



DANA KOBAK

# RUSSIAN-SPEAKING PROFESSIONALS IN THE HELSINKI METROPOLITAN AREA: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

5

STUDY REPORTS 2013



**City of Helsinki**  
Urban Facts

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# **RUSSIAN-SPEAKING PROFESSIONALS IN THE HELSINKI METROPOLITAN AREA: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES**

DANA KOBAK

TUTKIMUSKATSAUKSIA |  
FORSKNINGSRAPPORTER | **2013:5**  
STUDY REPORTS |

KÄÄNNÖKSET

ÖVERSÄTTNING

TRANSLATIONS

Lingoneer Oy

KUVIOT

FIGURER

GRAPHS

Pirjo Lindfors

TAITTO

OMBRYTTNING

GENERAL LAYOUT

Taittotalo PrintOne

KANSI

PÄRM

COVER

Tarja Sundström-Alku

Kansikuva|Pärmbild|Cover picture

Helsingin kaupungin matkailu- ja kongressitoimiston

materiaalipankki / Sakke Somerma

PAINO

TRYCKERI

PRINT

Edita Prima Oy, Helsinki 2013

PAINETTU

ISSN 1455-7266

ISBN 978-952-272-600-1

VERKOSSA

ISSN 1796-7236

ISBN 978-952-272-601-8

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# FOREWORD

City of Helsinki Urban Facts publishes on a wide range of topics typically covering issues that deal with relatively large groups of Helsinki - and sometimes larger Helsinki Metropolitan Area - residents. Dana Kobak's research orientation focuses on one specific group, Russian-speaking professionals, particularly those in their 20s and 30s, i.e., who are in early stages of their working life. Over the past two decades the amount Russian speaking well-educated professionals has increased and they feature relatively strongly in the Helsinki labour market.

So far, we do not have much knowledge of Russian speaking professionals' experiences of living and working in Helsinki. Dana Kobak interviewed a number of experts and reports her findings here.

Kobak's report shows that Helsinki has a relative advantage due to its close proximity particularly to St Petersburg. In addition, Helsinki provides many positive amenities for young professionals. On the other hand, this study also highlights challenges, particularly how newcomers would feel integrated and form social relationships with the local population. How various municipal services can overcome issues of bonding people together - that is a question well worth studying.

Helsinki, November 2013

Timo Cantell

Research director

City of Helsinki Urban Facts

# ESIPUHE

Helsingin kaupungin tietokeskus tuottaa julkaisuja, joiden aiheet vaikuttavat tyyppillisesti suhteellisen suuriin asukasryhmiin Helsingissä ja joskus koko pääkaupunkiseudulla. Dana Kobakin tutkimuksessa keskitytään erityisesti pari-kolmekymppisiin venäjänkielisiin ammattilaisiin, jotka ovat työelämänsä alkuvaiheissa. Kahden viime vuosikymmenen aikana koulutettujen venäjänkielisten ammattilaisten lukumäärä on kasvanut, ja he ovat suhteellisen suuri osa Helsingin työmarkkinoita.

Toistaiseksi meillä ei ole juurikaan tietoa siitä, millaisia kokemuksia venäjänkielisillä ammattilaisilla on Helsingissä elämisestä ja työskentelystä. Dana Kobak haastatteli useita asiantuntijoita ja kertoo havainnoistaan tässä.

Kobakin tutkimus osoittaa, että Helsinki saa suhteellista etua sijainnistaan erityisesti Pietarin lähellä. Lisäksi Helsingillä on monia positiivisia puolia nuorten ammattilaisten näkökulmasta. Toisaalta tutkimuksessa nousee esiin myös haasteita erityisesti siinä, miten tulokkaat onnistuvat integroitumaan yhteiskuntaan ja muodostamaan sosiaalisia suhteita kantaväestön kanssa. On tutkimuksen arvoista selvittää, kuinka erilaisilla kunnallisilla palveluilla voidaan lisätä yhteisöllisyttä eri ryhmien välillä.

Helsinki, marraskuu 2013  
Timo Cantell  
Tutkimuspäällikkö  
Helsingin kaupungin tietokeskus

# FÖRORD

Helsingfors stads faktacentral publicerar ett brett urval av ämnen som typiskt omfattar frågor som berör stora invånargrupper i Helsingfors – och ibland även i den vidare Helsingforsmetropolen. Dana Kobaks undersökning koncentrerar sig på en specifik grupp, rysktalande yrkesmänniskor, speciellt 20–30-åringar, d.v.s. de som är i början av sitt yrkesliv. Under de två senaste decennierna har antalet rysktalande högt utbildade yrkesmänniskor ökat och de framträder relativt starkt på Helsingfors arbetsmarknad.

Tillsvidare har vi inte mycket kunskap om de rysktalande yrkesmänniskornas erfarenheter av boende och att arbeta i Helsingfors. Dana Kobak intervjuade ett antal experter och rapporterar sina resultat här.

Kobaks rapport visar att Helsingfors har en relativ fördel tack vare sin närhet till speciellt St. Petersburg. Dessutom erbjuder Helsingfors många positiva faciliteter för unga yrkesmänniskor. Å andra sidan lyfter underökningen även fram utmaningar, speciellt hur nykomlingar känner sig integrerade och skapar sociala förbindelser med de lokala invånarna. Hur kan olika kommunala tjänster övervinna svårigheter att sammanföra människor – det är en fråga värd att undersöka.

Helsingfors, November 2013  
Timo Cantell  
Forskningsdirektör  
Helsingfors stad faktacentralen



# I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

## 1. Studying Russian-speaking skilled migrants in Helsinki and its Metropolitan Area

International migration of millions of people is one of the characteristics of the contemporary world and is the main motive force and result of the globalization processes. There are a variety of reasons migrants leave their home countries either permanently or for many years, or only for a specific fixed period of time. In the recent years, international mobility in the European Union has increased and European cities are competing in order to attract and retain skilled migrants and to offer expatriates more favourable conditions to settle and work.

One of the issues the city of Helsinki is currently facing is the ageing of the workforce in a number of sectors. Therefore, the need for skilled experts in the area is widely acknowledged (Kepsu et al., 2009, 2010). Attraction of skilled international labour migrants is a necessary strategy for the city, as it will enable it to maintain economic growth and remain competitive in many spheres – creativity, technology, innovation, communication and other. It is very important for the city to understand worries and problems of international professionals residing in the region and learn about their experience of living here in order to create more favourable conditions for attracting new specialists and retaining those who have already arrived. Although there have been some previous studies on skilled international migrants in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, more research is still needed.

The Helsinki Metropolitan Area (Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa and Kauniainen) has proved to be an appealing destination for highly skilled migrants who are seeking better employment opportunities in Finland. The study previously conducted by Kepsu et al. (2010) as part of the ACRE project analyzed the competitiveness of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area in knowledge-intensive and creative industries from the standpoint of both international and domestic experts. Individuals can have different reasons for staying in the country for years or even spending their whole life here; quite often they move to the Helsinki Metropolitan Area while still students in order to receive high-quality education and start working here full-time, trying to make most of their potential and be useful for the city.

Unlike studies investigating the social integration of various groups of foreign migrants in Finland (e.g. Liebkind et al., 2004), this case study focuses on Russian-speaking professionals in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. The study presents an insight into the experiences of Russian-speaking 25-40-year-old highly educated expatriates residing in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. The empirical research seeks to grasp and evaluate different soft and hard factors that influence Russian-speaking professionals' decision to come to Greater Helsinki, what motivates them to settle here or to move away in search for better career opportunities elsewhere abroad. What makes the Helsinki Metropolitan Area competitive from the perspective of Russian professionals? Are they satisfied with their life here? What has been challenging? What are their prospects for the future? Knowledge of expatriates' daily experiences in the target destination is important.

According to Statistics Finland (2012), foreigners made up 4.5% of the population in Finland in 2011 and Russians constituted the majority (the official figure points to as many as 58,300 individuals). Therefore Russians-speaking migrants in Finland are in general rela-

tively well and diversely researched, with the main focus being on their overall conditions of living, including economical, cultural and intellectual aspects of being as well as professional adjustment and adaptation into the society. Russian immigrants are often studied in comparison to other foreign groups (Liebkind et al., 2004 & Pohjanpää et al., 2003), however there are very few recent studies on highly qualified Russians residing in the country. Silfver (2010) studied the causes of migration to Finland of IT sector professionals from the post-Soviet states. One of the aims of this qualitative research was also to uncover their experiences of integration into Finnish society, the factors affecting their attachment to the country and their respective decision to settle here or move away.

More studies have previously been conducted on international skilled migrants in the European Union, especially in recent years – e.g. Kazlauskiene & Rinkevicius (2006) researched the push and pull factors causing “brain drain” in Lithuania and Egedy & Kovacs (2011) studied strengths and weaknesses of Budapest from the point of view of transnational creative workers. Findings of such studies point to the fact that experiences are different: issues encountered by migrants are not always the same and are country-specific. The main causes of migration of Lithuanian highly skilled professionals are “professional attraction, socio-economic status in Lithuania, the academic system and collaboration, the country’s macroeconomic status and governmental policy” (Kazlauskiene & Rinkevicius 2006, 35). The case of the Budapest Metropolitan Area shows that primarily hard factors such as work and studies as well as personal or family reasons attracted highly qualified professionals to the region. Among the weaknesses of Budapest, according to highly skilled foreigners, were excessively high cost of living and taxation. Raunio (2009) was concerned with the role cultural services in the living environment in attracting skilled foreign professionals to Finnish cities and whether they were a powerful enough pull factor.

Again, the competitiveness of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area has been studied recently as part of the ACRE project (Kepsu et al., 2009) which aims at finding the factors that make particular areas in Europe attractive for companies and highly skilled transnational migrants engaged in knowledge-intensive and creative industries. A study report by Merimaa & Kiviniemi (2010), similarly to the present study, discussed international skilled expatriates in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area with a difference that the writers examined the strengths and weaknesses of the area as perceived by the Chinese and Indian skilled migrants. The authors reflected on whether Helsinki has met expectations of this group regarding such aspects as working and daily life, studies as well as how they have succeeded in building professional and social networks in Finland. The aim of this report is to shed additional light on the current life situation of professionals who have immigrated to the Helsinki Metropolitan Area (with a focus on expatriates from Russia and Ukraine) and thus to supplement the existing discussions on highly educated foreign workers’ experiences in the region.

This qualitative study on Russian-speaking expatriates in Helsinki and its metropolitan area is coordinated by the City of Helsinki Urban Facts and is done as part of the Research Programme for the City of Helsinki for 2011-2015.

## **2. Implementation of the study and the sample**

The study report is based on one-to-one interviews with Russian-speaking young professionals in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, which form the primary data for the current research. Interviewees were chosen based on the following criteria: Russian language as a mother tongue, age 25-40 and current residence in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. In this report, a *professional* refers to an individual who holds a Bachelor’s degree or higher

and is employed. Citizenship of the interviewees did not matter, provided that their mother tongue was Russian, since a native language is a better indicator of one's foreign background than a citizenship that can be changed. Importantly, all interviewed native speakers of Russian immigrated to Finland as adults (19 years of age and older).

Altogether there were 18 interviewees, of whom 9 were males and 9 were females. The majority of the informants, 15 individuals, were originally from Russia (7 males and 8 females) and 3 persons came to Finland from Ukraine (2 males and 1 female). Interestingly, I was not able to find any informants from the Baltic countries who would match previously stated criteria for the study, although geographically these countries are located much closer to Finland than Ukraine is and communication between Helsinki and Estonia is especially well developed. Ethnic Russians are the largest minority group in Estonia and make up 25% of the population (Statistics Estonia, 2012).

The interviews were conducted and transcribed in the Russian language in September–October 2012. Each interview lasted 40-80 minutes, on average one hour. Interviewees were recruited through my personal contacts, colleagues, mailing lists, Russian associations in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area and a “snowball” method. The interviews took place either at the interviewees’ workplace or the university campus, or elsewhere in places suitable to the informants.

For the most part, the informants were employed in the private sector (9 individuals), an academic or scientific field (7 individuals) and the public sector (2 individuals). Their period of residence in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area spanned from 0.5 to 14 years. The sample is mainly represented by informants who came to the Helsinki Metropolitan Area to work or to study (see table 1) and made this decision individually; 4 individuals arrived here from other Finnish cities (3 females had studied and 1 male had a job). Students were not included since the target of the study was to uncover the experiences of Russian-speaking professionals in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area who were already employed. The interviewees arrived in Finland for the first time at the age of at least 19, and for them moving to Finland was a well-considered decision; none of them arrived as a child with their parents.

**Table 1. Grounds for the interviewees entering Finland**

	Work	Studies	Family unification	Returnee status	Total
Male	9	0	0	0	9
Female	1	6	1	1	9
Total	10	6	1	1	18

The aim of this paper is to emphasize the main aspects that influence the current life situation of Russian-speaking young professionals who have arrived and settled in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. This report uncovers where and how the group has ended up, as well as reflects particular factors that have a significant impact on their everyday and professional lives.

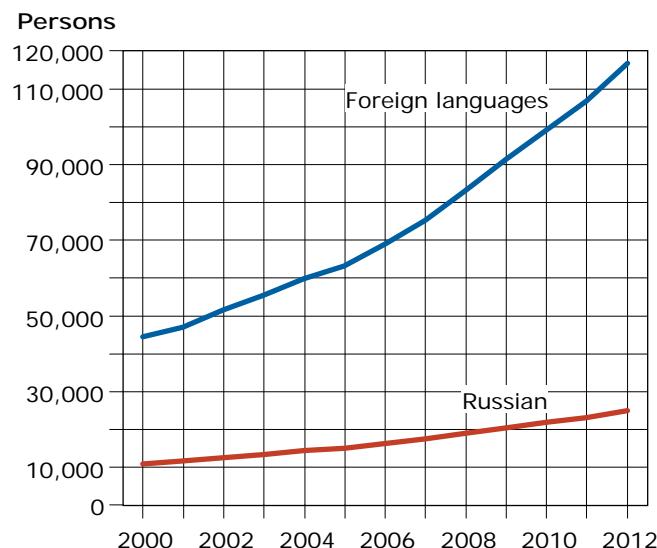
The accounts of only 18 informants (as obtained in September–October 2012) cannot represent the attitudes of all highly educated Russian-speaking professionals currently residing in Helsinki and its Metropolitan Area; however, a small group’s subjective opinions and criticisms of various aspects of life in the region can be useful in understanding these individuals’ concrete positive and negative experiences, as well as uncover strengths and challenges of the city from their perspective. Unlike the findings of a quantitative study,

the results of a qualitative research cannot be generalized to larger segments of the target population; however, interview-based findings shed light on particular issues that were brought up by Russian-speaking skilled migrants during discussion of their everyday experiences in Finland. The author of the report is responsible for all interpretations of the material.

### 3. Russians in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area

In January 2000, the Russian-speaking population in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area numbered 10,500 individuals and in 2012 the figure had already almost doubled, totalling nearly 23,500. The number of Russian-speaking migrants permanently residing in Greater Helsinki has grown rather steadily since 2000, in contrast to the whole foreign population in the area – its quantity has increased significantly and at a much faster rate in the recent years (see figure 1). According to Statistics Finland, Russian-speaking individuals form the largest group of foreigners in Finland and are followed by Estonians whose number is significantly less.

Figure 1. Russian-speaking and overall foreign population in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area in 2000–2012

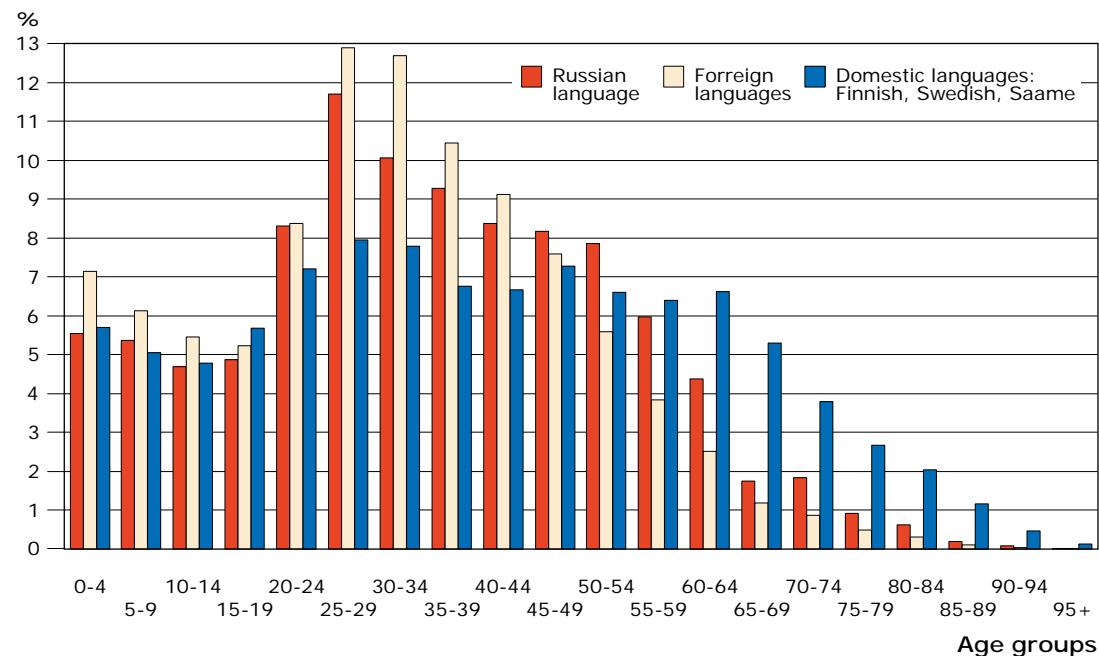


Source: Helsingin seudun aluesarjat

Official statistical data suggests that in 2011 there were 244,827 individuals in Finland registered as speaking a foreign language (a language different from Finnish, Swedish or Saame) and this number included 58,331 speakers of Russian. Hence, Russian-speaking residents in Finland made up 23.8% of the whole foreign population in the country. When speaking of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, the proportion of Russians among other foreigners here does not differ substantially from that of the whole country – Russians in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area make up 20.5% of all migrants. However, the Russian-speaking population is not so evenly distributed around Finland – according to statistical data

of 2011, the largest portion, representing 37.5%, was grouped in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. In 2012, the majority of the Russian-speaking population in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area was female – it represented 58.4% or some 13 700 individuals. (Statistics Finland.)

