

Helsinki

Growth through international talent

Development Programme for Migration and Integration 2026–2029





City of Helsinki's Development Programme for Migration and Integration 2026–2029

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Summary

The City of Helsinki's Development Programme for Migration and Integration is based on the 2025–2029 Helsinki City Strategy and the city's Objectives for Growth, Skills and Vitality renewal programme. In accordance with the City Strategy, the key objectives of the programme are to attract skilled workers from abroad to Helsinki, facilitate their smooth transition with city services and ensure that both they and their families feel at home in Finland's capital.

Migration to Finland in the 2020s has largely been the result of family ties (32%), work (23%), EU citizenship (21%) and studies (14%). This new development programme focuses on international talent and their families in particular, an evolution that reflects the changing profile of migration to Finland, the key priorities of the Helsinki City Strategy and the city's Objectives for Growth, Skills and Vitality.

For purposes of this development programme, the concept of "International talent" refers

to individuals and their family members who are moving to Helsinki from abroad or are already living here and are highly educated professionals, entrepreneurs, investors, degree students or researchers and people whose occupational skills are in demand in the labour market. Some of the measures are however aimed more broadly at all people moving to Helsinki from abroad, regardless of their status, including those that are moving to Helsinki from elsewhere in Finland or already living here.

The development programme contains three sub-themes that mirror the migration pathway:

- International awareness and talent attraction
- Settling in and the early stages of integration
- Receptiveness, a sense of belonging and retention



Examples of programme measures:

- We will increase international awareness of Helsinki, facilitate talent attraction that is ethically sustainable, and tailor our talent attraction efforts to meet the needs of employers.
- We will enhance early-stage migration services and help families comprehensively settle in.
- We will create incentives for newcomer employees to improve their Finnish and/or Swedish language skills and develop pathways and guidance for international students to facilitate their transition from education to employment.
- We will promote Helsinki as an open and diverse city, so that everyone feels as if they belong.
- We will improve the employment prospects of spouses of skilled workers in roles that match their qualifications.

Implementation:

- Implementation of the development programme is the joint responsibility of the entire city.
- The programme's measures will be converted into projects and promoted by special funding allocated in the Economic Development Department's budget.
- Development programme progress is reported as part of the annual monitoring of the City Strategy's implementation and its mid-term and final assessments.
- Development programme progress is discussed once a year by the City Executive Team and the Economic Development Sub-committee of the City Board.

Introduction

Helsinki strives to be an international and open city where everyone has the opportunity to live a good life and pursue their dreams. International mobility is increasingly important for the city's development. As the population ages, workforce growth is largely driven by migration. Helsinki seeks to strengthen this growth by attracting international talent and supporting their integration.

International professionals are not only moving to Helsinki from other countries, but also from other parts of Finland. In recent years, many people have come to Finland due to family ties, work or studies. More and more people are moving to Helsinki from Asian countries. According to data from Statistics Finland, there were around 150,000 people of foreign origin in Helsinki at the end of 2025, representing 22% of the population.

Around 40,000 people from abroad have moved to Helsinki so far in the 2020s. The proportion of people who moved for work has been 23%, and the proportion who moved for studies has been 14%. People who move to Finland for work or studies often arrive with their families, and family ties are, in general, the largest single reason for moving to Finland (32%). People have also moved to Helsinki from within the European Union and the EEA (21%), particularly from Estonia. The proportion of people who moved to Helsinki from abroad for humanitarian reasons in the 2020s has hovered at around 10%.

The measures in the development programme aim to both renew and the improve current activities. The programme focuses on attracting international talent, ensuring their smooth transition to life in Finland's capital and strengthening retention, in accordance with the city's overall Objectives for Growth, Skills and Vitality.

The programme's measures focus in particular on individuals and their family members who are moving to Helsinki from abroad or are already living here and are highly educated professionals, entrepreneurs, investors, degree students or researchers as well as people whose occupational skills are in demand in the labour market. At the same time, many of the measures benefit everyone moving to Helsinki or already living here, as many services are open to all, regardless of status.

The development programme will be implemented as a joint citywide effort. In the spring of 2026, the City of Helsinki's administrative divisions and executive office units participated in its preparation, alongside the municipal enterprises of Helsinki Employment Services and Helsinki Partners. Representatives of the business sector, various organisations, and higher education and research institutions, as well as a range of experts who have moved to Finland, were also involved.

The development programme was drafted by a citywide steering group during January–March 2026. The preparation of the objectives was overseen by the City Executive Team and senior public officials. The process was mindful of previous work and possible interfaces with other programme entirities.



Broadly promoting migration and integration

In Helsinki, integration and settling in are supported as part of the city's basic services, such as health and social services, education services, employment services and cultural and leisure services. Basic services are regulated by legislation as well as the city's strategy, budget and service strategies.

Helsinki organises statutory integration services for unemployed jobseekers and people outside the labour force, primarily through its employment services. To complement these and other services, the City Executive Office's Economic Development Department provides additional services to people who have moved to the city to work, study or start a business.

It is possible to receive support for setting up a business from the city's business services. Entrepreneurial skills are developed in accordance with the Objectives for Growth, Skills and Vitality. For many international visitors, tourism is their first encounter with Helsinki and can

also enhance the city's appeal as a place to work and live. The link between tourism and migration has also been recognised in the Development Programme for Helsinki Tourism and Events.

The City of Helsinki also implements a number of statutory and established citywide plans and programmes, which are updated each council term. Programmes are also consolidated to form renewal and integrated programme entiretyies.

The table in the Appendix show some examples of these many programmes and plans.



Development programme baseline and sub-themes

The City of Helsinki's key strategic priorities when it comes to migration can be found in the Helsinki City Strategy under the heading 'Activity, vitality, skills and growth'.

This development programme seeks to carry out the following strategy objectives found there:

1. We will invest in attracting skilled workers from abroad and helping them to successfully find their place in our city.
2. We will ensure that people moving to Helsinki have access to smooth, effective and accessible one-stop services for new arrivals.
3. We will devote special attention to ensuring that these skilled workers and their families feel at home in Helsinki.

