



Elinkeino-, liikenne- ja ympäristökeskus
Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment



Immigration Strategy for Northern Ostrobothnia 2015

Summary

Foreword

Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment for North Ostrobothnia, which was established at the beginning of 2010, is a regional state administrative authority, whose statutory tasks also include immigration, integration and the promotion of good ethnic relations. The Promotion of Work-related Immigration project pursued within Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment for North Ostrobothnia has been in charge for managing the strategy process.

The strategy is the result of close cooperation between parties engaged in immigration issues in Northern Ostrobothnia. It is based on their experiences about immigration and on statistical data, background inquiries and surveys. The core of the strategy consists of priorities, which cover the aspects that all the actors should develop and improve in order to create a tolerant atmosphere that gains strength from internationalisation, to ensure the availability of skilled labour and to support the integration of immigrants having moved here for different reasons.

This year immigration has been publicised broadly in the mass media. The labour market situation has changed considerably since the beginning of the strategy compilation process. The statistics analysed for the strategy and the survey conducted with employers together indicate, however, that despite the current trends we, too, must prepare for a time when the people living here do not necessarily provide enough labour resources to the companies situated in the region. All the involved actors should launch long-term future-oriented efforts in order to attract new experts to work in Northern Ostrobothnia and to integrate them and the existing immigrants successfully. Attention should also be paid

to integrating the mainstream population, as we, too, should learn how to live in international, multicultural Northern Ostrobothnia. The purpose of the strategy is in part to ensure that this complex task can be completed successfully and that different types of issues concerning migration and the recruitment of foreign labour can be addressed. The aim is that regional actors will commit themselves to the strategy and implement its objectives through their actions.

The personnel responsible for preparing the strategy at Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment for North Ostrobothnia wish to express their warm thanks to all the parties that contributed to the strategy work.

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Background

The share of immigrants of the population is much smaller in Northern Ostrobothnia than in Southern Finland. In Oulu, for example, the share was 2.2 per cent in 2009 (3 101 persons), as compared with 7.2 per cent in Helsinki and 4.7 per cent in Turku. There were a total of 5058 immigrants in Northern Ostrobothnia at the end of 2009. The number has increased by some 280 per year in the last few years. The growing number of foreigners calls for systematic actions to prepare for immigration. With this in mind, an immigration strategy has been drawn up for Northern Ostrobothnia.

The strategy will serve as guideline document for immigration issues in the region and coordinate the existing organisations and operations dealing with immigration issues. It also has a future-oriented focus and underlines the management of new immigration projects and operations.

The immigration strategy sets out from an operational environment analysis based on statistical data. An inquiry about the recruitment of foreign labour was conducted with companies, associations and municipalities in Northern Ostrobothnia in October 2008. The viewpoints of regional immigration actors were taken into consideration as broadly as possible when preparing the strategy. The framework of the strategy was set up in three work seminars with participants representing a large number of regional parties engaged in immigration issues: companies, authorities, municipalities, associations, project actors and immigrants. Comments about the draft strategy, which was drawn up on the basis of workshops, were requested from several actors in order to finish off the strategy.

The strategy will be specified, where necessary, and will have to be updated in any case

in 2015 at the latest. The implementation of the strategy will be monitored annually on the basis of indicators such as the number of foreign citizens in the region or the number of employed immigrants.

The main party responsible for the strategy is the Immigration Committee set by the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment. The task of the Committee is to assist the Regional Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, the Regional State Administrative Agency, the region's Employment and Economic Development Offices and municipalities in developing and harmonising integration and in addressing other questions related to immigration. The strategy appoints the parties responsible for each priority.

Internationalisation and the growing number of foreigners also show more and more in the streets.



Parties responsible for the strategy

Authorities

- Immigration Committee
- Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment for North Ostrobothnia
- Regional State Administrative Agency for Northern Finland
- Council of Oulu Region
- Employment and Economic Development Offices
- The police
- Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela)
- Tax office of Northern Ostrobothnia

Organisations

- Employer and employee organisations
- Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK)
- Other organisations and associations
- Northern Finland Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations (ETNO)

