial responsibility for his/her family upon their arrival in the country, it could also facilitate the family’s integration. The goal of the tightening of family reunification criteria is to ensure that Finland does not appear to be an exceptionally attractive country for seeking asylum.

KEY CASE LAW RELATED TO FAMILY REUNIFICATION

On 1 July 2015, the Supreme Administrative Court made a decision ruling that refusing a residence permit from the applicant on the grounds that the person does not possess, and cannot acquire from the Somali state, a travel document that Finland would accept, restricted the applicant’s and the sponsor’s right to family reunification in Finland to a greater extent than what was necessary. As a result of this decision, the Finnish Immigration Service issued a guideline that a residence permit application based on family ties can no longer be rejected solely because of lack of travel document if the person in question cannot, due to reasons beyond his or her control, obtain a travel document that is accepted in Finland.
RESEARCH ON FAMILY REUNIFICATION

Studies on family reunification published during 2015 highlight the diversity of family reunification.

An example of family reunification studies published in Finland is Heli Sjöblom-Immala’s study Puoliso-na maahanmuuttaaja – Monikulttuuristen perheiden viihtyminen Suomessa ja muutosuunnitelmat. Sjöblom-Immala introduces means with which families formed by Finnish citizens and their immigrant spouses can be supported and their settling in Finland can be assisted.

Marriage Migration and Multicultural Relationships, a collection of articles edited by Institute of Migration, looks into marriage migration and multicultural relationships from national, regional, EU and global perspectives. The key message of the publication is that this is a multidimensional phenomenon. The stereotypical idea of “a shy, unsociable man getting a wife from Thailand” represents a marginal phenomenon among international marriages. The majority of international marriages are linked with increasing human mobility which makes it more and more common to find a spouse outside one’s immediate surroundings. In this regard, the most likely scenario still is that the foreign spouse comes from a neighbouring country. In other words, the geographical scope of people’s lives has expanded and consequently, spouses are more often met outside one’s home country, without this being a product of “globalisation” as such.

3.3. Opiskelijat

The number of residence permit applications on the grounds of studying filed by foreign nationals has fluctuated between 5,000 and just over 6,000 applications per year in the 2010s. In 2015, the number of residence permit applications filed on the grounds of studying was 6,297, showing an increase of approximately 4% from the previous year. Approximately 92% of applicants (5,869) received a positive residence permit decision and 8% (482) received a negative decision. The ratio of positive and negative decisions is more or less in line with the previous years’ trend. As in the previous years, the nationality that was issued with the highest number of student’s residence permits was Russians (the Russian Federation): 17% (993) of all student’s residence permits issued. The second largest group was Chinese, 15% (870), and the third was Vietnamese, 11% (629). With regard to Vietnamese, it should be noted that the number of residence permit applications submitted by them and the number of student’s residence permits issued to them increased by nearly 47%.

Decisions on students’ first residence permits 2011–2015

Source: Finnish Immigration Service.

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88 Sjöblom-Immala, pp. 13–14. (available only in Finnish)
89 Heikkilä – Rauhut (eds.).
A total of 54% of study-based residence permits were issued to men and 46% to women.

On 13 May 2015, the Government parties agreed in the Government Programme on the introduction of tuition fees for non-EU and non-EEA students. In addition, those who have completed their studies will be encouraged to stay and work in Finland, for example with a tax deduction, and knowledge of the Finnish language will be emphasised during training and education. Furthermore, one of the Government Programme’s five strategic priorities is Knowledge and education that aims at supporting immigrants’ education and transition to working life.

LEGISLATIVE PROJECTS RELATED TO FOREIGN STUDENTS

Along with the amendment to the Aliens Act that entered into force on 1 February 2015, third-country nationals who have completed a degree in Finland could get a one-year residence permit for seeking employment. Previously, an equivalent residence permit was issued for six months.

RESEARCH ON FOREIGN STUDENTS

The cost effects of foreign students have featured in public dialogue during the year. After all, the number of foreign degree students at universities of applied sciences and universities has nearly tripled in ten years. Just like the cost effects of immigration in general, the cost effects of foreign degree students are extremely difficult to assess due to their multidimensional impact. VATT Institute for Economic Research have prepared a report on the topic, called Ulkomaalaisten korkeakouluopiskelijoiden opiskeluajan kustannukset ja taloudellinen toiminta Suomessa. A key conclusion of the report is that during their studies, costs generated by foreign students for public finances exceed financial benefits generated by them. Nevertheless, it is very difficult to assess the benefit-cost ratio as potential financial benefits are mainly generated after the studies through economic activity and on the other hand, attention should also be paid to the social impact of the training and education of foreign students. CIMO’s Faktaa Express publication also refers to VATT’s report and notes that if the review is limited to the period of the studies it does not yield an overall picture of economic effects as costs are more pronounced at this phase. The most significant benefits come about only after the studies provided that the student finds employment and remains in the country. Consequently, the review of the economic effects of foreign higher education students should be continued so that it also covers the time after the studies.

Exploring the Impact and Full Potential of International Education, a collection of articles edited by JAMK University of Applied Sciences, is an extensive review of the potential created for Finland by international degree programmes and foreign students. The publication looks into the internationalisation of studies as well as international degree programmes, the economic effects of internationalisation and international students, the employment of international students and their integration. The articles highlight the significance of the internationalisation of higher education for innovation and competitiveness. For this reason, the internationalisation of higher education requires strategic planning that promotes the offering of high-quality international degree programmes, support for integration and transfer of international competitiveness into working life. Especially the introduction of tuition fees requires a comprehensive impact assessment that takes into account the effects on the mobility of both students and personnel, the international learning environment and education export, among other things.
## 3.4. Returnees

A residence permit to Finland was issued to 244 returnees in 2015. The two groups considered returnees are Ingrian Finnish returnees and the descendants of Finnish citizens. The return migration of Ingrian Finns ends in 2016. The return migration queue was closed on 1 July 2011. Those who registered in the return migration queue before it was closed can apply for a Finnish residence permit on the grounds of being a returnee by 1 July 2016. Return migration has been constantly winding down since the queue was closed.

### Residence permits issued to returnees 2012–2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>577</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Finnish Immigration Service.

### RESEARCH AND PUBLIC DIALOGUE ON RETURNEES

In Finland, the majority of immigrants are young people or of working age. There are approximately 8,000 elderly immigrants (65+) in Finland, the majority of them returnees from the former Soviet Union. The dissertation *Arki uudessa kotimaassa – Štõdistat Neuvostoliitosta Suomeen ikäännä muuttaneiden arki, sosiaaliset suhteet ja kotoutuminen* examined at the University of Tampere) studied elderly returnees from the former Soviet Union, their support networks and services needed by them. The dissertation highlights the importance of the social and transnational networks and intergenerational relationships of the elderly returnees. On the other hand, municipal integration programmes and policy programmes for the elderly pay little attention to elderly immigrants, support for encounters with them and their special needs.

As the return migration of Ingrian Finns is drawing to its close, the topic has been discussed in media from the perspectives of history, the adaptation of returnees and its effects as well as the winding down of the return migration.

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96 Heikkinen. (available only in Finnish)
97 YLE News, 10 April 2015: Inkeriläisten kohtalo oli kipeä asia presidentti Koivistolle. (available only in Finnish)
98 YLE News, 11 April 2015: Inkeriläisten paluumuutto muutti Suomea monella tavalla. (available only in Finnish)
99 YLE News, 10 April 2015: Inkerinsuomalaisten kiinnostus paluumuuttoon vähenee – osa kielikurssieista peruttu. (available only in Finnish)
100 The appointment decision of the Ministry of the Interior, 27 September 2012: The project for preparing amendments to the Aliens Act in relation to alternative ways of receiving residence permit applications abroad. (available only in Finnish)
customer service and decision-making. The project looks into the best options for performing customer service and for relocating the Police personnel that becomes available into the Finnish Immigration Service. The Government Bill on the transfer of authority is scheduled to be submitted to the Parliament in the spring term 2016. The changes would enter into force in 2017.\textsuperscript{101}

The working holiday arrangement between Finland and New Zealand was changed in January 2014 through intergovernmental correspondence. The application of the original working holiday arrangement started in August 2004 but it has not been enforced nationally. The purpose of the changes is, for instance, to expand the age requirement to 18–35 years. The new agreement entered into force on 1 July 2015. The goal of the working holiday agreement is to facilitate the opportunities for Finnish young people to learn more about New Zealand’s culture and society and on the other hand, promote the opportunities for New Zealand’s young people to familiarise themselves with the Finnish society.\textsuperscript{102}

The new Non-Discrimination Act entered into force on 1 January 2015. The Act brought along several changes expanding the duty to promote equality and prevent discrimination. In addition to authorities, the duty applies to training and education organisers, educational institutions and employers, affecting especially working life in the private sector and equal treatment requirements. The goal of equality-promoting measures is that when recruiting, distributing tasks, making decisions on access to training, making decisions on salary and employment-related benefits as well as defining duties related to working and employment, among other things, the procedures applied at workplaces would be genuinely non-discriminatory. The new Act makes an equality plan containing different measures obligatory also in the private sector, in companies employing a minimum of 30 people.\textsuperscript{103} In February 2015, the corporate responsibility network FIBS published a private sector guide\textsuperscript{104} for equality planning. As a result of the new legislation, the Ombudsman for Minorities was replaced by the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, which supervises compliance with the Non-Discrimination Act with regard to all grounds of discrimination covered in the legislation. Compliance with the provisions on equality in working life in individual cases is, however, supervised by the occupational safety authorities. However, also the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman has duties and powers relating to equality in working life. The National Discrimination Tribunal and the Equality Board were merged to create a new body. The mandate of the new Tribunal covers all discrimination grounds. The Tribunal may issue prohibition or obligation decisions and, by virtue of the Non-Discrimination Act, confirm a conciliation settlement between parties. To reinforce its prohibition or obligation decision, the Tribunal may also impose a conditional fine.\textsuperscript{105}

The national act on the EU Home Affairs Funds entered into force on 1 January 2015 and the related Government Decree on 7 April 2015. The act applies to two new EU Home Affairs Funds: the Internal Security Fund (ISF) and the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). The Internal Security Fund is divided into the instrument for financial support for external borders and visa and the instrument for financial support for police cooperation, preventing and combating crime and crisis management. The act contains provisions on the preparation, approval and administration of national programmes and detailed national implementation plans as well as on competent authorities. The act regulates the prerequisites and criteria for funding distributed from the Funds, funding-related procedures and supervision. The programming period of the Home Affairs Funds is 2014–2020. It is estimated that Finland will receive approximately EUR 113 million from the funds during the programming period.\textsuperscript{106}

\textsuperscript{101} The Ministry of the Interior’s decision, 5 February 2015: The transfer of foreign-national permit matters and tasks in the early stages of the asylum process to the Finnish Immigration Service; an investigation and regulation project.
\textsuperscript{102} Government Bill 84/2014 and the Ministry of the Interior, web news, 25 June 2015: Sopimus Suomen ja Uuden-Seelannin välisestä työlmajärjestelmästä voimaan. (available only in Finnish)
\textsuperscript{104} Yhdenvertaisuussuunnitelun opas yksityiselle sektorille / FIBS. (available only in Finnish)
\textsuperscript{106} Ministry of the Interior, media release, 6 November 2014: Kansallinen laki EU:n sisäasioiden rahastoista valmistunut. (available only in Finnish)
3.6. Integration

Due to the increase in the number of asylum seekers, an additional appropriation of EUR 23.8 million was allocated to integration training for immigrants in the State’s supplementary budget, and the City of Helsinki, for instance, has added EUR 10 million to its budget to cover the increasing costs of immigration and integration. Human resources have also been increased by 16 employees in Regional State Administrative Agencies and by 40 employees in Employment and Economic Development Offices.¹⁰⁷

**DEVELOPMENT MEASURES RELATED TO INTEGRATION**

**In the Government migration policies**¹⁰⁸ of 11 September 2015, it was decided that the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of the Interior will immediately initiate a joint investigation project with the aim of decreasing the amount of reception allowance. The reception allowance paid to asylum seekers is linked with the amount of social assistance, but currently it is 30% lower than the general social assistance as reception centres arrange housing and basic healthcare for asylum seekers. Investigation projects on the level of the reception allowance and the social security system were launched in the autumn of 2015 and decisions on measures, if any, will be made on the basis of the investigations. During the present Government’s term of office, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health looks into, as a key project, the allocation of residence-based social security in international circumstances. As a part of this, an independent report will be prepared on costs of immigration and its impact on our society, including effects on safety and security. Furthermore, it will be investigated quickly whether social security systems can be changed so that asylum seekers who have been issued with a residence permit are not included within the scope of the residence-based social security system but have an integration system of their own instead. If this kind of separate system is established, the grounds for granting different forms of financial assistance will be defined within the integration system, based on, among other factors, the duration of the person’s uninterrupted residence in Finland. In the integration system, the starting point is that the level of financial assistance is lower than in the current residence-based system.