**Figure 2. Age groups of the Russian-speaking, foreign and domestic population in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area in 2012, %**



Source: Helsingin seudun aluesarjat

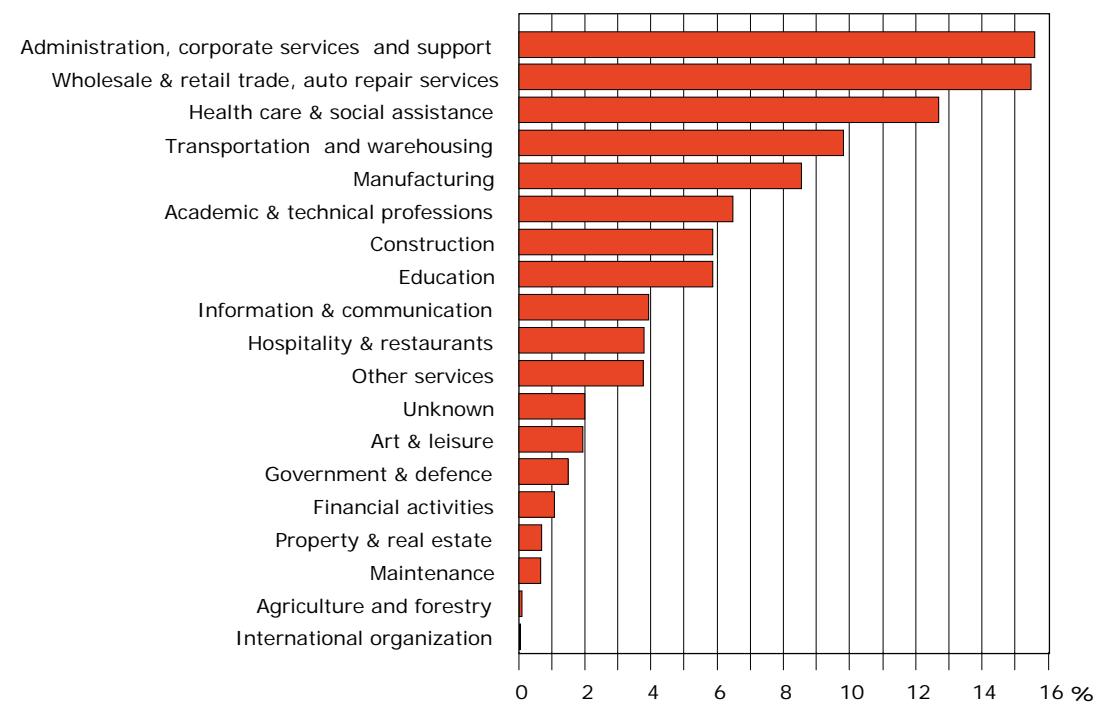
The Russian population has had quite a long history in Finland and in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area in particular, although its age distribution is not entirely even, especially compared to that of the native Finnish, Swedish and Saame speakers. As Figure 2 suggests, the Helsinki Metropolitan Area residents aged 25–60 make up the majority of all Russian-speaking population in this region and 25–34-year-olds are their largest age group. One of the explanations for this may be that people of this age group are the most mobile and relocate more willingly and actively because of jobs, studies or family ties, etc. Thus the number of speakers of Russian residing in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area permanently is also supplemented by expatriates who have only arrived here in the very recent years. The individuals interviewed for this research (aged 25–40) represent specifically the biggest group among the Russian-speaking population in the area in general.

Figure 2 also shows explicitly that the share of native population aged over 60 is substantially overrepresented in contrast to the share of foreigners in Helsinki and its metropolitan area. A significant part of the whole foreign population in the region is largely represented by working age individuals, 25–49, while the biggest proportion of Russians spans from 20-to-54-year-olds; their share is clearly greater than at of the native population.

In which economic sectors are speakers of Russian mainly employed in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area? Figure 3 presents employment by sector of individuals residing in Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa and Kauniainen who have arrived from Russia and the former Soviet Union countries. It points out three spheres where immigrants with the Russian background tend to find employment the most. Around equal numbers of individuals (about

16%) are involved in either wholesale or retail trade or auto repair services and thus do blue collar jobs, while another 15.6% of immigrants with a Russian background are employed in white collar professions – administration, corporate services and other office jobs. Another sector popular among Russians is health care and social assistance, where an employee's tasks can vary substantially depending on one's professional qualification and skills. By and large, over one third of the Russian population in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area is employed in positions requiring higher education qualifications while a significant number of people are still occupied in lower skilled jobs. However, the data do not give more precise information on the number of highly educated professionals in the region and it is thus not possible to draw conclusions about degree of over-qualification among migrants with Russian background and to what extent jobs they hold correspond to their qualifications. The interviewees were mainly employed in academic and IT positions as well as corporate services.

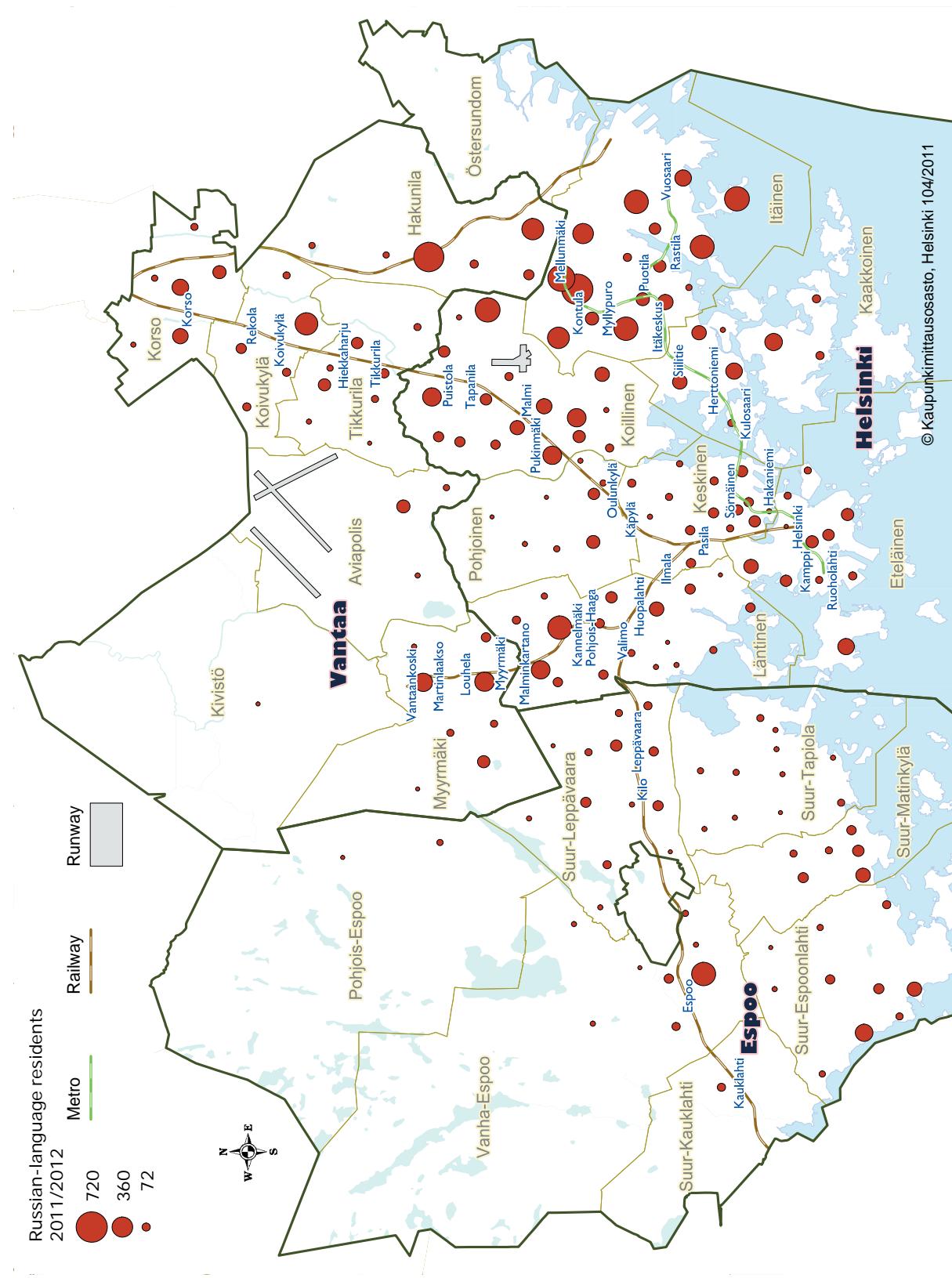
**Figure 3. Employment of Russian-speaking population in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area by sector, 2010, %**



Source: Statistics Finland

Neighbourhood choices and housing patterns of immigrants with a Russian background should also be mentioned. This group is not evenly distributed throughout the territory of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area; map 1 shows that native speakers of Russian are grouped in certain districts. The districts in Helsinki where Russian and Ukrainian immigrants are settled the most include Kontula, Vesala, Kallahti, Meri-Rastila, Jakomäki and Kannelmäki – the majority thus resides in East Helsinki. In Espoo, the greatest proportion of Russians resides in Suvela and in Vantaa these districts are Hakunila, Havukoski and Myyrmäki. The most common trend is that Ukrainian and Russian-speaking migrants prefer to settle in areas in close proximity to train stations and generally along railway lines in the Helsin-

**Figure 4.** Russian-speaking population in Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa by districts as well including those born in Ukraine. 2011/2012.



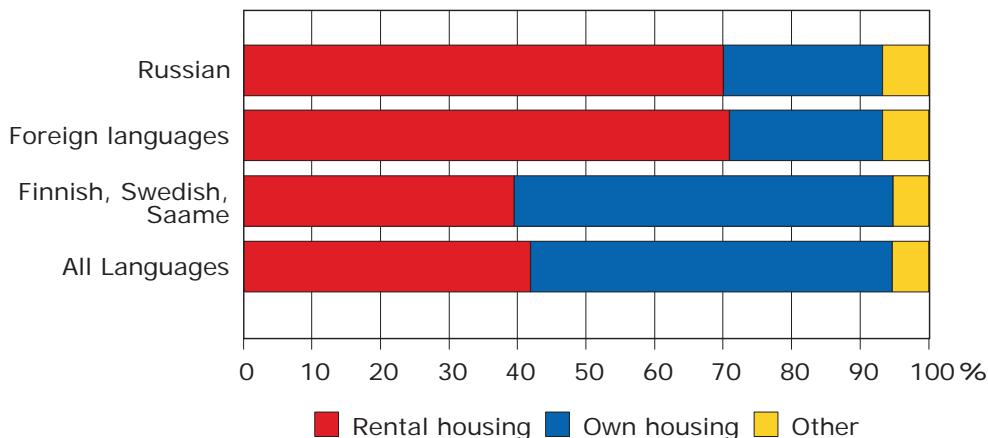
Source: Tilastokeskuksen PKS – väestöpaketti, 2011.

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ki Metropolitan Area, as the Helsinki city centre is best reached by commuter trains. The three neighbourhoods where Russian-speaking migrants' absolute numbers are the greatest are Kontula, Hakunila and Vesala, however there is neither a direct metro nor railway connection between Hakunila and the Helsinki city centre. The individuals interviewed for the research resided in different parts of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area and quite often in other areas than the Russian-speaking population in general. However, for the interviewees, a good public transport connection between their dwelling and the Helsinki downtown was the main criterion when choosing accommodation.

Official statistical data as of 2010 show that the overwhelming majority of the Russian-speaking population in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area – 70% – reside in rental accommodation (including renting in the private housing market as well as state-subsidized dwellings and others). Only less than one fourth of all Russian-speaking households residing in this region has been willing to acquire their own housing (figure 5). The majority of the interviewees lived in rental accommodation as well, and only few had their own housing at the moment of the interview. Overall, residence in rental accommodation is typical to the foreign population in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. In contrast, over half of the population speaking domestic languages (55%) lives in apartments that are their own property.

**Figure 5. Housing situation of Russian-speaking residents in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area in 2010, (% of Russian-speaking households).**



Source: Statistics Finland

In the beginning of 2010, there were altogether 8,473 Russian-speaking households in Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa, of which families with children made up 61%. A Russian household here refers to a family where at least one person is a native speaker of Russian. Households with children constitute the majority and include both those households with two parents and those with single parents, where the number of the latter is twice as big as the number of the former. Families without children in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area total as many as 3,296 units.

## II. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

### 4. Why Helsinki?

Hard factors, namely an attractive job or a study place and associated career prospects, turned out to be the main reason most of the interviewees came to the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. One of the female respondents moved to Finland because of family unification; however, general possibilities of employment were crucial to her and she did not move from Russia before having secured a job in Helsinki. Another female interviewee entered Finland as a returnee and did not yet have a job, but nevertheless it was extremely important to her as well to find employment in her own specialization.

*"I lived in Tampere, and I was already thinking of moving away from Finland, it became boring there and I needed a more active life. And then I was invited to acquaint myself with the work of one of the start-ups in Helsinki. At first I was skeptical about it, but decided to come and see for myself. I liked what they did, and moreover, Helsinki was an active city. But, of course, the main reason to come here was the job in an interesting field so the fact that Helsinki turned out to be a notably active city was actually just a pleasing side effect." (Female, 30-34.)*

The informants who came here to complete a University degree had in mind enhancement of career prospects as opposed to what could be expected in Russia/Ukraine. In Russia, higher education is mainly paid and it is very difficult to get accepted to those few places financed from the state budget – the competition is too high. Also, education in Russia is less international, there are almost no courses in English, and opportunities to study abroad as an exchange student are less easily available than they are to European students. In certain fields (e.g. IT), a Russian diploma is highly valued abroad, while in others (e.g. medicine, law) it needs official recognition.

*"I tried to enter the University [in Ukraine], but my family did not have networks and thus was not able to pull strings. Also I needed a different specialization than what was offered there. Enrolment competition was too high: per one place there were 27 applicants willing to study law, while in Finland the competition was only 5 applicants. I was not in the firm belief that I would be able to enter the University; I did not have either very good friends or any romantic relationship that would keep me in Ukraine, neither was I confident about my career. [Moving to Finland] was a turning point." (Female, 25-29.)*

Most respondents reported having satisfactory living and housing conditions as well as good jobs back in their countries. An overwhelming majority of interviewees had previous relevant work experience either in their home country or elsewhere in Finland before relocating to the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. Yet migrants mentioned that in Finland they were offered much better salaries for exactly the same work and that the working environment was more motivating. Moreover, modern expensive equipment as well as other tools for professional performance were available at their disposal.

*"I had prospects there [in St. Petersburg]. I had a job there, quite a promising future and a few job offers concerning additional work in public relations, but I just wanted to study again, I wanted more. And I do not regret having left that all because now everything is much better. Perhaps, I would have had much money if I had stayed [in St. Petersburg], but it would surely have been less interesting. Here I am engaged in interesting work and by global standards; I have all necessary resources to be able to do quality performance at a high level. In Russia it is impossible, there are so many limitations there..."* (Female, 25-29.)

*"My situation in St. Petersburg was quite good. I had a small apartment, but it was my own, and my parents also had a big apartment. So there I had housing and a competitive salary by the standards of St. Petersburg, there was really nothing that would push me away from there."* (Male, 35-40.)

Economic reasons and state-of-the-art equipment were most often mentioned by those employed in academic research positions, while those working in the private sector talked primarily about finding better opportunities for personal and professional realization and development as well as enhancing social status compared to their home country. For example, a teacher or a university lecturer has always been a respected job in Russia and Ukraine, however nowadays it is not treated with due respect and is valued less and less. This is the result of the very small salaries of teachers and academic lecturers, and the possibility for some students to make more than a professor. Izvestia (3.4.2012) reports that in 2011, the average monthly salary of a university lecturer in Russia amounted to RUB 23,000 (~EUR570) and that the general situation in Russia was that "a university lecturer's salary in the majority of regions was less than an average salary in the region in question".

*"In my previous job I had a beggarly salary; and also when laboratories are not well-equipped, the experiments are of low quality. To be able to get enough money one should take up 2-3 jobs, and when a person does so much, most probably they do all those tasks poorly. I have a different attitude."* (Male, 25-29.)

For several interviewees, professional realization was even much more valuable than a high salary. They went for a more interesting job where they could grow professionally and develop personally but would receive less money than they would doing a less demanding job and getting a higher salary. The same finding was observed by Kazlauskienė & Rinkevičius (2006) when studying causes of brain drain in Lithuania, namely "the higher is the education level of the respondents, the greater influence to the departure play not economic effects but better conditions of professional realization" (Kazlauskienė & Rinkevičius 2006, 35).

Those interviewed who came to Finland to study were swayed towards Finland because education here was free, of high quality and offered an interesting program and promising career prospects. Several already had a Bachelor's or Master's university degree from their home countries, and only one interviewee arrived in Helsinki to acquire her first university degree after finishing high school. Their aim was to get a diploma of a European standard and depending on their life situation to decide what to do and where to go next. Some of them did not plan on necessarily staying in Finland after graduation, although they enjoyed their life here and after a while found a job matching their educational background and stayed in the country.

*"I came here [to Helsinki] accidentally in 2007 as an exchange student. I thought that I would return home after half a year, but I liked it so much here that decided to apply for a Master's degree. ...Also I knew that at home I would not have any prospects after graduation, the only possibility would be to work in a bank. Here I have received education and it is European, so I can work in any European country, while a Russian diploma is only accepted in Russia. I would work in a bank, but the town is small, opportunities are small and there is no possibility of development, it would be just a bank and nothing more. I work here but I know I can change my job or leave for a different country, there are no limitations." (Female, 25-29.)*

Personal ties also played an important role in decision to emigrate. For one of the respondents, the study program was of absolutely no value or importance since her main idea was "to just emigrate" from her home country and build up a new life abroad. However, after graduation she also found a job in her field and continued on in Finland. Among other reasons that made speakers of Russian move to Finland (push factors) were dissatisfaction with some of the aspects of living in their home country: e.g. its general position, political situation, compulsory service in the army which is often perceived as a negative and undesired experience due to bullying, etc.).