This development programme is a subprogramme of the city's umbrella renewal programme entitled "Objectives for Growth, Skills and Vitality".



The city's Objectives for Growth, Skills and Vitality set out more detailed guidelines for this development programme:

1. Helsinki will be one of the most attractive cities in Northern Europe for international talent by the year 2029.
2. International talent attraction to Helsinki is ethical and sustainable.
3. More employers are utilising international talent.
4. Helsinki's labour market offers excellent opportunities for people moving to Helsinki from abroad, allowing them to fully utilise their skills.
5. People moving to Helsinki feel welcome and have smooth access to effective one-stop services for settling in and integration.
6. More graduating international students find work that matches their qualifications
7. People moving to Helsinki from abroad feel at home and included in Finland's capital.

The Helsinki City Strategy sets the framework



Figure 1: How this development programme ties in with the Helsinki City Strategy and the city’s Objectives for Growth, Skills and Vitality



The development programme has three sub-themes that mirror the migration pathway. They have similar content, so the boundaries between them are not strictly defined. There are nine objectives in total.

Development programme objectives

International awareness and talent attraction

Objective 1: Increase international awareness of Helsinki and its attractiveness among selected target groups.

Objective 2: Boost Helsinki's international appeal with ethically sustainable talent attraction efforts that provide up-to-date and realistic information.

Objective 3: Base our talent attraction efforts on the genuine workforce needs of employers and provide them with ample support for international recruitment.

Objective 4: Supply proactive pre-arrival assistance to families moving from abroad so they can settle into everyday life in Helsinki quickly and easily.

Settling in and the early stages of integration

Objective 5: Ensure people moving to Helsinki from abroad can easily access the services they need, primarily from the same source.

Objective 6: Improve employment of international students by providing them with more opportunities to gain work experience and make useful contacts during their studies.

Objective 7: Provide migrants who have found work with more opportunities to learn and actively use Finnish and/or Swedish.

Receptiveness, belonging and retention

Objective 8: Make people moving to Helsinki from abroad feel more at home and included.

Objective 9: Identify spouses as skilled workers from the onset and assist more of them to find work that matches their qualifications.

Figure 2: Development programme objectives

1: International awareness and talent attraction



Photo: Kuvatoimisto Kuvio Oy

Objective 1: Increase international awareness of Helsinki and its attractiveness among selected target groups.

Objective 2: Boost Helsinki's international appeal with ethically sustainable talent attraction efforts that provide up-to-date and realistic information.

Rationale

In 2022, Helsinki's international branding and marketing efforts were expanded to include talent attraction from abroad, focusing on Germany, the US and the UK. Helsinki is being marketed as a diverse city where residents can enjoy a smoothly functioning daily life. This marketing is targeted in particular at groups whose skills meet the needs of the city's strategic growth sectors and employers. Despite being targeted at these specific groups, the key messages about a good life in Finland's capital naturally also reach a much larger audience. When people's expectations do not match reality, however, it can cause problems that can potentially strain city services and damage Helsinki's reputation. This is why it is important to tailor the attraction messaging to the different target groups. The city's talent attraction efforts must be ethically sustainable and provide transparent information on the realities of life in Helsinki, such as the required language skills and the cost of living.

The start-up ecosystem of Helsinki and the whole country has improved considerably in international comparisons, making Finland and its capital more attractive to entrepreneurs and skilled workers. In 2023, there were around 840 early-stage start-ups in Helsinki.

Since 2023, the metropolitan area cities of Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa have been working together on a joint project to attract start-up entrepreneurs from outside the EU and help them establish businesses in Finland. The innovations and skills of start-up entrepreneurs from abroad currently drive the city's strategic growth sectors, and the aim is to focus our attraction efforts even more strongly on these sectors in 2026–2029. The aim is also to increase the overall number of start-ups.



Photo: Marjaana Malkamäki

Implementation and monitoring

Objectives		Assessment of the objectives' achievements		
Objective 1: Increase international awareness of Helsinki and its attractiveness among selected target groups.		Campaign-specific surveys will assess whether international awareness of Helsinki and its attractiveness have increased among the campaign target groups. The surveys will also assess if the respondents' willingness to move to Helsinki has also increased. Baseline value: Pre-campaign level. Target value: Improvement from the pre-campaign level.		
Objective 2: Boost Helsinki's international appeal with ethically sustainable talent attraction that provides up-to-date and realistic information.		The indicator will be developed separately as part of the monitoring of migrants' experiences of settling in, belonging and participation. (See section 3.4 below.)		
Set of measures	Primary responsibility	Co-implementers	Cooperation partners	Indicator
1.1. We will strengthen attraction and international marketing, so Helsinki is more widely recognised as a diverse and safe city that offers a high quality of life.	Helsinki Partners	Communications Department of the City Executive Office Communications services of the city's divisions	Cities in the capital region The Six Cities Network Employers Higher education institutions Work in Finland	Done/not done
1.2. We will improve content and websites of citywide communications based on our client insight, so that they meet the needs of those considering a move to Helsinki and those who have already moved here. Ensure the City of Helsinki's digital channels remain a reliable sources of information.	Communications Department of the City Executive Office	Helsinki Partners Communications services of the city's divisions Helsinki Employment Services	Economic Development Department of the City Executive Office, Migration Affairs Unit	Done/not done Customer satisfaction improves (Welcome Helsinki's customer satisfaction survey NPS).
1.3. We will tailor our attraction efforts to attract growth companies, so that the city can attract skilled workers and operators that meet its growth, workforce and innovation needs.	Economic Development Department of the City Executive Office, Migration Affairs Unit	Helsinki Partners Helsinki Employment Services Communications Department of the City Executive Office Economic Development Department of the City Executive Office, Business Services Unit Business Finland Work in Finland	Cities in the capital region The Six Cities Network Employers Educational institutions in the capital region Local organisations	Number of start-ups and jobs

Objective 3: Base our talent attraction efforts on the genuine workforce needs of employers and provide them with ample support for international recruitment.