The services of the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela) became more easily accessible for immigrants during the year as, starting from March 2015, Kela has offered customer service in English, Russian, Sami and Kurdish as a remote service. Customer assistance in the four languages will be available through a video connection for 4–6 hours per week depending on the language. Remote customer service means that a Kela customer service specialist assists customers through a video connection. This new service gives customers more equal access to services. It is also useful for showing customers how to use online customer service options.¹⁰⁹

The Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations (ETNO) was re-established for a new four-year tenure in November 2015. The board is an inclusive expert body established by the government that brings together migrant and ethnic minorities, political parties, labour unions and key ministries to jointly consult on migration, integration and equality issues. ETNO is co-ordinated by the Ministry of Justice from 1.1.2015 in line with the new Non-Discrimination Act. Migrant, ethnic and religious groups have the opportunity to influence and take part in decision-making processes. ETNO provides training and capacity-building for member non-governmental organisations.¹¹⁰

According to government decree 771/2015, ETNO is mandated to monitor the state of ethnic relations nationally. This task is to be carried out over the next four year period 2015–2019 using the *Good Relations model* of assessing relations. The model focuses on four domains of good ethnic relations: attitudes, personal security, interaction with others and participation and influence.¹¹¹

**ONGOING INTEGRATION PROJECTS**

On the initiative of the Finnish Immigration Service and the Ministry of Education and Culture, a pilot project of asylum seekers’ capacity survey has been launched. It aims at developing the capacity survey into a natural part of reception operations and at finding out the skills and competences that asylum seekers possess. On the basis of the pilot project, decisions will be made on measures for utilising asylum seekers’ capacity and integration training will be set at the right level.

The national Kotona Suomessa (At Home in Finland) project, funded by the European Social Fund, is carried out in 2015–2017 and it is coordinat-

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¹⁰⁷ Centre of Expertise in Integration / Ministry of Employment and the Economy.
¹⁰⁸ Hallituksen maahanmuuttopolitiikset toimenpiteet, 11 September 2015. (available only in Finnish)
¹⁰⁹ Kela, press release, 2 March 2015: Multilingual customer service via video conferencing.
¹¹⁰ Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations (ETNO).
¹¹¹ Ibid.
ed by the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment for Uusimaa. The Kotona Suomessa project develops services and processes that support immigrant integration. The Hyvää alku (Good Start) sub-project models a national service model for the early stage of integration on the basis of the pilot project results. The Hyvää polku (Good Path) sub-project enhances the effectiveness of local, integration-promoting activities with the aid of regional coordinators. In addition, regional coordinators work towards the goal of turning the operations of the Centre of Expertise in Integration, operating under the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, into an established practice in the regions. The Kotona Suomessa project links experts working with immigrants into a network that provides higher-quality, more effective integration services throughout Finland. With the aid of the services, immigrants with different backgrounds integrate more quickly, becoming independent, equal and productive members of our society.112

The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) provides funding for the Lasten kokemus-siantuntijatoiminta osana kotouttamista (Children’s Expertise by Experience as a Part of Integration) project by Save the Children Finland. The project builds an expert-by-experience model for those dealing with children and young people who have arrived in Finland, to form a part of integration-related operating environments. The project establishes a network of organisations, authorities and service providers working in this field as well as strengthens the expertise of the persons working with the target group when it comes to highlighting children’s experience-based knowledge. The project promotes the quality and child orientation of the services provided to asylum-seeking minors. The activities support integration, increase children’s awareness of their rights, enhance the children’s ability to protect themselves, promote active participation and exchange of information in a peer group as well as increase opportunities to grow into active citizenship.113

The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund provides funding for two projects related to the assignment of refugees to municipalities. The SYLVIA II – Pakolaisten kuntiiin sijoittamisen tehottomien (Increasing the efficiency of assigning refugees to municipalities) project carried out by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy consists of intensified efforts to find municipal placements for those have been issued with a residence permit in Finland on the basis of international protection. The goal is to ensure the sufficiency of municipal placements by supporting municipalities financially and by increasing the competence of the municipal personnel. The ASIM – Pakolaisten asumisselvitys (Refugee housing study) project administered by the Ministry of the Environment involves a nationwide study on the supply and demand of rental housing from the perspective of the assignment of refugees to municipalities. The preparer of the study gathers information about and different practices related to both public and private rental housing at the national level and makes recommendations for the future. The steering group consists of a large group of relevant parties, which also promotes networking among them. The projects are carried out in 2015–2016.114

The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund provides funding for two regional projects: the KARI-BUNI – tervetuloa (KARIBUNI – Welcome) project in the municipality of Nurmijärvi and VIEK-KU – Vieraat kulttuurit vierellä kulkemaan (VIEKKU – Foreign Cultures Walking Alongside) in the municipality of Rautalampi. These projects support the integration and reception of refugees regionally through the correct allocation of existing resources and the competence development of the actors participating in integration measures. The projects are carried out in 2015–2018.115

In 2015, the Ministry of Education and Culture reviewed the situation with regard to opportunities to study the Finnish language offered by higher education institutions and will draw up, by the end of spring 2016, measures for the development of Finnish language studies together with higher education institutions.116 The Ministry of Education and Culture also supports the development of practices that reform opportunities to study Finnish at the language centres of higher education institutions. The monitoring of Finnish language studies will be included as part of the data collection and feedback practice related to higher education institutions.116

As part of the “Maankäyttö, asuminen ja kestävä julkinen talous” (JULMA, Land Use, Housing and Sustainable Public Finances) research project117, funded by the Prime Minister’s Office, Aalto University’s Department of Real Estate, Planning and Geoinformatics (YTK) studied regional segregation and demographic changes in major urban regions. The results can be summarised as follows: 1) During the past ten years, the number of immigrants has increased considerably and their residence is heavi-

112 The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund projects, updated on 12 February 2016.
113 Ibid.
114 The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund projects, updated on 12 February 2016.
115 Ibid.
116 Ministry of Education and Culture.
117 JULMA research project / Aalto University http://maa.aalto.fi/fi/research/ytk/research/julma/, (available only in Finnish)
ly concentrated in large cities. 2) Generally speaking, the level of ethnic segregation within the cities has not changed much during this period; however, the situation varies slightly from city to city. 3) There are fairly large differences in the level of segregation between different immigrant groups, and of the cities, Turku stands out, featuring higher segregation. 4) In nearly all cities, there is a relatively strong interdependence between ethnic segregation and socio-economic segregation. 118

The Perheenystämisen hyvä käytännöt guide119 by the Federation of Special Welfare Organisations (EHJÄ ry) was published in 2015, with the aim of supporting the work carried out by municipal social services in the early stages of integration of immigrants arriving in the country through family reunification.

LEGISLATIVE PROJECTS RELATED TO INTEGRATION

Ammatillisen peruskoulutuksen valmistavien koulutusten uudistus tuli voimaan 1.8.2015 lukien. Ammatilliseen peruskoulutukseen valmentava koulutus (Valma)120 on tutkintonojohtamon koulutuskokonaisuus, jossa on tarkoitus ottaa huomioon opiskelijoiden erilaiset erityistarpeet. Koulu

tus on tarkoitettu ensisijaisesti perusopetuksen päättäneille nuorille, jotka tarvitsevat opiskelumahdollisuuksien parantamista sekä ohjausta ja tukea koulutuksen ja ammattin valinnassa. Toisena tärkeänä kohderyhmänä ovat eri syistä koulutuksen ulkopuolella olevat nuoret ja aikuiset, jotka eivät ole löytäneet paikkaansa koulutusjärjestelmässä (heikot opiskelumahdollisuudet oma

jen tai henkilöllisyyden tunnistamisen suhteen, mikä on johtanut siihen, että merkintä varmistamattomasta henkilöllisyystä on estänyt esimerkiksi pankkitilien päätöstä, ja verkkopankkitunnusten saamisen. Tämän vuoksi Suomeen on ollut muodostumassa varsin mittava oleskeluluvan saaneiden ulkomaalaisten ryhmä, joiden

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre’s publication Maahanmuuttajataustaiset oppijat suomalaisessa koulutusjärjestelmässä125 evaluates education services provided to immigrants. The evaluation produced information from the point of view of teaching and education providers: how they perceived their capabilities and possibilities of offering learners with immigrant background equal opportunities to participate in education that is common to all. The results of the study indicate that teaching and education providers were, as a rule, satisfied with education offered to learners with immigrant background, the smoothness of the application and transition points as well as teaching of languag-

118 Laitinen - Pukarainen - Boberg, p. 64–69 (Jukka Hirvonen, Sari Puustinen). (available only in Finnish)
119 Lehtonen – Niinimäki / EHJÄ. (available only in Finnish)
122 Heikkilä – Kostiainen – Leinonen (eds.).
123 Pirinen (ed.) / Finnish Education Evaluation Centre. (available only in Finnish)
es and other learning support provided.

In its fourth focussed study of 2015, Changes in immigration status and purpose of stay: an overview of EU Member States approaches\textsuperscript{126}, the European Migration Network (EMN) studied the integration of beneficiaries of international protection into the labour market. As a rule, integration services are offered in Finland under the same conditions regardless of the grounds of the residence permit. Similarly, foreign nationals can generally access the same employment services as the original population. On the basis of the conclusions of the Finnish national contribution, it can be noted that the employment of immigrants is promoted by linking education and training closely with working life as immigrants do not have networks gained from earlier jobs. The language skills requirement for immigrants can also be considered unreasonable, and it may become an obstacle to obtaining a job or a study place if there are also Finnish applicants available.

After speakers of Russian and Estonian, people with Somali background are the third largest foreign-language minority group in Finland, with nearly 16,000 members. People with Somali background have been migrating into Finland since the beginning of the 1990s, so there are also many second-generation migrants among them and the group is of interest from the point of view of long-term integration research. Indeed, several Somali-related studies were published in 2015\textsuperscript{127}.

City of Helsinki Urban Facts has published a study on Somali entrepreneurs called Kauppakansa pakossa: Somaliyrittäjät meiliä ja muualla\textsuperscript{128}. Minnesota, USA, and in major cities in Great Britain, for instance, have already witnessed the emergence of busy hubs of Somali-owned enterprises. In Finland, the majority of Somalis and their businesses are in the Helsinki metropolitan area. Even though there are still relatively few Somali entrepreneurs, enthusiasm for entrepreneurship is promoted by the strong tradition of trading and extensive international networks. One of the challenges is the fact that their entrepreneurship relies on their own community as far as resources and customer base are concerned. Similarly, they rarely turn to business counselling services. An obstacle to the growth of Somalis’ business operations has been, on the one hand, the fact that enterprises have not managed to extend their customer base outside the Somali community and, on the other hand, the insufficiency of funding. For religious reasons, entrepreneurs have not been willing to obtain funding from a bank or they have had difficulties in finding required guarantors. As for the future, Somalis expect that there will be more joint enterprises of Somalis and members of the original population, that second-generation Somalis will put the education and training they have received in Finland to good use in their business operations and that consequently, the community-based approach also supports the business operations of the older generation.

Suomen somalit\textsuperscript{29} is a book based on interviews, statistics and studies about the life of Somalis living in Finland. The book discusses the historical perspective of the Somali community that has migrated into Finland, their experiences, the visibility of Somali culture in their life in Finland, encounters with the original population, everyday life, celebrations, integration and the exertion of influence in society.

In her dissertation Mistä on hyvät tytöt tehty – Somalitytöt ja maineineen merkityksen\textsuperscript{130} (examined at the University of Turku), Anu Isotalo studied the everyday life of Somali girls, expectations set for them and their views on choices that are considered significant for reputation. The study highlights the significance of Somali girls’ reputation both for the family’s well-being and as a reflection of the state of Somali culture and religious values in the Somali diaspora.

In 2015, the Ministry of Employment and the Economy commissioned four studies on integration, discussing the following topics: immigrant organisations as service providers\textsuperscript{131}, the impact of the integration plan on children’s education-related choices\textsuperscript{132}, early-stage support services for families with immigrant background\textsuperscript{133} and the mental well-being of immigrants\textsuperscript{134}.

According to Elina Ekholm’s study Työtä yhteisön ja yhteiskunnan hyväksi – maahanmuuttajajärjestöt palveluiden tuottajina\textsuperscript{135}, the majority of immigrant organisations operates on a voluntary basis and receives only a little financial support. Another group

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\textsuperscript{126} Kiuru / EMN focussed study 4/2015.
\textsuperscript{127} Finnish Somali League. \url{http://somaliilitto.fi/somalialaiset-suomessa/}.
\textsuperscript{128} Joroinen – Hassan Mohamed. (available only in Finnish)
\textsuperscript{129} Mubarak – Nilsson – Saxen. (available only in Finnish)
\textsuperscript{130} Isotalo. (available only in Finnish)
\textsuperscript{131} Ekholm. (available only in Finnish)
\textsuperscript{132} Hämäläinen – Pesola – Sarvimäki. (available only in Finnish)
\textsuperscript{133} Turtiainen – Hiitola. (available only in Finnish)
\textsuperscript{134} Kerkkänen – Sääväälä. (available only in Finnish)
\textsuperscript{135} Ekholm. (available only in Finnish)
is organisations operating with project funding, and the smallest group is organisations that produce outsourcing services. One of the key findings of the study is that the language and culture competence of immigrant organisations helps in encountering, with a needs-based approach, even those persons that are difficult for the public sector to reach. Immigrant organisations’ strength lies in more efficient and targeted production of integration services.