Municipalities and parishes

- Municipalities
- Education institutions
- Parishes

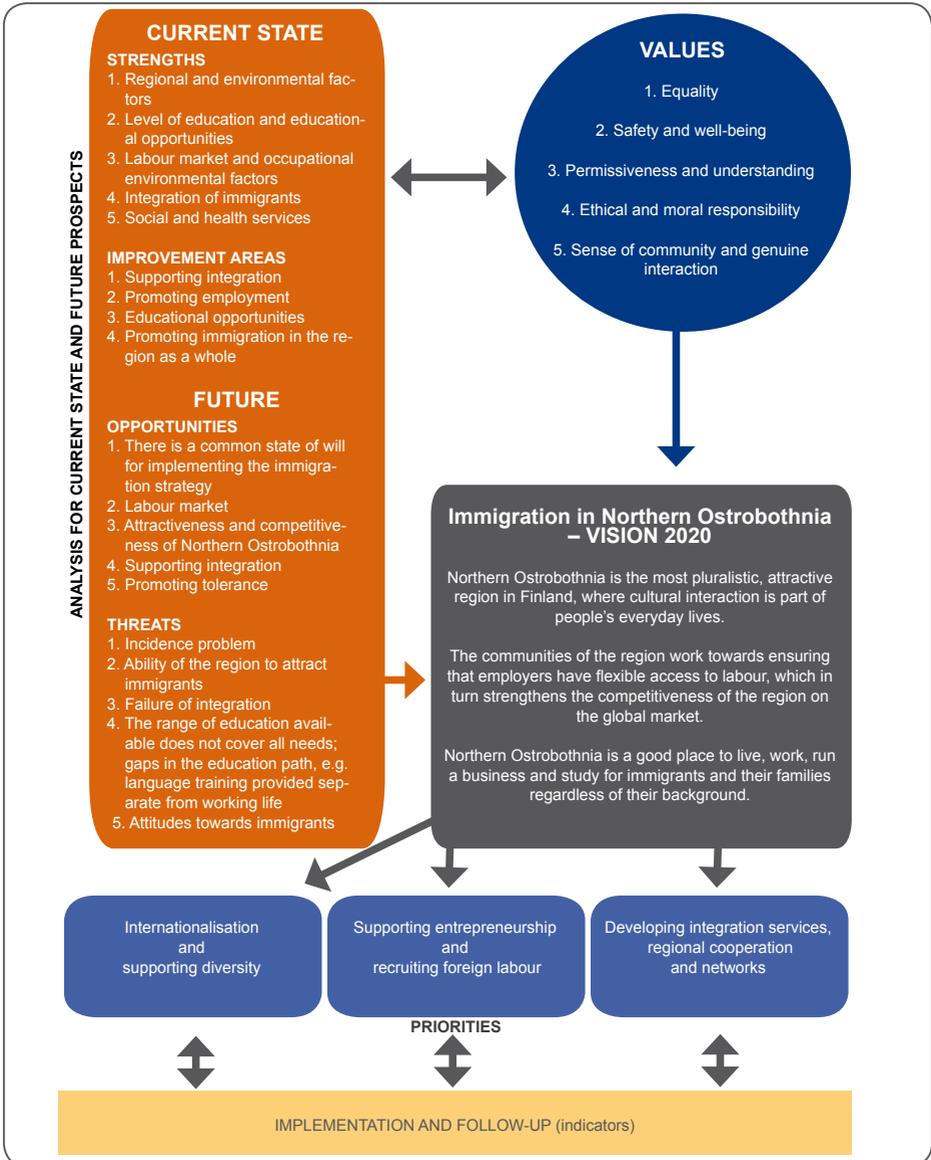
Companies and organisations supporting them

- Entrepreneur organisations
- Oulu Chamber of Commerce
- Municipal and regional development companies
- Recruitment companies

Subsistence farming in Ruukki. Rahlan H Huong in the front, with her daughter Rahlan Saara and father Rahlan Y Lem.



Immigration strategy



The Immigration Strategy for Northern Ostrobothnia is based on five **values** defined in the workshops:

1. *Equality*
2. *Safety and well-being*
3. *Permissiveness and understanding*
4. *Ethical and moral responsibility*
5. *Sense of community and genuine interaction*

Priorities

1 Internationalisation and supporting diversity

The aim of the first priority is to prepare different types of operation models and procedures for supporting diversity in schools, education institutions, workplaces and in people's everyday lives. Major emphasis is also placed on factors connected with the internationalisation of companies and education institutions in the region. The challenge here is that the various parts of the region differ in terms of their future challenges and the current state of internationalisation.

