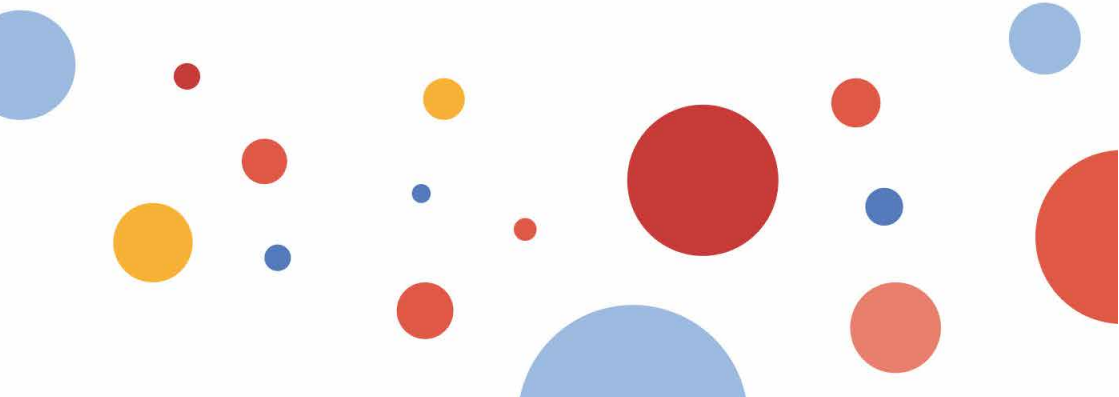




INTEGRATION AS A FAMILY

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FOREWORD

You have moved to a new country. Many things in Finland are different from your home country. Things can feel strange. Some things that are new include the language, culture, customs, climate, food and people. Approach all the new things fearlessly and with an open mind!

It is important for the whole family – every family member – to integrate into the new country. Everyone also has the right to integrate. Be interested in how the other family members are integrating and support each other. Make it a family project.

This booklet talks about some things that can help you and your family with your integration.

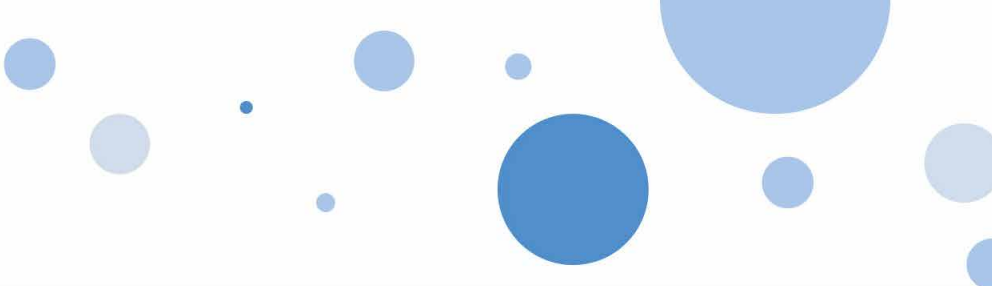
Welcome to Finland!



WHY DO I NEED TO INTEGRATE?