The study *Kotoutumissuunnitelmien vaikutukset maahanmuuttajien lasten koulutusvalintoihin*\(^{136}\) compared immigrants who had moved to Finland slightly before May 1997 and those who had moved slightly after May 1997. May 1997 was the point when the preparation of an integration plan became obligatory for immigrants who registered as job seekers for the first time. The results of the study indicate that the integration plan can be considered an efficient integration policy even for the next generation of immigrants given that the study shows it was more common for the children of those immigrants for whom an integration plan had been prepared to pass the Finnish matriculation examination and to study at a university of applied sciences than for the comparison group.

The study *Varhaisen tuen palvelut maahanmuuttajajataustaisille perheille – Ammattilaisten ja perhen kulutuksia*\(^{138}\) looked into the services offered to multicultural families by child health clinics, early childhood education and schools. According to the study, one of the most important aspects in early-stage support services is a confidential and mutually respective relationship between professionals and parents. The study states that the establishment of this relationship can be promoted through multiculturalism training provided to the professionals and resource allocation that ensures that there is a sufficient amount of time for the encounter.

The study *Maahanmuuttajajen psykykkistä hyvinvointia ja mielenterveyttä edistävät tekijät ja palvelut*\(^{138}\) indicates that the mental well-being of immigrants is a multifaceted phenomenon. However, as a summary, it can be noted that measures that boost integration also support mental well-being. The most effective interventions are measures that help in coping with the burden of everyday life. When it comes to care-related interventions, it is important to take cultural accessibility into account.

In 2015, Statistics Finland, the National Institute for Health and Welfare and the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health conducted a study called *Survey on work and well-being among people of foreign origin*\(^{139}\). The survey describes the population of foreign origin that resided permanently in Finland in 2014: its reasons for immigration as well as its education and training, language skills, labour market situation and health and well-being. A key finding yielded by the survey was that, compared to the earlier overall picture that was based on limited information, it provided a more positive view of the situation of the population of foreign origin in Finland. Employment among the population of foreign origin that had resided for more than 10 years in Finland was only 5% lower than among the population of Finnish origin. The employment rate of people of refugee origin was lower but even among them, up to 57% of men who had resided 10 years in the country were a part of the workforce. Among women, the development of employment was slower. There were also nearly as many higher education graduates among people of foreign origin as among people of Finnish origin. On the other hand, the share of people with a low level of education (comprehensive school or lower) was considerably larger among the population of foreign origin than among the population of Finnish origin. The parents’ low level of education also seemed to be linked with young people’s early dropping out of school, which was substantially more common among people of foreign origin. As far as health is concerned, it can be observed that the population of foreign origin consumed notably less alcohol than the population of Finnish origin and lifestyle was also otherwise healthier when compared to the general population.\(^{140}\)

Well-being was also investigated in the study *Ulkomaalaistautaisten nuorten hyvinvointi Helsingissä*\(^{141}\) by City of Helsinki Urban Facts, based on a school health survey conducted in 2013. The study compared three groups of residents of Helsinki: first-generation migrants, second-generation migrants and people of Finnish origin. A key finding of the study is that the well-being of young people of foreign origin is at a lower level than that of young people of Finnish origin in light of both statistics and experienced well-being. Young first-generation migrants have more negative experi-

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\(^{136}\) Hämäläinen – Pesola – Sarvimäki. (available only in Finnish)

\(^{137}\) Turkinoja – Hietala. (available only in Finnish)

\(^{138}\) Kerkkänen – Sääväli. (available only in Finnish)

\(^{139}\) Nieminen – Sutela – Hannula. (available only in Finnish)

\(^{136}\) Hämäläinen – Pesola – Sarvimäki. (available only in Finnish)

\(^{137}\) Turkinoja – Hietala. (available only in Finnish)

\(^{138}\) Kerkkänen – Sääväli. (available only in Finnish)

\(^{139}\) Nieminen – Sutela – Hannula. (available only in Finnish)

\(^{140}\) Statistics Finland.

\(^{141}\) Ranto – Ahlgren-Leinvuo – Haapamäki – Högnabba. (available only in Finnish)
3.7. Citizenship

In 2015, a total of 8,281 persons acquired Finnish citizenship. The number of citizenship applications has been growing for years. The increase from 2014 to 2015 was exceptional and after it, in 2015, the increase has evened out. In 2015, the total number of citizenship applications and declarations submitted was 11,880, with 93% (11,041) of them citizenship applications.

The share of negative decisions increased in 2015 to 16% of all decisions made, while in 2014 it was 12.5%. The most common reason for a negative decision on a citizenship application is insufficient language skills. Pursuant to the Nationality Act, a requirement for naturalisation is satisfactory oral and written skills in the Finnish or Swedish language. The sufficient language skill level based on the national certificate of language proficiency is the proficiency level 3 that is defined as follows: "Understands longer stretches of speech and the central idea from many TV and radio programmes if the topic area is relatively familiar and the speech tempo is normal. Understands ordinary everyday texts but more demanding texts with unfamiliar subject matter may cause difficulties. Can cope in the most common speech situations and is able to write simple, coherent text on everyday topics, even though grammatical and lexical inaccuracies may occasionally hinder comprehension." A partial or full exception to the language skills requirement may be made for beneficiaries of international protection who are over 65 years of age, for illiterate persons and due to health reasons. According to the Nationality Unit of the Finnish Immigration Service, when it comes to applications rejected due to insufficient language skills, the majority of applicants had invoked an exception to the language skills requirement.

PUBLIC DIALOGUE ON INTEGRATION

According to media monitoring, dialogue on integration has made the headlines in printed media from August until the end of the year. In addition, there was some dialogue on integration in online media before the election. The functionality of Finland’s integration policy has been criticised to some extent in public dialogue. For instance, according to Ismo Söderling, researcher and the retired director of the Institute of Migration, Finland has failed in the integration of immigrants. His view is that integration should be tailored more closely according to immigrants’ skills and characteristics and the efficiency of the process as a whole should be improved. The costs incurred by integration training have also been publicly criticised.

Citizenship applications by nationality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russian Federation</td>
<td>2,312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>1,316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>448</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Finnish Immigration Service.

142 STT’s media monitoring.
143 Helsingin Sanomat, 19 October 2015: Tutkija: Maahanmuuttajien kotouttamisessa epäonnistuttu Suomessa – Ruotsissa tehdään jo "etnistä profilointia". (available only in Finnish)
144 Helsingin Uutiset, 6 May 2015: Maahanmuuttajien kotouttaminen on miljoonabisnes – kulut vain kasvavat. (available only in Finnish)
3.8. Managing migration and mobility

Due to the increase in the number of asylum seekers, the Government published its migration policies on 11 September 2015 and its action plan on asylum policy on 8 December 2015. The measures included in these documents have been and will be implemented over different periods of time. Countries of origin are also actively informed of the measures through social media channels, such as Facebook, among other means.

VISA POLICY AND BORDER CONTROL

Visas issued for Finland 2013–2015

As in the previous years, the top nationalities among citizenship applicants were nationals of the Russian Federation (2,312 applications), Somalia (1,316 applications), Iraq (988 applications), Afghanistan (508 applications) and Estonia (448 applications). The number of Somali and Iraqi nationals applying for Finnish citizenship decreased slightly from 2014. As for other nationalities, their number of applications remained more or less unchanged.

The number of citizenship declarations filed in 2015 was 839, with 855 decisions made. A total of 97% of the decisions on citizenship declarations were positive. The largest group of applicants filing citizenship declarations was Swedish nationals.

In 2015, altogether 773,718 visas for Finland were issued, which is 45% less than in 2014 and only half of the number of visas issued in 2013. As the majority of the visas are issued to Russians, these figures effectively illustrate the influence of the economic situation in Russia, the exchange rate of the rouble and the foreign policy situation on Russians’ travelling to Finland.

During 2015, the safety and smoothness of border control have been improved with the extensions at the Imatra, Nuijamaa and Vaalimaa border crossing points and with the new mobile equipment (a mobile

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146 Hallituksen maahanmuuttopoliittiset toimenpiteet, 11 September 2015 (available only in Finnish) and Government action plan on asylum policy, 8 December 2015. More information on this topic is provided in Section 2.
147 Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
device attached with passport reader together with wireless fingerprint reader) that has been taken into use in order to perform the mandatory VIS-visa fingerprint checks. The VIS Visa Information System will be implemented in all regions at the beginning of 2016. This will improve the security of the Schengen visas when biometric identifications are used in all areas. In addition, Immigration Liaison Officers of the Finnish Border Guard report on their work on a weekly basis. This also includes information on irregular migration routes.148

At the end of 2015, Finland has visa outsourcing in operation in three new countries (China, India and Turkey) and the total number of visa application centres (VAC) which visa applicants to Finland can use is about 30 VACs in those countries. Before this, visa services had already been outsourced in Russia, Ukraine and Thailand.149

The Finnish Border Guard has actively and remarkably contributed to the Frontex-coordinated joint operations also abroad: on the Mediterranean Sea and at the land borders in South-Eastern Europe. It has participated in all maritime operations in the Mediterranean, namely the Poseidon Sea, Triton and Indalo. Experts and border guard dogs from The Finnish Border Guard have participated in Frontex-coordinated joint operations in South-Eastern Europe, such as in Bulgaria, Greece and Hungary. On a yearly basis, Finland uses approximately 11 FTEs (full time equivalents) in joint operations. For supporting joint European activities in the area mostly affected by irregular migration flows, Finland has decided to deploy an Offshore Patrol Vessel to joint operation Poseidon Sea in the Aegean Sea for January–April 2016 outlined above.150

**LEGISLATIVE PROJECTS RELATED TO MANAGING MIGRATION AND MOBILITY**

The legislative amendments related to the detention of foreign nationals entered into force on 1 July 2015. The amendments to the Act on the Treatment of Aliens Placed in Detention and Detention Units improve the status and legal protection of detained foreign nationals. The safety of the detention unit, its customers and personnel is also improved. At the same time, a foreign national’s obligation to report oneself at the police station was made a more functional solution, facilitating its use as an alternative to detention. In addition, the law was amended to include the option of arranging court hearings on detention and the extension of detention using videoconferencing or some other suitable communication technology. This significantly saves the Police resources as detained foreign nationals no longer need to be transported to a district court hearing.151

Pursuant to the Act on the Treatment of Aliens Placed in Detention and Detention Units, the utilisation of use-of-force instruments at detention units requires training that is regulated in more detail in the Decree of the Ministry of the Interior on a detention unit’s public-service personnel training on the utilisation of use-of-force instruments. The Decree entered into force on 1 January 2016.152

The Ministry of the Interior set up a legislative project on the adoption of new alternatives to detention. The term of the project was from 23 February to 31 December 2015. The project looked into the adoption of residence-related obligations and electronic surveillance as alternatives to the detention of foreign nationals. The aim was to reduce especially the detention of minors, people with families and other vulnerable foreign nationals. The project was based on a report on alternatives to detention, published in December 2014.153

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148 Finnish Border Guard.
149 Ibid.
150 Ibid.
151 Ministry of the Interior, media release, 25 June 2015: Ulkomaalaisten säilöönottoa koskevat lakimuutokset voimaan. (available only in Finnish)
152 Sisäministeriön asetus säilöönottoyksikön virkasuhteisen henkilöstön voimankäyttövalineiden käyttöä koskevan koulutuksen toteuttamisesta (1560/2015) (available only in Finnish).
153 The appointment decision of the Ministry of the Interior, 23 February 2015: The Säilöönoton vaihtoehdot project. (available only in Finnish)
4. International protection including asylum

4.1. Asylum seekers and decisions

In 2015, a total of 32,476 persons applied for asylum in Finland, representing a nearly ninefold increase in the number of asylum seekers from 2014. At the same time, 1.26 million persons submitted first-time asylum applications in the EU and EEA countries, almost double the number in 2014. In absolute numbers, the European country to receive the most asylum seekers was Germany with 442,000 asylum seekers, 2.5 times the number in 2014. In Sweden, Hungary and Austria, the number of asylum seekers also increased by more than 50,000 when compared to the previous year. However, in Finland, the proportional increase in the number of asylum seekers was the highest in Europe.\(^{154}\)

Until the end of April, the monthly number of asylum applications was less than 400 applications per month. The sharp increase in the number of asylum seekers began in July and in the peak month of September, there were nearly 11,000 new asylum seekers. Towards the end of the year, the number of asylum seekers took a downward turn; in December, the number of new asylum seekers was only a bit over 1,800.

The top country of origin among asylum seekers in 2015 was the same as in 2014: Iraq. The number of Iraqi asylum seekers grew almost 25-fold from the previous year. Afghan nationals emerged as the second largest group of asylum seekers, with more than 25 times the number that put them in the fourth position in 2014. The third largest group was Somalis, whose number grew nearly fivefold from the previous year. For the first time, Syrians appeared among the top five nationalities seeking asylum in Finland, being the fourth largest group. In 2014, the number of Syrian asylum seekers arriving in Finland was 149, representing a nearly sixfold increase in their number. Another new group among the top asylum-seeking nationalities was Albanians.