In order to succeed in national and international competition, Northern Ostrobothnia must be able to reform and also open up to influence from elsewhere. As a term, diversity means that the region can be proud of its history, culture and the practises it has developed during the years for dealing with things, at the same time accepting new, different

Based on the above values, the workshops formulated a vision entitled **Immigration in Northern Ostrobothnia – VISION 2020:**

Northern Ostrobothnia is the most pluralistic, attractive region in Finland, with daily cultural interaction between its inhabitants. The communities of the region work towards ensuring that employers have flexible access to labour, which in turn strengthens the competitiveness of the region on the global market. Northern Ostrobothnia is a good place to live, work, run a business and study for immigrants and their families regardless of their background.

practises and cultures. Innovations that form the basis for growth are best generated at the interface between old and new operation cultures.

1.1 Supporting diversity in schools, workplaces and people's everyday lives

International education must be extended to all levels from early childhood education onwards. The internationalisation theme should be included in studies qualifying people to work with young children, paying attention to the local culture as well. The operation of schools, day-care centres and clubs should be developed in order to support international education more effectively.

The companies in Northern Ostrobothnia are not as familiar with immigrant employees as those situated in Helsinki Metropolitan Area, for example. Entrepreneurs may not have the courage to hire immigrants, due to their own

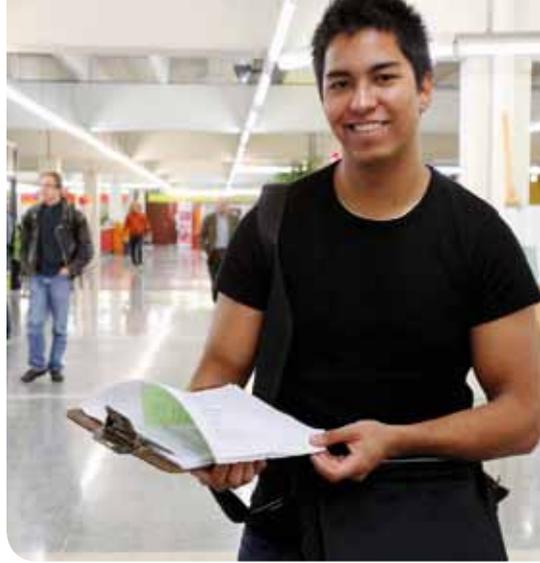
prejudice, inadequate knowledge of multiculturalism or fear of how customers will react. One way of influencing attitudes can be to arrange diversity training to employees. In addition, different types of incentives should be provided to employers in order to encourage them to hire immigrants.

Telling about the everyday lives of immigrants in the mass media will make the mainstream population more familiar with immigrants and help understand them. However, taking up immigration topics should not be a value in itself, and care should be taken not to create a stereotypical picture of immigrants. As labour immigration is increasing, measures should be taken to ensure that the public attitude towards immigrants does not turn negative.

While increasing the knowledge of the mainstream population of immigrants and their cultures, the knowledge of immigrants of Finnish society and culture should be increased and their involvement in society supported. Immigration and cultural interaction can strengthen traditional Finnish culture. The actions of the third sector, i.e. associations and immigrant organisations, and voluntary work play an important role here. Parishes, too, are important actors by arranging clubs for children and families and by organising youth work. Immigrants' own organisations also play a role here. The establishing of organisations should be supported, without forgetting to maintain interaction with the mainstream population.

1.2 Supporting internationalisation

At best foreign labour can enrich the operation of companies and help them create new innovations. Multiculturalism can be supported among other things by arranging multicultural training to companies and employers. More practical training opportunities should be of-



Foreign students are part of internationalisation of the University of Oulu.

fered to immigrants. The multicultural aspect must be taken into consideration when developing the operation of companies.

The education institutions in the region from the upper secondary level to universities have set aims for promoting and increasing internationalisation. Many of them already offer international degree programmes, the availability of which should be promoted. The education institutions in the Oulu Region are more internationally oriented than those situated elsewhere in the region. In future, more attention should be paid to promoting the internationalisation of education institutions situated in other parts of the region.

International student exchange must be promoted, because it helps students gain international experience and competence. The number of students entering student exchange schemes from the University of Oulu and Oulu University of Applied Sciences, for example, is much smaller than the number of overseas exchange students entering them.

The contacts and networks of Northern Ostrobothnians living abroad should be utilised in internationalisation.

2 Supporting entrepreneurship and recruiting foreign labour

Supporting entrepreneurship and recruiting foreign labour call for new types of measures, which are based on forecasting the region's labour needs and a view of the competences required of labour. From the point of view of



Foreign labour is also employed in the metal industry. Pocsai Zoltan is finishing off a piece at Millupipe Oy in Raahе.