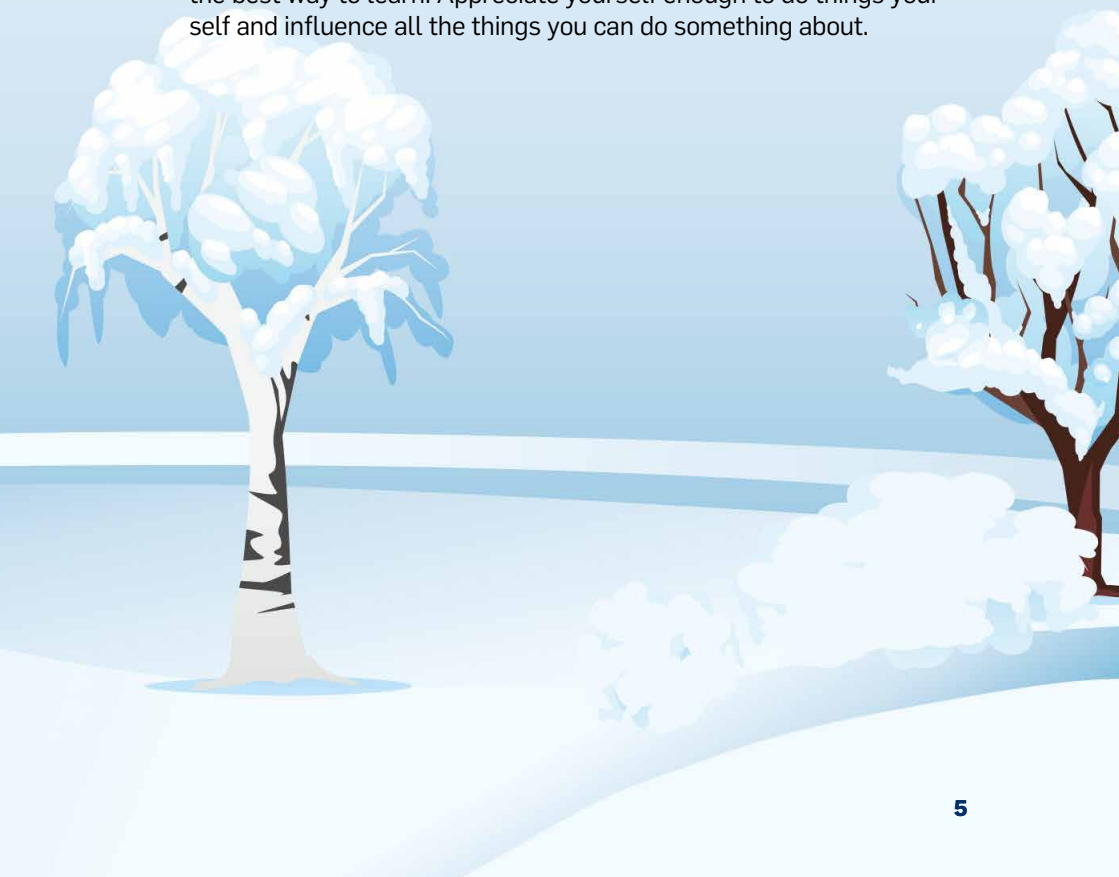
Integration means adapting to a new country and learning the knowledge and skills you need in society and in working life. Integration does not mean that you should forget your own language and culture. It is a good idea to continue to speak your mother tongue at home. Your culture is an essential part of your identity and it is important for you to become part of the Finnish society while maintaining your own language and culture. Integration takes place in everyday life, such as in school, at work, through hobbies or even at the grocery store.





Integrating into the new country is important so that you can live an independent life and feel like you know how to do things and cope with life. Finns will respect you more if you are actively involved and try to do your part. Finland may feel more like home once you can cope independently with everyday tasks and understand the society around you.

The main responsibility for integration is on you. No one else can go through integration for you. You need to be active and fearless, that's the best way to learn. Appreciate yourself enough to do things yourself and influence all the things you can do something about.



INTEGRATION IS A PROCESS

Settling in and adapting to a new country can cause all kinds of mental stress. Integration can bring up a variety of feelings from gratitude to homesickness and fear. Remember that all your feelings are normal. Talking about your feelings is important and will make you feel better.



Adapting to a new country can be described as a process with three phases:

- At first, everything is new and different: your friends, home, the landscape and the language. This phase can feel scary, because you have lost everything that is familiar. You may feel confused and helpless.
- In the next phase, you will start to observe the conditions in your new country and perhaps compare them with your home country. When you start learning the Finnish language, your relationship with the new country will change and your integration process will move forward.
- In the third phase, you will be able to find a balance between the culture of your home country and the culture of the new country and Finland will start to feel like home.