*"I like this country [Finland], it is comfortable, quiet, and safe, there are good salaries here and people are sensible. The political situation in Russia played the crucial role in my choice. I have never liked living in Russia, but this is just my personal opinion. I have always strived to expatriate and since childhood I have had a firm belief that sooner or later I would leave Russia. I mean I am a migrant by nature. Somebody might not approve of this, but I have made my choice and I do not regret it." (Female, 30-34.)*

When considering different professional opportunities abroad, as a rule, professionals had a number of options to choose from. Primarily, only European countries were considered because of location, similarity of mentality (in contrast to Asia or North America) and availability of tuition-free education. However, ultimately they preferred relocating to the Helsinki Metropolitan Area taking into account also its close proximity to Russia and relatively close distance to Ukraine (e.g. compared to Canada or Australia), as well as positive feedback and recommendations from friends who already lived in Helsinki. For some, the decisive factors were safety, security, good organization, etc. as well as some practical issues, such as how easy it would be to get a residence permit and on what conditions.

*"As a matter of fact, there are a lot of jobs in my area of specialization in Europe, and for the most part they are located not in Finland, but in countries that are more developed from a technological standpoint, such as Germany, Austria, Sweden or Norway. But I wanted to be closer to Russia. I visit St. Petersburg frequently, I have friends there, I visit my parents. That was the first condition." (Male, 30-34, employed in the private sector)*

Soft factors also proved to be important in shaping potential migrants' decisions. Immediate proximity to Russia mattered greatly to almost all respondents, because most of them had close friends and relatives in St. Petersburg, Moscow and elsewhere in Russia and planned to visit them often. For migrants who had a family or were in a relationship, those always came first and were the strongest factors determining moving, while at the same time Helsinki was seen as a city with a generally wide variety of possibilities of employment. This destination turned out to be attractive also for those family couples, for whom employment of both spouses was a compulsory condition.

*"As a matter of principle, I did not want to move. I was completely content with everything in Russia, I had quite a good job and one month before I quit my job I had got a pay raise and had been promoted. I moved solely because of love, my husband, my family. Otherwise I would not have done so. I was happy that I moved, but it had nothing to do with 'It is bad in Russia, and it is nice here'. I was glad that I did not have to make frequent trips to Finland every weekend and we could finally be together." (Female, 25-29.)*

Also, it is worth mentioning that according to some respondents who had been looking for job before departure, they received confirmation from the potential Finnish employer the earliest, which allowed them to secure the position, making the Helsinki Metropolitan Area their ultimate choice.

*"... First come, first served. You send your CV to different companies that interest you and just go where you have been offered a position. In total, I was offered 10 positions, but it extended over time and Finland was the first, so I came here. Finland was not exactly my desired target destination; rather my goal was to come to a country where I could develop." (Male, 25-29.)*

Interestingly, for those who had applied for their positions in IT and research (both being in Finland and in a home country), the city itself as a destination was not important at all; they chose to move to the Helsinki Metropolitan Area solely because a suitable job was located here. According to them, it could have equally been a different Finnish or other European city. Several interviewees told that they chose Helsinki based on what career prospects and social life could be like and how easy life of expatriate would be here (no need to speak the local language, residence permit is not bound by a concrete employer, active social life, etc). For those purposes they consulted their friends in Finland, thematic forums in the Internet as well as used their own experience of visits to Finland.

*"- Why is it the Helsinki Metropolitan Area where you have decided to start a new job?"*

*"Actually, I did not care about the city; I came here because of work. I could have come to Tampere or Oulu or Helsinki. In this respect it was all the same to me. The most important was good laboratory equipment and a good salary. Also my aim was to complete my PhD dissertation and receive a Finnish diploma." (Male, 25-29.)*

However, quite often there was not only one single reason for Russian-speaking professionals to expatriate from their country; they rather took into account a number of aspects simultaneously. By and large, factors pulling highly educated migrants to Finland proved to be more important in their decision-making process than push factors. This finds justification also in the previous studies dedicated to highly skilled foreigners in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area (e.g. Kepsu et al., 2009), and also Kazlauskienė & Rinkevičius (2006) have noted that "pull factors except the relations in academic society, play a much greater role for the migration of the people with higher-skills" (Kazlauskienė & Rinkevičius 2006, 35).

All in all, hard factors (related to a job and studies) as well as family connections (e.g. having a Finnish spouse) appeared to become the most important factors attracting expatriates to Finland and simultaneously attaching interviewees to the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. Soft factors played a less important role in attracting Russian professionals, they rather influenced migrants' everyday life once they had already lived in the city for a while and hence confirmed their decision to settle in the region.

**Table 2. Push and pull factors affecting Russian-speaking professionals' decision to migrate**

Pull factors	Push factors
interesting work (or a study program) and conditions for professional realization	limited conditions for professional realization => low social status
a more motivating working milieu and modern equipment	dissatisfaction with the home country's general position (political situation, corruption, bureaucracy, rising crime rates, gap between rich and poor)
high quality of European education and a European diploma	prospect of military service
economic reasons – greater salary	
a Finnish spouse	
desire to have an international experience and improve living conditions	
proximity to Russia, particularly to St. Petersburg	
opportunity to lead an independent life	
better environment for raising children	

## 5. Working in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area

### 5.1. Job hunting

Most Russian-speaking professionals in fields of research and IT (predominantly males) found their job before coming to Finland (or the Helsinki Metropolitan Area) with relative ease. All male interviewees came to Finland because of work and mostly they came to the Helsinki Metropolitan Area directly from their home countries. Respectively, the majority of male informants applied for their jobs while in Russia or Ukraine, and namely the fact that a position was confirmed by a Finnish employer sooner than in other European countries became in some cases a decisive factor in their choice of destination. Before coming here to work, almost all male applicants had up to several years of relevant work experience. Those looking for employment in the IT sphere and academic or postdoctoral research had several options of jobs in Europe and had only to select the one that best fit their professional profile. An important factor favouring employment among the male respondents was that speaking Finnish fluently was not an obligatory requirement. All teams in companies and research units were to a great degree shaped by international professionals, and thus the working language was always English.

What comes to job searches, most female informants, unlike male interviewees, found themselves in a slightly different situation. Mainly, they came to Finland to receive higher education, either a bachelor's or master's degree or some other vocational training, and were mainly in their early twenties. Basically that meant that they did not have much substantial work experience in their field from their home countries, and had to build their professional careers exclusively in Finland. Those informants that were lacking work experience and were looking for a job during their studies and after graduation from a Finnish university encountered certain difficulties.

*"I really had a hard time finding an internship position in Helsinki. I received two-month funding from the university and had to find a place. I was looking for it for about one year. I was sending my CV to banks, insurance agencies but no one wanted*

*"to take me, although it was free for them. Finally, I got accepted to this place. [...] And I have stayed here. Now I have a very wide spectrum of tasks. It is not completely my field, but I like it."* (Female, 25-29.)

The most difficulties when searching for a job were encountered by those interviewees who did not have sufficient work experience in their field or only started to look for their job being already in Finland. In the sample, it was mainly female respondents who happened to have such a background: unlike their male counterparts who had up to several years of work experience and had secured a job before their arrival in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, it took them longer to find the right position, as the majority of CVs sent were left unanswered. An absence of previous work experience and subsequent recommendations was mentioned by interviewees as one of the major obstacles and, according to a few, they found their jobs "accidentally" or "by a lucky coincidence". In many cases those applicants who had a broad specialization field in which to search for a job encountered more difficulties than candidates who knew exactly what they were looking for (e.g. a concrete sphere in IT or research) and had relevant work experience.

One of the main barriers on the path of job-seekers who applied to work in a non-English speaking environment (again, in this sample most female informants met this condition), was the requirement to speak Finnish fluently in order to be able to compete with Finnish applicants. Those who already had previous work experience appeared to be in a much more advantageous position and were hired easier. The majority of informants bypassed the language-related obstacle by finding employment in companies where they could make use of their proficiency in Russian and knowledge of Russian culture.

*"In my job, I take advantage of my education and proficiency in two languages. Russian-speaking individuals can find a job by actively using their knowledge of Russia, this is a great advantage. The most important is education, proficiency in the language, work experience and your own proactive attitude."* (Female, 35-39.)

Knowledge of the Russian language and society and a completed degree from a Finnish university proved to be a very valuable assets for respondents not employed in IT or research. It allowed them to obtain a good job even in companies where English is not an official corporate language or in the event that they did not have enough substantial work experience.

*"My advantage here is that I know Russia and what is happening there. One should understand the peculiarities of the country and how the system works there, not only have proficiency in Russian. I would like to continue working on the interface between the two countries."* (Male, 30-34.)

In spite of the obvious advantage of speaking Russian as native language, not all of the interviewees talked about a successful experience in job-seeking. Some jobseekers were not active and persistent enough, while some were lacking work experience. Having failed to get a job in her field, one of the applicants chose to change her career path.

*"My sister graduated from a university of applied sciences [in Helsinki], but never worked in the business sector. Being Russian, she found difficulties in getting a job; also because she did not have work experience. So she just decided to study to become a nurse - she can work in any country and there is always demand."* (Female, 25-29.)

*"- How have you found your job?*

*- By happy fortune. I sent [my CV] to many places during the winter, but they never invited me to an interview except for this position. I also sent a lot of job applications in the summer, but the result was the same, too. Now everyone tells me that if I speak both Finnish and Russian, I will get a job easily, but I am looking for job openings where the combination 'Finnish + Russian' are needed and there are only very few of them, literally two and that is it." (Female, 25-29.)*

Table 3. Advantages to and challenges of employment in different sectors (as mentioned in the interviews)

IT & Research		Private sector (other than technology) & Public sector	
Advantages	Challenges	Advantages	Challenges
International working environment, easier integration into the work collective	Employment requires high skills and qualification in a chosen field	Possibilities to benefit from knowledge of Russian culture and language	Need to speak Finnish fluently
English is a corporate language	Less possibilities to practice Finnish and learn about the Finnish culture	In the public sector: flexible working hours and "children-friendly" attitude	Securing a position often requires previous work experience and recommendations
No need to speak Finnish fluently		In the public sector, rights of an employee are especially observed	Integrating into the working collective takes more time
Relaxed atmosphere and flexible working hours in research			More bureaucracy in public sector, it is less flexible
Possibilities to work remotely in IT			

## 5.2. Working culture

All interviewees admit that the working culture in Finland differs a great deal from that of their home countries. Those working in Finnish and international companies in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area talked mostly about positive aspects of the working culture in Finland. Of course, respondents who relocated to Finland without previous experience of work and working culture of the country could not expect what it was like, but having worked here for a while they appreciated it. The aspects mostly valued by Russian-speaking professionals were much freedom in performing tasks, less hierarchy in the workplace and a more responsible attitude to work. Another typically appreciated attribute was that employees' rights were always observed in contrast to the situation in Russia or Ukraine.

*"Here everything is done the way it should be done. If you are supposed to have a vacation – you will get it. And they even make sure that you are on that leave. Labour unions make sure employees' rights are not infringed upon. In the private sector, though, it depends on what kind of private sector it is and how you can fight for your rights. In Russia you'd always need to know what rights you have and fight for them." (Female, 35-39.)*

A motivating working culture and pleasing working conditions proved a good incentive for staying in Finland and keeping on working here. For the most part, the respondents have

enjoyed their jobs and working environment, a fact which was conditioned by a number of factors including a clear boundary between personal and professional relations in the work place, communication with highly educated & intelligent colleagues and the rights of employees being observed. One of the most important aspects of the working culture in Finland was the possibility to maintain work-life balance, which appeared to be essential for many, especially for families with children.

*"Everything is very comfortable here in a sense that I have time for many things during the day. Everything is so close, you do not need to travel far, and even if you do not live nearby, a one-way trip to your work place will not take one and a half hours. I like that I can go to work from 8 am to 4 pm, then do sports, meet somebody and even visit Café Lingua. I can have time for many activities."* (Female, 25-29.)

Despite the fact that the Finnish working culture attracted Russian-speaking professionals by the generally relaxed atmosphere at work, flexible hours, possibility to make decisions, etc., it also gained some criticism. The interviewees mentioned a very formal attitude to work; according to them, in Finland people do not work overtime while it is a norm in Russia.

*"People have a very formal attitude to work here, in Russia they were ready to work more."* (Male, 30-34.)

A similar view was expressed also by Chinese and Indian professionals in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area (Merimaa & Kiviniemi 2010, 26), who considered the Finnish working culture not competitive enough. According to the Chinese and Indian migrants, it did not offer enough opportunities for the most career-oriented individuals and decreased work motivation, an opinion which was voiced by the Russian-speaking skilled workers, too. Although, in case of the Russian professionals decreasing work motivation was linked not as much to the Finnish working culture in general as to their concrete job and set of tasks.

*"- Do you like your work?*

*- It does not allow me to bring out my full potential and this has been a bit demotivating. I have been searching for other jobs lately, but I also hope I could be promoted here."* (Female, 25-29.)

Some interviewees who have had work experience also in Russian companies in Finland admit that they have not fully enjoyed working there. The reason for this lies with certain aspects of the Russian working environment, including long working hours, the sense of competition between employees and mixing personal and professional life. Indeed, undefined boundaries between professional and personal relations are typical to working culture in Russia; moreover, such attitude is encouraged, since it helps employees do their work coherently. In Finland, on the contrary, friendship is less likely to happen outside of the workplace, which represents a common trend in the country's working culture.

### 5.3. Entering the work community

Entering a new work collective in Finland was experienced differently by the informants. For some, it was easy to feel an integral part of the team while for others it just took much time to get accustomed to an already established group.

*"Among the employees we have both Russians and Ukrainians here. We have plenty of common informal happenings [...] It is easy to enter the working collective that way. If I have any questions I can always ask. The atmosphere is very informal, between both colleagues and the boss." (Male, 25-29.)*

Those working in an international collective, namely in an English-speaking environment (mostly males) adapted rather well without problems. Respondents admit that in an international working environment people are more easy-going and open, and it makes adaptation almost effortless. Conversely, those who worked in Finnish-speaking environments had difficulties in finding contact with older colleagues in their companies. In these cases both age difference and language played a role and relations with colleagues tended to be solely professional.

*"It was not very easy to integrate into the team. During the first month there I was thinking how to just start talking to them. The majority of employees there are Finns aged 30-40. In the beginning, some of them did not even say "hello" or simply muttered something. They went to have lunch only with their own crowd, so my bosses invited me to have lunch with them. Then I started to associate with other trainees, and now I am even regularly invited to have lunch with them. I realized that it was just a matter of time. They are getting used to me. They are like that, they keep distance. These are just normal relationships with colleagues, but not friendship." (Female 25-29.)*

It can be problematic for someone to join the work collective because of the differences in culture, since it was noted that communication with Russian-speaking colleagues in the same mainly Finnish environment appeared to be much easier and more natural. For some respondents, the Finnish language was a barrier towards more effective socialization with their colleagues, while for some it was even an insufficient level of English. Some informants mentioned that their English was good enough for work, but perhaps not entirely fluent. All in all, more informal relations with colleagues were established sooner in smaller companies and departments, where individuals were working in small groups. Another aspect that emerged in relation to getting along with colleagues was belonging to a particular group.

*"Everyone here is good-natured, yet socialization somehow escapes me. I do not fit in very well. There exists a routine of the group to meet, discuss something, to drink coffee. More close communication is possible then, but there is a division between family people, PhD students, etc" (Male, 30-34.)*

## 6. Housing

### 6.1. Difficult to find

The interviews with Russian-speaking professionals revealed a number of difficulties and inconveniences related to housing that they have encountered since arrival in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. Mainly interviewees were satisfied with the quality of rented housing, very good public transport communication to the Helsinki city centre and a neighbourhood that is comfortable to reside in. However, the first problem commonly faced by several respondents was difficulties in renting a suitable apartment.

Usually those who came to the Helsinki Metropolitan Area to work and signed their contracts already before arrival had very few difficulties finding a place to live. Common practice shows that in such cases an employer rendered assistance in apartment searches and working out other necessary practicalities. Alternatively, relocation services compensated by an employer were actively used by migrants. Those employed in research positions, e.g. at a university, were offered more inexpensive and affordable housing for PhD students through HOAS. Hence, it was relatively easy for most informants to receive their first accommodation in Finland.

However, for different reasons, not everyone was fully satisfied with their first dwelling and was willing to change an apartment after about one year of residence. By that time, the informants had become more or less acquainted with what the housing market in Finland was like and started their searches for new accommodation. In the process of applying for rental housing on the private market, various difficulties were revealed by the migrants.

*"I needed to find housing as soon as possible and this one turned out to be the only place downtown that had a garage. Searching for a dwelling in Finland is not the most comfortable thing; you need to find yourself apartments that are being shown and make an appointment to see them. And there will surely be a lot of people coming, it is difficult. I attended 5 open houses in Helsinki, and this one was the best. The most important thing is that you do not compete with Finnish married couples, because they are immediately given preference. It is always so. A landlord wants quiet, familiar people in their apartment. They are the biggest competitors, but also they often look for single houses or townhouses." (Male 30-35.)*

In many cases, Russian-speaking professionals noted high competition with Finnish applicants who in the end were often given preference over Russian ones. According to the interviewees, it was very frustrating to attend one apartment presentation after another only to find the place finally given to a Finnish citizen. Their experience has been that landlords have concerns about renting out an apartment to foreigners.

*"When I arrived, I lived in an apartment offered by my company, I would not have been able to immediately find anything myself – foreigners are treated with distrust. For example, if you are looking for an apartment and there are 10 candidates, Finns are always prioritized. And also Finns told me that Finns are Finns and foreigners are foreigners and you do not know what to expect from foreigners. After several rejections I started searching for very expensive apartments (price/quality) and rented one. There just were no other candidates." (Male, 25-29)*

Landlords' reluctance to rent out apartments to foreigners has become a widely spread idea among the interviewed Russian-speaking professionals. In attempts to somehow by-

pass competition with Finns, one had to agree to apartments they were not fully content with. Migrants feel that they are somehow being excluded from the opportunity to rent a considerable amount of good housing because of Finnish landlords being “afraid” of Russians. The speakers of Russian perceive that in the current situation, their choices are limited significantly. In a few cases, having heard about problems encountered by Russian friends and colleagues in the process of renting an apartment, interviewees did not even try to find something available on the private market. Instead, they either tried to locate suitable housing with the help of their own friends and local networks, or to purchase own accommodation.