Rationale

The economic downturn in Finland has reduced employers' workforce needs and slowed their need to recruit talent from abroad. For many employers, the threshold to start recruiting international talent remains high. Helsinki carried out several attraction and visitor campaigns in 2022–2025, as well as a number of joint pilot projects to recruit international talent. The number of employers participating in talent attraction has however remained moderate, due to the depressed market situation.

The aim for 2026–2029 is to increase the number of employers taking part in talent attraction efforts organised by both the City of Helsinki and the Finnish State. Marketing will be utilised to attract international talent to jobs at Helsinki-based employers in selected sectors. Successful talent requires effective and expanded cooperation with employers.

Employer services that support the recruitment of international talent, both locally and from abroad, have been broadly developed of late. The City of Helsinki, for instance, developed a service model for international recruitment in 2024. The aim for 2026–2029 is to provide

employers with services supporting recruitment from abroad in an even more targeted and client-oriented manner, with a better flow of information between the different operators. We will increase employers' awareness of services promoting recruitment from abroad and strengthen their international staff retention capabilities. We will help lower the overall threshold for employers to recruit international talent and increase the number of companies who engage in international talent recruitment.

The City of Helsinki is Finland's largest employer. In recent years, the City of Helsinki has recruited staff from abroad to fill posts in fields with a shortage of workers in both the city's Social Services, Health Care and Rescue Services Division and the Education Division. In order to make the attending immigration and integration processes as smooth as possible, the city has been developing a cross-division operating model. A service path has also been developed to support potential spouses and family members with settling in. In 2023, the City of Helsinki drew up ethical principles for recruitment from abroad, to which all service providers involved in the recruitment process must commit.

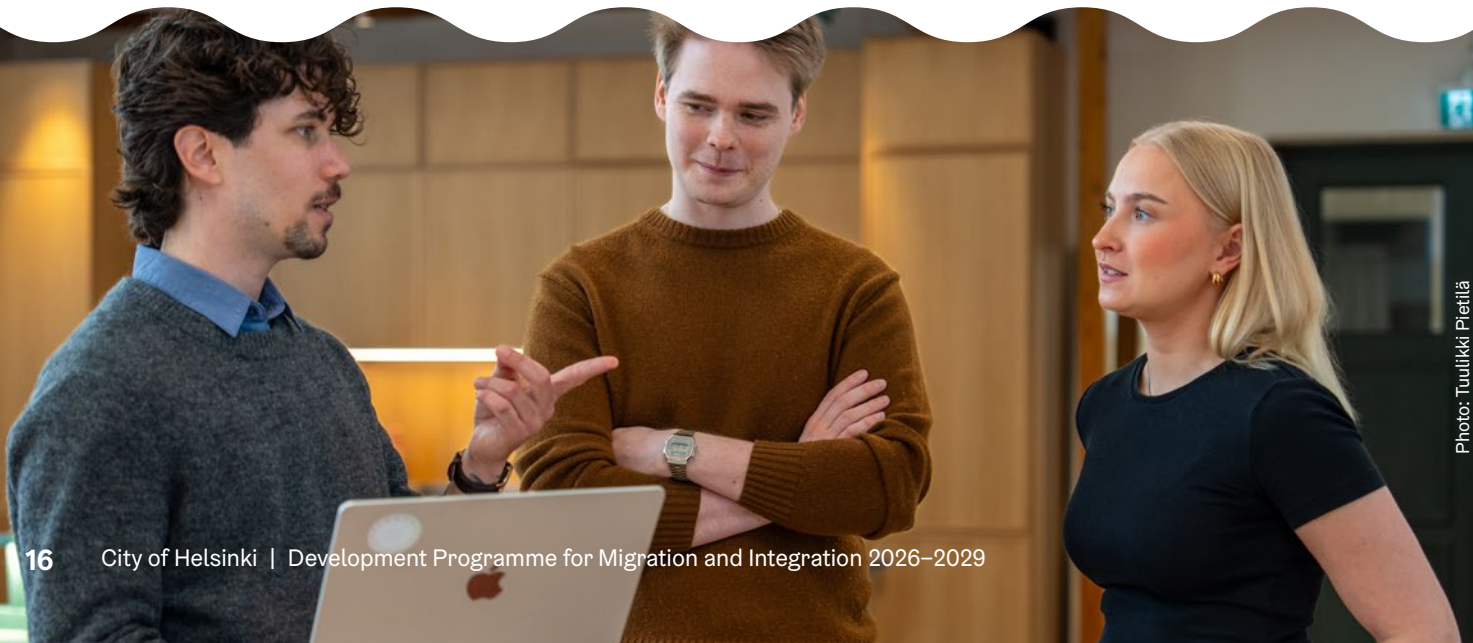


Photo: Tuutikki Pietilä

Implementation and monitoring

Tavoite		Tavoitteiden toteutumisen arviointi		
Objective 3: Base our talent attraction efforts on the genuine workforce needs of employers and provide them with ample support for international recruitment.		The proportion of employers who have recruited or hired international talent in the past five years will increase (survey on skilled workers by the Chambers of Commerce). Baseline value: Of the companies participating in the survey, 30% (2025) have recruited or hired international talent. Target value: 50% (by the end of 2029).		
Set of measures	Primary responsibility	Co-implementers	Cooperation partners	Indicator
1.4. We will strengthen dialogue between employers and stakeholders and work together to better target our talent attraction efforts.	Economic Development Department of the City Executive Office, Migration Affairs Unit (guidance from employers) Helsinki Partners (international marketing)	Helsinki Employment Services Economic Development Department of the City Executive Office Human Resources Department of the City Executive Office	The Six Cities Network Work in Finland Business organisations	Encourage employers to participate in joint talent attraction efforts: Number of employers contacted. (Migration Affairs Unit) Facilitate employer access to qualified international job seekers in the selected business sectors in which marketing efforts are made. Marketing indicators will be specified separately each year. (Helsinki Partners)
1.5. We will streamline the flow of information and cooperation between the city and its partners to develop employer services and improve the client experience.	Economic Development Department of the City Executive Office, Migration Affairs Unit	Helsinki Partners Helsinki Employment Services Economic Development Department of the City Executive Office Human Resources Department of the City Executive Office	The Six Cities Network Work in Finland Helsinki Region Chamber of Commerce	Client experience (NPS) regarding the services provided by the city and its partners. Partner survey (currently C6 survey and, in future, a new citywide survey: Helsinki Employment Services, Migration Affairs Unit and Helsinki Partners).