Positive relationships with other people and social skills are important for your mental wellbeing during the integration process. Get together with your friends and family. Talk to others and tell them how you feel. They may also have similar feelings and thoughts.

Integration is easier if you learn the language, show curiosity and interest in things, explore new places and meet new people. Do not stay at home, but look for contacts and move away from the safety of the familiar. Approach everything new without fear and with an open mind!





MOTIVATION

Finding internal motivation is important. It is up to you to make the decision to want to integrate into the new country.

Think about what would motivate you to integrate and where you can find motivation, for example to learn the new language. Are you motivated by being able to manage your affairs on your own or finding a job more easily? Or perhaps finding it easier to have conversations with Finns and make new friends? You can also be motivated by being able to read Finnish newspapers and understanding the society around you. Everyone is motivated by different things, and you should think about what motivates you personally.



GOAL

It can be easier to find motivation if you set yourself some goals. For example, you could think about starting vocational education, finding a job, buying a home or being able to manage your own affairs more independently one year from now. It is also a good idea to talk about your path with a professional.

Ask yourself:

What is my goal and what are my chances of getting to where I want to be?

Will I have my own home in 10 years' time and will all my family members be living their lives according to their own hopes and goals?

Do we have any common goals as a family?

How can we reach our goals?

You can also set yourself smaller sub-goals – for example, learning 10 new words every day. Another goal could be finding at least five opportunities every week to speak Finnish with someone.



LANGUAGE – THE KEY TO SOCIETY

Learning the language plays a key role in integration. In order to feel like part of the Finnish society, you will need to learn the Finnish language.

The language will create many opportunities for you: you can build new networks, get to know new people, find a job or a place to study and move on in life. Learning the language will help you understand the new country and culture better, watch Finnish news and other television programmes. Your everyday life will run smoother and you will have more diverse job and career opportunities.

Children often learn the language quickly. Adults can also learn the language if they work hard enough.



How can you learn the language?

Don't be afraid of using the language, act like a parrot and repeat what you hear. Be open and soak in the words in your environment. Don't be afraid of making mistakes. Have fun when you study. Be curious and interested in the new language. Practice the language frequently.

Study the language in a course or in school, be active in your free time. Use the internet, YouTube, language apps and books. Watch TV shows, plain language news and children's programmes in Finnish. Listen to the radio and music in Finnish and find a hobby. Don't be afraid to talk to people, even if you only know a few words in Finnish. Read different kinds of texts, children's books, newspapers and magazines, advertisements and tables of contents.

Use topics and materials that you are interested in to learn the new language! Find the learning styles that work best for you, there are many options available.

Memorize and learn to write:

your name, personal identity code, address and phone number.