*“- What kind of difficulties did you face when searching for an apartment?*

*- Those kinds of difficulties that Russians are rented out apartments rarely, not as often as to Finns, they are a bit afraid of Russians. So I decided not to search but to purchase my own. I have not encountered any problems because when selling an apartment nobody cares if you are Russian whereas when you rent they pay attention to it. When I got a permanent contract I decided that I would take a mortgage loan for many years and I have lived so for 6 years already.”* (Female, 25-29)

## 6.2. Too expensive

The most common housing problem experienced by the Russian-speaking migrants is overpriced housing. Sometimes the quality of accommodation was also insufficient (e.g. an apartment required renovation or lacked a bathroom) although it was compensated by an advantageous location either downtown or in a more relaxed, quiet and green neighbourhood in the midst of nature.

Most migrants who have already purchased their own apartments/houses have acknowledged that it is simply the most economically advantageous way to live in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. Those who reside in rental accommodation are planning to also move to own housing as soon as they are ready to make a purchase. Russian-speaking professionals admit that mortgage conditions in Finland are milder and more favourable than those in their home countries and this factor proved to become a good motivator when making a housing decision. In Russia, it is very hard for young working people to get a mortgage from banks and purchase their own housing for various reasons and now, unfortunately, this is a general tendency. The main reasons are very high interest rates and a number of additional requirements; taking a mortgage is considered to be a risky endeavor.

The “housing question” is very topical in contemporary Russia; it is still the norm that the whole family represented by two or more generations lives in the same apartment – one often shares a dwelling with both parents and children who are already adults. Moreover, the situation is exacerbated by very high prices for rent that most cannot afford (Kalinichev 2011, 39).

*“I got divorced [in Finland] and was looking for my own apartment, attended several open houses and chose the one closest to my workplace. I cannot say that I am satisfied with it, I would like a bigger one and to pay less. But the location is good. Of course, I would love to buy my own housing but there is just the first 15% of the total price that is still missing.”* (Female, 25-29)

The majority of interviewees have voiced complaints about prices on the private housing market. The level of prices was quite high, and often presented a difficulty to those who

would like to acquire own accommodation. The necessity of living for years in expensive rental housing considerably slowed the process of saving money and decreased the chance of settling in one's own dwelling. It affected primarily younger migrants who did not have previous substantial savings from their home countries and had only one employed person in their household. Most interviewees who have not yet purchased their own apartment are thinking about doing so. A small part of the respondents does not yet plan to buy their own dwelling because of not being entirely sure whether they would like to stay in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area or if a new job would lead them away to a different city or even country.

*"I live in a rental apartment and I do not like it, I should purchase one of my own. Now it is like you are throwing the money away. It is a private sector apartment. On the housing market a nice apartment costs €700-800, so basically you can pay the same amount per month if you have taken a mortgage loan. Otherwise you just throw the money away. It is horrible. As soon as I get a permanent contract I will buy my own apartment." (Male, 25-29.)*

### 6.3. The neighbourhood is chosen carefully

The importance of the location of an apartment as well as the quality of the neighbourhood in general has been mentioned by the majority of interviewees. Everyone has their own criteria and as a rule preferences depended on the character of an interviewee and on some personal experiences. All purchased housing, however, is located in residential districts due to the price factor.

For some, an apartment should be close to the city centre and have good transport connections and infrastructure. Families with children value quiet neighbourhoods and residential districts with a high availability of services; they desire a place where children could walk to school safely. One of the interviewees mentioned that a decisive factor for her was lack of migrants in the neighbourhood, which would ensure general feeling of safety and security. The importance of being close to nature was also mentioned by some informants.

*"I have lived in Helsinki for 5 years, the neighbourhood is wonderful, it borders with Vantaa, there are woodlands and parks there. You can just go there and wander for hours, there is no one there, although at the same time it is close to the city centre. Helsinki and Finns do well when they do not destroy nature on the construction sites but integrate urban structures into the existing natural landscape." (Female, 30-34.)*

The interviewed Russian migrants show different preferences when choosing a neighbourhood. For many respondents, proximity to the centre is important, although in essence very few live downtown. More remote districts, nevertheless, are also a good option because of a very well-developed network of public transportation within the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. However, those who come originally from small towns look for similar living conditions and choose less urbanized areas. For them, the most important is nature and less noise, but still with proximity to the busy city.

*"I found my apartment with the help of relocation services. We used to live in the suburbs of St. Petersburg and I am not a fan of a megalopolis, a large city and noise. I was attracted mainly by this. Here we live close to the sea, everything is green and nice. Perhaps in due course we will think of buying our own." (Male, 30-34)*

Another thing that mattered for a few interviewees was neighbours. For migrants it was important what kind of people lived close by, and the possibility to maintain good relations was also appreciated.

*"Now we live in a quiet neighbourhood. For us the neighbourhood is very important. We paid attention to price, transport connection, infrastructure and location. We used to live in a state-subsidized city-owned apartment and were dissatisfied with everything there, especially with the neighbours living above us – they were loud and their apartment was sometimes flooded with water which in turn caused damage to our home. We did not want our children to see that and bought our own dwelling."*

(Female, 35-39)

By and large, despite of all these challenges Russian-speaking migrants are satisfied with their current housing – its quality, location and neighbourhood. The main concern of the interviewees, however, is the lack of accommodation at a reasonable price and perceived discrimination on the open housing market. The current high prices of rental apartments in the city of Helsinki and its Metropolitan Area have been a topical issue for all residents in Finland who live in rental housing and it has been so for quite a while already (Helsingin Sanomat, 13.02.12). As acknowledged by Secretary of State R. Sailas, the shortage of housing is "a national problem and a major impediment hindering economical growth." (Helsingin Sanomat, 16.11.12). However, international migrants and Russians in particular find themselves in a more vulnerable position in contrast to their Finnish counterparts, since as foreigners they face even more problems.

Table 3. Challenges and strengths of the Finnish housing market (as mentioned in the interviews)

Strengths	Challenges
Affordable accommodation for PhD students in HOAS	Overpriced private sector housing (price/quality)
Favourable mortgage conditions compared to Russia=> opportunity to purchase own housing	Difficult to save money for the first installment while living in expensive rental accommodation
A very good selection of rental housing options all over the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, variety of neighbourhoods different from each other	Landlords are reluctant to rent out accommodation to Russians & high competition with Finns

## 7. Services

### 7.1. Leisure and free time

What attitude do Russian-speaking professionals in Helsinki exhibit towards leisure activities and recreation services? Are they well informed about the whole spectrum of activities in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area? The interviewees expressed different opinions and experiences regarding the matter depending on their personal interests, age and period of residence in Finland. For some, going to a cinema was a good way to spend spare time, while for others singing or painting has been a hobby for many years. Also having a family affected the choice of recreation services. Respondents who have children admit

that their leisure time activities are mainly connected to their children's hobbies and that most free time is spent with children, be it at the cinema or taking the child to sports or a hobby group. There are a lot of activities for children in Helsinki Metropolitan area. Also Rainio (2009) admits that the life of migrants in Finland having a family is to a lesser degree work-oriented than that of single individuals, which, in turn, affects their leisure related preferences and choices.

Under 30-year-old respondents who do not yet have a family with children or are single prefer to spend their free time actively; they are involved in various sports, dancing, etc. and believe there are a lot of options to choose from in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. They are busy with work, but think there is a rich supply of leisure activities in Helsinki.

*"There are so many things to do here. Everything is very well developed and anyone who says there is nothing to do here is just a lazy person. You can always find everything here, there are so many advertisements, but it happens often that those advertisements are in Finnish."* (Female, 30-34.)

However, some individuals have expressed an opinion that life in Helsinki is rather boring and they do not know where to engage. For the most part, such a perception of Helsinki can result from a number of factors: an individual having very little information about activities and events, very limited circle of friends, or not belonging to any group or association that could suggest useful information and tips about opportunities to pass free time in the city.

*"- Is there enough to do in Helsinki?*

*- Rather nothing to do. But we should search more actively. Now our lifestyle is child-oriented. In Moscow, for example, there is always a great deal of movement, there is movement at work and there is always a feeling that there are a lot of things to do. And I knew what I could do there, because I lived there for a longer period. I could, for instance, go for a walk. For me it is already a happening when people get together it puts me in good spirits. People are in a hurry somewhere and this kind of bustle creates an illusion that there is a lot to do there. Here, on the contrary, I do not see this. Moving to a new country changed our lifestyle and put to an end association with old friends. Here we were practically do not have any friends."* (Male, 30-34.)

How often and to what degree people are involved in free-time activities also says something about their general integration into the society. As noted by Raunio (2009), the major function of cultural and recreation services is to offer foreigners access to a society and community so they can become part of them. Often those who do not understand Finnish and do not have wide social networks also stay away from the main channels of information about events and other ideas that would suggest a hobby. Many learn about events organized in the city of Helsinki (e.g. Restaurant Day) from friends, the Internet or Facebook. Knowing what one is looking for usually eases the searches, and it is also important to know where to find the necessary information.

A few full-time employed informants report that they often have relatively little time for leisure or their hobby is related to work so it would be difficult to draw a boundary between those two. The same idea was pronounced by Raunio (2009) who studied the role of cultural services as both a pull factor and a social environment for international experts in Finland in the beginning of 2000s. Today as well as ten years ago the life of work migrants is busy and very much work-oriented, so that to some extent a job and a hobby merge.

How people talk about free time also depends on each individual's personal interests and availability of time. Night life was very seldom mentioned by interviewees as a preferred way to spend their free time; instead, Russian-speaking professionals appreciate

wide opportunities for sports including cycling as well as well-equipped sports facilities. For some, visiting their friends, receiving guests or just staying at home was a good means of spending free time. Interestingly, going to restaurants as a means of spending free time was named by only one informant, who briefly mentioned going out and eating out in the company of international colleagues. Instead, going to bars turned out to be more popular among the interviewees. They saw bars as a comfortable setting for socializing and having a drink, catching up with old friends in a relaxed atmosphere and meeting new ones. Some prefer bars because of the possibility to listen to live music and dance or to play pool. A few respondents were interested in quiet walks in parks, being close to nature and having a barbecue with friends or relatives.

*"There is everything in Helsinki, but the main thing is, there should be more of everything. When I visited Amsterdam, there were five Latin dance events per night while in Helsinki there are maybe three a week and not every week. Everything is good in Helsinki, but it should be increased by three times." (Male, 30-34.)*

Russian people appreciate art, and culture is important for them. The interviews revealed that Russian-speaking migrants' interest and demand for cultural events taking place in the city is high, too, but most of them are disappointed by the range of cultural places to visit. Especially those who come from bigger cities like St. Petersburg and Moscow are used to regularly visiting theatres, museums, exhibitions and being involved in the cultural life of the city in other ways as well. St. Petersburg, the so-called cultural capital of Russia, is a city of 5 million located only 400 km away from Helsinki; it offers a great variety of opportunities to experience different aspects cultural life. Dissatisfied with the supply of performances and concerts and the amount of Russian theatrical shows, many choose to travel to Russia for those purposes. Russia is vital for the expatriates in this sense, as it provides numerous opportunities to engage in culture, and importantly to view performances in their own language.

*"When we come to Russia, the first thing we do is purchase tickets to a theatre, possibly to cultural exhibitions. It is possible to here, too, but these opportunities are limited. When we are there, our children are taken care of and we have time to go somewhere. Here we do not have much time." (Female, 35-39.)*

## 7.2. To St. Petersburg to see a doctor

The healthcare system has been widely criticized by the Russian-speaking migrants interviewed for this research. Although it was not used intensively by the interviewees, informants had single concrete unsatisfying experiences which made them perceive the whole healthcare system as such. According to the interviews, the problems included waiting for too long for an ambulance, prescription of painkillers in case of different disorders, and failure to be diagnosed properly and receive adequate treatment. Also in case of some acute situations on weekends or later time of a day, clinic staff was not available.

*"... And I had a talk with a lot of people – with Finns, Russians, Europeans, and also medical professionals. Everyone says the same thing: healthcare services are very bad here. A Russian doctor here told me that on principle healthcare is OK here, but only after diagnostics. You need to tell your physician what your diagnosis is, and then you will get appropriate treatment. That is why it is worthy to go to St. Petersburg in such cases, everyone I know does so." (Male, 30-34.)*

The vast majority of interviewees have personally had negative experience with Finnish healthcare services and after a few attempts have decided to resort to Russia. Most informants are used to traveling to St. Petersburg to see specialists. This can also be explained by the fact that they have lived the longest in Russia, know the healthcare centres and specialists personally and have used their services for some time. Also, friends and relatives living in Russia can suggest a good doctor, while due to less extensive networks in Finland migrants gain less information through this channel.

*“... Generally speaking, I do not like medical services here, I really do not use them here. If I have a problem I just go to St. Petersburg to handle the issue. Here it is difficult to access – a doctor will not approach you unless you are almost dying. My wife had a problem, so we went there and were told that they would close soon and had no time for us. We called to a duty medical officer but he just offered to wait until the next morning. In the morning at a municipal clinic we were told that the problem could be fixed by a pain killer burana. Healthcare is not very good, neither is doctors' qualification.”* (Male, 30-34.)

Such an attitude to healthcare in Finland has become so widespread that according to the interviewees, some who have not yet used the services decide not to even try but go directly to Russia. On the contrary, dentistry in private clinics was appreciated and was not commented on negatively.

I must also note that those who have lived in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area the longest (7-10 years and more) never talked negatively about Finnish healthcare services or did not mention them at all. On the contrary, those who have arrived recently tended to praise the Russian healthcare system more.

Finnish health care consists of the publicly funded health care system as well as the private sector, and all employees are supposed to have health insurance provided by their employers. Those Russian-speaking professionals who talked about their negative experiences did not always specify whether they had used public or private health care services. However, those who did specify it were talking primarily about local municipal health centres and their visits to both general practitioners and specialists. Some of the unemployed close relatives of the informants also had to use the medical services of their local health centers. The main concern of the interviewees was not so much long queuing as that the treatment they received differed from what they were expecting (based on their experiences of medical services in Russia and Ukraine). According to the findings of Merimaa & Kiviniemi (2010), some of the aspects of healthcare in Finland were of concern to Indian professionals, too.

### 7.3. “Finnish bureaucracy is the best in the world”

Respondents acknowledged functionality of Finnish bureaucracy and the fact there was no fear of officials. In Russia as well there is a great deal of bureaucracy that often impedes smooth implementation of a matter. According to the informants, everything was well organized, and the most important official documents were available also in English. Several respondents who came to Helsinki Metropolitan because of work have used the Finland Relocation Services and had no problems with settling in Finland. Yritys Helsinki was also mentioned in relation to positive experiences with services in Finland. Everyone talked about the availability and comfort of public transport (also reittiopas.fi).

*"Frankly, I am in love with the Finnish bureaucracy. It is the best bureaucracy in the world. I am familiar with Ukrainian and American bureaucracy and according to my friends' accounts I more or less get an idea of how it works in Germany. But in Finland it is the best. When you have problems and go to the police they actually help there." (Male, 30-34.)*

Among the less successful experiences I could name long queues in the police and the practice of issuing work-based residence permits. One of the interviewees mentioned that in Ukraine it is possible to buy some additional services for extra money, whereas in Finland the level of paid and free services is approximately the same.

*"The main difference in principle is that in Finland everything is more or less the same, while in Ukraine it is not. In Ukraine I can buy myself an additional service for money, if I have money, while in Finland I cannot. Medical services are the most striking example, but in essence I think it is applicable to all spheres." (Male, 30-34.)*

## **8. Daily Life in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area**

### **8.1. Social networks: non-Finnish**

The interviews with the Russian-speaking professionals have shown that similarities can be observed in how their social networks are formed. These include Finnish-speaking, Russian-speaking as well as circles consisting of international individuals. However, Finns still constitute the smallest part of most interviewees' social networks.

*"I think I could have more Finnish friends. I believe that it is inappropriate to show initiative many times, it means that you inflict yourself on them. I was brought up that way. But it is hard to behave with Finns the other way, they show initiative very rarely. I can initiate meetings but sometimes I just lose all patience. The first idea that comes to my mind is that I am inflicting myself on them." (Female, 25-29.)*

A vast majority of the respondents admit to spending much time in international groups. Such networks are typically shaped by frequent contacts with international colleagues and expatriates, since the working environment is often English-speaking. For several migrants, the workplace, university or Finnish language courses presented a good opportunity to make contact and get acquainted with Finnish society, so for many establishing their own networks began then. And this, in turn, affected the current situation. As few as only two respondents said their social networks consisted mainly of Finns, and it was their own well considered choice to create such kinds of networks.

Most of the interviewees have primarily international friends, although those include a few internationally-minded Finns as well. Expatriates are usually met at international parties and organizations, introduced by friends.

*"My social networks consist of colleagues from work and the university and the project I am involved in. These are foreigners and Finns, but actually there are very few Finns. We need people who show more initiative, and foreigners are just more active. If somebody relocated here from their country they are already active. Finns are lazy enough. It is much more interesting to associate with proactive people." (Male, 30-34.)*

The language barrier or failure to speak Finnish fluently in most cases is the main obstacle towards entering a Finnish-speaking group. Another reason for lack of Finnish friends, as pointed out by interviewees, is Finns being reserved, introverted, and not very talkative or sociable. Cultural differences also matter: interviews point to certain tension that remains when communicating with Finnish people. It is conditioned by concerns about how not to accidentally offend a Finn because some individuals have had such unpleasant experiences.

*"You always have to think about what you say, and make sure the other person will understand what you mean. The ways we think as well as jokes are so different. The cultures are different. We respect them, but it is hard to understand them completely."*  
(Female, 35-39.)

Some respondents admit they generally do not have many friends in Finland. Their social networks consist of either colleagues or individuals with whom association and communication is not very intensive but is instead superficial. In this case, migrants choose to maintain frequent contact with friends and relatives in their home countries. Family and relatives are very important for Russians, and members of a family are much closer to each other than they are in Finland. Since the Soviet times in many situations people have become used to relying heavily on close friends, but above all on their family members. This, of course, is much less pronounced in the contemporary Russian society; however, family still remains a very important part of life of a person brought up in a Russian environment. Therefore the interviewees either visit their families and friends in Russia often or invite the latter to see them in Finland. Alternatively, there is always a good chance to keep in touch via the Internet.