Nationalities of asylum seekers, Top 5 groups in 2015

In 2015, the Finnish Immigration Service made decisions on 7,466 asylum applications, which is more than double the number in 2014. Excluding decisions on expiration, the number of decisions made on asylum applications increased by approximately one fourth from the previous year. However, the applications on which decisions were made in 2015 were mainly applications that had been filed before the sharp increase in the number of asylum seekers. In the decision statistics, the increase in the number of asylum seekers is anyway visible in the number of expired asylum applications. In the majority of expired asylum applications, the applicant has cancelled his/her application and returned to his/her home country. The number of expired asylum applications has grown more than 10-fold from 2014. Nevertheless, in proportion to the number of asylum applications submitted during the year, the number of expired applications has not increased.

When decisions on the expiration of asylum applications are excluded, in 2015, a residence permit was issued in the asylum process in 44% of all decisions whereas in 2014, the corresponding figure was 40%. From the same point of view, asylum was anyway granted significantly more often than before, in 25% of decisions made, whereas in 2014, asylum was granted only to 14%. In absolute numbers, asylum granted more than doubled from the previous year. When reviewed on the same basis, negative decisions decreased slightly from the previous year, to little under 31%. The remainder of decisions in the asylum process are dismissal decisions\(^{155}\), most of which are cases in which the person in question is returned through the Dublin procedure to the Member State that is responsible for examining the asylum application.

It is worth noting a fairly short-lived phenomenon emerging in the statistics: the manifestly unfounded asylum applications submitted mainly by citizens of Albania in July–August 2015. In 2015, a total of 758 decisions on manifestly unfounded asylum applications were made whereas the corresponding figure in 2014 was 378. In 2015, 328 of these were applications submitted by citizens of Albania and 85 by citizens of Kosovo. In 2014, the corresponding figures were 65 and 30. Consequently, the number of manifestly unfounded asylum applications submitted by Albanians rose more than fivefold and those submitted by citizens of Kosovo grew nearly threefold. In 2015, a total of 667 decisions were made on asylum applications submitted by Albanians, none of which resulted in the granting of international protection or a residence permit. The phenomenon seems to indicate that misleading information would have been spread about the system of voluntary return as the Albanians reported support for assisted voluntary return as one of the reasons for their arrival in the country. In August, the Finnish Immigra-

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\(^{155}\) For more information on dismissal decisions, see: [http://www.migri.fi/asylum_in_finland/applying_for_asylum/processing_the_application/dismissal.](http://www.migri.fi/asylum_in_finland/applying_for_asylum/processing_the_application/dismissal)
tion Service decided that Albanian asylum seekers are not paid support for assisted voluntary return, unless it is a question of an exceptional case.

In 2015, the largest age group among asylum seekers was 18–34-year-olds, representing more than 60% of all asylum seekers. The second largest group, a little less than one fourth of all asylum seekers, were minor asylum seekers, including both unaccompanied minors and minors seeking asylum with their family. The share of 35–64-year-olds among asylum seekers was 15% and that of over-65-year-olds only 0.2%.

The gender distribution among applicants that received a positive decision on international protection in 2015 was as follows: approximately 73% were men and approximately 27% women. In 2015, decisions were made mainly on applications that were filed already before the increase in the number of asylum seekers. Among the asylum seekers that arrived in the country in 2015, the relative share of men seems to have further increased: 81% of the asylum seekers were men and 19% women.

**Gender distribution among asylum seekers 2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Finnish Immigration Service.

**Gender distribution among persons who have been issued with a residence permit in the asylum process 2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Finnish Immigration Service.

**ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES IN ASYLUM POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION**

On 4 September 2015, the Ministry of the Interior established an expert group to manage the situation generated by the sharp increase in the number of asylum seekers in Finland. The group maintains overall situational awareness of migration and decides actions to be taken and leadership assumed in this exceptional situation. Besides representatives of the Ministry of the Interior, the expert group has a representative from the Finnish Immigration Service, the National Police Board, Finnish Border Guard and the Finnish Security Intelligence Service. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs is also represented in the group. Work is led by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior. To support the operations of the group, daily and weekly asylum situation reports are compiled, making it possible to launch required proactive measures at all levels throughout the administrative sector.\(^{156}\)

Due to the significant increase in the number of asylum applications, the number of asylum application case workers at the Finnish Immigration Service has been increased in 2015 from 73 to 220 person-years and in the autumn of 2015, two new regional offices (Turku, Rovaniemi) were established at the Finnish Immigration Service. The Asylum Unit has developed an efficient training path for new officials who process asylum applications. New employees have started training in groups that are recruited in stages and that start every couple of months, according to the facilities and trainer capacity. Training is carried out as efficient two-week joint training sessions, utilising remote technology and developing training constantly. In this manner, it has been possible to include new workforce in the decision-making process quickly and efficiently. The backlog of applications will be cleared by the end of 2016.

In addition, at the beginning of November 2015, the Police and the Finnish Immigration Service adopted a common operating model in which a single authority will conduct both the initial hearing and the asylum interview at the same time. The aim is to clear the accumulated backlog of applications. The tasks will be transferred from the Police in phases and the hearings will be entirely conducted by the Finnish Immigration Service start-

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\(^{156}\) Ministry of the Interior, media release, 4 September 2015: Sisäministeri kokosi ryhmän johtamaan turva-paikkatilannetta. (available only in Finnish)
ing from March 2016. The transfer of initial hearings takes the operations towards the so-called “single contact approach”, which accelerates the processing of applications. When the Finnish Immigration Service conducts both the initial hearing (establishing the identity and the travel route, among other things) and the asylum interview at the same time, a several months’ waiting period that currently exists between the police investigation and the asylum interview can be eliminated.157

The Maahanmuuttoa hallinnon tuloksellisuuden parantaminen vuosina 2011–2014 (Improving the Effectiveness of the Administration of Immigration Affairs in 2011–2014) project was finished at the end of 2014 and its final report was published on 20 March 2015. During the project, the Asylum Unit of the Finnish Immigration Service has made the asylum procedure faster and smoother and a permanent cooperation group has been set up for operational cooperation among asylum authorities. The efficiency of the asylum procedure has been enhanced by accelerating the asylum decision-making by, for instance, screening for clearly unfounded or positive applications and by increasing cooperation between authorities. Working processes and guidelines have also been harmonised. The asylum investigation both by the Police and at the border is efficient and cooperation between authorities has been increased. The Police’s removal procedure is also efficient and, when considered in the European frame of reference, yields results. In addition, the first-instance appeal process in asylum-related matters has become faster and the moving to municipalities has become smoother. The asylum seeker reception system was also adjusted to the then decreasing number of applicants and apartment-based accommodation was increased to replace institutionalised accommodation.158

LEGISLATIVE PROJECTS RELATED TO INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

The amendments to the Aliens Act that entered into force on 1 July 2015 related to the enforcement of the Asylum Procedures Directive improve the legal protection of vulnerable applicants, such as unaccompanied minors, with provisions on the arrangement of a medical examination and the obligatory presence of the representative of the minor in the asylum interview. The amendments also clarify the asylum procedure. The processing of subsequent applications and the procedures pertaining to non-refoulement, in particular, are simplified. Subsequent applications that do not present new grounds for staying in the country that would affect the decision-making on the case are dismissed, as are applications submitted by applicants coming from a safe country of asylum or a safe third country, whereas before these applications were processed in an accelerated procedure. Applicants’ possibility to file new subsequent applications is also restricted. A seven-day time limit is set for submitting an application for an injunction against the enforcement, and the obligation to wait for a court decision on the injunction against the enforcement before the enforcement of the removal, previously stated in the authority’s guidelines, is now included in the Aliens Act.159

The Ministry of the Interior set up a project to review the criteria of residence permits issued on the basis of international protection. The term of the project is from 2 November 2015 to 31 January 2016160. The objective of the project is to prepare the required legislative amendments so that the criteria of Finnish residence permits issued on the basis of international protection would be in line with the EU regulation. The aim is that the Finnish legislation would not be more favourable in this respect when compared with other EU Member States. In practice, this could mean the repeal of Section 88a of the Aliens Act, pertaining to a residence permit issued on the basis of humanitarian protection. Another goal of the project is to improve the efficiency of the collection of fees charged for the processing of the residence permit, with provisions regulating that the authorities would not continue the processing of an application for asylum until the applicant has paid the chargeable processing fee.161

The Ministry of the Interior set up a project for the term from 16 September 2014 to 31 October 2015 that looked into whether there was a need for more specific legal provisions to govern general legal counselling provided to applicants for international protection. Alternative methods for arranging legal counselling were investigated as well.162

157 Finnish Immigration Service, press release, 30 October 2015: The asylum application process is being streamlined – One authority will conduct both the initial hearing and the asylum interview.
158 Maahanmuuttoa hallinnon tuloksellisuuden parantaminen vuosina 2011–2014. (available only in Finnish)
159 Government Bill 218/2014.
161 Ministry of the Interior, press release, 4 February 2016: Amendments to requirements for granting international protection. 162 The Ministry of the Interior’s decision, 17 September 2014: Kansaivälistä suojelua hakevalle annettava yleinen oikeudellinen neuvonta -hankkeen asettaminen (available only in Finnish) and the Ministry of the Interior’s decision, 1 June 2015: Kansaivälistä suojelua hakevalle annettava yleinen oikeudellinen neuvon-ta -hankkeen asettamispäätöksen muuttaminen. (available only in Finnish)
PARTICIPATION IN EU-LEVEL OPERATIONS IN ASYLUM-RELATED MATTERS

The phenomena characterising the year 2015 throughout Europe were the major increase in the number of asylum seekers and the pressure towards countries on the EU’s external borders. This also applies to the Dublin Regulation in that unauthorised crossing of an external border has become more common as the grounds for responsibility.

The relocation of asylum seekers from Italy and Greece has begun. Thus far, Finland has committed to relocating a total of 3,200 asylum seekers from Italy and Greece in two years’ time. In 2015, the total number of accepted relocations was 149: 51 from Greece and 98 from Italy. The relocations carried out included 24 persons from Greece and 87 persons from Italy, meaning that 111 persons arrived in Finland via relocation in 2015. The majority of these persons were Eritreans, with Syrians as the second largest group and Iraqi nationals totalling fewer than 10. The remaining accepted relocations were postponed to 2016.

Finland has participated in the operations of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) by nominating a total of 13 experts to EASO’s Asylum Intervention Pool (AIP). In addition, an expert from the Finnish Immigration Service has participated in providing training on country of origin information to Italian and Bulgarian authorities, Finland has taken part in the implementation of the registration centre (hotspot) concept in Italy and Greece, and officials from the International Affairs Unit of the Ministry of the Interior have participated in supporting Greek and Bulgarian authorities in the utilisation of EU funds.

DEVELOPMENT MEASURES RELATED TO APPEALS AGAINST ASYLUM DECISIONS

The Ministry of Justice is preparing various measures to ensure efficient handling of appeals, sufficient legal aid and smooth procedures. Asylum seekers must be guaranteed a fair trial also in a situation in which the number of appeals is expected to rise significantly.

As of the beginning of 2016, the composition of the Supreme Administrative Court required for making a decision was decreased in matters concerning a leave to appeal related asylum and other international protection. The Court may also decide on granting a leave to appeal in a composition consisting of two judges, instead of the previous requirement of three judges. If the judges are not unanimous, the matter will be transferred to be ruled by a three-member or larger composition.

In addition, there are legislative amendments being prepared for achieving various goals: having courts process matters related to international protection with urgency, shortening appeal periods, decreasing the Administrative Court composition required for making a decision and tightening the criteria on the basis of which the Supreme Administrative Court could grant a leave to appeal. Furthermore, the granting of free legal aid for an asylum interview would be restricted, the qualification requirements of counsels would be specified and fees would be regulated on a case-by-case basis.

The Ministry of Justice also investigates the possibility of decentralising the processing of asylum-related appeals from the Administrative Court of Helsinki to all or some other Administrative Courts. Training and recruitment will also be increased in the justice system, working methods will be developed and cooperation between authorities will be improved.

Currently, all appeals against asylum decisions are processed at the Administrative Court of Helsinki. It has been granted additional funds due to the expected increase in asylum-related appeals. A new, 7th chamber was established at the Administrative Court of Helsinki, featuring a preparatory unit formed by referendaries and secretaries. It is planned to consist of a maximum of 90 employees divided into three different sub-chambers. The first 30 employees started working at the beginning of 2016 and the next 30 at the beginning of April. The start of the final batch of employees depends on the increase in the number of appeals.