Set of measures	Primary responsibility	Co-implementers	Cooperation partners	Indicator
1.6. We will strengthen the City of Helsinki's international recruitment service path from the perspective of spouses and families.	Economic Development Department of the City Executive Office, Migration Affairs Unit	Human Resources Department of the City Executive Office Education Division Social Services, Health Care and Rescue Services Division	City's Urban Research and Statistics Unit	Services that are essential for spouses and families have been integrated into the recruitment service path of the city's administrative divisions (yes/no).
1.7. We will help employers to lower the threshold for recruiting international talent and utilise their skills.	Economic Development Department of the City Executive Office, Migration Affairs Unit	Helsinki Employment Services Economic Development Department of the City Executive Office Human Resources Department of the City Executive Office	The Six Cities Network Work in Finland Helsinki Region Chamber of Commerce	Number of employer clients using services supporting the recruitment of international talent (160 per year). Migration Affairs Unit: Participation in services and events that support international recruitment. Employment Services: international recruitment services and international recruitment events for employers (ATMT). Client experience, as measured by the indicator in the Economic Development Department's Action Plan: 75% give a rating of 4/5 or 5/5.

Objective 4: Supply proactive pre-arrival assistance to families moving from abroad so they can settle into everyday life in Helsinki quickly and easily.

Rationale

International House Helsinki (IHH) is a one-stop service hub for migrant reception services that brings together key services for new arrivals to the country. IHH provides pre-arrival support services, early-stage information, a wide range of public authority consultation services, and several services that support newcomers' settling into society. In 2025, 2,715 of the 16,320 people who moved to the capital region from abroad took advantage of IHH's pre-arrival support services. Client satisfaction with the services in 2025 was 94%.

International awareness of Helsinki and its attractiveness will be strengthened by introducing several new concrete actions and seamless processes to the migrant reception services. Helsinki should be known as a city with an excellent service promise for migrants – and a client experience that lives up to that promise. The service promise and the services provided must also extend to the entire family, as a focus on only the recruited employee may undermine a family's decision to move to Finland or cause a family that is already here to move away.

The City of Helsinki's current migrant reception services do not yet sufficiently support international talent and their families to make the necessary pre-move arrangements. For example, under current legislation, it is not

possible to secure a place at a school before moving to Finland. The City of Helsinki has however introduced a new flexible policy that ensures that all children and young people of compulsory education age are placed in a school immediately after moving to the city. In 2026, a time-limited admission model for children from international families who do not pass the language proficiency test for English-language education will be piloted, to give minors who are new arrivals to the city a better chance of securing a study place in English. The crucial role of early childhood education will also be recognised, and efforts will be made to ensure a flexible placement process during the early stages of a family's move.

The accessibility of our pre-arrival support services must be improved, so that a larger proportion of people who are planning a move to the country are aware of these services before their arrival and are able to make use of them. In certain instances, it should be possible for international families to receive information about their child's school placement before moving to Finland. Spouses' employment opportunities should also be supported both before the family's arrival and immediately after their move.

Implementation and monitoring

Objectives		Assessment of the objectives' achievements		
Objective 4: Supply proactive pre-arrival assistance to families moving from abroad so they can settle into everyday life in Helsinki quickly and easily.		Number of people using pre-arrival support services in relation to the total number of people who have moved to the capital region. Baseline value: 17% Target value: The proportion will increase. Client feedback on the City of Helsinki's pre-arrival support services. Baseline value: 94% Target value: Client satisfaction will remain at least at the same level.		
Set of measures	Primary responsibility	Co-implementers	Cooperation partners	Indicator
1.8. We will draw up a joint service promise through extensive cooperation and including the City's different services in our talent attraction efforts.	Economic Development Department of the City Executive Office, Migration Affairs Unit	Education Division Helsinki Partners Culture and Leisure Division Social Services, Health Care and Rescue Services Division	Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment Employers	Has a service promise been made (yes/no)?
1.9. We will enhance targeted marketing aimed at people considering a move to Finland and reach a larger group of people before they arrive in the country.	Economic Development Department of the City Executive Office, Migration Affairs Unit (early-stage services and cooperation with embassies, higher education institutions and employers) Helsinki Partners (targeted marketing)		Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland Employers Higher education institutions	Possible survey for new arrivals on their participation in IHH's pre-arrival support services (to be developed).

2: Settling in and the early stages of integration



Photo: Antti Rintala

Objective 5: Ensure people moving to Helsinki from abroad can easily access the services they need, primarily from the same source.

Rationale

IHH provides a wide range of services to individuals and their family members who are moving to the capital region from abroad to work, study or start a business. In 2025, just over 40% of people who had moved to Finland from abroad used IHH's services.

At present, however, the IHH service point does not broadly offer information on many of the everyday services the City of Helsinki has to offer. For example, IHH clients do not receive targeted information on matters associated with housing, health and social services, education, leisure activities or volunteering.

If these city services were concentrated more broadly at IHH, clients will be able to access most of the city's services from just one source – the same place where they need to go anyway to access early-stage information and public authority consultation services. The addition of these services would also boost awareness of the early-stage services and make it possible to communicate about them in a more consistent manner. The City of Helsinki must, for its part, ensure that the client experience is as smooth and positive as possible and that people are properly guided through the migration process.