The interviewees long for deeper and more profound contacts. Having settled in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area and lived here for several months and even years, Russians still are not quite satisfied with the quality of their social lives and acquired contacts and networks. Although they have friends to a lesser or a greater degree and do not feel entirely lonely in Finland, these contacts are not meaningful enough and friends are not close enough. Friendship occupies a special place in the Russian culture and the word "friend" has a slightly different meaning. By friendship, a Russian usually means more profound relations, and a friend is supposed to render help in case there are problems as well as give some psychological advice; a friend is not just a person with whom one can spend free time.

*"There have been issues in relation to namely intellectual communication. A person not only needs material conditions for living, but also intellectual communication, love, friendly connections. And this leaves much to be desired. But these are Nordic people; they are rather pragmatic and materially oriented. Having Russian roots, I suffer from lack of full and productive communication..."* (Female, 30-34.)

A few interviewees have mainly Russian-speaking circles of friends. As a rule, Russian families who have lived here more than 5-7 years tend to associate mainly with Russians, while those migrants who arrived just recently easier find themselves in a company of foreigners. However, a number of respondents named Russians in their circles, and stated that the more they lived in Helsinki Metropolitan Area the more Russian friends they made. For those who have resided here for more than 5 years, the closest friends were individuals met during the very first years in Finland.

*"Perhaps I am not very well integrated into the Finnish-speaking society. If you regard the Russian community as part of Finnish society, then I am well-integrated. I "dive"*

*into the Finnish society while attending Finish courses. I intentionally avoided communication with Russians and tried to meet more Finns. It lasted a few months and helped a lot and my Finnish advanced. But it was hard, because I felt bad, I wanted to associate with Russians and when I started doing so, I felt much better. Our culture and the Finnish culture are so different. There are jokes that Finns just do not get, they do not have the same associations as we have. You say something and a person understands a completely different thing. I could immerse myself into the Finnish culture, but I just do not need it.”* (Female, 25-29.)

It turned out to be very important to many respondents who their friends were and this choice is easiest summarized in the conventional wisdom: “tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are”. Usually these are individuals with a similar educational background, intelligent. For some, education of their contacts matters, while others value manners and a general level of intelligence. As a rule, interviewees described their friends as educated, motivated and having a self-motivating and proactive attitude. Those who are constantly unemployed and living on allowances are very seldom included in the circle of associates because, according to migrants, they are “so different and do not have the same topics of conversation”.

Some respondents admitted that having a family and a child put certain limitations on general creation of their social networks. Couples who have small children lead a busy life and spend most of their free time with children and similar couples with children are more likely to be found in their circles of friends. That is how a respondent describes his social networks:

*“I think that having a child affects [our social network]. A family with a child of a similar age with whom we could meet would be a great advantage. The children could play together. A Russian couple was the great hope for us. During the recent two months we have been busy with work-related issues.”* (Male, 30-34.)

This informant talks about lack of social networks due to busy schedules, especially when there is a child and both parents are employed. For people who have recently arrived in Finland and fit this profile, the easiest way to find contacts other than colleagues would be communication with other Russian, Finnish or English-speaking families who have children as well. A daycare can be a good place where such people can be met. However, for some migrants who do not yet speak Finnish, communication with the Finnish families can be difficult.

To sum it up, the main concerns Russian-speaking migrants have about their social networks in Helsinki Metropolitan include having very few Finnish friends and generally very few close friends. According to the interviewees, it is rather difficult to move from a superficial friendship to a closer one.

Russian-speaking individuals have very few points of contact with Finns. This holds especially true of Russian families or employees in international companies who are surrounded by foreigners every day and spend their free time with other expatriates. The situation changes when children start going to daycare and school and migrants become more involved into the Finnish-speaking environment. For several persons, Russian friends were a conscious choice: they feel much more comfortable speaking their native language and share the same culture. A few individuals have made a choice to have mainly Finnish contacts and friends (they have lived in Finland at least 9 years and are fluent in Finnish). Those who cannot make closer friends resort to either frequent visits to Russia or invite Russian friends to Finland. Among the obstacles to meeting new people are also very tight working schedules, lack of free time and insufficient knowledge of Finnish.

## 8.2. Is it necessary to speak Finnish in Finland?

Russian migrants do not have the same attitude towards learning Finnish. The respondents are clearly divided into two groups – the first one acknowledged the importance of learning Finnish and speaking it fluently, while for others it was not necessary at all.

*"When I was an exchange student, everything was already organized, the study program was in English and the circle of acquaintance was English-speaking, too, and I did not feel any discomfort about it. It appeared when I decided to settle in Finland. I noticed that the Finnish language was needed, but originally I did not have any limitations."* (Female, 25-29.)

The usefulness of speaking Finnish was emphasized by the female interviewees more often than by the male ones. Females spoke about being isolated from the Finnish society without knowing the language and tried their best to master it. Even if they need to speak English at work, they prefer using Finnish in their daily lives. Failure to understand and be understood in Finnish presents emotional discomfort and is seen as one of the biggest obstacles to successful integration. The importance of understanding the culture and Finnish humour were also mentioned.

Individuals typically employed in an IT or research field (mostly males in this sample), where there are a lot of international colleagues and the corporate language is always English, however, are more reluctant to learn Finnish to be really able to actually speak it. The first reason for their poor language proficiency is Finnish being difficult to learn. The other reason is not being quite sure if they would stay in Helsinki Metropolitan area or move elsewhere abroad in search of better career prospects. The fact that Helsinki Metropolitan area is a very international place to live in plays its role, too. Chances to manage without speaking at work, in official institutions and in daily life, as well as having international and Russian friends and colleagues do not add to the necessity spend time and energy to learn Finnish. English is considered the main means of communication in Finland and has been so for a few years already for some of the interviewees.

*"If work does not require Finnish, it decreases one's motivation to study the language. You only need to learn Finnish to be able to order a drink at a bar. Besides, everyone knows English. I have been here for two years, yet cannot speak Finnish properly. I started learning it, but noticed it was difficult and required particular diligence, while my priority is my dissertation. My main reason for coming here was not to live in Finland but to write my PhD dissertation here. If you come with a goal to settle in Finland you learn Finnish, if your aim is to just move to a Western country then English is enough."* (Male, 25-29.)

Also, Finnish was very hard to learn and besides it was not set as a top priority. Professionals dedicate most of their time to work; sometimes hobbies are also work-related, hence there is no time or need to study. Attending courses of Finnish did not prove effective for most, since teachers either talked often in English, or very fast in Finnish, or instructors changed very frequently to top it all off. Such a situation with Finnish courses (for which many interviewees had great expectations) did not add to motivation and desire to learn a challenging language.

*“– Do you speak Finnish?*

*Not at all. I had studied it for one and a half years, I attended the course organized by the city of Espoo. The teacher had very little experience with teaching a group and spoke English a lot during the class. Then she was changed by a very good teacher, she only used Finnish. The third instructor talked to us as if we were Finns, she never chose the right words; I was coming and listening, but I can do exercises myself at home, too. So after that I just got bored with it.”* (Male, 30-34.)

Conversely, professionals employed in Finnish-working companies (mainly females in the sample) are much more motivated to study Finnish, and language learning proved more effective to them; some individuals speak it fluently already. For females, it is beneficial to speak Finnish at work as well as when applying for a vacant position. However, the need to speak and study Finnish is acknowledged by those who intend to stay in the country for longer periods, while during the first 3-4 years after arrival it is not yet topical.

Other concerns linked to the language issue were emphasized by respondents who had small children. Their main concern was difficulties connected to developing children's Russian language skills. They feel that only speaking Russian at home is not enough to teach the children to speak correctly and teach a rich vocabulary – the influence of the Finnish environment is too strong.

*“I would like my children to work in a Russian-speaking environment, to give them such a chance. The only possibility is to go to study in Russia – there is not a single Russian-speaking daycare in Espoo, they all are located in Helsinki. But it is so far to travel every day. It is hard to maintain when you live in a different cultural and linguistic environment.”* (Female, 25-29.)

Another informant was worried that there were no foreign movies available in Russian or with Russian subtitles. Overall, all interviewees with children (regardless of whether both parents were Russian or not) were interested in their children learning to speak Russian as their mother tongue. Russian daycare in most cases has been chosen as the best means to maintain a linguistic environment since childhood.

*“Talking about children, their communication in Russian is limited to a great extent. Primarily it happens within a family and hobby groups, and this is a disadvantage. We have to put so much effort into maintaining their Russian – this environment is so limited. They speak Russian well, but their language skills do not develop so fast. The main disadvantage is that all CDs and DVDs here are not in Russian. I would like to rent out and show a movie, but in essence it does not exist here, only if the original language is Russian.”* (Male, 35-39.)

### 8.3. Perception of everyday life in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area

In this subchapter I would like to write more about experiences the native speakers of Russian have had in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. Some of the experiences appeared to be another positive encounter with the Finnish society and lifestyle while some presented a challenge; they all help to better understand the lives of Russian-speaking expatriates.

### 8.3.1. Positive experiences

Some respondents had frequent touristic trips to Helsinki and its Metropolitan Area before finally moving here, which created a good opportunity for them to get to know more about life in a Finnish capital and make the right choice. The most common experience is, of course, feeling safe and secure, which has been mentioned by many. Interviewees also value quiet peaceful life away from the noise of big cities, and the smaller number of people outside. Several interviewees came to Finland from Moscow and St. Petersburg – cities with a population of several million residents who suffer from typical problems of urban areas such as air pollution, traffic noise and little green space. These informants especially admit that better ecological conditions in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area than those in a busy home city attracted them to the area and that they now enjoy nature and a green environment. A few citations below show the informants' attitude to their life in Finland and point out what they value and appreciate in the city; they mainly talk about the city's positive sides.

*“...This is life for those who appreciate nature. And, perhaps, word number one is safety. Everything is always and everywhere safe.”* (Male, 30-34)

*“I like that there are few people in the streets, there are few Russians. This is my country, my small paradise.”* (Female, 30-34.)

One of the interviewees even admitted to spending most of his time in Espoo because it seemed less busy and comfortable than Helsinki, and that thus far Helsinki had remained mainly unexplored. At the same time there were also informants who missed of the active side of life in a city, but they felt so comfortable in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area that even this would not be an obstacle to further staying in the city.

*“I hardly know Helsinki, it is a too large city for me.”* (Male, 30-34.)

For many, daily life in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area has been experienced as comfortable and less stressful. The very well-developed network of public transportation eased travels around the Greater Helsinki, substantially reduced time spent on such travels and hence left much time and energy for other activities. The interviewees from bigger cities used to spend up to 1.5 hours making daily trips from home to work. It is one of the aspects pointing to improved quality of life in comparison to the home country.

*“What I have noticed about Helsinki is that all travels within the city take 25 minutes, or less than half an hour. I am talking about the destinations where I usually travel. If I cannot make it somewhere by foot in 20-25 minutes, I take my bike. If it is not possible to get there in 25 min by bike also I can always take a bus or a tram. And even if I cannot reach it by bus or tram in 25 minutes, I just take a car and get there in 20 minutes.”* (Male, 30-34.)

The importance of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area being an international place was often brought up and highly appreciated by migrants who did not speak Finnish fluently and were at only a beginner's level. For many, the possibility to live in Helsinki without speaking Finnish was a great advantage considering the quality of life would not suffer from it; even some official documents in English accessible via Internet.

*"I am very glad that almost everyone speaks English. The culture here is very international and I should give Finns credit for that. They have made it possible for people from different parts of the globe to come here to work and study."* (Male, 30-34.)

Another aspect that influenced Russian migrants' satisfaction with their life in Helsinki was the time factor. Having lived here for several months or years, it became easier for them to get attached to the city, to get friends and create social and professional networks. The fact that a spouse or children had adapted to the place and started feeling comfortable here played its role, too. However, the children of a few respondents were already born in Finland. One of the female respondents talks about her priorities in such a way: *"The most important is a stable life for my family, confidence in the children's future, good possibilities for education and personal development."* (Female, 35-39.)

Having better integrated into the society and learned the language, Russian-speaking professionals have more attractive career prospects to choose from and greater opportunities to realize themselves professionally. This adds to their general satisfaction with living in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area and attaches migrants to the region.

Overall, life in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area is sooner perceived as slow and quiet by Russian-speaking migrants, especially by those who arrived from bigger cities. While for some it is a great relief to find themselves in a less stressful environment after experiences of a busy city and need to cover very long distances on a daily basis, for some interviewees Helsinki was a dull place, not active enough. Helsinki was perceived as a boring place to reside in primarily by those who were not able to come up with a hobby or failed to make a circle of acquaintances. Both those who have lived in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area for many years and only about one year have had very different experiences in the city. Generally, the experiences depended on the personality of an individual, what priorities they set, what their interests and life attitude were, so one could either feel very lonely and bored here or busy and engaged in a variety of activities and projects.

### 8.3.2. Negative experiences

Despite many delightful experiences of Russian-speaking professionals in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, there have been unpleasant incidents as well. A part of concerns of the speakers of Russian was about their children, namely parents worried about how their children were treated at school by their Finnish peers. However, all informants who had children were willing to teach them the Russian language and culture as much as possible and never talked about trying to hide their Russian origin.

*"The situation the children face at school upsets us a lot. They are called names because of their national origin almost every day. In elementary school it used to be even more often. We do not conceal our roots; our children speak Russian well and respect our roots."* (Female, 35-39.)

The interviewees mentioned very seldom a situation when they encountered discrimination in one form or another; most frequently they referred to difficulties in renting out an apartment due to landlords' prejudices about Russians and females also admitted having troubles while searching for a job.

*"I like Finns a lot; it is a wonderful and a kind nation. I like them for their attitude towards Russians [...], I have never faced discrimination. I have a Finnish last name*

*- it also plays its role, perhaps. And I have a sincere attitude towards them, too." (Female, 30-34.)*

A few female interviewees mentioned that they never experienced discrimination in Finland and besides they had Finnish last names; according to one of the respondents that resulted from her Finnish passport, language skills and that she has studied in a higher education institution in Helsinki. Nevertheless, findings of a recent study (Larja et al., 2012) revealed that discrimination of Russians in the Finnish labour market existed. Russian-named job seekers encountered discrimination in the process of recruitment, namely they had to send twice as many job applications in contrast to respective Finnish-named applicants to be able to receive invitation to an interview.

*"Luckily, I have never faced discrimination, although many talk about it. Perhaps, I just chose not to pay attention to it, or perhaps it applies less to young women. I think that often such defiance is explained by me not speaking Finnish perfectly. Maybe the other person who is serving me is just tired or misunderstood what I meant." (Female, 25-29.)*

According to the interviewee, she has never experienced discrimination in any form in Finland, however her remark about "not paying attention to discrimination" just points to the fact that discrimination might be unnoticed by her. In other words, she does not deny it completely; a similar finding was observed by Larja et al. (2012).

To conclude, most of the experiences of Russian professionals in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area turned out to be rather positive and pleasing, which made them think they had made the right decision on coming to Finland. In contrast, worries and negative experiences were in the minority.

## **9. Staying in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area or moving elsewhere?**

The interviews allow me to assume that the two most significant factors that influence Russian-speaking professionals' decision to remain in the country are an interesting job and family ties. Soft factors are also very important, as they attach migrants to their current living environment. Safety, proximity to nature, transparency of society, standard of life, better conditions to raise children, multicultural English-speaking population and integration of a spouse are among the most common soft factors. Expatriates feel comfortable in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area and very few of them are actually thinking of going back to Russia and Ukraine. More likely, however, is that they consider moving to a third country (primarily in Europe) in case there is a better job there, a higher salary and standard of life and there are no family ties that would keep them in Finland.

*"As a researcher my career is already very well developed and I should move to the next phase - project management. And it will not necessarily be here, I have a plan to go to Switzerland, because I speak French and the climate there is milder. Also the standard of life there is simply higher, I mean the salary in relation to expenses. Quality of life in Finland is good enough, however the standard of life is insufficient. Here I receive an average salary, while in Switzerland those involved in scientific work have a much higher level of income." (Male, 30-34.)*

As already noted elsewhere in this paper, several individuals who came to Finland to study did not initially plan to stay here for a long period of time, but decided to remain in Finland

after having spent a few months or years here. Their idea was to receive free education or work experience in a European country and move on to a different place. Interestingly, almost no one was thinking of returning to their home countries. Those who came to the Helsinki Metropolitan Area because of work, however, never mentioned that they were going to stay in the country for only a limited period. On the contrary, they came here because of a work opportunity and planned to continue here as long as they had a job; ideally everyone was hoping for a permanent contract.

*"I would be glad to settle here. I would not like to move from one place to another in search of grants. For single individuals it is easier to relocate, as having a family and a child restricts mobility considerably. In Russia it is harder for me to get a corresponding job, alternatively I could change a profession, but I would not like to do so. Most of my former colleagues in research took up jobs that had nothing to do with their education or were hardly related to it. In principle, one can get a very good job in Moscow, the standard of life is high and salaries are high, but I have concerns about the rising levels of crime." (Male, 25-29.)*

Most interviewees are willing to stay in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area and continue working here. Family and other serious relationships (together with the presence of children) play a crucial role in the decision to stay in Helsinki. During the first years after arrival there would be no reason for them to be in the country without having a job, since some are not even entitled to social security benefits. Conversely, those who have lived in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area for about 10 years and more, usually have children, own dwelling and are not willing to move out Finland permanently, if not for a couple of years to be sure back in Finland.

Family is of great importance for Russians, also owing to the country's historical and cultural background. Generally, people in Russia tend to get married earlier than in Finland, and by the age 30 a female is expected to be married and possibly already have a child. The same attitude was adopted by the female interviewees as well. For most female informants who are single and do not yet have families, starting a family is prioritized for the next 5 years; thus, unlike family, the career becomes less important. Therefore their location and willingness to stay in Finland will be to a large extent determined by where they will have better chances to create a family.