SMEs, the key question is how easily they can hire skilled foreign labour. Distinct models should be prepared in order to help employers recruit labour from abroad. It is important to utilise the competence of foreigners moving to or already living in Finland and to launch open-minded recruitment measures in those sectors that have had difficulties in recruiting skilled labour.

2.1 Self-employment among immigrants or foreigners moving to Finland

Some immigrants should consider entrepreneurship as a way of employing themselves. They may already have run a business in their home countries or have special vocational competence that supports self-employment. Entrepreneurship among immigrants can be supported by making them better familiar with different types of support available

to entrepreneurs (e.g. the start-up grant). The services should be refined in order to make them better suitable to immigrants. Entrepreneurship counselling and guidance should be included in the integration process in order to identify potential entrepreneurs at an early stage.

Networking should be developed among foreigners already running a business in the region. The network can be used to support entrepreneurship among immigrants and to promote the internationalisation of Finnish companies.

Entrepreneurship information should be made available in a single package and expressed in a form that foreigners can understand easily. It is important to collect information about different organisations that offer entrepreneurship services in Northern Ostrobothnia. An essential part of the priority is active communications about entrepreneurship. Information packages about entrepreneurship in Finland should also be marketed abroad through suitable channels.

2.2 Supporting the recruitment of foreign labour

The purpose with forecasting is to find out the sectors and professions where there is need for foreign labour. Forecasting future labour needs should take place at the level of companies and regions. The ability of companies to forecast their labour needs should be improved and closer cooperation pursued between organisations engaged in forecasting.

It is important to develop effective recruitment models in order to help companies recruit labour from abroad. In some sectors, companies have found it difficult to find labour for jobs where special competence is required.

It may be that for some jobs, skilled labour could be found among immigrants already living here if the candidates with suitable competence can be identified and if their recruitment is not prevented by employers' attitudes. However, it is not always possible to find enough suitable labour sufficiently quickly from the region or the whole country, in which case experts should be sought from overseas.

Foreign labour can be recruited through a variety of channels. Companies can consult recruitment companies, use the public job exchange service, recruit labour on their own or consider setting up recruitment offices in interesting target countries. One potential future employee group comprises foreigners who are studying in the region's education institutions. There are also despatched employees, for whom there are separate regulations.

The recruitment of foreign labour can be supported by 1) publicising the existing services and policies, 2) developing recruitment cooperation between the private and public sector and 3) developing new policies in order to support recruitment.

The existing services include the international job exchange services (EURES), which are provided by Employment and Economic Development Offices. In addition, more extensive use could be made of international recruitment fairs. Private and public sector job exchange systems, through which foreign labour can be recruited, currently work separately. Recruitment can be enhanced by developing cooperation between them. New policies are needed especially for companies recruiting employees on their own, with the aim of facilitating recruitment at all levels. In addition, information and counselling services should be available to help companies deal

with the practical issues connected with the hiring of foreign labour.

Information on the recruitment of foreign labour is available from a variety of sources. However, the problem is that the information and services are scattered. The existing information services should be integrated into easy-to-use information packages. Services of this kind are provided by Employment and Economic Development Offices, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland KELA, the police, tax offices, municipalities and recruitment companies.

All foreign employees should be secured the same rights as Finnish employees. When recruiting, foreigners should be given the same opportunities as Finnish candidates to enter job interviews, for example. If the task in question does not require a perfect command of Finnish, the language requirement should be lowered. Measures should be taken at the same time to ensure that foreign employees are familiar with the rules and obligations of working life in Finland.

There have been several immigrant employment projects in the region and many of them are still in progress. Cooperation between the existing projects and new ones to be launched should be increased in order to avoid overlapping.

From the point of view of the international labour market, Finland is competing for labour in the northern corner of Europe, and Northern Ostrobothnia does not necessarily appear as the most attractive region to foreign employees. The strengths of the region are its human scale, favourable environmental factors and the services of a Nordic welfare society, which should be emphasised in order to improve its attractiveness. The development of cultural

services should not be forgotten either. Twin cities, the international networks of regional actors, and short-term immigrants capable of acting as ambassadors to Northern Ostrobothnia in their home countries can be used as an aid to marketing the region.

In future, the attractiveness of the region must be developed through close interaction between the Oulu Region and other parts of Northern Ostrobothnia, setting out from the competitive factors of the various parts of the region. The evolvement of rural areas into a valuable, attractive, safe living environment should be supported, as they need more population and labour especially in order to maintain their vitality.