RESEARCH ON ASYLUM

In 2015, the Country Information Service completed the Suuntaus project, with 75% of the funding from the European Refugee Fund, that produced a total of eight focused country information reports, two of which discuss persecution against
women and three focus on persecution against sexual and gender minorities in different regions. The reports discussed the following topics: Christian converts in Iran, Palestinians in the West Bank, Violence against women and honour-related violence in Iran, Current status of insurgency in the North Caucasus and persecution by the authorities, Status of sexual and gender minorities in Nigeria, Security situation in Baghdad – The Shia militias, Current situation of sexual and gender minorities in Russia and Human trafficking of Nigerian women to Europe.168

PUBLIC DIALOGUE ON ASYLUM

In the autumn, the asylum seeker situation became one of the leading topics in the news and for instance, Prime Minister Juha Sipilä stated the following: “The situation is extremely exceptional, and the Government will monitor it very closely. To me it seems that the situation caused by the flow of refugees might be even worse than our economic situation. The authorities have carried out enhanced surveillance at the border for several weeks now, and they will further reinforce their actions.” At the political level, “the migration crisis” was a commonly used term and it was assured that the importance of ensuring public order and safety was emphasised. The President of the Republic also commented on the migration crisis and its effects on Finland and the topic was discussed at the Ministerial Committee on Foreign and Security Policy Affairs.169

Dialogue on asylum seekers was also interwoven with dialogue on Finland’s public finances. Finland’s carrying capacity was contemplated in the media throughout the autumn and even President Niinistö commented on the dialogue by noting that immigration had been uncontrolled.170

Similarly, various views on the asylum seekers’ effects on economy and employment in Finland have been expressed in the media. It is feared that asylum seekers and persons who have been issued with a residence permit are a burden to the Finnish social security system and further impairs unemployment. However, several economists consider that, in the long term, the situation will have a positive impact on the economy and employment in Finland and will improve the dependency ratio.171

4.2. Quota refugees

In July 2015, the EU’s Ministers of the Interior agreed on the resettlement of quota refugees. Finland’s share is 293 persons during the next two years172. These persons are part of Finland’s annual refugee quota that was 750 persons in 2016, on the basis of the refugee quota allocation decision.173 During the past two years, the refugee quota has been raised to 1,050 persons per year.

In the refugee quota for 2015, a total of 1,034 quota refugees were selected to be taken in by Finland. They were selected among the refugees registered by UNHCR in Lebanon, Egypt, Malawi, Zambia and Iran. In addition, the quota included 100 refugees categorised as emergencies. The majority of the quota refugees selected were Syrians (638), Congolese nationals (the Democratic Republic of the Congo; 151) and Afghan nationals (139). The refugees categorised as emergencies represented different nationalities, some of which are mentioned above.

The bottleneck of the quota refugee process is the insufficiency of municipal placements. In 2015, a total of 915 quota refugees and 92 refugees categorised as emergencies arrived in Finland. Nearly half of the arrivals had been selected in the refugee quota for 2014; however, there were refugees who had been selected already in the refugee quota for 2012 and had waited for several years for access to Finland. A total of 319 of the refugees selected in the quota for 2015 arrived in Finland during the year. As for refugees categorised as emergencies, the corresponding number was 34.

In 2013–2015, pre-departure cultural orientation was organised, with funding from the European Refugee Fund, for quota refugees selected for admission to Finland before they arrive in the country.174 In 2015, classroom training sessions lasting a bit more than three days each were organised in Iran, Egypt and Lebanon. New project funding was granted for the Finnish Immigration Service’s pre-departure cultural orientation from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) for the period from 1 January 2016 to 30 August 2017.

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168 The reports of the Suuntaus project: http://www.migri.fi/about_us/country_information_service/reports.
170 Verkkouutiset, 11 December 2015: Sauli Niinistö: Maahanmuutto on ollut hallitsematonta. (available only in Finnish)
171 Taloussanomat, 21 December 2015: Ekonomistit: Pakolaiset tuskia heiluttavat Suomen työmarkkinoita. (available only in Finnish)
172 Ministry of the Interior, web news, 21 July 2015: Turvapaikanhakijoiden sisäiset siirrot maiden välillä helpottavat Etelä-Euroopian maahanmuuttopaineita. (available only in Finnish)
173 Ministry of the Interior, media release, 18 December 2015: Suomi jatkaa syyrialaispakolaisten vastaanottoa ensi vuoden pakolaiskiintössä. (available only in Finnish)
174 In 2001–2010, pre-departure cultural orientation was acquired from IOM. In 2011–2012, no orientation was organised.
PUBLIC DIALOGUE ON QUOTA REFUGEES

The size of the refugee quota invoked discussion throughout the year. The original intention was to receive 750 quota refugees in 2015 but in the supplementary budget in February, the number was increased to 1,050. 175 The refugee quota for 2016 was dropped back to 750 refugees, which invoked discussion in the editorials in several newspapers, expressing concern for forgetting the most distressed groups as the number of asylum seekers increases.176

4.3. Reception

The Finnish Immigration Service steers the operations of reception centres. Two of the reception centres (Oulu and Joutseno) are the State’s reception centres and the other reception centres are maintained by municipalities, the Red Cross, private companies and non-profit operators.

The starting point is to aim at keeping the utilisation rate of the reception capacity as high as possible because vacant reception places incur unnecessary expenses for the State. Indeed, in late summer 2015, the most urgent measures required by the increase in the number of asylum seekers were particularly related to increasing the reception capacity quickly. In this acute situation, it was also necessary to resort to various emergency accommodation solutions.

During the autumn of 2015, the reception centre capacity was increased considerably. At the end of 2015, there were a total of 212 units (reception centres and special units for asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors) around the country. In 2015, the number of residents in the reception units intended for adults and families increased eightfold, from 3,300 to 27,300 residents. Similarly, the number of reception units intended for these groups has grown sevenfold, from 20 to 144. A total of 60 new reception units have been established for asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors, to provide children with care and education according to their level of development and to accommodate them in facilities separate from adult asylum seekers. In the special units for minors, the number of residents has increased 16-fold, from 150 residents at the end of 2014 to 2,500 residents at the end of 2015. As for the number of special units for minors, it has grown more than eightfold, from 8 to 68.

The total reception costs in 2015 amounted to EUR 168.2 million while in 2014, they were EUR 61.9 million177. The main reason for the increase in the costs was the multifold increase in the number of customers described above. Additional expenditure was incurred by non-recurring costs associated with opening new reception centres. Their impact is especially pronounced in this situation, as the units are new and only had the time to operate for a few months in 2015. Moreover, due to circumstances,

175 Vihreä Lanka, 20 February 2015: Pakolaiskiintiö ei pienene. (available only in Finnish)
176 Savon Sanomat, 14 June 2015: Turvapaikanhakijoiden ei pitä syrjäyttää pakolaisia. (available only in Finnish) Etelä-Suomen Sanomat, 15 June 2015: Hädässä olevia autettava. (available only in Finnish)
177 Maahanmuuttopirasto – Kirjanpitoysiköön tilinpäätös 2014. (available only in Finnish)
many of the units use central catering, which is a more expensive alternative than letting asylum seekers cook for themselves. More money was spent on the security of reception centres than in previous years. Costs were increased by various technical security solutions and the hiring of security guards.178

Research centre customers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adults and families</td>
<td>3,300</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaccompanied minors</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Finnish Immigration Service.

Reception centres and special units for minors 2014–2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residents in the reception units intended for adults and families</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents in the special units for minors</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Finnish Immigration Service.

ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES RELATED TO THE RECEPTION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

The acute situation in which an increasing number of asylum seekers had to be directed to reception centres each day required the Finnish Immigration Service to arrange real-time coordination of the situation. For this task, the Finnish Immigration Service established a coordination centre to guide practical reception-related accommodation operations in an acute situation. The coordination centre operates from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. every day, including holidays, and coordinates the assignment of asylum seekers to different reception centres.182

Due to the acuteness of the situation, the Finnish Immigration Service was given a fixed-term mandate to establish necessary reception and registration centres until 31 December 2015. Normally, it is the Ministry of the Interior that decides on the establishment of reception centres.

On 17 September 2015, the Finnish Government decided that a registration centre (hotspot), or a first-stage reception unit, be established as a response to the sharp increase in the number of asylum seekers. The centre established in Tornio was the place where immigrants were directed if their identity was unclear or if it could not be determined whether they met the requirements for entry. The aim of having all immigrants registered in a controlled manner was achieved as asylum seekers could no longer move on to other parts of Finland uncontrollably. The registration centre was mainly operated by the personnel of the Police, the Border Guard and the Finnish Immigration Service. When authorised by the Ministry of the Interior, authorities other than Police and Border Guard officers could also register asylum seekers at the centre. Initially, the registration centre was established for three months. On 26 November 2015, it was decided that the registration centre operations would be extended by three months after the expiry of the initial fixed-term decision on 18 December 2015.183

In October, Finland applied for emergency funding under the EU’s Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). These resources are used to cover financial needs that could not be incorporated in national funding. The European Com-

178 Finnish Immigration Service, press release, 29 February 2016: The year 2015 was an unusual one for the Finnish Immigration Service.
179 Some of the reception centre customers may live in private accommodation outside reception centres. Nevertheless, they are included within the scope of the services offered by reception centres.
180 Residents in the reception units intended for adults and families.
181 Residents in the special units for minors.
182 Finnish Immigration Service.
183 Ministry of the Interior, press release, 17 September 2015: Valtioneuvosto päätti järjestelykeskuksen perustamisesta. (available only in Finnish)
mission granted Finland EUR 8 million in emergency funding for the reception of asylum seekers between 1 September 2015 and 31 January 2016.\textsuperscript{184}

**CHALLENGES IN THE RECEPTION OFASYLUM SEEKERS**

During 2015, in connection with the increase in the number of asylum seekers, the main attention of both authorities and citizens focused on the reception system. The substantial and extremely fast increase of the reception capacity, along with the significantly higher number of applicants, has proved to be challenging, which has partly been reflected on reception conditions. In early autumn, it was necessary to resort to various emergency accommodation facilities, such as church crypts, sports halls, tents and containers, to accommodate asylum seekers.\textsuperscript{185} The establishment of new reception centres was slowed down by the long municipal approval process that could result in the municipality prohibiting the establishment of a reception centre or an emergency accommodation unit in its territory. When the need for new reception centres became extremely acute in September, the Finnish Immigration Service decided to cease consulting local authorities concerning the establishment of reception centres if a reception centre or an emergency accommodation unit is to be located in facilities rented from private owners or if it is to be maintained by the Finnish Red Cross or another third party.\textsuperscript{186}

There are completely new operators among the parties maintaining new reception centres and employees include professionals that do not necessarily have previous experience working with asylum seekers. The Reception Unit of the Finnish Immigration Service has visited reception centres, tailored a great deal of new instructions and written material, offered guidance and counselling and responded to questions posed by the centres. At the establishment phase, general orientation and advanced training for different occupational groups have been organised.

The number of asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors increased considerably, too. Non-governmental organisations reported that in late summer and early autumn, they had assisted children and young people encountered at railway stations in registering and accessing the asylum seeker reception system.\textsuperscript{187} New reception centres and emergency accommodation facilities intended for temporary use in reception have also been established on short notice in municipalities with no previous experience of reception centres in their locality, which has, in some cases, caused concern in the neighbourhood. Criminal offences, such as vandalism and even attempted arson, have also been committed against reception centres and facilities with planned use as reception centres.\textsuperscript{186} On the other hand, another emerging topic is that it should be ensured that Finland’s reception system would not be a pull factor.

In some reception centres, the Police have had to intervene in disputes between different ethnic groups. Cases where asylum seekers have been suspected of criminal offences have also made the news, which has led to the forming of unofficial street patrols in different parts of the country. Authorities and politicians have varying views on street patrols: on the one hand, they are inclined to limit the ensuring of the safety of the citizens to authorities; on the other hand, it has been noted that street patrolling is legal as long as it does not lead to criminal offences. For instance, Minister of the Interior Petteri Orpo and the new Director of the Finnish Security Intelligence Service Antti Pelttari have commented that the street patrols described above do not necessarily increase safety, but may instead deteriorate it.\textsuperscript{189}

The ways to tackle these challenges have included information events for local residents that have been organised in connection with the establishment of reception centres, with personnel from reception centres, the parties maintaining the reception centres and the Finnish Immigration Service present to answer any questions of the residents of the municipality. Furthermore, increasing efforts have been devoted to advice related to Finnish society that is provided to asylum seekers. The Finnish Immigration Service has also published a mobile-format course on equality, sexual health and sexual rights that asylum seekers can take with the aid of their mobile phones.\textsuperscript{190} Towards the end of the year, the Finnish

Immigration Service, in cooperation with different actors, launched the planning of a training package targeted at reception centre customers. After completing the training, asylum seekers commit to adhering to the rules of Finnish society.191

**LEGISLATIVE PROJECTS RELATED TO THE RECEPTION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS**

The legislative amendments related to the reception of applicants for international protection entered into force on 1 July 2015. The amendments specified the provisions of the Act on the Reception of Persons Applying for International Protection that apply to the assessment of the special needs of vulnerable persons, the accommodation of applicants for international protection and the representative of an unaccompanied minor. With these amendments, the Finnish legislation is harmonised with the EU’s Reception Conditions Directive which is part of the regulation entity related to the Common European Asylum System.192