*"I still would like to get a Master's degree here since it is free of charge and then will start sending my CV abroad. If I were married I would not go anywhere, it is so quiet here, but it is very hard with Finns here, because it is boring. There is so little fine architecture here, I do not like theatres here [...]. I would stay if I found someone for family life, otherwise it is so depressing here. I feel bored, so bored here despite the fact that I have a job. I work my hours and then comes free time and there is no place to go." (Female, 25-29)*

Those who have an interesting, well-paid permanent job but do not have a family or other personal ties that would attach them to Helsinki, both males and females, admit that they have still a variety of options ahead of them. They would prefer staying in Finland, although they are prepared to move to a different place if they find more attractive career opportunities or will be able to start a family. Such personal connections (despite being a soft factor) have proved to be strong motivators for Russians to stay.

*"My plans for the future are to work in a company and build my career in industry, not in academia. In Finland there is no such industry, so it would be easier to find a job*

*"in Switzerland, Germany, Austria or the Netherlands, there I could apply my knowledge. But I am a family-oriented person and if I do not yet have a family by the time of having written my PhD dissertation, I would move to a different place with a better climate, more sociable people and better career prospects. But a family is a priority; if I have a wife and children it is better to stay in Finland, I will be able to find a job here, too, and make an interesting one out of it." (Male, 25-29.)*

Very few respondents are actually considering going back to their home countries (Russia, Ukraine), because according to some that would mean returning to the same level as before departure and it would be hard to get used to the way of life there after years spent in Finland. Moreover, all interviewees who used to have families but got divorced in Finland have chosen to further stay in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. However, according to several professionals, the situation in a home country has changed since the year of their departure and in certain cases they could have made even much money in their field in Russia or Ukraine.

*"When I got divorced, I moved to a different apartment. I felt sad and was considering returning home, but it did not last long. To start with, Finland simply fits my character, I feel psychologically much more comfortable here than in Russia. I like the Finnish temperament, at work I am never asked about personal things. No one cares about how much money you have and how you are dressed. I have never seriously considered coming back home. I have lived here for too long and I do not know whether I can adapt there. I am so used to living here and obviously I will not find a better job in Russia, I am sure. Also, nothing can be guaranteed in Russia." (Female, 25-29)*

Besides the hard factors already mentioned, such as studies and work, soft factors also influence Russian migrants' decision to stay; these include new good friends and already established networks, the ability to speak Finnish to a greater or lesser degree and simply feeling comfortable in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. The years of residence of the interviewees in this region varied from 0.5 to 14 years and the length of the residency influenced their views on their life in Finland. As a rule, the longer an individual has lived in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, the better they are integrated and, in turn, the more they have a tendency to stay here. The first 5 years of residence are decisive, as during this period migrants try to figure out whether they would like to settle in Finland or seek for better career opportunities and life somewhere else. Also, several respondents already have Finnish citizenship, while some are just going to apply for it; that is another sign of how attached to Finland some expatriates wish to be.

*"...I am attached to my home here, to this environment; I know very well how this society works. If I need something I know how to reach it the easiest in this society... For me, this place is the simplest. [...] There is always room for free time here and possibility to maintain work-life balance. In an Anglo-Saxon environment work is top priority, it is not interesting to me. Also, it is easy to be different from Finns here, you are allowed to be yourself." (Female, 25-29.)*

Most interviewees, both females and males, who were under 30 years old (some also had children), admitted they were ready to move to other places (in Europe or the United States) with milder climate, better career prospects and more sociable people. The older respondents have lived in Finland for a longer period, have children and their own housing and have already made their decision to settle in Finland. Moreover, they do not view dwelling purchased in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area on credit as an obstacle towards relocation.

However, interviewees over 30 years of age have reported that they are ready to settle and raise children in Finland.

*"We have decided to buy our own housing relatively early because it is economically more advantageous to own an apartment. We have realized that the most part of our lives will be in Finland, and even if we spend some time abroad we will always come back here. There is always a possibility to sell the apartment or sublet it and go abroad; we are mobile but we will return to Finland."* (Female, 25-29)

Several respondents have business ideas and are planning to start their own businesses if they do not already have one. Owning a start-up or a firm (not a retail outlet, though) has emerged as a dream of several respondents, and the study of Merimaa & Kiviniemi (2010) also points to this fact. Alternatively, a few interviewees were talking about opportunities to do remote work for a firm in future. This means that the place of residence could be independent from a company location and be changed freely. However, mainly, they suppose to be located in Finland (Helsinki Metropolitan Area), because they are already here and they enjoy the country, the city and mode of life here.

Table 4. Factors attracting Russian-speaking professionals to Finland, to their home country and elsewhere abroad.

To Finland	Elsewhere abroad	To their home country
Interesting work and comfortable working culture	Even better career prospects	
A spouse, children or a relationship with a Finn		Relatives and friends
Being already adapted to living in Finland	A more socially active and open society	
A spouse feels home here and has a job		
Increased quality of life	Expectations of even better standard of life, a higher salary	
A European country, yet close to Russia	Milder climate	
Knowledge of Finnish		

## III. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### 10. Migrants mainly satisfied, yet some challenges still exist

Today Russians represent the largest foreign group in Finland and their number has risen dramatically in the previous decade (Statistics Finland, 2011). A great number of Russian-speaking highly educated professionals are actively employed in the knowledge-intensive sector and considering location, the majority of the international skilled labour force is grouped in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area.

This qualitative research based on one-on-one interviews revealed different reasons explaining Russian professionals' decision to expatriate to the Helsinki Metropolitan Area – the main reasons were work, education, family reunification or Finnish roots; however, there was a motive that united all interviewees – opportunities for self-realization. Differences in quality and standard of life between Russia/Ukraine and Finland, safety and security and absence of corruption swayed Russians towards relocating to Europe. Both hard and soft factors were crucial incentives for migrants when making a decision. While hard factors attracted migrants to Finland, it was the soft ones that attached them to Helsinki and its Metropolitan Area. Among those factors, the most common are family, friends and established networks, safety, being integrated into the Finnish society as well as proficiency in the language. For those who arrived in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area directly from their home countries, the most powerful motives to come here were a concrete job or a study program as well as family ties. For those who came to Finland to study, the primary criterion of choice was tuition-free, high-quality education and the resulting recognition of the diploma in the European Union, as well as an opportunity to start an exciting international career. Overall, the prospect of a more fulfilling lifestyle turned out to prevail over merely economic reasons for migration.

When making a decision about expatriating to Finland, the interviewees did not seem to be attracted by the Finnish welfare provision, but rather everyone relied on themselves. The importance of personal contacts in the choice of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area as a place to work should be especially emphasized, too. They attracted and attached Russian professionals to the Helsinki Metropolitan Area or provided with necessary information and recommendations about various aspects of a foreigner's life in the city. As a rule, informants migrated to Finland being either single or having a spouse or a partner, and started to have children only after having spent several years in Finland. However, soft factors were more decisive in not so much attracting as attaching migrants to the region. In this respect, the situation of Russian-speaking professionals reflects the common trend of all knowledge-intensive sector professionals in the region (Kepsu et al., 2010).

Searching for a job in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area presented a difficulty to mainly those informants who had recently graduated and had little relevant work experience or did not have it at all (mainly females); moreover, jobs typically desired by highly educated Russian-speaking females very often require proficiency in Finnish, so failure to speak Finnish fluently came as a natural obstacle when applying for a position. Conversely, male respondents did not encounter such problems, since their jobs were in either science or the IT sector, the working environment was distinguished by multiculturalism and was English-speaking and they had often had previous work experience in their particular sphere.

Communication between colleagues and integration of newcomers into the new place was eased substantially in international English-speaking working environments. Those who work primarily in Finnish-speaking work collectives talk about certain distance between employees and note that their adaptation to the workplace took a while. Interviewees appreciated the Finnish working culture, namely the less hierarchical structure and less control on the part of the company management, yet effectiveness, opportunities to maintain work and life balance and clear boundaries between professional and friendly relationships in the work place.

The research shows that the Russian-speaking highly educated professionals interviewed reside mainly in rental accommodation. Finding rental housing was perceived by the interviewees as one of the main challenges; they considered the open private dwelling market to be overpriced, so due to affordable enough mortgage loan conditions, purchase of one's own accommodation seemed to be an economically more advantageous option for many. Moreover, migrants from Russia appeared to be very enthusiastic about a possibility of purchasing their own dwelling in Finland since it was rather difficult to do so in Russia. Therefore, accommodation preferences of the Russian-speaking highly educated professionals differ from where and how Russian migrants generally live in this region (considering also location of neighbourhoods). Lack of reasonably priced housing has presented an issue for the interviewees and is a current topical issue. If the volume of construction of affordable rental housing were increased in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, it would raise the standard of living of international professionals and would be another powerful incentive for them to settle in the city. Another issue acknowledged by migrants (mostly males) is limited access to rental dwelling because of landlords' prejudices about foreigners who preferred Finnish tenants. The neighbourhood proved important for respondents - they appreciate safety, good public transport connection to the Helsinki city center and pay attention to who their neighbours are. Own housing is not a factor that attracted skilled migrants to the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, nor is it even considered to be a strong enough stimulus for them to stay in the region. Younger (and especially single) interviewees who have obtained their own dwelling still leave room for moving abroad and in some cases even wish to do so.

The interviews have revealed that there is not only one aspect of life that makes a person leave their home country, but it is often a combination of many. This also holds true for incentives that keep people attached to Helsinki and its Metropolitan Area. The most common reasons named by Russian professionals that retain them in the area are a permanent contract, having a family and having children; also already established stable life resulting from having resided in the country for years was emphasized. Feelings of loneliness and an unsettled personal life are among the factors that encourage professionals to move out of Finland.

The informants have named many positive everyday life experiences and encounters in the city of Helsinki and its Metropolitan Area. These include a developed public transport system, availability and functionality of official institutions, proximity to nature and the ecological situation, calm and quiet life and a less dense population. Also, according to the expatriates, compared to Russia, Ukraine and a few other European countries, Finland had well-functioning bureaucracy. After having lived in big Russian cities, the Helsinki Metropolitan Area seemed to be more compact and quiet, yet sufficiently urbanized. All in all, the decision to settle was formed after having spent a longer period of time in Finland and having experienced both positive and negative aspects of living here as part of the local society.

Cultural services are not emphasized as a pull factor that had attracted those interviewed to the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, although most interviewees are satisfied with the selection and availability of leisure-related activities offered in Helsinki – almost everyone

has found a hobby to their taste and everything they were looking for. As Raunio (2009) writes, cultural and recreation services ease migrants' access to the community, help create networks and become a setting where new social contacts can be made. However, the most common factors limiting the use of cultural services emphasized in the interviews appeared to be little free time and an insufficient supply of such services in the Russian language (e.g. theatre), which could be increased. The insufficient supply of culture in the Russian language was observed also by Lammi and Protassova (2011). Overall, Finland is perceived by the respondents as an expensive country, and this applies also to the high prices of cultural activities. Another aspect was unsatisfactory proficiency in Finnish, which placed certain limitations on the Russian-speaking professionals' ability to use of all available cultural services to the fullest.

The social networks of the interviewed Russian-speaking professionals have a tendency to be mainly international. Those who have arrived in Finland recently and do not speak Finnish fluently build their professional and social networks through colleagues and expatriates, while individuals who have spent more years in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area tend to sway towards either mainly Russian- or Finnish-speaking contacts. Feeling comfortable in a new country also depends on how broad a spectrum of social networks one has; in that respect, networks play a crucial role in the life of Russian expatriates in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area and are the force that attaches them to it. If Russians had more points of contact with Finns, in other words, more social ties with the local community in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area would be created and this would help migrants become part of the community and integrate sooner.

As was mentioned in the interviews, the Finnish health care system presented a challenge to the Russian-speaking professionals. Those who have had negative experiences talked primarily about their visits to municipal health centers; in contrast, services provided by private sector specialists (i.e. dentists) were not criticized. Perhaps some of the Russian professionals have simply not resided long enough in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area to have all necessary information about the whole spectrum of health care services provided in this region, how the system works and how to use services offered. In this respect, insufficient integration into the Finnish society can also affect one's experience of public health services.

One of the major challenges of highly skilled foreign workers and students in Helsinki, according to one of the previous studies (Merimaa & Kiviniemi, 2010), was the feeling of being very much an outsider and having very little contact with the locals because of lack of sufficient language skills. This still holds true, although in case of Russian-speaking expatriates this was less pronounced in terms of being outside the society. Even those who did not speak Finnish were still able to be actively involved in community life, make Finnish friends, access various kinds of information and develop networks (although mainly English-speaking) even without proficiency in the language. One's own active attitude in case of speakers of Russian proved a more decisive factor in establishing networks.

As already noted earlier, much attention should be paid to migrants' opportunities to study the Finnish language as well as to the quality of instruction. A motivating learning environment as well as an experienced teacher attending to the needs of students could affect the learning process of international professionals and be an incentive for study efforts. Practical knowledge of Finnish will make their life in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area more comfortable and help them to better understand and easier integrate into Finnish society.

The findings of Silfver's (2010) research on opportunities of post-Soviet professionals in Finland point to a large degree of uncertainty among professionals about their future in the country. However, this study indicates that for the most part Russian-speaking professionals were sure about their plans for the future and had very few concerns about how they will stay attached to the city. Almost all interviewees had a more or less clear idea of

what their plans for the future are, at least in relation to preferred location. If an interviewee had only a fixed-term employment contract, they would still know if they would like to move abroad or find a permanent job in Finland. Despite enjoying their work and life in the Finnish capital, for single individuals a more appealing interesting position elsewhere abroad or in Finland would be a sufficient incentive to move to a different place.

Although the Russian migrants have experienced several challenges during their stay in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, all of them have been quite happy to reside and work here; they report that almost all of their expectations concerning living here have been met. Also, findings of one of the recent studies suggest that 83.3% of immigrants with Russian background in Finland are satisfied with their quality of life in the country (Castaneda et al, 2012). If more favourable conditions for retention of the Russian-speaking highly educated professionals were created, foreign professionals would integrate into the Finnish society easier and the country would be able to make much use of their skills and potential.

Based on a series of one-on-one interviews with native Russian speaking highly educated professionals it is possible to name certain strengths and weaknesses of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area as a migration destination from a standpoint of this particular group. The main points brought up by the interviewees are summarized in the table 5.

**Table 5. Strengths and challenges of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area.**

Strengths	Challenges
Labour market: good supply of positions in IT and research	Expensive rental housing; landlords' prejudices towards Russians
Education: tuition-free and of high quality	Difficult creating social networks within the local community; lack of Finnish networks, very few Finnish friends, superficial friendships
Safety, security	Need to understand/speak Finnish in order to be better integrated into Finnish society
Helsinki is small, yet urbanized; very well developed public transport system; relatively quiet lifestyle	Poor availability and quality of medical services
Proximity to Russia, especially St. Petersburg	Insufficient supply of cultural services (also in the Russian language)
Well internationalized, most speak English	
Proximity to nature	

The study report draws on highly educated Russian expatriates' experiences as they were shared at the moment of an interview. Hence, findings of a qualitative study based on material elicited through a series of interviews cannot be statistically generalized due to the sample being small ( $N=18$ ) and thus are not representative of the whole Russian-speaking population in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. In spite of this, a qualitative study helps to highlight particular issues experienced by skilled migrants after they have lived in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area for a certain period of time. Once particular issues have been detected, a respective quantitative study can help evaluate how common they are in reality.

Further research is needed on the labour market situation of Russian-speaking migrants who have already lived for some months or even years in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, hold a university degree and have professional qualification, yet are unemployed or are employed in low-level or mid-level jobs. What is the share of highly educated professionals with a Russian background whose potential has yet to be unlocked? A good job has proved

to be one of the primary factors in retaining highly educated Russian professionals in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area.

Another question is how Russian-speaking recent graduates from Finnish universities have succeeded in finding a job corresponding to their qualifications. Are there graduates who resort to starting studies leading to another degree because of difficulties finding a position in their field of expertise? What is the proportion of those who have left Finland after completing their degree? A more detailed study can be concerned with what could be done so that the city of Helsinki could make better use of this valuable human capital and benefit from it.

# TIIVISTELMÄ JA JOHTOPÄÄTÖKSET

## **Siirtolaiset ovat enimmäkseen tyytyväisiä, mutta joitakin haasteita on vielä**

Venäläiset ovat nykyään Suomen suurin ulkomaalaisten ryhmä, ja heidän lukumääränsä on kasvanut merkittävästi kuluneen vuosikymmenen aikana (Tilastokeskus, 2011). Suuri osa korkeasti koulutetuista venäjänkielisistä ammattilaisista on työllistynyt tietointensiiviselle sektorille, ja suurin osa kansainvälisestä koulutetusta työvoimasta on keskittynyt pääkaupunkiseudulle.

Laadullinen tutkimus perustui yksilöhaastatteluihin, joissa ilmeni venäläisten ammattilaisten erilaisia syitä muuttaa pääkaupunkiseudulle. Tärkeimmät syyt olivat työ, koulutus, perheen yhdistäminen tai suomalaiset juuret. Kaikkia vastaajia yhdisti kuitenkin yksi syy – itsensä toteuttamisen mahdollisuudet. Venäjän/Ukrainan ja Suomen väliset erot elämänlaadussa, elintasossa ja turvallisuudessa sekä korruption puute houkuttelivat venäläisiä muuttamaan Eurooppaan. Muuttopäätöksiin vaikuttivat ratkaisevasti sekä kovat että pehmeät tekijät. Kovat tekijät houkuttelivat siirtolaisia Suomeen, mutta pehmeät tekijät saivat heidät valitsemaan Helsingin ja pääkaupunkiseudun. Yleisimmät päätökseen vaikeuttavat tekijät olivat perhe, ystävät ja olemassa olevat verkostot, turvallisuus, integroituminen suomalaiseen yhteiskuntaan sekä suomen kielen taito. Suoraan pääkaupunkiseudulle kotimaastaan saapuneiden tärkeimmät muuttoon vaikuttavat motivit olivat konkreettinen työpaikka tai opinto-ohjelma sekä perhesiteet. Suomeen opiskelemaan tulleiden ensisijaiset valintaperusteet olivat lukukausimaksuton ja laadukas koulutus, tutkintotodistuksen pätevyys EU:ssa sekä mahdollisuus aloittaa kiinnostava kansainvälinen ura. Yleisesti ottaen tyydyttävämmän elämäntyylin mahdollisuus painoi muuttopäätöksessä enemmän kuin vain taloudelliset syyt.