Linking the city's services to the IHH service selection would also require a willingness to consider expanding IHH's target group and language offering.

In addition to early-stage services, many families who have moved to the country are looking for low-threshold opportunities to familiarise themselves with local services and to network with others living in their same neighbourhood. The City of Helsinki's Education Division and the Culture and Leisure Division currently offer a joint "Welcome Families" service to newcomer families in the Helsinki districts of Malmi, Kannelmäki and Mellunkylä. At weekly meeting during the school year and summer activities during the month of June, participating families receive helpful information about schools, free-time activities and everyday life in Finland. The service introduces families to the services in their neighbourhood and allows them to meet other families who may be in a similar life situation. The service has facilitated cost to 2,000 client encounters over the past two years. This development programme aims to expand the Welcome Families concept into new areas and enhance the service with added content.



Implementation and monitoring

Objectives	Assessment of the objectives' achievements				
Objective 5: Ensure people moving to Helsinki from abroad can easily access the services they need, primarily from the same source.	Satisfaction with service provided by IHH. Baseline value: Client satisfaction 87% (2025) Target value: Client satisfaction at least at the same level as the 2025 baseline value Feedback from Helsinki-info clients on one-stop access to information and services Baseline value: An NPS score of 58 for information provided by the city's Helsinki-info advisory service at IHH. Feedback indicates that 75% felt they had received useful information on their next steps (March–December 2025). Target value: The NPS for information provided by Helsinki-info will improve on the baseline value. At least 75% of respondents will feel they have received useful information on their next steps. We will also develop our monitoring of IHH clients' service paths.				
Set of measures	Primary responsibility	Co-implementers	Cooperation partners	Indicator	
2.1. We will integrate city services from the City of Helsinki's divisions into International House Helsinki's service offering.	Economic Development Department of the City Executive Office, Migration Affairs Unit	Education Division Culture and Leisure Division Social Services, Health Care and Rescue Services Division		Provide more information on the city's service offering at IHH. (yes/no)	
2.2. We will expand the Welcome Families concept to new areas, include other city divisions and expand the content to, among other things, support parenting and the overall integration the whole family.	Education Division	Culture and Leisure Division Economic Development Department of the City Executive Office, Migration Affairs Unit Social Services, Health Care and Rescue Services Division	Other city divisions Organisations	Expand Welcome Families activities into new areas. (yes/no) Number of encounters in the activities.	

Objective 6: Improve employment of international students by providing them with more opportunities to gain work experience and make useful contacts during their studies.

Rationale

International students make up a significant proportion of Helsinki migrants and yet many of them still face challenges finding a job. Many international degree students have inadequate professional and social networks and minimal contact with potential employers. They often do not learn enough Finnish and/or Swedish, and after graduation, their joblessness prevents them from practicing their language skills in the workplace. A lack of internships, apprenticeships and thesis workplaces likewise reduces their opportunities to gain work experience and expand their professional networks.

The City of Helsinki must cooperate more systematically with higher education institutions and employers to forge better pathways and offer better guidance for graduates starting out in their career. Clear service paths should

provide international degree students with more opportunities to find internships, project work, apprenticeships and thesis workplaces. This would also make it easier for employers to find suitable skilled workers when they are needed. Employers will be offered services and financial incentives to lower the threshold for hiring international students.

International students' skills will be strengthened by stressing the importance of networks right from the start of their studies. At the same time, they will be provided with opportunities to familiarise themselves with working life in Finland and the operations of, for example, start-ups. Students will be better informed – before and during their studies – of the fact that success in the Finnish labour market often requires proficiency in Finnish and/or Swedish.



Photo: Tuutikki Pietilä

Implementation and monitoring

Objectives		Assessment of the objectives' achievements		
Objective 6: Improve employment of international students by providing them with more opportunities to gain work experience and make useful contacts during their studies		Proportion of international degree students at higher education institutions in the capital region of Uusimaa who are employed one year after graduation. (Vipunen). Baseline value: 55% Target value: A 10-percentage point increase in the number of international students who are employed within one year of their graduation. Amount of work experience gained by international degree students (internships, hackathons, mentoring) Baseline value: Unknown. Target value: 150–200 a year.		
Set of measures	Primary responsibility	Co-implementers	Cooperation partners	Indicator
2.3. We will build connections to working life and clear service paths for international degree students together with higher education institutions and employers, in line with the different characteristics of universities of applied sciences and universities.	Economic Development Department of the City Executive Office, Migration Affairs Unit	Helsinki Employment Services Other units of the Economic Development Department of the City Executive Office Higher education institutions Cities in the capital region	Employers The Six Cities Network Helsinki Region Chamber of Commerce	Service paths created/number of path users and feedback received. Number of international students, employers and start-ups participating in different activities; client satisfaction 7.5/10.
2.4. We will motivate and support employers (Helsinki Internationalisation Voucher, recruitment support and support for language learning in the workplace).	Economic Development Department of the City Executive Office, Migration Affairs Unit	Helsinki Employment Services Higher education institutions Cities in the capital region	<i>Kielibuusti</i> project The Six Cities Network Work in Finland	Number of international vouchers issued and a client satisfaction rating of 7.5/10 from employers and students. Self-assessment by international students: the perceived impact of internships on the development of language skills.
2.5. We will support students in making contacts with working life and establishing professional and social networks.	Economic Development Department of the City Executive Office, Migration Affairs Unit	Helsinki Employment Services Other units of the Economic Development Department Higher education institutions Cities in the capital region	Employers and the organisations representing them Start-ups Helsinki Region Chamber of Commerce The Six Cities Network Work in Finland	Number of participants: e.g. other training programmes, mentoring programmes, networking events and hackathons. Client satisfaction 7.5/10.

Objective 7: Provide migrants who have found work with more opportunities to learn and actively use Finnish and/or Swedish.