On 21 December 2015, the Ministry of the Interior set up a legislative project to prepare necessary regulation proposals that would enable the presence of security guards at reception centres. It should be possible to hire security guards to maintain order. The term of the project is from 21 December 2015 to 30 June 2016. The legislative project also assesses the mandate that security guards in these facilities should have. At the moment, ordinary guards can be hired to reception centres and registration centres while security guards cannot be. An ordinary guard watches over assets, protects individual integrity and/or reveals crime against the guarded facility or the client, whereas a security guard maintains order and safety and prevents crime and accidents. There have been disturbances at reception centres. The reception centre personnel’s actions and mandate are not sufficient for maintaining order in all cases. As for the Police, its resources are limited and they cannot be continuously present at reception centres.193

The Ministry of the Interior set up a project to look into the potential need for changes in the management of reception operations related to applicants for international protection. The term of the project was from 22 August 2014 to 30 April 2015. A preparation group was set up for the project, with the task of investigating different options for managing reception operations related to applicants for international protection and of reviewing the roles of the Ministry of the Interior and the Finnish Immigration Service in reception centre operations. Another task was to look into different options for arranging and guiding reception operations. On the basis of its investigation work, the preparation group recommended the integration of the State’s reception centres into the Finnish Immigration Service. The integration will be carried out with a project set up for the term 3 June 2015–31 December 2016. The related Government Bill is scheduled to be submitted to the Parliament in the spring term 2016. Legislative amendments to the Act on the Reception of Persons Applying for International Protection and to the Act on the Finnish Immigration Service are prepared so that they will enter into force on 1 January 2017.194

Investigation projects on the level of the reception allowance and the social security system were launched in the autumn of 2015 and decisions on measures, if any, will be made on the basis of the investigations.195

**PUBLIC DIALOGUE ON THE RECEPTION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS**

During the most intense period of the establishment of new reception centres in early autumn, newspapers constantly published news about new reception centres, the locations of intended reception centres and the decisions municipalities had made regarding the establishment of reception centres.196 In newspaper editorials, appeals were made to municipalities for the establishment of reception centres.197 Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior Päivi Nerg also appealed to municipalities to find more premises for the reception of asylum seekers.198 Similarly, many policymakers, such as Minister of the Interior Petteri Orpo, Prime Minister Alexander Stubb, MEP Henna Virkkunen and Dep-

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191 Finnish Immigration Service.
192 Ministry of the Interior, media release, 5 February 2015: Kansainvälistä suojelua hakevan vastaanottamiseen koskevat lainsäädäntökysymykset voimassa. (available only in Finnish)
193 Ministry of the Interior, media release, 21 December 2015: Lakimuutos toisi järjestyksenvalvojat turvaa-maan järjestystä vastaanottokeskuksin. (available only in Finnish)
194 Kansainvälistä suojelua hakevan vastaanottamiseen hallinnoinnin hankkeen loppuraportti.
195 Helsingin Sanomat, 11 September 2015: Turvaapikaanhakijoiden vastaanottamiseen saattaa laskea myös sosiaaliturvaan harkitaan muutoksia "kannustavammaksi". (available only in Finnish)
196 E.g. Helsingin Sanomat, 1 September 2015: Keuruu ja Vihti sanovat eivät vastaanottokeskuksilta; Helsingin Sanomat, 31 August 2015: Kunnat puivat lähipäivinä vastaanottokeskuksiin. (available only in Finnish)
197 Helsingin Sanomat, 1 September 2015: Kuntien apua tarvitaan pakolaiskierron hoitamisessa. (available only in Finnish)
uty President of the National Coalition Party Sanni Grahn-Laasonen, spoke out in favour of finding re-
ception centre facilities and expressed their disagree-
ment with the municipalities that had refused the estab-
lishment of a reception centre.200

During the autumn, there were demonstrations for and against new reception centres in many
locations. Usually, there were a couple of hundred demonstrators present – a sufficiently significant
phenomenon in Finland to be covered by national media.201 As a response to the fears of the residents of
municipalities, discussion events were arranged in reception centre locations. In these events, the
residents had an opportunity to voice their concerns and to have authorities answer the questions running
through their minds. The residents have especially been concerned about safety-related issues and, on
the other hand, the compensation of costs potentially incurred to municipalities by asylum seekers.199 In
some cases, the opposition to reception centres also escalated into attacks carried out by individual per-
sons upon reception centres or facilities with planned use as reception centres.202

Lack of accommodation capacity also awoke in-
dividuals’ willingness to help and some private
home accommodation was offered during the au-
tumn,203 however, according to the Refugees Wel-
come Finland home accommodation network, home
accommodation of refugees has remained a rath-
er marginal phenomenon.204 The Finnish Immigra-
tion Service also published instructions for house-
holds who wish to accommodate asylum seekers at
home.205 Even Prime Minister Juha Sipilä offered his
home, not used by his family at that moment, for
asylum seekers’ accommodation.206 The offer even
made the news internationally.

During the autumn, willingness to help spread among Finns as a counter-reaction to hate
speech and manifested itself as voluntary work at reception centres, for instance.207 In social
media, dozens of groups emerged for arranging help for asylum seekers.208 Similarly, the amount of do-
nated goods even exceeded the actual need.209 One of the donations to the Finnish Immigration
Service is a website: Lahjoitukset.fi that helps re-
ception centres to coordinate the donations they re-
ceive. At Lahjoitukset.fi, reception centres can list
what and how much they need. People who wish to
donate can select a centre and tick their donation on
the list, for example, the number of coats they are
going to donate. Then they select a date for deliv-
ering the items to the reception centre. The list will
be updated as soon as the reception centre reports
that it has received the donation. The website will
reduce the number of donation-related emails and
phone calls to reception centres. It will also ensure
that each reception centre receives whatever items
genuinely needs.210

199 Helsingin Sanomat, 2 September 2015: Orpo: Johonkin ihmiset on pakko majoittaa. (available only in Finnish)
200 E.g. YLE News, 30 August 2015: Vastaanottokeskusta vastustavat ja puolustavat mielenosoitukset sujuivat rauhallisesti
Salossa. (available only in Finnish)
201 Ilkka and Pohjalainen, 8 September 2015: Tuntematon herättää pelkoa – Kauhavaiset ovat huollissaan etenkin turvapaikkaan
hakeviista nuorista miehistä. (available only in Finnish)
202 Helsingin Sanomat, 7 October 2015: Vastaanottokeskus yritettiin polttaa Lammilla – Hämeenlinnan kau-pungin johto:
“Yksittäinen tapaus” (available only in Finnish); Helsingin Sanomat, 19 October 2015: Vas-taanottokeskuksen oveen heitettiin
savukranaatetta sunnuntaina Siilinjärvellä (available only in Finnish); Helsingin Sanomat, 1 November 2015: Alakaisten
turvapaikanhakijoiden asuinrakennukseen hyökkättiin polttopolloon Ylivieskassa (available only in Finnish); Ittasanomat, 23
November 2015: Vastaanottokeskukseen yritettiin heittää polttopullo Oulussa – Luokitellaan rasistiseksi rikokseksi (available
only in Finnish); Helsingin Sanomat, 4 December 2015: Poliisi vahvisti Rauman palon tuhopoltoksi – vastaanottokeskuksiin
tehty yli kymmenen iskua pitkin syksyä (available only in Finnish); Iltasanomat, 12 December 2015: Vastaanotko-keskukseen iskuja
Porissa: Ikkunatulitteita ja ikkuna rikki (available only in Finnish); Turun Sanomat, 12 December 2015: Taas epäilty polttoisku
Home accommodation was offered during the au-
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asylum seekers’ accommodation.206 The offer even
made the news internationally.
5. Unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable groups

5.1. Unaccompanied minors

In 2015, the total number of asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors was 3,024, more than 15-fold the number of the previous year. Of these, 94% were boys and 6% were girls. Of the actual asylum-seeking minors (once the asylum seekers that have been proved adult by the age test have been removed from statistics), 14% are 0–14 years of age and 86% 15–17 years of age. The youngest unaccompanied minors often arrive with an older sibling or escorted by another relative or acquaintance. A total of 63% of asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors were Afghan nationals (1,916). The second largest group was Iraqi nationals, 21% (635), and the third was Somalis, 8% (253).

In 2015, a total of 168 decisions were made with regard to asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors. International protection was granted to 80 of these minors and a residence permit on other grounds was granted to 32. In 2014, the corresponding figures were 47 and 17, so the number of residence permits issued to asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors increased by 75%. As a rule, asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors are issued with a residence permit in the asylum process. In some cases, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has managed to reach the family and the minor has been able to return to them.

As during the year, the majority of the applications received in the autumn of 2015 could not yet be decided upon, the decisions made apply mainly to applications filed before that time. Instead, the situation in the autumn could be seen in the number of expired asylum applications (44) which was five-and-a-half time the number of the previous year. The most common reasons for the expiration of an asylum application are that the asylum seeker goes missing or cancels his/her asylum application in order to return to his/her home country. An alarming phenomenon in 2015 that is worth highlighting here is the increase in the number of asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors that went missing during the asylum process.

At the early stage, the age of asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors is based, almost without exception, on the applicant’s own statement. Through instructions and guidelines, the Finnish Immigration Service has tried to prevent applicants who are, in actual fact, clearly adults from ending up in units intended for minors. The first screening is conducted by the Police or a Finnish Immigration Service official already in the connection with the registration of the application or with the initial hearing. If an asylum seeker declaring himself/herself a minor has no documentary evidence of his/her age and there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that he/she is an adult, he/she will be immediately directed to a medical age assessment.211

A medical age assessment may be conducted on an asylum seeker with his/her consent if it is suspected that his/her declared age does not correspond with his/her biological age. In 2015, a total of 149 medical age assessments were conducted. Of persons who sought asylum as minors and had an age assessment conducted, 90 were found to be over 18 years of age and 41 were found to be, as they had declared, under 18 years of age. In addition, the result of 16 assessments was unclear because there was found to be an approximately 50% chance of the person being over or under 18 years of age or teeth were lacking. The age assessments conduct-

211 Finnish Immigration Service / age test: http://www.migri.fi/moving_to_finland_to_be_with_a_family_member/processing_and_deciding_on_the_application/age_test
ed for two persons who declared themselves adults proved that they are adults, as declared.

The highest increase in the number of asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors took place during late summer and in the autumn. For instance, non-governmental organisations reported that in late summer and early autumn, they had encountered children and young people at railway stations and assisted them in registering and accessing the asylum seeker reception system, which illustrates the extraordinary nature of the situation.

As a general rule, the accommodation capacity for minors has been sufficient, but in the autumn of 2015, the situation was very challenging. For instance, it was necessary to temporarily resort to overcapacity in existing units in order to accommodate applicants while waiting for the new units to become fully operational. Nevertheless, the basic needs of children and young people could always be met. It is likely that an equivalent number of this type of units have never before been established in Finland on such short notice. It is the Finnish Immigration Service’s aim to respond to the increase in the number of applicants and units by organising its operations and recruiting personnel to guide, plan and monitor the practical activities at group homes, supported living units and folk high schools. The parties maintaining the units also understood the challenging nature of the situation and responded to it well. In 2015, a total of 60 new group homes and supported living units were established for asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors. In addition, the Finnish Immigration Service arranges supported housing and training for asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors in 20 folk high schools through the Nutukka – Nuoret turvapaikanhakijat kansanopistossa (Nutukka – Young Asylum Seekers at Folk High Schools) project.

With regard to the unaccompanied minors who have been issued with a residence permit, new kinds of permanent solutions are sought as the current group home capacity is full and the number of unaccompanied minors with a residence permit will probably continue increasing in the future.

**LEGISLATIVE PROJECTS RELATED TO ASYLUM-SEEKING UNACCOMPANIED MINORS**

The legislative amendments related to the detention of foreign nationals entered into force on 1 July 2015. The Aliens Act was amended so that the detention of asylum-seeking unaccompanied children is prohibited and regulation pertaining to the detention of a child is further specified. An unaccompanied minor under 15 years of age may not be detained even after the decision of his/her removal has become enforceable. In addition, the detention of older unaccompanied minors for the purpose of ensuring removal is restricted. The detention of minors on police premises is prohibited.

**RESEARCH ON ASYLUM-SEEKING UNACCOMPANIED MINORS**

Research on asylum-seeking minors published in Finland in 2015 included Krister Björklund’s study Unaccompanied refugee minors in Finland – Challenges and good practices in a Nordic context. First of all, the study draws attention to the integration of children after they have been issued with a residence permit. Integration would be promoted if the family group home where those who have been issued with a residence permit live and the group home where they lived during the residence permit process were located close to one another so that the ties the child has already established in the country would not be broken. Another key finding is the need for and importance of coordination in a process involving multiple authorities, emphasised especially in the targeting of mental health services.