BEING A MEMBER OF THE FINNISH SOCIETY

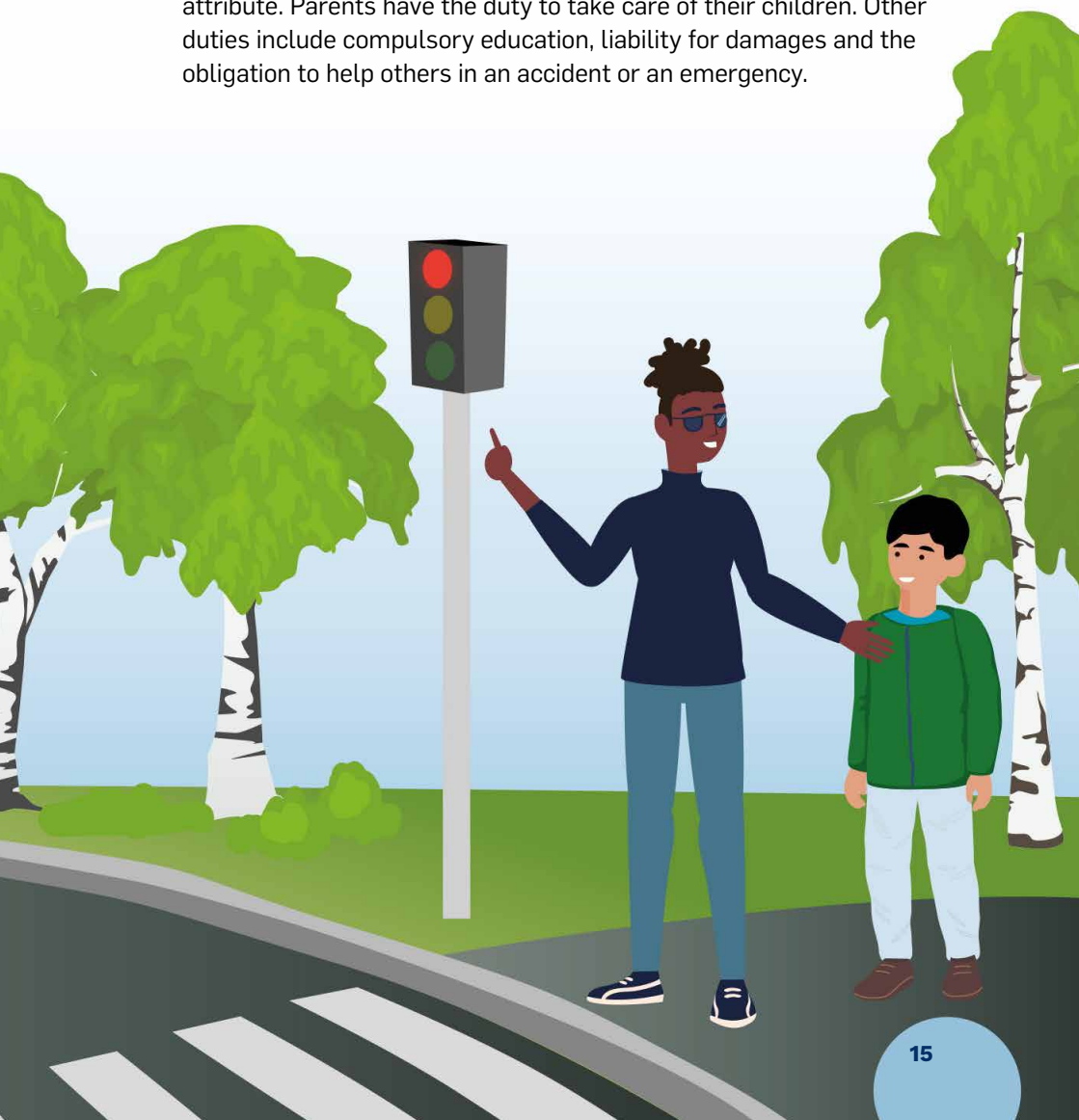
In Finland, everyone has the same rights, duties and opportunities. Get to know them thoroughly. In Finland, religion does not affect decisions or the way people are treated.

Finland is a free country, and people are free to do many things here. For example, in Finland you have freedom of religion and freedom of speech, freedom to choose where you live and freedom to choose your spouse. Here, everyone can live their lives in private and in the way they want.

In Finland, we believe that we have built this society together so we are also responsible for it together. We take care of the environment, we are honest with each other and with society.



In Finland, it is your duty to obey the law. The law is the same for everyone and everyone is equal. No one should be treated differently because of their gender, age, religion, disability or some other attribute. Parents have the duty to take care of their children. Other duties include compulsory education, liability for damages and the obligation to help others in an accident or an emergency.



FINNISH WORKING CULTURE

Honesty and hard work are appreciated in working life. If you don't understand something, ask, and don't hesitate to ask the same thing again. It is important for you to know what you are doing and understand what you are being asked to do. Nobody will get angry if you ask a lot of questions. Your supervisors and co-workers are there for you – you can go and talk to them and ask them for help.