Vastaajia ei houkutellut Suomen sosiaaliturva, vaan kaikki luottivat pärjäävänsä omillaan. Vastauksissa korostui erityisesti myös henkilökohtaisten kontaktien merkitys siinä, että vastaajat päätyivät hakeutumaan töihin pääkaupunkiseudulle. Henkilökohtaiset kontaktit houkuttelivat venäjänkielisiä ammattilaisia tulemaan ja jäämään pääkaupunkiseudulle, tai tuttavat antoivat tietoa ja suosituksia ulkomaalaisena elämistä koskevissa asioissa. Pääsääntöisesti vastaajat muuttivat Suomeen yksin tai puolisonsa kanssa ja hankkivat lapsia vasta asuttuaan Suomessa useita vuosia. Pehmeät tekijät eivät niinkään houkutteleet vastaajia tulemaan alueelle, mutta saivat heidät jäämään sinne. Tässä suhteessa venäjänkielisten ammattilaisten tilanne vastaa pääkaupunkiseudun tietointensiivisen sektorin kaikkien ammattilaisten yleisiä asenteita (Kepsu et al., 2010).

Työnhaku pääkaupunkiseudulla oli vaikeaa lähinnä vastaajille, jotka olivat juuri valmistuneet ja joilla oli oleellista työkokemusta vain vähän tai ei lainkaan (suurin osa heistä on naisia). Lisäksi työpaikat, joita korkeasti koulutetut venäjänkieliset naiset tyypillisesti tavottelivat, edellyttävät hyvin usein sujuvaa suomen kielen taitoa, joten puhutun suomen puutteet olivat luonnollinen este paikan haulle. Miespuoliset vastaajat taas eivät kohdanneet samanlaisia ongelmia, sillä he hakivat lähinnä luonnontieteellisen tai IT-alan töitä, joissa työympäristö on monikulttuurinen ja englanninkielinen, ja heillä oli usein aikaisempaa työkokemusta alaltaan.

Kollegoiden välinen viestintä ja tulokkaiden integroituminen uuteen työpaikkaan onnistuivat huomattavasti helpommin kansainvälisissä ja englanninkielisissä työympäristöissä. Ensisijaisesti suomenkielisissä työyhteisöissä työskentelevät mainitsevat, että työntekijöiden välillä oli tietty juopa ja kertovat, että työpaikkaan sopeutumiseen tarvittiin aikaa. Vastaajat arvostavat suomalaista työkulttuuria ja mainitsevat sen hyväksi puoliksi vähemmän hierarkkisen rakenteen, yrityksen johdon lievemmän kontrolloinnin, tehokkuuden, mahdollisuudet tasapainottaa työ ja henkilökohtainen elämä sekä selvät rajat ammatillisten ja henkilökohtaisten suhteiden välillä työpaikalla.

Tutkimuksessa haastatellut venäjänkieliset korkeasti koulutetut ammattilaiset asuvat lähinnä vuokralla. Vastaajien mukaan vuokra-asunnon löytäminen oli yksi suurimmista haasteista. He pitivät vapaita vuokramarkkinoita ylihintaisina, joten riittävän edullisten lainaehtojen vuoksi monet pitivät omistusasunnon hankintaa taloudellisesti järkevämpänä vaihtoehtona. Lisäksi monet Venäjältä muuttaneet tuntuivat olevan innoissaan mahdollisuudesta hankkia omistusasunto Suomesta, sillä se on melko vaikeaa Venäjällä. Näin ollen venäjänkielisten korkeasti koulutettujen ammattilaisten asumismieltykyiset eroavat siitä, missä ja miten Venäjältä muuttaneet asuvat yleensä pääkaupunkiseudulla (myös asuinypäristöjen osalta). Kohtuuhiptaisten asuntojen puute oli vastaajille ongelma, ja aihe on muutenkin ajankohtainen. Edullisten vuokra-asuntojen rakentamisen lisääminen pääkaupunkiseudulla nostaisi kansainvälisen ammattilaisten elintasoja, ja se houkutteli voimakkaasti heitä jäämään kaupunkiin. Toinen vastaajien (lähinnä miesten) mainitsema ongelma on, että ennakkoluuloiset vuokranantajat suosivat suomalaisia vuokralaisia, mikä rajoittaa vuokra-asuntojen saatavuutta. Asuinypäristö oli vastaajille tärkeä – he arvostavat turvallisuutta ja hyviä joukkoliikenneyteyksiä Helsingin keskustaan ja katsovat myös, keitää heidän naapureinaan asuu. Omistusasuminen ei houkutellut koulutettuja ammattilaisia pääkaupunkiseudulle, eikä sitä edes pidetä riittävänä syynä jäädä alueelle. Nuoret (ja erityisesti yksin asuvat) vastaajat, jotka olivat hankineet omistusasunnon, eivät sulje pois muuttamista ulkomaille ja joissain tapauksissa jopa toivovat sitä.

Haastatteluista ilmeni, että kotimaasta muuttamiseen ei vaikuta mikään yksittäinen tekijä vaan useiden tekijöiden summa. Tämä koskee myös kannustimia, jotka houkuttelevat asukkaita jäämään Helsinkiin ja pääkaupunkiseudulle. Venäjänkielisten ammattilaisten mainitsemat tärkeimmät syyt jäädä alueelle ovat vakituinen työsopimus sekä perhe ja lapsset, ja vastauksissa korostui myös elämän vakiintuminen uudessa maassa useiden vuosien asumisen seurauksena. Yksinäisyys ja henkilökohtaisen elämän vakiintumattomuus olivat tekijöitä, jotka kannustavat ammattilaisia muuttamaan pois Suomesta.

Vastaajat mainitsivat monia positiivisia arkielämän kokemuksia ja kohtaamisia Helsingissä ja pääkaupunkiseudulla. Niitä ovat kehittynyt joukkoliikennejärjestelmä, julkisten laitosten saatavuus ja toimivuus, luonnonläheisyys ja ekologinen tilanne, rauhallinen ja hiljainen elämä sekä pienempi asukastiheys. Vastaajien mukaan Venäjään, Ukrainaan ja muutamaan muuhun Euroopan maahan verrattuna Suomen byrokratia toimii hyvin. Venäjän suurkaupunkeihin verrattuna pääkaupunkiseutu tuntuu kompaktimmalta ja hiljaisemmalta mutta riittävän urbaanilta. Kaikkiaan päätös jäädä alueelle muodostui, kun Suomessa oli vietetty kauan aikaa ja paikallisessa yhteiskunnassa elämisestä oli saatu sekä positiivisia että negatiivisia kokemuksia.

Kulttuuripalvelut eivät korostu vetovoimatekijänä, joka olisi houkutellut vastaajia pääkaupunkiseudulle, vaikka useimmat vastaajista olivatkin tyytyväisiä Helsingin vapaa-ajan toiminnan valikoimaan ja saatavuuteen – lähes kaikki ovat löytäneet mieleisensä harrastuksen ja kaiken mitä etsivätkin. Raunio (2009) kirjoittaa, että kulttuuri- ja virkistyspalvelut helpottavat siirtolaisten pääsyä osaksi yhteisöä, auttavat verkostoitumista ja muodostavat ympäristön, jossa uusia sosiaalisia kontakteja voidaan perustaa. Tavallisimmat haastatteluissa korostuneet kulttuuripalveluiden käyttöä rajoittavat tekijät ovat kuitenkin vapaaajan vähäisyys ja venäjänkielisten palveluiden (esimerkiksi teatterin) tarjonnan puute,

joten tarjontaa voi olla syytä lisätä. Venäjänkielisten kulttuuripalveluiden puutteen ovat havainneet myös Lammi ja Protassova (2011). Yleisesti ottaen vastaajat pitävät Suomea kalliina maana, mikä ulottuu myös kulttuuritapahtumiin. Myös riittämätön suomen kielen taito rajoitti venäjänkielisten ammattilaisten mahdollisuusia hyödyntää kulttuuripalveluiden tarjontaa täysin.

Haastateltujen venäjänkielisten ammattilaisten sosiaaliset verkostot ovat yleensä kansainvälistä. Suomeen vasta saapuneet, jotka eivät puhu sujuvaa suomea, muodostavat sosiaaliset ja ammatilliset verkostonsa kollegoiden ja maahanmuuttajien kautta, kun taas useita vuosia pääkaupunkiseudulla asuneilla haastateltavilla saattoi olla enimmäkseen joko venäjänkielisiä tai suomenkielisiä tuttavia. Uudessa maassa viihtyminen riippuu myös maahanmuuttajan sosiaalisten verkostojen monipuolisudesta. Tässä suhteessa verkostolla on ratkaiseva merkitys Venäjältä tulleiden elämässä pääkaupunkiseudulla, ja ne ovat voima, joka saa heidät jäämään alueelle. Toisin sanoen jos venäläisillä olisi enemmän kontakteja suomalaisiin, heille muodostuisi enemmän sosiaalisia siteitä pääkaupunkiseudun yhteiskuntaan, mikä saisi maahanmuuttajat integroitumaan nopeammin osaksi yhteiskuntaa.

Haastatteluissa nousi esiin, että Suomen terveydenhoitojärjestelmä oli haastava venäjänkielisille ammattilaisille. Negatiiviset kokemukset liittyivät ensisijaisesti kunnallisiin terveyskeskuksiin, kun taas yksityisiä asiantuntijopalveluja (esimerkiksi hammaslääkäriä) ei kritisoi. On mahdollista, että jotkin venäjänkieliset ammattilaiset eivät ole asuneet riittävän kauan pääkaupunkiseudulla, jotta heillä olisi riittävästi tietoa terveydenhoitolpalveluiden koko tarjonnasta, järjestelmän toiminnasta sekä palveluiden käytöstä. Tässä suhteessa puutteellinen integroituminen Suomen yhteiskuntaan voi vaikuttaa myös käsitykseen julkisista terveydenhoitolpalveluista.

Korkeasti koulutettujen ulkomaalaisten työntekijöiden ja opiskelijoiden yksi suurimista haasteista Helsingissä on erään aiemman tutkimuksen mukaan (Merimaa & Kiviniemi, 2010) olon tunteminen todella ulkopuoliseksi ja heikko yhteys kantaväestöön puutteellisen kielitaidon vuoksi. Tämä on yhä totta, mutta venäjänkieliset maahanmuuttajat eivät tunne oloaan yhtä voimakkaasti ulkopuoliseksi yhteiskunnassa. Jopa suomea puhumattomat pystyvät osallistumaan aktiivisesti yhteiskunnan elämään, ystävystymään suomalaisten kanssa, hakemaan tietoa ja verkostoitumaan (vaikkakin lähinnä englanniksi). Venäjänkielisten joukossa verkostoitumisessa korostui erityisesti oma aktiivinen asenne.

Kuten aiemmin on jo mainittu, sekä maahanmuuttajien mahdollisuksiin opiskella suomea että opetuksen laatuun pitäisi panostaa enemmän. Motivoiva oppimisympäristö ja kokenut opettaja, joka vastaa opiskelijoiden tarpeisiin, voivat vaikuttaa kansainvälisen ammattilaisten oppimisprosessiin ja edistää opiskelua. Suomen kielen käytännön osaaminen helpottaa elämistä pääkaupunkiseudulla, auttaa ymmärtämään suomalaista yhteiskuntaa ja helpottaa integroitumista.

Silfverin (2010) tutkimuksessa neuvostoajan jälkeisten ammattilaisten mahdollisuuksesta Suomessa nousi esiin ammattilaisten voimakas epävarmuus tulevaisuudestaan maassa. Tutkimuksesta kuitenkin ilmenee, että venäjänkieliset ammattilaiset olivat enimmäkseen varmoja tulevaisuudensuunnitelmistaan, eivätkä he olleet juuri huolissaan kaupunkiin jäämisestä. Lähes kaikilla vastaajilla oli suurin piirtein selvä ajatus tulevaisuudensuunnitelmaan vähintään ensisijaisen asuinpaikan osalta. Myös haastateltavat, joilla on vain määräaikainen työsopimus, osaavat sanoa, haluavatko he muuttaa ulkomaille vai saada Suomesta vakiutisen työpaikan. Siitä huolimatta, että yksin asuvat ovat tyytyväisiä työhönsä ja elämäänsä Helsingissä, houkuttelevampi ja kiinnostavampi työpaikka muualla Suomessa tai ulkomailla olisi riittävä syy muuttaa.

Haasteista huolimatta kaikki Venäjältä muuttaneet vastaajat ovat olleet tyytyväisiä elämäänsä ja työhönsä pääkaupunkiseudulla, ja he kertovat lähes kaikkien alueella elämistä koskevien odotustensa täyttyneen. Erään viimeaikaisen tutkimuksen mukaan 83,3 % Su-

messa asuvista venäläistaustaisista maahanmuuttajista on tyytyväisiä elämäänsä Suomessa (Castaneda et al., 2012). Venäjänkielisiä korkeasti koulutettuja ammattilaisia paremmin sitouttavat olosuhteet edistäisivät heidän integroitumistaan suomalaiseen yhteiskuntaan, jolloin heidän osaamistaan ja potentiaaliaan voitaisiin hyödyntää tehokkaammin.

Yksilöhaastatteluissa venäjää äidinkielenään puhuvien korkeasti koulutettujen ammattilaisten kanssa nousi esiin pääkaupunkiseudun tiettyjä vahvuksia ja heikkouksia uutena kotimaana tämän ryhmän näkökulmasta. Haastatteluissa ilmenneet tärkeimmät tekijät on esitetty taulukossa 5.

#### **Taulukko 5. Helsingin pääkaupunkiseudun vahvuudet ja haasteet.**

Vahvuudet	Haasteet
Työmarkkinat: hyvä työpaikkatarjonta IT- ja tutkimusalalla	Vuokra-asuminen on kallista; vuokranantajien ennakkoasenteet venäläisiä kohtaan
Koulutus: lukukausimaksuttomuus ja korkea laatu	Sosiaalinen verkostoituminen paikallisyritysössä on vaikeaa; suomenkielisen verkostojen puute, vain vähän suomalaisia ystäviä, ystävyysuhteet pinnallisista
Turvallisuus, elämän varmuus	Integroituminen suomalaiseen yhteiskuntaan edellyttää kykyä ymmärtää ja puhua suomea
Helsinki on pieni mutta urbaani; joukkoliikenneyrjestelmä on hyvin kehittynyt; elämäntyyli on suhteellisen rauhallinen	Terveydenhoitolapalveluiden heikko saatavuus ja laatu
Läheisyys Venäjään ja erityisesti Pietariin	Kulttuuripalveluiden riittämätön tarjonta (myös venäjän kielellä)
Kansainvälistyminen, useimmat puhuvat englantia	
Luonnonläheisyys	

Tutkimus perustuu korkeasti koulutettujen Venäjältä muuttaneiden kertomuksiin kokemuksistaan haastatteluhetkellä. Tämän laadullisen tutkimuksen havainnot perustuvat haastatteluista saatuun aineistoon, joka ei ole otoksen pienien koon ( $N=18$ ) vuoksi tilastollisesti yleistävä, joten se ei edusta pääkaupunkiseudun koko venäjänkielistä väestöä. Tästä huolimatta tämä laadullinen tutkimus korostaa ongelmia, joita koulutetut maahanmuuttajat ovat kohdanneet asuttuaan pääkaupunkiseudulla tietyn aikaa. Kun tiettyt ongelmat tunnistetaan, niiden todellinen esiintyvyys voidaan määrittää määrällisellä tutkimuksella.

Lisätutkimusta täytyy kohdistaa sellaisten venäjänkielisten maahanmuuttajien työmarkkinatilanteeseen, jotka ovat jo asuneet pääkaupunkiseudulla joitakin kuukausia tai jopa vuosia, joilla on yliopistotutkinto ja ammatillinen pätevyys, mutta jotka ovat silti työttöminä tai työllistettyinä matalan tason tai keskitason työtehtävissä. Kuinka suuri osuus on korkeakoulutetuilla venäläistaustaisilla ammattilaisilla, joiden potentiaalia ei vielä hyödynnetä? Hyvä työpaikka on osoittautunut olevan yksi tärkeimmistä tekijöistä, jotka saavat korkeasti koulutettuja venäjänkielisiä ammattilaisia jäämään pääkaupunkiseudulle.

Toinen kysymys on, kuinka suomalaisista yliopistoista vasta valmistuneet venäjänkieliset ovat onnistuneet löytämään pätevyyttään vastaavaa työtä. Onko koulutusta vastaavaa työtä niin vaikea löytää, että osa valmistuneista alkaa opiskella toista tutkintoa? Kuinka suuri osuus valmistuneista on muuttanut valmistuttuaan pois Suomesta? Tarkemmassa tutkimuksessa voidaan keskittyä siihen, miten Helsingin kaupunki voisi hyödyntää tästä arvokasta ihmillisistä pääomaa paremmin omaksi edukseen.

# SAMMANFATTNING OCH SLUTSATSER

## Invandrarna huvudsakligen nöjda, ändå kvarstår en del utmaningar

Idag representerar ryssarna den största utländska gruppen i Finland och antalet har ökat dramatiskt under förra årtiondet (Statistik över Finland, 2011). Ett stort antal rysktalande högt utbildade yrkesmänniskor sysselsätts av den kunskapsintensiva sektorn och med tanke på placeringsort är majoriteten av den internationella yrkeskunniga arbetskraften stationerad i Helsingforsregionen.

Denna kvalitativa undersökning som baserar sig på enskilda intervjuer avslöjade olika orsaker som förklrar de ryska yrkesmänniskornas beslut att flytta till Helsingforsmetropolen. Huvudsakliga orsakerna var arbete, utbildning, familjens återförening eller finländska rötter; ändå fanns det en orsak som var gemensam för alla intervjuade – möjligheterna att förverkliga sig själv. Skillnader i kvalitet och levnadsstandard mellan Ryssland/Ukraina och Finland, trygghet och säkerhet och avsaknaden av korruption påverkade ryssarna att flytta till Europa. Både hårda och mjuka faktorer var avgörande incitament för inflyttarnas beslutsfattande. Medan de hårda faktorerna lockade inflyttarna till Finland, var det de mjuka som anknöt dem till Helsingforsmetropolen. De vanligaste bland dessa faktorer var familjen, vänner och etablerade nätverk, trygghet, integrering i det finländska samhället samt språkkunskaper i det lokala språket. De starkaste motiven för dem som anlände direkt från sitt hemland till Helsingforsmetropolen var ett konkret jobb eller ett studieprogram såväl som familjeförbindelser. För dem som kom till Finland för att studera var de främsta urvalskriterierna den högklassiga, avgiftsfria utbildningen och den resulterande uppskattningen av avgångsexamen i den Europeiska Unionen samt möjligheten att påbörja en spännande internationell karriär. Generellt sett visade sig möjligheten till en mera innehållsrik livsstil vara förhärskande jämfört med enbart ekonomiska orsaker för migration.