Rationale

Finnish and/or Swedish language skills open up broader career prospects in Finland's labour market. People who migrate to Finland for work cannot usually study the language easily because very few employers offer the opportunity to study the language during working hours. Language courses are mainly available in the evenings, and it can be challenging to reconcile studying with work or family life. Helsinki Employment Services will support employers by providing more language training and support for using the language in the workplace through joint procurement. The Kielibuusti ("Language Boost") project for higher education institutions has also developed solutions to help international talent learn Finnish and/or Swedish.

More extensive and effective language learning services must be developed for employers to make use of in order to help their employees

learn and actively use Finnish and/or Swedish, as the current service offering does not meet this need. A citywide service voucher model will not only encourage employees to learn the languages but also encourage service providers to offer language learning support services to employers on a wider scale. Our aim is to make adult education's language learning options more flexible, so that their content better meets the needs of people who are working.

If international students studying in Helsinki were to achieve at least a B2 level of proficiency in Finnish and/or Swedish during their studies, this would support their employment, participation in society and long-term attachment to Helsinki. The City of Helsinki is developing models of cooperation with higher education institutions, employers and the third sector to support this objective.



Photo: Sijja Minkkinen

Implementation and monitoring

Objectives		Assessment of the objectives' achievements		
Objective 7: Provide migrants who have found work with more opportunities to learn and actively use Finnish and/or Swedish.		Number of clients covered by the Workplace Finland service and the study voucher Baseline value: 0 persons (Workplace Finland and the service voucher pilot project). Target value: A total of 2,500 people participate in the Workplace Finland and study voucher pilot project during the development programme period. Number of employed clients attending Adult Education Centre courses Baseline value: The precise number of employed clients attending Adult Education Centre courses is not known. Target value: Will be specified once the above information is known.		
Set of measures	Primary responsibility	Co-implementers	Cooperation partners	Indicator
2.6. We will encourage employers to support language learning (e.g. with the help of a service voucher) and promote the adoption of solutions for language learning in the workplace and alongside work.	Helsinki Employment Services	Economic Development Department of the City Executive Office Human Resources Department of the City Executive Office Education Division	Cities in the capital region Work in Finland	Client satisfaction 7.5/10 of employers and employees
2.7. We will expand the current range of adult education courses and adapt it to meet the needs of people who are working and investigate how language teaching is organised at other educational institutions.	Education Division, Liberal Adult Education Department	Helsinki Employment Services City Executive Office's Migration Affairs Unit		Number of teaching hours and students in S2 courses, as well as the NPS. Monitoring of employed persons will be developed.

3: Receptiveness, belonging and retention



Photo: Marjaana Malkamäki

Objective 8: Make people moving to Helsinki from abroad feel more at home and included.

Rationale

Migrants to Finland who develop a strong local identity have better levels of wellbeing, belonging and participation. Social relationships play a major role in a person's experience of inclusion. Loneliness is still common, however, and newcomers to Finland often find it difficult to make friends with local residents. Perceived discrimination and racism further complicate these feelings. Surveys indicate that nearly half of those with a foreign background in the capital region have experienced discrimination.

The City of Helsinki works extensively to combat racism and ethnic discrimination. This work ties in naturally with the Development Programme for Migration and Integration objectives and supports their achievement. Helsinki has made it a point to promote interactions between different demographic groups in various ways, such as by organising staff training sessions on polarisation, anti-racism and good relations between different members of the population. In addition, many local services and events aim to promote resident interaction. The city has also put a great deal of effort into communications promoting non-discrimination and equality.

Opportunities for low-threshold language learning, such as language café activities, are organised by the city in libraries and playgrounds and within various organisations. Language is also learnt while pursuing various hobbies and leisure activities. Language skills help newcomers become a part of society, participate and handle everyday matters. Learning Finnish and/or Swedish also requires locals to speak Finnish or Swedish when interacting with people who have moved here from abroad.

To ensure that more people feel at home in Helsinki and in their neighbourhood, the City of Helsinki must arrange more local activities that

are open to all and increase residents' opportunities to engage in interactions between local residents. These activities should be planned in closer cooperation with the city's residents and various organisations. The city should also provide more opportunities for residents to use and practise their Finnish and/or Swedish.

At present, the City of Helsinki is not conducting any regular or systematic monitoring of migrants' experiences of belonging and participation. The city has participated in population surveys carried out by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) and other research projects that have investigated newcomers' sense of belonging, social relations and perceived discrimination and racism, and the city's Urban Research and Statistics Unit has also developed two monitoring projects, one to track the experiences of city employees recruited from abroad as they settle in, and another to study the experiences of foreign-language speakers living in the city's suburban regeneration areas in relation to Helsinki and their own neighbourhood.

As part of this development programme, a system will be created in Helsinki for the ongoing monitoring of migrants' experiences of settling in, belonging and participation. To this end, the City of Helsinki will carry out a survey targeting international talent, drawing on the client contacts of International House Helsinki. In addition to this, Helsinki will look into participating in the next round of data collection for THL's *MoniSuomi* survey and carry out data collection targeted at the city's suburban regeneration areas, which is outside the scope of the development programme. This work nevertheless benefits this development programme because it focuses on the five largest groups of foreign-language speakers.