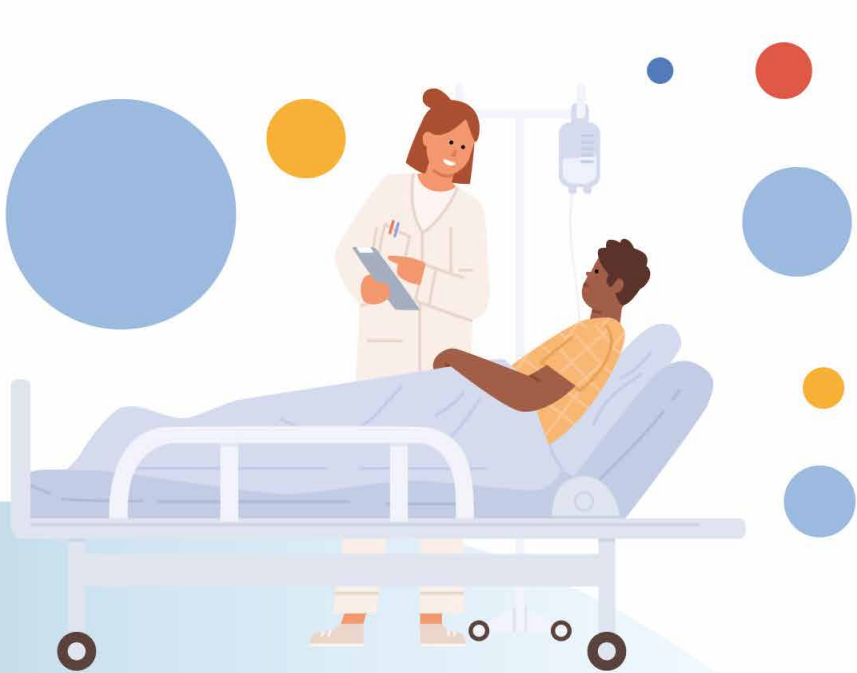
Equity and equality are important values in working life as well. It is important for you to take initiative and be responsible and reliable. You should be punctual when it comes to schedules. You should always let your supervisor know if you are running late or sick. You cannot be absent from work without a good reason. You should always discuss absences with your supervisor. In Finland, your religion or culture may not disrupt your work. When you are at work, follow the common rules of the workplace, free time is kept separate.



TAXATION

In Finland, people pay taxes to the state on all their income. Taxes are also paid on goods and services. Taxes are almost always paid whenever money exchanges hands. Since people in Finland pay taxes, all the members of society have the right to basic public services and a safe life. For example, you do not need to pay large hospital bills. Finland has a good, free education system that is funded by tax revenue. Child benefits, basic social assistance and pensions are also funded by tax revenue.

Paying taxes is important and the duty of every citizen, because many things and services that we may take for granted are actually funded by tax revenue.



PERSONAL FINANCE

It is important to look after your finances. You should create a budget, plan your spending and think about how you will make your money last all month. First, pay the necessary expenses, such as rent and electricity. After that, you can estimate how much money you have left for your other expenses that month.

Consumer credit, hire-purchase credit (part payment plans) and instant loans are easy to get, but difficult to pay back. They can lead you to financial problems. Avoid taking them out. If you need to buy something, compare prices and remember that second-hand shops also sell a lot of good items and clothes at a low price.



WELLBEING AND LEISURE

Take care of your overall wellbeing. Wellbeing consists of mental, physical and social elements. A physically active hobby and a healthy diet will keep you in shape and give you energy. Friends and stimulating activities in your free time are important for your mental ability to cope.

It is a good idea to find hobbies that you and your family members enjoy and that support wellbeing. A hobby means an activity that you enjoy doing in your free time. It could be something related to exercise, art, handicrafts or something else that puts you in a good mood and interests you. Exploring nature, camping, berry picking, fishing and mushrooming are also great hobbies that help you relax and keep your mind and body healthy.



VOLUNTEER WORK

Volunteer work means work without pay. You can look for volunteer work based on your personal interests, for example from organizations or homes for the elderly. This will give you something meaningful and important to do that also makes you feel good. Volunteer work will also help you find Finnish contacts, learn the Finnish language and get to know the Finnish working culture.