2.3 Developing education models and forecasting of educational needs

The range of education currently available does not necessarily cover all the needs that immigrants have. Language training, for example, is often arranged too separate from working life. In addition, arranging vocational education to immigrants places special chal-

Alli Hosseini in practical training at Huovisen Leipomo. Practical training is part of the immigrant course arranged by Oulu Adult Education Centre.



lenges to the educational system. Effective education paths should be developed for immigrants based on their personal competences and need for special support. Among other things, preparatory training should be arranged to young immigrants, especially in the rural municipalities of the region.

The education needs of immigrants are assessed on the basis of the competence needs of working life. The purpose of forecasting is to identify as accurately as possible the sectors where labour is needed in future and the sectors to which educational resources should be assigned. The increasing number of immigrants and the resulting special needs should be taken into consideration in forecasting.

The vocational qualifications that immigrants have completed in their home countries do not necessarily correspond to Finnish vocational qualifications. As a result the recognition and comparability of qualifications should be developed. There is need for a distinct, flexible system by means of which it is possible to compare foreign degrees and qualifications with Finnish ones and indicate the type of supplementary education needed in order to achieve correspondence between them. In recruitments taking place in Europe (EU/EEA countries), use can be made of the Europass system.

Vocational competence can be updated by arranging targeted education based on the competence and working experience of immigrants and covering sectors and professions where the need for labour is greatest. It is often possible to harness the immigrant's competence through short-term supplementary education. Trying to retrain personnel who have already completed qualifications elsewhere is a waste of time and effort.

3 Developing integration services, regional cooperation and networks

The aim of integration is to enable immigrants to participate in Finnish society in the same way as the mainstream population, regardless of the reasons why they have entered the country. One of the key factors supporting integration is the ability to the country's native languages. The aim is to help immigrants of working age find a job so that their competence and education can be harnessed to the benefit of Finnish society. New means for addressing different situations must be developed in order to integrate the immigrants already living in the region. For those having moved to work in Finland, it is important to remember that the ability of their families to adapt also contributes greatly to the staying of foreign employees in the country.

A successful integration process is the sum of many parts. It requires that authorities are capable of pursuing flexible cooperation, educational organisations know how to deal with immigrants representing different backgrounds and cultures, and the third sector supports to the integration process. Immigrants, in turn, must be motivated and willing to learn Finnish, the regularities of Finnish society, and Finnish culture. The focus in the priority is on the open-minded development of integration measures and cooperation between different regional actors. The aim is to exchange experiences and good practises and put together pieces of information that support integration.

3.1 Developing integration services

The focus in developing integration measures in future will be on increasing cooperation between parties engaged in integration work and on developing the content of integration

efforts. All the parties engaged in integration must be involved: authorities, municipalities, the third sector and other actors, such as parishes and education institutions. With such a large group of parties, it is possible to utilise the strengths of each organisation. Integration should be viewed from a different perspective by developing new types of policies. Longer work periods should be arranged in integration education, teaching of Finnish should be organised, immigrants' special competence should be utilised and peer support should be offered to immigrants. Organisations play an important role in providing peer support. The role of work in integration is also important, because it offers a chance to genuinely integrate with Finnish society. The role of work and practical training in the integration process must be developed by encouraging employers to offer more practical training places to immigrants.

Municipalities play a prominent role in arranging integration services. The challenge with organising services is the broad heterogeneity of immigrants and growth in their numbers, as a result of which more resources must be assigned to providing services to immigrants. At the same time municipalities are faced with the need to cut down their resources. This controversy should be resolved locally, regionally and nationally. At the local level solutions can be sought through cooperation and the exchange of information between municipalities about issues connected with integration efforts.

The dual nature of integration should not be forgotten either. Finns and Finnish communities also need "integration" in order to adapt to pluralistic everyday life, and they should become familiar with the culture of immigrants. Among other things, this can be done through



Immigrants studying Finnish at the International Activity Centre Villa Victor in Oulu.

shared entrepreneurship and employment projects intended to both immigrants and the mainstream population and through cooperation between organisations or religious communities.

An important development theme in integration is the teaching of Finnish to immigrants. Language training can be developed by linking it more closely with other forms of immigrant education, by providing it at work and by developing functional language learning schemes. Language training should also be arranged to labour immigrants' family members and attention paid to the position of their families and to preventing marginalisation. Special challenges are placed by the integration of young people and young adults. The self-initiative of the immigrants should also be supported as part of the integration process.