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212 Nuoret turvapaikanhakijat kansanopistossa - Nutukka 2. (available only in Finnish)
213 Ministry of the Interior, media release, 25 June 2015: Ulkomaalaisten sääliönottoa koskevat lakimuutokset voimaan. (available only in Finnish)
214 Björklund.
5.2. Other vulnerable groups

The legislative amendments related to the reception of applicants for international protection entered into force on 1 July 2015. The amendments specified the provisions of the Act on the Reception of Persons Applying for International Protection that apply to the assessment of the special needs of vulnerable persons, the accommodation of applicants for international protection and the representative of an unaccompanied minor. With these amendments, the Finnish legislation is harmonised with the EU’s Reception Conditions Directive which is part of the regulation entity related to the Common European Asylum System.\(^{215}\)

A project set up by the Ministry of the Interior for the term from 23 February to 31 December 2015 looked into the adoption of residence-related obligations and electronic surveillance as alternatives to the detention of foreign nationals. The aim was to reduce especially the detention of minors, people with families and other vulnerable foreign nationals. The project was based on a report on alternatives to detention, published in December 2014.\(^{216}\)

Along with the legislative amendments related to the National Assistance System for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings, the Assistance System was given a mandate, in order to protect particularly vulnerable victims of trafficking in human beings, to grant its customers a recovery period or a reflection period during which the victim can recover from what he/she has experienced and decide whether to get involved in cooperation.\(^ {217}\)

In the return monitoring development project being carried out by the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman in 2015–2018 and funded from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, particular attention is paid to the return-related situation of vulnerable persons who have been served with an expulsion decision.

In 2015, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) provided a report\(^{218}\) on its visit to Finland in September–October 2014. The Committee visited Finnish detention units, among other locations. In its report, the Committee calls upon the Finnish authorities to put in place as a matter of priority a prompt and systematic medical screening for all newly-arrived detainees. Furthermore, the report gives several recommendations on, inter alia, improving the availability of a nurse, ensuring adequate access to psychological assistance and psychiatric care for detainees and developing the activities offered to foreign nationals at the detention unit. The Committee also recommends that necessary measures be taken to ensure that unaccompanied minors are always provided with special care and accommodated in an open (or semi-open) establishment. In addition, the Committee recommends certain measures to ensure the legal remedies of detainees.

In 2015, the Government commissioned a report called *Maahanmuutto & turvallisuus – arvioita nykytilasta ja ennusteita tulevaisuudelle*\(^{219}\), drawn up under the leadership of the Police University College, in cooperation with Statistics Finland and the National Institute for Health and Welfare. On the basis of the analysis of the material, five security-wise vulnerable groups with foreign background were identified: immigrants with refugee background, the second immigrant generation (i.e. the children of immigrants), asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors, people residing illegally in the country without a residence permit (so-called undocumented persons) and Muslims converted to Christianity.

\(^{215}\) Ministry of the Interior, media release, 5 February 2015: Kansainvälistä suojelua hakevan vastaanottoa koskevat lainmuutokset voimaan. (available only in Finnish)

\(^{216}\) The appointment decision of the Ministry of the Interior, 23 February 2015: The appointment of the Säilöönoton vaihtoehdot project. (available only in Finnish)

\(^{217}\) Ihmiskaupan uhrien auttaminen ja ihmiskaupan uhrien auttamisjärjestelmän toiminta 1.7.2015 alkaen. Tietopaketti. (available only in Finnish)

\(^{218}\) Report to the Finnish Government on the Visit to Finland Carried Out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), 17 March 2015.

\(^{219}\) Laitinen – Pukarainen – Boberg, p. 2. (available only in Finnish)
6. Actions addressing trafficking in human beings

In 2015, residence permits for a victim of trafficking in human beings were issued to 11 victims. Of these, 82% were women and 8% men. In 2014, residence permits for a victim of trafficking in human beings were issued to 23 persons and in 2013, the corresponding figure was 13. In cases in which the residence permit was granted on other grounds, there may also have been indications of trafficking in human beings. In cases processed by the Finnish Immigration Service, elements of trafficking in human beings are reported in approximately 50 cases per year.

The increasing number of asylum seekers did not manifest itself as an increase in the number of residence permits on the grounds of trafficking in human beings or the number of victims who have sought inclusion in the National Assistance System for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings, at least not in 2015.

In the prevention of trafficking in human beings, the aim is to pay particular attention to unaccompanied minors, whose number grew 15-fold in 2015 over the previous year. The number of minors who have gone missing during the asylum process has multiplied from the previous years. Another group that requires particular attention is married minors. The asylum process has also revealed signs of phenomena related to trafficking in human beings, such as sexual or work-related exploitation in countries of transit and various individual cases of trafficking in human beings that have come up during interviewing. New Senior Advisers of the Asylum Unit receive a brief training on matters related to trafficking in human beings, related to, for instance, detecting trafficking in human beings and referring to the Assistance System.

Finland’s Ministry of the Interior and Nigeria’s anti-trafficking agency (NAPTIP) improve the efficiency of cooperation in preventing and combating trafficking in human beings. In 12 January 2015, a related Memorandum of Understanding was signed in Nigeria. Cooperation is increased especially by improving the efficiency of the exchange of information. In Finland, the competent authorities are the National Police Board, the National Bureau of Investigation and the Border Guard.

NATIONAL ASSISTANCE SYSTEM FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

At the end of 2015, the National Assistance System for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings included 89 customers. At that time, two of the customers were minors. The customers represented 26 different nationalities, with Nigerians as the largest nationality group. A typical Nigerian victim of trafficking in human beings has been subjected to sexual exploitation in another EU Member State.

In 2015, a total of 52 new customers were included in the Assistance System. Women accounted for 69% of the new customers while the share of women among all customers included in the Assistance System at the end of 2015 was 79%. The majority (52%) of the new customers had been subjected to work-related exploitation. Most typically, exploitation had taken place in the restaurant sector or in agricultural tasks in Finland. In absolute numbers, the number of people subjected to work-related exploitation was 27, whereas in 2014, the corresponding figure was 11. On the other hand, the number of victims of sexual exploitation decreased by 56% from the previous year (2015: 18 victims, 2014: 32 victims). The category “Other” refers to forms of trafficking in human beings that are not directly related to sexual or work-related exploitation. Examples of groups included in the Assistance System in 2015 are victims of trafficking in human beings related to forced marriage and forced participation in crime. No under-aged victims of trafficking in human beings have been referred or admitted into the Assistance System in 2015.

The majority (62%) of new customers have become victims of trafficking in human beings in Finland or their exploitation has either started or continued in Finland. This category also includes persons who have been lured to leave Finland and move abroad, where they have been subjected to circumstances with elements of trafficking in human beings. In 2014, a total of 42% of new customers included in the Assistance System had become victims in Finland.

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220 Ministry of the Interior, web news, 12 January 2015: Suomi ja Nigeria tehostavat yhteistyötä ihmiskaupan torjunnassa. (available only in Finnish)
221 Ihmiskaupan uhrien auttamisjärjestelmän tilannekatsaus 1.1.–31.12.2015. (available only in Finnish)
222 Ihmiskaupan uhrien auttamisjärjestelmän tilannekatsaus 1.1.–31.12.2014 (available only in Finnish); Ihmiskaupan uhrien auttamisjärjestelmän tilannekatsaus 1.1.–31.12.2015. (available only in Finnish)
During the first half of the year, the National Assistance System for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings received a slightly higher number of referrals for inclusion in the Assistance System than it normally does. However, the number of referrals during the second half of the year was considerably lower than in the corresponding period in the previous years. It is noteworthy that the number of referrals submitted by reception centres and the Police decreased especially in late summer and early autumn. During the first half of the year, reception centres submitted altogether 16 referrals for inclusion in the Assistance System and the Police 7 referrals, while during the second half of the year, the corresponding figures were 6 and 3.

The Reception Unit of the Finnish Immigration Service included a section on anti-trafficking in reception centre work meetings arranged in 2015 and in the orientation organised for new reception centre employees in the autumn of 2015. The large-scale immigration that started in the summer of 2015 has especially burdened the personnel of reception centres, the Finnish Immigration Service, the Police and the Border Guard, which has, for its part, decreased the number of referrals to the Assistance System as there has not been sufficient amount of time for the kind of encounters that create the trust required for the identification of victims. Nevertheless, a modest increase in the number of referrals could be witnessed towards the end of 2015. The Assistance System does not do outreach work. Potential victims of trafficking must be referred to the Assistance System.  

In July 2015, the Assistance System published a booklet on victim assistance and the Assistance System, directed at the public and private sector. It details, for example, how a person can be referred to the Assistance System, and what information should be provided to the potential victim of trafficking in the process.
LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENTS RELATED TO VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

The legislative amendments related to the National Assistance System for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings entered into force on 1 July 2015. The legislative amendments improve the National Assistance System for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings by making it clearer and more transparent. The legislative provisions specify more clearly what is meant by assistance measures in practice, and under what conditions the provision of assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings can be initiated and later discontinued. In addition, the amendments ensure the equal treatment of victims and clarify the division of responsibilities between the authorities. Along with the legislative amendments, the Assistance System can also formally identify its customer as a victim of trafficking in human beings. Other identifying actors are the criminal investigation authorities (the Police, the Border Guard and the prosecutor) and the Finnish Immigration Service. These amendments make it clear in the legislation that victims of trafficking in human beings who have a municipality of residence in Finland are also entitled to assistance. Furthermore, the Assistance System was given a mandate to grant its customers a recovery period or a reflection period. The recovery period may be granted for 1–3 months and it is intended for citizens of Finland and persons residing legally in the country. The reflection period is intended for illegally resident victims of trafficking in human beings and it regularises the residence for 1–6 months. During the recovery and reflection periods, the authorities responsible for the preliminary investigation and the prosecutor do not yet contact victims for the purpose of investigating the offence related to trafficking in human beings. However, victims would receive immediate assistance even if they are not ready to participate in investigating the crime. During the recovery and reflection periods, the victim can recover from what he/she has experienced and decide whether to get involved in cooperation with authorities for the purpose of investigating the offence. Along with the legislative amendment, the Finnish Immigration Service guides, plans and supervises the practical operations of the Assistance System.225

The legislative amendments related to the reception of applicants for international protection entered into force on 1 July 2015. The amendments specified the provisions of the Act on the Reception of Persons Applying for International Protection that apply to the assessment of the special needs of one vulnerable group: the victims of trafficking in human beings.226

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225 Ministry of the Interior, media release, 9 April 2015: Ihmiskaupan uhrien auttamisjärjestelmää koskevat lakimuutokset voimaan 1.7. (available only in Finnish); Ihmiskaupan uhrien auttaminen ja ihmiskaupan uhrien auttamisjärjestelmän toiminta 1.7.2015 alkaen. Tietopaketti. (available only in Finnish)
226 Ministry of the Interior, media release, 5 February 2015: Kansainvälistä suojelua hakevan vastaanottoa koskevat lainmuutokset voimaan. (available only in Finnish)
7. Migration and development policy

There is particular emphasis on the relation between migration policy and development in the current situation in which the volume of forced migration has multiplied. Nearly nine out of ten refugees in the world are residing in developing countries. As conditions deteriorate, they may head for Europe.

The Government’s decision to cut development cooperation funding by EUR 300 million, that is: by 38%, starting from 2016 has reflected on organisations involved in development cooperation. They have been forced to abandon planned and desired expansions of projects as well as to reduce existing activities.

For instance, the Finnish Refugee Council works in fragile states in West Africa. The goal of its work is to strengthen civil society and consequently prevent the recurrence of conflicts. The Finnish Refugee Council has worked in Sierra Leone for a long time and has tailored its activities according to the changes in the social situation. In 2015, nurse training was started as a response to the collapse of the healthcare sector caused by the Ebola epidemic. However, this work will be terminated in 2016 due to Finland’s cuts in development cooperation funds. If there are no opportunities to earn a living in the home country, especially young West Africans from Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone are ready to seek entry to Europe through Nigeria.

In Uganda, Finnish organisations, such as the Finnish Refugee Council and Finn Church Aid, work with refugees who have fled from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. In 2015, Uganda received 112,000 new refugees. The Finnish Refugee Council worked in five large refugee settlement areas in Uganda in 2015. It is the only organisation that offers adult education in these refugee settlement areas. Instead of the planned expansion of activities, the cuts in Finland’s development aid forced the Finnish Refugee Council not only to abandon the planned expansion but also to wind down its activities, although there is a considerable need for basic education for adults. The organisation has to completely terminate its work in, for instance, the Kyangwali refugee settlement area, with more than 2,000 students in 2015. This means that in the future, an equivalent number of people remains completely without education as there are no other actors in the adult education sector. There are more than 40,000 refugees in the area.

Finland also participates in the funding of the Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP) through the EU’s emergency fund for migration. In 2015, RDPP was being launched in the Horn of Africa and in North Africa. The goal of the programme is to help refugees find durable solutions through voluntary return, local integration or resettlement, for instance.

Furthermore, Finnish migrant NGOs, especially the Finland-based Somali diaspora organisations, play an active role in development cooperation. Out of the development cooperation funds intended for NGOs, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs provided funding for a total of 15 CSOs and 26 of their projects in Somalia in 2015. The total support amount is approximately EUR 3 million. Approximately half of this is channelled through immigrant organisations.