IDENTITY

Identity means what you think about yourself and how you perceive yourself. Everyone has a personal identity and there are no right answers as to how it is formed. Instead of answers, there are lots of questions that each family member should think about in private and also discuss together with the others. Identity also changes and develops over time and whenever the circumstances change.

Questions to think about when moving to a new country:

- What will my identity and my place be in Finland?
- How will I balance the Finnish culture and the culture of my country of origin? What will I keep and what will I give up?
- How will I balance work or studying and family life?
- Will I allow my children to find their own identity and path in life? Will I be able to accept it if they adapt to the Finnish society better than I do? Will I resist or enable changes in my children's life?



Work

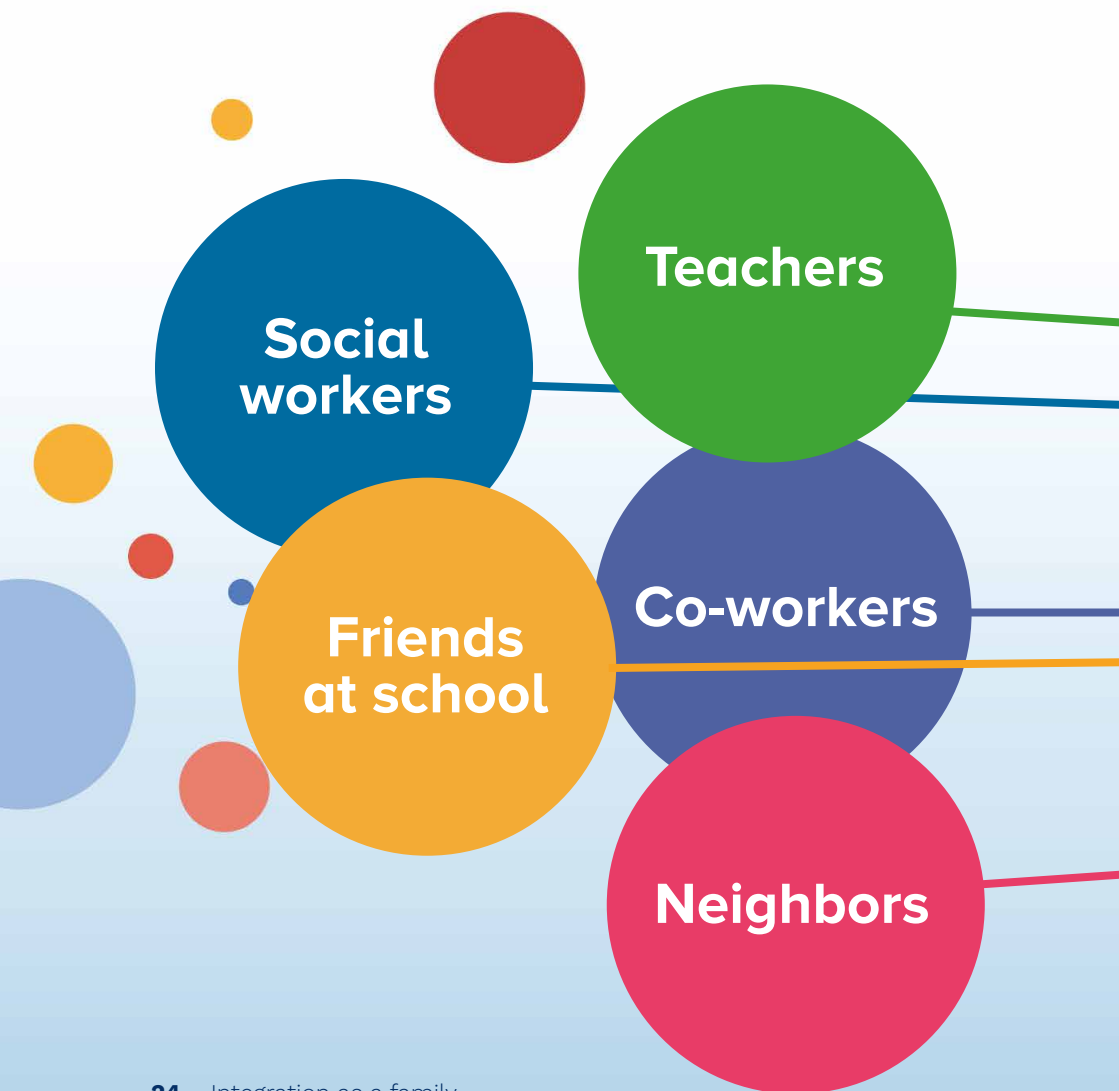
Studies

Family



NETWORK

In Finland, you do not have to do things on your own. The people around you and the professionals form a network.



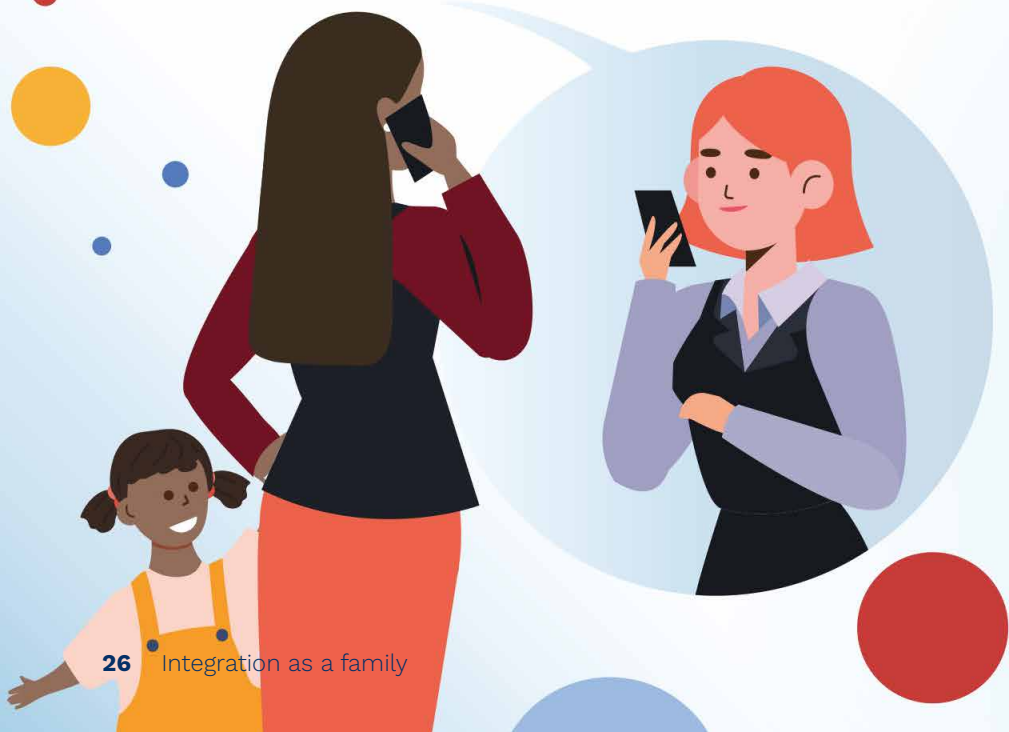


Relatives and friends

FAMILY

In Finland, men and women are equal and they share the responsibility for the family, the children and managing the family finances. It is important for both spouses to be able to take care of family matters and this is why all decisions concerning the family should be made together. It is not the children's responsibility to take care of matters that belong to their parents. Support each other and show interest in each other's lives. Help each other in your everyday life, because your family is the most important thing in life.