De intervjuade verkade inte i samband med sitt beslut att flytta utomlands till Finland lockas av det finländska välfärdssamhällets tjänster, utan alla förlitade sig på sig själva. Vid valet av Helsingforsmetropolen som en ort att arbeta i tål det att speciellt understryka vikten av personliga kontakter. De lockade och anknöt ryska yrkesmänniskor till Helsingforsmetropolen eller gav nödvändig information och rekommendationer om olika aspekter av en utlänningars liv i staden. I regel migrerade respondenterna till Finland som ensamstående eller med make eller partner och började få barn först efter flera års vistelse i Finland. Mjuka faktorer var dock mera avgörande för att anknyta än för att locka migranter till regionen. I det avseendet reflekterar de rysktalande yrkesmänniskornas situation den allmänna trenden för alla yrkesmänniskor i den kunskapsintensiva sektorn i regionen (Kepsu et al., 2010)

Jobbsökandet i Helsingforsmetropolen visade sig vara svårt främst för dem som var nyutexaminerade och hade kort eller ingen (främst kvinnor) relevant arbetserfarenhet; dessutom krävde de arbetsplatser som typiskt tilltalade högt utbildade ryska kvinnor ofta kunskaper i finska, vilket ledde till att oförmågan att tala finska flytande blev ett naturligt hinder vid sökandet av en tjänst. Däremot stötte de manliga respondenterna inte på liknande problem, eftersom deras arbetstillfällen fanns antingen inom vetenskapen eller inom IT-branschen, där arbetsmiljön karakteriseras av mångkulturalism och var engelskspråkig och de hade ofta arbetserfarenhet på sitt område.

Kommunikationen kolleger emellan och integreringen av nykomlingar till den nya arbetsplatsen var avsevärt lättare i internationella engelskspråkiga arbetsmiljöer. De som arbetar i främst finskspråkiga arbetskollektiv talar om ett visst avstånd mellan arbetstagarna och noterar att det tog en tid för dem att anpassa sig till arbetsplatsen. De intervjuade uppskattade den finländska arbetskulturen, nämligen den mindre hierarkiska strukturen och mindre kontroll från företagsledningens sida, som dock är effektiv, möjligheterna att balansera arbete och privatliv och de klara gränserna mellan yrkesmässiga och vänskapsförhållandena på arbetsplatsen.

Underökningen visar att de intervjuade ryskspråkiga högt utbildade yrkesmänniskorna huvudsakligen bor i hyresbostäder. Att hitta hyresbostad upplevdes av de intervjuade som en av de största utmaningarna; de ansåg att den privata bostadsmarknaden var överprissatt, så tack vare överkomliga villkor för bostadslån verkade skaffandet av en egen bostad vara ett förmånligare alternativ för många. Därtill verkade migranterna från Ryssland vara mycket entusiastiska inför möjligheten att köpa en egen bostad i Finland eftersom det är tämligen svårt att göra det i Ryssland. Därför skiljer sig de högt utbildade rysktalande yrkesmänniskornas boendepreferenser från var och hur ryska migranter vanligtvis bor i den här regionen (också med beaktande av grannskapens placering). Bristen på rimligt prissatt boende har blivit ett problem för de intervjuade och är ett aktuellt samtalsämne. Om byggandet av överkomligt prissatt hyresboende skulle öka i Helsingforsmetropolen skulle det höja de internationella yrkesmänniskornas levnadsstandard och skulle utgöra ytterligare ett starkt incitament för dem att bosätta sig i staden. Ett annat problem som migranterna (främst manliga) känns vid är den begränsade tillgången till hyresbostäder som beror på hyresvärdarnas fördomar mot utlänningar och deras preferens för finländska hyresgäster. Grannskapet visade sig vara viktigt för respondenterna – de uppskattar trygghet, goda allmänna transportförbindelser till Helsingfors centrum och fäster uppmärksamhet vid vilka som är deras grannar. Eget boende är inte en faktor som lockade yrkeskunniga migranter till Helsingforsmetropolen, inte heller upplevs det som ett tillräckligt starkt incitament för dem att stanna i regionen. Yngre (och speciellt ensamstående) respondenter som har skaffat ett eget boende lämnar rum för möjligheten att flytta utomlands och i vissa fall önskar de även göra det.

Intervjuerna har visat att det inte är endast en livsaspekt som får en person att lämna hemlandet utan det är ofta en kombination av flera. Det här stämmer även för incitament som håller människor anknutna till Helsingfors och dess metropolområde. De vanligaste orsakerna som håller ryska yrkesmänniskor i området är ett fast kontrakt, familj och barn; ett etablerat liv av att ha bott årat i landet underströks. Känslor av ensamhet och ett icke etablerat personligt liv finns bland faktorer som uppmuntrar yrkesmänniskor att flytta ut ur Finland.

Respondenterna har nämnt flera positiva alldagliga upplevelser och möten i Helsingfors stad och dess metropolområde. Dessa innefattar ett utvecklat allmänt transportsystem, tillgängligheten till och funktionaliteten av kommunala verk, närheten till naturen och det ekologiska läget, ett lugnt och stillsamt liv och en låg invånartäthet. Dessutom har Finland en väl fungerande byråkrati jämfört med Ryssland, Ukraina och några andra europeiska länder, anser migranterna. Efter att ha bott i stora ryska städer verkar Helsingforsmetropolen mera kompakt och stillsam, och ändå tillräckligt urbaniserad. I sin helhet formades beslutet att bosätta sig efter att ha spenderat en längre tid i Finland och ha upplevt både positiva och negativa aspekter av att bo här som en del av det lokala samhället.

Kulturella tjänster poängterades inte som en tilldragande faktor som hade lockat de intervjuade till Helsingforsmetropolen, fastän de flesta respondenterna var nöjda med utbudet av och tillgängligheten till fritidsaktiviteter i Helsingfors – närapå alla hade hittat en hobby som de gillade och allt de hade varit ute efter. Som Raunio (2009) skriver, underlättar kulturella och rekreationstjänster migranternas tillgänglighet till samhället, de hjälper att skapa nätverk och erbjuder en uppställning där nya sociala kontakter kan knytas. De vanligaste faktorerna som begränsade utnyttjandet av kulturella tjänster och som poäng-

terades i intervjuerna var dock den begränsade fritiden och det otillräckliga utbudet av sådana tjänster på det ryska språket (t.ex. teater), vilket kunde utökas. Det otillräckliga utbudet av kultur på det ryska språket observerades även av Lammi och Protassova (2011). I det stora hela uppfattas Finland av respondenterna som ett dyrt land, vilket också gäller kulturaktiviteternas höga priser. En annan aspekt var de bristfälliga kunskaperna i finska, vilket lade vissa begränsningar på de ryska yrkesmänniskornas förmåga att utnyttja alla tillgängliga kulturtjänster till fullo.

De intervjuade ryskspråkiga yrkesmänniskorna sociala nätverk tenderar vara huvudsakligen internationella. De som har nyligen anlånt till Finland och inte talar finska flytande bygger sina yrkesmässiga och sociala nätverk via kolleger och migranter, medan individer som har vistats flera år i Helsingforsmetropolen tenderar att vända sig huvudsakligen till rysk- eller finskspråkiga kontakter. Vidden av ens sociala nätverk påverkar bekvämlighetskänslan i ett nytt land; i det avseendet spelar näverken en avgörande roll för ryska migranters liv i Helsingforsmetropolen och är den kraft som anknyter dem till området. Om rysarna hade flera kontaktpunkter med finnar, med andra ord flera sociala knytningsar med det lokala samhället i Helsingforsmetropolen skulle knytas, skulle det hjälpa migranterna att bli delaktiga i samhället och de skulle integreras snabbare.

Såsom nämntes i intervjuerna, utgör det finländska hälsovårdssystemet en utmaning för de rysktalande yrkesmänniskorna. De som hade haft negativa upplevelser talade främst om deras besök på kommunala hälsocentraler; däremot kritiseras inte privata sektorns specialisttjänster (d.v.s. tandläkare). En del av de ryska yrkesmänniskorna har kanske inte varit bosatta tillräckligt länge i Helsingforsmetropolen för att innehålla all nödvändig information om hela spektret av hälsotjänster som erbjuds i regionen, om hur systemet fungerar och hur man kan utnyttja de tjänster som erbjuds. I det här avseendet kan även en otillräcklig integration i det finländska samhället påverka ens erfarenhet av de allmänna hälsotjänsterna.

Enligt en tidigare utredning (Merimaa & Kiviniemi, 2010) utgörs en av de största utmaningarna för kunniga utländska yrkesarbetare och studenter i Helsingfors av känslan att vara utomstående med mycket lite kontakter med de lokala invånarna på grund av bristande språkkunskaper. Det här stämmer, även om det inte var så betonat för de ryskspråkiga migranterna i fråga om att vara en utomstående i samhället. Också de som inte kunde finska kunde ändå delta aktivt i samhällslivet, skaffa finländska vänner, få tillgång till olika slags information och utveckla nätverk (även om huvudsakligen engelskspråkiga) fastän man inte hade kunskaper i språket. Den egna attityden ifråga om ryskspråkiga visade sig vara en mera avgörande faktor för att skapa nätverk.

Såsom påpekats tidigare borde mera uppmärksamhet fästas såväl vid migranters möjligheter att studera det finska språket som vid kvaliteten på undervisningen. En motiverande inlärningsmiljö kopplad med en erfaren lärare som svarar på elevernas behov kunde påverka de internationella yrkesmänniskornas inlärningsprocess och utgöra ett incitament för studier. Praktiska kunskaper i finska gör deras liv i Helsingforsmetropolen bekvämre och hjälper dem att förstå det finska samhället bättre och de integreras i det lättare.

Resultaten av Silfvers (2010) undersökning om postsovjetiska yrkesmänniskors möjligheter i Finland påvisade en hög grad av osäkerhet bland yrkesmänniskorna om deras framtid i landet. Denna utredning indikerar dock att största delen av de ryskspråkiga yrkesmänniskorna var säkra på deras planer om framtiden och de oroade sig knappast alls för hur de skulle hållas anknutna till staden. Nästa alla respondent hade en mer eller mindre klar uppfattning om deras framtidsplaner, åtminstone gällande deras önskade placeringssort. Om intervjugpersonerna hade endast en viss tids arbetskontrakt, skulle de ändå veta om de ville flytta utomlands eller hitta ett stadigvarande jobb i Finland. Oavsett att de njuter av sitt arbete och liv i den finländska huvudstaden, skulle en mera lockande position utomlands eller i Finland vara ett tillräckligt incitament för en ensamstående individ att flytta till en annan ort.

Även om de ryska migranterna har stött på flera utmaningar under deras vistelse i Helsingforsmetropolen, har alla varit mycket nöjda med att bo och arbeta här; de rapporterar att nästan alla deras förväntningar gällande boendet här har blivit uppfyllda. Likaså visar en av de nyligen utförda utredningarna att 83,3 % av immigranter med rysk bakgrund är nöjda med deras livskvalitet i Finland (Castaneda et al., 2012). Om man skapade gynnsammare förhållanden för att hålla kvar högt utbildade rysktalande yrkesmänniskor, skulle utländska yrkesmänniskor integreras lättare i det finländska samhället och landet skulle dra stor nytta av deras färdigheter och potential.

På basen av en serie enskilda intervjuer med infödda rysktalande högt utbildade yrkesmänniskor är det möjligt att utpeka vissa styrkor och svagheter hos Helsingforsmetropolen som migrationsdestination ur denna specifika gruppens synvinkel. Huvudpunkterna som respondenterna framförde är sammanfattade i tabell 5.

**Tabell 5. Styrkor och utmaningar för Helsingforsmetropolen**

Styrkor	Utmnaningar
Arbetsmarknaden: stort utbud av arbetsplatser inom IT och forskning	Dyrt hyresboende; hyresvärdarnas fördomar mot rysrar
Utbildning: avgiftsfri och av hög kvalitet	Svårt att skapa sociala nätverk i det lokala samhället; brist på finländska nätverk, få finländska vänner, ytliga vänskapsband
Trygghet, säkerhet	Behov att förstå/tala finska för att bättre kunna integreras i det finländska samhället
Helsingfors är litet, dock urbaniserat; väl utvecklat allmänt transportsystem; relativt stillsam livsstil	Dålig tillgång till och kvalitet på hälsotjänster
Närbet till Ryssland, speciellt St. Petersburg	O tillräckligt utbud på kulturtjänster (även på ryska språket)
Hög internationalisering, de flesta talar engelska	
Närbet till naturen	

Utredningsrapporten baserar sig på högt utbildade ryska migranters erfarenheter såsom de berättades under en intervjustund. Förlagtsligen kan resultaten av en kvalitativ undersökning som baserar sig på material som frambringats via en serie intervjuer inte generaliseras statistiskt på grund av att samplet är litet ( $N = 18$ ) och således inte representativt för hela ryskspråkiga befolkningen i Helsingforsmetropolen. Oavsett detta hjälper en kvalitativ undersökning att poängtala specifika problem som yrkeskunniga migranter har upplevt efter att ha bott en viss tid i Helsingforsmetropolen. När specifika problem har upptäckts kan en motsvarande kvantitativ undersökning utvärdera hur vanliga de är i verkligheten.

Ytterligare forskning behövs om rysktalande migranters situation på arbetsmarknaden; migranter som redan har bott några månader eller till och med år i Helsingforsmetropolen innehåller en universitetsexamen och yrkeskvalifikation och ändå går utan arbete eller är anställda vid arbetsplatser av låg eller medelnivå. Vilken är andelen av högt utbildade yrkesmänniskor med rysk bakgrund vars potential inte ännu har frigjorts? En bra arbetsplats har visat sig vara en av de viktigaste faktorerna för att hålla kvar ryska yrkesmänniskor i Helsingforsmetropolen.

En annan fråga är hur nyligen utexaminerade rysktalande studenter från finländska universitet har lyckats hitta ett jobb som motsvarar deras kvalifikationer. Finns det utexaminerade som tydigt till att inleda studier för en annan examen på grund av svårigheter att hitta en arbetsplats inom sitt eget kunskapsområde? En stor andel utgör de som har lämnat Finland efter att ha slutfört sin examen? En mera detaljerad undersökning kunde koncentrera sig på vad som kunde göras för att Helsingfors stad effektivare utnyttjade detta mänskliga kapital och kunde dra nytta av det.

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## **Appendix**

### **1. Interview questions:**

- How long have you lived in Finland? What influenced your decision to move from your home country? What were your expectations before coming?
  - What did you know about Helsinki before coming here?
  - Did you have to choose between other options? Why the Helsinki Metropolitan Area? What did you find attractive in Helsinki?
- 2. Where do you work? What do you like and dislike about it? What do you think about your working environment?**
- How did your career develop before your arrival in Finland?
  - How difficult or easy it was for you to find the job?
  - What are the advantages/disadvantages of the Finnish working culture in comparison with your home country? What do you value in your job most of all?
  - How did you join the team, how did your new colleagues meet you?
- 3. What do you like and dislike in Helsinki? Are you satisfied with your life here? What has been challenging?**
- Are there any cultural differences between Finland and your home country that are important for you and affect your daily life?
  - How comfortable is the city for foreigners?
  - What kind of services have you used in Helsinki? How easy has it been to access them? Where did you get information about them?
  - Are you happy with your choice to move to Helsinki? Have you ever doubted it?
  - What makes you satisfied or dissatisfied with your life here? What do you think about quality of your life here compared to in your home country?
- 4. Where do you live? What do you like and dislike about your housing?**
- What do you think about your neighbourhood?
  - What is most important about your housing?
  - What kind of difficulties were you facing when searching for housing?
  - Do you consider buying your own apartment in Finland? Where?
- 5. How do you spend your free time? With whom?**
- Is there enough to do in Helsinki?
  - How have you met your friends here?
  - Are you a member of any associations?
  - Have you ever felt a need for additional information about free-time activities in Helsinki?
  - Has Helsinki met your expectations or not?
  - How do you keep in touch with your home country?

6. Where do you see yourself professionally in 5 years?

- Would you like to continue your professional career in Helsinki?
- What factors may affect your decision about staying in Helsinki or moving out?
- Have you met your expectations here?
- Would you like to add something important from your point of view?

7. Respondent's personal information

- Age
- Where are you from?
- Who are the members of your household?
- What is your current job?
- What is your highest degree of education? Where was it obtained?

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KUVAILULEHTI

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Russian-speaking professionals in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area:  
Prospects and Challenges

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Helsingin kaupungin tietokeskus	2013	60
Sarjan nimike	Osan numero	
Tutkimuskatsauksia - Helsingin kaupungin tietokeskus	2013:5	

ISSN(painettu) 1455-7266 ISBN(painettu) 978-952-272-600-1  
ISSN(verkossa) 1796-7236 ISBN(verkossa) 978-952-272-601-8

Kieli  
eng, fin, swe

Abstract

Today international labour migration in the European Union is an essential attribute of the globalization process. Since foreign skilled migrants contribute to economic growth and leave a positive effect on economic well-being of cities, the increasing need for such labour force in knowledge-intensive and creative industries has been acknowledged. Trying to remain competitive in a variety of spheres, Helsinki and its Metropolitan Area like other major European cities, attempts to attract and retain highly educated international professionals.

This study focuses on Russian-speaking professionals working in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area and seeks to evaluate factors that influenced their choice of this particular destination. Based on the interviews with Russian-speaking experts, the paper also presents an insight into the expatriates' positive and negative experiences in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area as well as points out the main strengths and challenges of the city from their perspective. Such knowledge is needed in order to identify the already existing issues and create more favorable conditions for further successful attraction and retention of international highly skilled migrants in the region.

Keywords:

skilled migrants, Russian-speaking migrants, migrant opinions

Hinta 11,00 €	Jakelu puh. 09 310 36293
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