Persons having moved to work in the region are positioned differently as compared with people having moved on account of family ties, asylum seekers, refugees and minors

who have moved in alone. The integration needs of immigrants depend on their cultural and educational background and linguistic proficiency, for example. The range of immigrants varies from highly educated, linguistically proficient people to completely illiterate, alphabetic persons representing a completely different cultural environment. Integration programmes should be drawn up comprehensively on the basis of analysing the needs of each individual in order to combine educational activities with training for work. The integration process must be started immediately when the immigrant arrives in the country. The aim is to integrate refugees and to make sure that they are available to the labour market in future. There is currently a lack of places for immigrants in municipalities. Measures are currently being taken at the national level to address this need: a municipal placement strategy for refugees is being prepared at the Ministry of the Interior.

3.2 Strengthening regional cooperation in integration

The municipalities of Northern Ostrobothnia already have experiences about integration, which differ considerably according to municipality. It takes years for municipalities to learn the integration work process. Organisations engaged in integration work are all preoccupied with their own special fields so integration-related information tends to be scattered. Therefore, measures are needed to gather the information. The exchange of information between municipalities should be increased.

An integration and immigrant employee post should be established for the whole region in order to promote cooperation between actors engaged in the integration process. His/her duties would include disseminating information about integration and coordinating cooperation between the various actors. He/she should also include coordinate cooperation between regional immigration employees.

Immigration Statistics

	Northern Ostrobothnia			Whole country		
Foreign citizens 2009, persons	5 058			155 705		
Share of foreign citizens of the population 2009, %	1.29			2.91		
Number and share of foreign citizens of the whole population in 2009 (five municipalities with the highest share of immigrants in Northern Ostrobothnia/the whole country with the highest number)	<i>Municipality</i>	<i>persons</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Municipality</i>	<i>persons</i>	<i>%</i>
	Siikajoki	160	2.8	Helsinki	41 735	7.2
	Oulu	3 101	2.2	Espoo	15 304	6.3
	Raahe	309	1.4	Vantaa	11 919	6.0
	Sievi	64	1.2	Turku	8 237	4.7
	Kalajoki	138	1.1	Tampere	7 390	3.5
	Eight nationalities with the highest population. Number and share of all foreigners. Number of immigrants in the whole country	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>persons</i>	<i>share of foreigners %</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>persons</i>
Venäjä		862	17.0	Venäjä	28 210	18.1
Ruotsi		495	9.8	Viro	25 510	16.4
Irak		264	5.2	Ruotsi	8 506	5.5
Vietnam		250	4.9	Somalia	5 570	3.6
Kiina		234	4.6	Kiina	5 180	3.3
Thaimaa		232	4.6	Thaimaa	4 497	2.9
Viro		226	4.5	Irak	3 978	2.6
Somalia		198	3.9	Turkki	3 809	2.5
Unemployment rate among foreigners 2008, % (Statistics Finland: Employment Statistics)	23.2			19.2		
Employed foreigners 2008, persons	1 642			58 862		
Employed foreigners, share of all employed persons in 2008, %	1.0			2.5		
Number/share of foreign language pupils in schools 2008	<i>persons</i>	<i>%</i>		<i>persons</i>	<i>%</i>	
	478	1.1		17 156	3.1	
Foreign degree students 2008	<i>persons</i>	<i>%</i>		<i>persons</i>	<i>%</i>	
	858	1.9		18 980	3.3	

Notes



Immigration strategy for Northern Ostrobothnia 2015

The framework of strategy was set up in three work seminars with participants representing a large number of regional parties engaged in immigration issues: companies, authorities, municipalities, associations, project actors and immigrants.

The strategy is composed of three priorities: 1) Internationalisation and Supporting Diversity, 2) Supporting Entrepreneurship and Recruiting Foreign Labour, 3) Developing Integration Services, Regional Cooperation and Networks.

The aim is to use the strategy as a guideline document for immigration issues in Northern Ostrobothnia. The strategy is used to coordinate the existing organisations and operations dealing with immigration issues. In addition, it contains a future-oriented focus and underlines the management of new immigration projects and operations.



Foreign employees are an everyday sight in the ICT sector (Symbio, Oulu).

**For a full version of the strategy, go to
www.ely-keskus.fi/pohjois-pohjanmaa/julkaisut**

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