The integration process is different for every individual. Children and young people often integrate faster. It is still important that the parents also integrate and adapt to their new home country. This way, the whole family will feel better. Children have their own things and their own path to travel – support your child with the things in their life. Be genuinely interested in your child's life. Ask questions, listen and encourage your child in all phases of life.



A daily rhythm, clear daily routines and various activities help the whole family adapt to the new country. They provide safety and a clear structure in everyday life. Make sure that your children get enough sleep, rest and nutrition. It is up to the adults to set boundaries and ensure the safe growth and development of the children.

Cooperation with early childhood education and care and the school is important for the growth and development of your child. The common goal is to raise healthy, happy and capable children. Carefully read all the papers that your child brings home with them. Attend parents' evenings and discussions with teachers and caretakers. If you have any questions or are concerned about your child, do not hesitate to contact their teacher. There is no need to be intimidated by the teacher. The teacher wants to know how your family is doing.



STORIES OF INTEGRATION

THE STORY OF AN ARAB MAN

I came to Finland as an asylum seeker seven years ago. I realized that this is where I'll be living for the rest of my life. I decided to do everything I could to adapt and find my place in this new, strange society. I had a chance to start my life over. A new country – new possibilities! I started studying the language right away. Now that I have lived in Finland for seven years, I've studied for a new profession and I have a permanent job. I have Finnish friends and I feel appreciated. The most important thing has been learning the Finnish language. I learn more new words and things every day. Learning the language has been the key to absolutely everything.



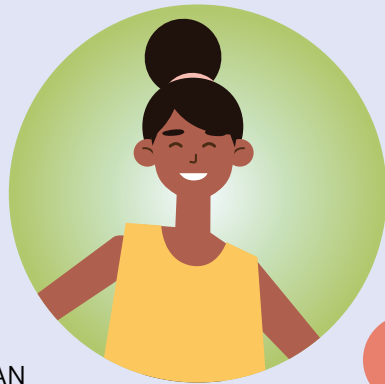


THE STORY OF AN AFRICAN WOMAN

I came to Finland five years ago with my family. I'm the mother of a family with three small children. At first, everything felt difficult and new in Finland. Now I'm studying to become a practical nurse and working as a personal assistant at the same time. My dream is to get a job after I graduate. I want to be an active member of society who goes to work and lives just like the other Finns do. Being hard-working and motivated has helped me with my integration. I haven't given up, even though balancing the new language, culture, school and family has often felt hard.

THE STORY OF A SOUTH AMERICAN WOMAN

I moved to Finland with my husband two years ago. At first, I stayed at home with my son and studied Finnish independently. Later, my son started daycare and I was able to attend a Finnish language course. In addition to the school, I also study Finnish at home and go to places where I can use the language. I also work as a cleaner. I feel that being active has been the most important thing in my integration to the new country. I'm not afraid of going to new places, participating in events and using the Finnish language in everyday situations. The language has been the key to my integration.



THE STORY OF AN AFRICAN WOMAN

I moved to Finland three years ago with my family. I've worked hard to learn the language the whole time I have lived in Finland. I'm active and fearless in my daily life and I try to avoid staying at home all the time. It's important to step outside your home, even if you're feeling tired. In my integration, finding motivation and setting goals has been important, in addition to being active and fearless. My dream is to study in Finland to become a practical nurse and find a job. I'm currently in practical training in a home for the elderly and I hope I'll be able to work here in the future as well. Finland has given me so much, it's my new, dear homeland!



THE STORY OF AN ARAB MAN

I came to Finland eight years ago. My hobbies have played an important role in my integration, because I have found Finnish friends and learned the language and culture through them. The internet has also been a big help in learning the language.

After being granted asylum, I was accepted to study electrical engineering. In my home country, my family ran an electrical engineering company, so I wanted to continue this career in my new home country as well. I have now graduated from vocational school and found a job in my field. My integration has been a long process with ups and downs. Being able to talk to people who are important to me about the things on my mind has been important.

Toivola-Luotolan Settlementti

ROHKEASTI IHMISEN PUOLELLA

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