Implementation and monitoring

Objectives	Assessment of the objectives' achievements			
Objective 8: Make people moving to Helsinki from abroad feel more at home and included.	The indicator will be developed separately as part of the monitoring of migrants' experiences of settling in, belonging and participation. (See section 3.4 below.)			
Set of measures	Primary responsibility	Co-implementers	Cooperation partners	Indicator
3.1. We will increase interactions between Helsinki's different demographic groups and social networks in neighbourhoods.	Culture and Leisure Division	City's divisions	Organisations Resident associations Residents	Indicator will be developed separately as part of the monitoring of migrants' experiences of settling in, belonging and participation. (See section 3.4 below.)
3.2. We will create and maintain opportunities for low-threshold language learning and use in cooperation with our partners.	Culture and Leisure Division	Education Division Economic Development Department of the City Executive Office, Migration Affairs Unit	Organisations Volunteers Other operators	Indicator will be developed separately.
3.3. We will develop the city's communications to portray life in Helsinki as diverse and open, a place where everyone can feel at home.	Communications Department of the City Executive Office	Communications services of the city's divisions Economic Development Department of the City Executive Office, Migration Affairs Unit		Implemented measures in the communications plan for migration and integration (yes/no). Indicator will be developed separately as part of the monitoring of migrants' experiences of settling in, belonging and participation. (See section 3.4 below.)
3.4. We will monitor migrants' experiences of settling in, belonging and participation, their experiences of racism and discrimination, and investigate the conditions required for ongoing monitoring.	Strategy Department of the City Executive Office, Urban Research and Statistics Unit	Economic Development Department of the City Executive Office, Migration Affairs Unit	Digital and Population Data Services Agency and other research institutes	Completed/not completed. The monitoring system to be established as part of this measure will provide information on the implementation of the development programme.

Objective 9: Identify spouses as skilled workers from the onset and assist more of them to find work that matches their qualifications.

Rationale

Some families of international talent may choose to move away from Finland because of partner's dissatisfaction or unemployment. Efforts should be made to improve spouses' employment opportunities both before they arrive in Finland and immediately after their arrival. Spouses need support in finding roles that match their qualifications, so they can maintain their professional identity.

According to the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) *MoniSuomi* survey, 72% of men and 60% of women who had moved to the capital region due to their partner's work or studies were employed, either full-time or part-time. Helsinki Employment Services reach a significant proportion of people who have moved to Helsinki as a spouse. In fact, of the approximately 3,000 clients of the city's integration services each year, the majority are people who have moved to the country as someone's spouse or partner. These spouses are offered services and activities designed to support their employment and integration as part of the statutory client process. The most important tool in this process is drawing up an integration plan together with the client. The services offered as part of the integration plan include multilingual civic orientation, integration training, services for identifying and developing professional skills, coaching for improving job-seeking skills and various language courses.

Since 2020, the City of Helsinki has been supporting the settling in, employment readiness and networking of the spouses and partners of international talent with the city's Spouse Program. The programme offers targeted, low-threshold support for

career planning, strengthening professional networks and promoting employment opportunities, particularly for highly educated spouses and partners, including those who are underemployed and those whose career path does not initially require proficiency in Finnish or Swedish. More than two-thirds of the programme's participants to date have been women.

The aim of the Spouse Program is to provide targeted career planning and employment support services. It also helps spouses who are already in part-time or full-time employment that does not match their qualifications or skills to find more suitable work. The Spouse Program complements Helsinki Employment Services' statutory services that support employment and integration, such as job placement services, job-search coaching, integration training and vocational training. Participation in Spouse Program activities does not require that people be a client of Helsinki Employment Services.

Cooperation between the Spouse Program, employers and the Helsinki Employment Services' customer service will be further intensified. The participation and networks of spouses and partners will be strengthened by making community-building social activities an even more integral part of the Spouse Program. Citywide events for families will be developed in cooperation with others to better accommodate recently migrated spouses and families as their own target group. Cooperation with organisations will also be increased in the organisation of events and services.

Implementation and monitoring

Objectives		Assessment of the objectives' achievements		
Objective 9: Identify spouses as skilled workers from the onset and assist more of them to find work that matches their qualifications		Survey participants in the career path service of the Spouse Program before and after participation, in relation to employment. Baseline value: There is no comprehensive monitoring of the service as of yet. Target value: At least 30% of the people who used the career path service found work that matched their qualifications within the 12-month follow-up period. Feedback from participants in community events and their assessment of improvements in their wellbeing. Baseline value: Satisfaction with events 92%. Of the participants, 73% felt that their wellbeing had improved following the event (2025). Target value: Satisfaction with the events and participants' experience of an increase in wellbeing following the event will at least remain at the same level as the baseline figure.		
Set of measures	Primary responsibility	Co-implementers	Cooperation partners	Indicator
3.5. We will organise a service specifically aimed at spouses to support career planning and employment, with the aim of improving their chances of finding work that matches their qualifications.	Economic Development Department of the City Executive Office, Migration Affairs Unit	Helsinki Employment Services	Employers Organisations	Career path service participation figures and completion rates; employment results (including work that matches participants' qualifications) and participant feedback.
3.6. We will support the participation and network development of spouses by strengthening Spouse Program's social activities and by offering various options for language learning.	Economic Development Department of the City Executive Office, Migration Affairs Unit	IHH Friend Program Other community-based services	Organisations	Number of events aimed at spouses; participation, belonging and wellbeing feedback. Information on language learning options has been compiled and shared in cooperation with the city's network of operators and organisations (yes/no).
3.7. We will plan citywide events for families with consideration of spouses and children of international talent.	Economic Development Department of the City Executive Office, Migration Affairs Unit	Culture and Leisure Division Education Division Helsinki Employment Services Social Services, Health Care and Rescue Services Division	Organisations	The indicator will be developed with units organising events.

Implementation and monitoring of the development programme



Photo: Ninni West

Implementation

Implementation of this development programme is the joint responsibility of the entire city, including the City Executive Office, the city's administrative divisions and its municipal enterprises. Subsidiaries will be involved in the implementation to the extent that the objectives relate to the subsidiaries' activities and ownership strategies. The programme work will be carried out in close cooperation with key stakeholders. Where necessary, the measures set out in the development programme will also be considered when drafting service and similar agreements between the city and partners relevant to the implementation.

In accordance with the decision on the implementation of the Helsinki City Strategy, the implementation of this development programme will be overseen by the City of Helsinki's Executive Team and the city's senior public officials.

The city's divisions are responsible for taking this development programme into account in their annual operational and financial planning. The allocation of resources will be specified in this context on an annual basis. The objectives will be aligned with the city's other strategic priorities within the available financial framework, to ensure that the measures are implemented in a cost-effective manner. A significant proportion of the objectives can be advanced using existing resources, for example, by developing the city's existing operational

practices and service culture, or by strengthening the city's internal cooperation.