The healthcare development project conducted in northern Somalia in 2014–2016 continued in 2015. The project is funded by IOM and carried out in cooperation with the healthcare professionals of the Finnish Somali diaspora. In 2015, a similar healthcare project, called MIDA FINNSOM, was initiated by IOM and the Finnish Somali diaspora in Southern and Central parts of Somalia. In addition to healthcare development, the new programme also includes training. Between 50–60 Somali diaspora professionals will offer temporary mentoring in health and education ministries, as well as other institutions, such as local health institutions and universities, transferring skills and experiences gained while working and studying in Finland.

In Kosovo, the Finnish funded Diaspora Engagement for Economic Development project (DEED) is being implemented from 1 April 2012 to 30 June 2016 with a budget of approximately EUR 2 million. The project is an innovative initiative for enabling the Kosovo diaspora to take an active and effective role as development agents in their communities of origin. The project works with remittance receiving households, members of the

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227 Kaisa Väkiparta / Finnish Refugee Council
228 Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
Kosovo diaspora, as well as the relevant government authorities in Kosovo. The goal is to create opportunities for Kosovo’s people, at home and abroad, to create a better future. In order to achieve this main goal, it aims to strengthen the capacities of Kosovo’s authorities to implement the National Strategy for Diaspora, to upscale and consolidate the tested models and mechanisms that facilitate migrants’ investments in Kosovo, and improve the business environment in Kosovo to facilitate the development impact of migration and remittances. The project is funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and implemented jointly by the United Nations Development Programme in Kosovo and the International Organization for Migration mission in Kosovo. The main results of the DEED project in 2015 are as follows: the communication and cooperation between Diaspora and Kosovo Institutions was established and improved; Diaspora Businesses are more aware of the investment opportunities and business climate in Kosovo; businesses in Diaspora are partnering in trade as a result of the Networks established; and new jobs and new businesses were created.229
8. Irregular migration

A total of 14,286 persons residing in the country illegally were found in 2015, nearly five times the number in 2014. The number of persons found to be residing illegally is directly linked with the increase in the number of asylum seekers. The number of persons arriving in the country through arrangement of illegal immigration has also grown. According to the Police statistics, illegal immigration was arranged for 2,435 persons in 2015, which is more than six times the number in 2014.

The Finnish Immigration Service devotes increasing efforts to the prevention of irregular migration and in late 2015, it established the position of a Special Senior Adviser for prevention of irregular migration.231

In the operations of the National Bureau of Investigation, one of the top priorities is the investigation and prevention of arrangement of illegal immigration and smuggling in human beings. The National Bureau of Investigation has increased the efficiency of investigation and exchange of information in order to prevent cross-border crime related to the arrangement of illegal immigration by organised crime.

EXPULSION DECISIONS AND ENTRY BANS

In 2015, the number of expulsion and refusal of entry decisions was 7,524,232 which was more than 25% more than in the previous two years. Growth has taken place in particular in the number of refusal of entry decisions related to the Finnish Immigration Service’s negative asylum decisions. On the other hand, the number of refusal of entry decisions on crime-related grounds in 2015 decreased by up to 24% year-on-year (from 742 to 565).

The Finnish Immigration Service makes a refusal of entry decision, on the basis of a proposal from the Police and the Border Guard, for foreign nationals who have resided in the country for more than three months and in connection with a negative residence permit decision when the applicant resides in the country. The number of deportation decisions remained at the same level as in the previous years, totalling 279 cases. Unlike a refusal of entry decision, a deportation decision is made for a person who has or has had a residence permit for Finland. In connection with an expulsion decision, it is possible to issue an entry ban. In 2015, a total of 2,879 entry bans were issued, representing subtle growth when compared to the previous year.

Persons issued with a refusal of entry decision233

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>2,435</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Finnish Immigration Service.

Arrangement of illegal immigration

Source: Police.

230 Cases that are included in the Police statistics and in which the asylum investigation or the investigation of a violation of the Aliens Act revealed that illegal immigration was arranged for the person.

231 Finnish Immigration Service.

232 The total number of refusal of entry decisions made by the Finnish Immigration Service, the Police and the Border Guard.

233 Expulsion and refusal of entry decisions.
LEGISLATIVE PROJECTS RELATED TO COMBATING IRREGULAR MIGRATION

The amendment of the Act on the Processing of Personal Data by the Police entered into force on 27 January 2015 and expanded the Police’s rights to utilise passenger records in order to prevent and investigate crime. The purpose of the amendment is, among other things, to improve the capacity to identify persons who travel to conflict areas for the purpose of participating in combat or return from there.234

The mandate of the authorities conducting the monitoring of foreign nationals was further specified in the legislative amendments that entered into force on 1 May 2015. In addition, the legislation now defines in more detail than before what the monitoring of foreign nationals is. Clear regulation makes it easier to see the monitoring of foreign nationals as normal official operations that respect equality and human rights. Legislation was amended to authorise the Police and the Finnish Border Guard to carry out the monitoring of foreign nationals also on premises subject to public peace. Such locations include, for instance, restaurants, business premises and construction sites. The amendments enhance the cooperation possibilities of the authorities in the prevention of informal economy, among other fields. When conducting the monitoring of foreign nationals, it is also possible to make observations related to indications of trafficking in human beings and other similar offences. Legislative amendments are based on the Action Plan against Illegal Immigration for 2012–2015 (the Ministry of the Interior’s publication 37/2012).235

The Government Bills to the Parliament for the Act on the municipality’s obligation to arrange certain healthcare services for certain foreign nationals and for an act amending the Act on Cross-Border Health Care were not approved by the Parliament. The amendment would have applied to the arrangement of healthcare services for third-country nationals who reside in Finland and do not have a residence permit required by the Aliens Act or who have been issued with a temporary residence permit, on certain grounds separately specified in the Aliens Act, but who are not entitled to public healthcare services other than urgent medical care.236 Along with the processing of the legislative proposal, the case of so-called undocumented persons momentarily made the headlines in media.237

Persons issued with a deportation decision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Finnish Immigration Service.
9. Return

A person who has been issued with an expulsion decision, that is: a refusal of entry or deportation decision, may leave the country independently or through assisted return under the system of voluntary return or the Police may enforce his/her removal from the country. Removal from the country enforced by the Police can be executed either in such a way that the Police escorts the returnee to an aircraft or ship or as a so-called "escorted return" in which case the person is escorted all the way to his/her home country. In 2015, the number of removals enforced by the Police increased slightly when compared to the previous years. When analysed by nationality, the main group among persons removed from the country by the Police was Iraqi nationals (537): their number more than doubled from the previous year. The second largest group was Albanians (478), whose number grew no less than sevenfold when compared to 2014. The third largest group was Estonians (428), whose number remained at the same level as in the previous years. The number of escorted returns increased by a fifth from 2014 due to chartered return flights arranged for Albanian asylum seekers.

On 1 January 2014, an obligation to monitor, in all of its stages, the enforcement of removal of foreign nationals subject to deportation and refusal of entry was added to the Aliens Act and the Act on the Ombudsman for Minorities (now replaced by the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman). The everyday work of the removal monitoring team includes visits to detention facilities where persons subject to expulsion are detained and the monitoring of the journey of persons returning escorted by the police. The assessment of the application of legislation, guidelines and measures is also among the team’s tasks. On the basis of information received, the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman selects the decisions, the enforcement of which he/she wishes to monitor more closely. In 2015, the team participated in 13 flights, monitoring the journey of persons returning escorted by the police.

The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund provides funding for the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman’s return monitoring development project. The project develops return monitoring that was started in 2014. Through this development, an external and independent removal monitoring system, required by the EU directive and our national legislation, will be consolidated in Finland, strengthening the legal protection of third-country nationals in connection with their return. In development work, particular attention is paid to the situation of vulnerable persons. The project is carried out in 2015–2018.

Two reception centres for people returning to their home countries are planned to be opened in the Helsinki metropolitan area. The idea is to establish a reception centre that focuses on return and is intended for persons issued with an expulsion decision. Its operational concept would differ somewhat from other reception centres.

It was decided that a transit department for persons who return voluntarily to their home countries on the Police’s charter flights be opened in connection with an existing reception centre in Vantaa. The transit department make it smoother for returnees to handle departure formalities, to wait for their departure and to go to their flight directly from the transit department. The department began operating in February 2016.

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238 Office of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman.
LEGISLATIVE PROJECTS RELATED TO RETURN

The Ministry of the Interior has set up a project to investigate how the removal of certain foreign nationals found guilty of crimes could be expedited. The term of the project is from 24 September 2015 to 31 December 2016. The purpose is to chart any removal-related problems. The project reviews related legislation, instructions and guidelines issued by the authorities and official practices. The project assesses whether official practices and related instructions and guidelines should be changed and prepares proposals on necessary legislative amendments.240

VOLUNTARY RETURN

In 2015, a total of 634 persons returned under the system of voluntary return, which means that their number nearly doubled when compared to the previous years.241 Under the system of voluntary return, once again, the largest group was those returning to Iraq, 250 persons, which is three times the number of the previous year. The second largest group was Albanians, with 147 returnees, which grew more than sevenfold from 2014.

During the autumn, the popularity of return and also the returnees’ hurry to get back to their home countries surprised many actors. The system of voluntary return became badly overburdened in the autumn and the Iraqi diplomatic mission also ran out of repatriation certificates due to their high demand. It is worth noting that in the end, many of those who applied for support for assisted voluntary return returned to their home countries independently, at their own expense, as due to the overburdened situation, they would possibly have even needed to spend months waiting for return with support for assisted voluntary return. In statistics, this can be seen as a difference between applications for voluntary return and actual returns.

LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENTS AND PROJECTS RELATED TO VOLUNTARY RETURN

The legislative amendments required by the consolidation of the system of voluntary return entered into force on 1 July 2015. One of the background aspects is the EU Return Directive that was enforced in Finland in 2011. The Directive emphasises voluntary return as the primary form of return. The consolidation of the system of voluntary return is related to the Government Programme’s target of expediting the removal of persons after the refusal of asylum. The aim of the system is to give people whose asylum applications have been refused in Finland or who have cancelled their asylum applications the opportunity to return to their home country.

Statistics on voluntary return 2010–2014

240 The appointment decision of the Ministry of the Interior, 24 September 2015: Project to investigate how the removal of certain foreign nationals found guilty of crimes could be expedited. (available only in Finnish)
countries or countries of permanent residence voluntarily. In addition, Finland aims at implementing bilateral return agreements with countries in which circumstances have improved, making the return of asylum seekers to their countries of origin possible. The goal of the legislative amendments is to increase the attractiveness of voluntary return by no longer granting a temporary residence permit or reception services to a person whose asylum application has been refused and who could return to his/her home country.242

For instance, the Finnish Refugee Council has expressed its concern over the fact that the amendments may increase the number of undocumented, or irregular, migrants in Finland.243

The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) provides funding for the Vapaaehtoisen paluun vakiinnuttaminen (Consolidation of Voluntary Return) project carried out by the Finnish Immigration Service. The project produces information materials on voluntary return, organises training and information events for reception centres, authorities and stakeholders as well as prepares instructions and guidelines for authorities. The reception centres acting as partners in the project develop methods for working with customers in the field of voluntary return and share this competence that they accumulate during the project with all reception centres. The project is carried out in 2015–2016.244

CHALLENGES IN VOLUNTARY RETURN

Until the summer of 2015, voluntary return was carried out on the basis of projects led by IOM. Along with legislative amendments, voluntary return was consolidated as part of the operations of authorities. The new system was launched starting from July 2015. Simultaneously, the number of asylum seekers took a drastic upward turn, which posed challenges for the new system, especially as new reception centres were established at the same time and all reception operations, including return-related issues, were completely new to these centres. The return system became badly overburdened in the autumn.

Solutions have been sought for the challenges related to voluntary return. In the Finnish Immigration Service, human resources have been increased in the processing of applications related to voluntary return and the service provider IOM has raised its capacity in arranging returns.

In the summer, the number of Albanian asylum seekers multiplied compared to the earlier situation. The phenomenon seems to indicate that misleading information would have been spread about the system of voluntary return as the Albanians reported support for assisted voluntary return as one of the reasons for their arrival in the country. In August, the Finnish Immigration Service decided that Albanian asylum seekers are not paid other support for assisted voluntary return than travel tickets to their home locations. Only particularly vulnerable persons were offered allowance for assisted voluntary return in addition to travel tickets.

RESEARCH ON VOLUNTARY RETURN

In its second focussed study of 2015, Dissemination of information on voluntary return: how to reach irregular migrants not in contact with authorities, the European Migration Network studies the dissemination of information on voluntary return. In Finland, the dissemination of information about the possibility of voluntary return primarily takes place during the asylum process and after a negative decision (if such has been made) as the majority of the voluntary return target group in Finland are asylum seekers. The study also notes that Finland is not a particularly attractive country for illegal entry as Finland is one of the most efficient countries in the EU in the enforcement of removal.

242 Ministry of the Interior, media release, 21 May 2015: Vapaaehtoisen paluun järjestelmä vakiinnutetaan. (available only in Finnish)
243 Kansan Uutiset, 23 February 2015: Pakolaisapu: Suomi luo tietoisesti uuden paperittomien siirtolaisten ryhmän. (available only in Finnish)
244 The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund projects, updated on 12 February 2016.
245 Saastamoinen / EMN focussed study 2/2015.
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