The steering group that prepared this development programme will continue in this role throughout the strategy period and will be responsible for promoting the programme's implementation and reporting to the City Executive Team and the operational management group. Implementation of the development programme will also be supported by also taking the themes into account in division communications.

The measures set out in the development programme will be implemented on a project basis between 2026 and 2029, specified and grouped into sets relevant to the implementation. The party with primary responsibility will be responsible for implementing the development programme's specific set of measures. Co-implementers will allocate the resources of specialists and managers and participate in the implementation. Partners will be involved in a partner capacity.

In addition, it has been proposed that separate development funding be allocated to the relevant groups within the City of Helsinki for a period of two or three years. Funding has been earmarked in the budget of the Economic Development Department's Migration Affairs Unit, and its purpose is to accelerate the launch of the development programme's measures and the further develop existing operating models.



Monitoring the development programme

Progress on the development programme will be reported as part of the annual monitoring of the Helsinki City Strategy implementation as well as its mid-term and final assessments. Progress on the development programme will also be discussed once a year by the City Executive Team.

Monitoring and assessment the implementation and impact of the Development Programme for Migration and Integration will take place at three levels:

- 1. The City of Helsinki will monitor international migration and the settling in and integration of people who have moved to Finland on a general level.** This information will be published on the website of the city's Urban Research and Statistics Unit. This ensures that information essential to the development programme is easily accessible.
- 2. Assessment of the achievement of the development programme's objectives.** A baseline value and target values have been specified for monitoring the achievement of the objectives to the extent possible. The programme's success will be assessed as a whole and in relation to its specific objectives, both during the programme and upon its completion. Assessing the achievement of the development programme's objectives requires the use of appropriate data sources. Researchers at the city's Urban Research and Statistics Unit work with service providers to identify suitable data sources and provide support in the implementation of data collection.

- 3. Indicators for measuring the implementation of the development programme's sets of measures and monitoring progress.** Indicators have been specified for the sets of measures. In addition, the progress of the set of measures will be monitored using a traffic light system (not started, not implemented, started, progressing as planned/completed).

An impact assessment and more detailed investigation can be carried out for some of the measures, if necessary.

It is also appropriate to improve the monitoring of migrant's experiences of settling in, belonging and participation by establishing a continuous monitoring system. This objective is set out as a separate set of measures in section 3.4.

Impact assessment

The impact of the development programme will be assessed at a general level. If certain measures are identified as having significant impact, their financial and other impacts will be assessed in greater detail as part of the programme or as part of the city's annual financial and operational planning.

The measures set out in the development programme are expected to have particularly positive social impacts, as well as a positive impact on the city's economy. Talent attraction efforts, support for employers to support the recruitment of international talent and help employees to learn Finnish and/or Swedish lower the threshold to hiring skilled workers, which will in turn promote employment and economic growth. The programme will also promote encounters between different demographic groups, help establish social networks and increase inclusive communications.



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Appendix: Excerpts from city plans and programmes relating to migration

Table 1. Excerpts from city plans and programmes relating to migration

Name	Core focus of the content	Connection with migration and integration	Connection with the development programme
Theme: Wellbeing and health The City of Helsinki's Welfare Plan for 2026–2029 (statutory). The city's Welfare Plan also includes Child-Friendly Municipality measures (the UNICEF model).	Reducing differences in wellbeing and health and promoting daily physical activity and an active lifestyle. In the Child-Friendly Municipality model, Helsinki has committed to promoting children's rights by implementing an action plan. The action plan includes increasing competence in children's rights, systematising child impact assessments and strengthening the role of safe adults in children's lives.	Migrant residents are included as part of the measures set out in the Welfare Plan. Migrant children are included in the Child-Friendly Municipality measures.	Indirect
Theme: Preventing segregation Preventing segregation	Largely mitigates the trend towards segregation. The priorities will be specified.	Immigration is connected to regional segregation, service needs and participation in society.	Particularly strong connection to the development programme's sub-theme of Receptiveness, belonging and retention.
Theme: Suburban regeneration Priorities for suburban regeneration	Preventing regional segregation. Priorities include improving pleasantness, safety, construction and investments, housing construction, local character, regional distinctiveness, vitality and services.	Immigration is connected to the development of the services provided in the city's suburban regeneration areas.	Connection to the development of services and operating models (for example, <i>Welcome Families</i>).

Name	Core focus of the content	Connection with migration and integration	Connection with the development programme
Theme: Equality and non-discrimination in services Equality and Non-discrimination Plan for Services 2026–2029 (statutory)	Striving towards equality and non-discrimination in the city's services, includes an analysis of various grounds for discrimination by population group.	The plan does not treat immigration as a separate phenomenon, but as part of the diverse population and minority groups. The plan sets out citywide priorities and measures for promoting equality and non-discrimination in city services.	Particularly strong connection to the development programme's sub-theme of Receptiveness, belonging and retention (feeling at home in Helsinki, non-discriminatory services, anti-racism and the prevention of racism).
Theme: Non-discrimination among city staff Equality and Non-discrimination Plan for Personnel 2026–2029 (statutory)	Equality and non-discrimination among the city's staff, from the perspective of human resources policy.	The plan helps ensure that staff are treated fairly and equally, regardless of their origin, language or nationality. The measures set out in the plan also help ensure equality and non-discrimination in work communities.	Indirect (though it is important to use the city's activities as an example).
Theme: City human resources planning Human resources plan	Anticipating human resource needs Competent and adequate human resources	Staff diversity has been identified as one of the four key themes in the human resources plan, and the aim is to promote diversity within the city's personnel. The aim is for the diversity of the city's staff to reflect the diversity of the population.	Recruitment of foreign-language speakers and migrants Recruitment from abroad in accordance with the human resources plan
Theme: Services, Helsinki Employment Services Service Strategy of the Helsinki Employment Services 2025–	The focus is on clients' integration and employment in particular (services for working-age migrants, labour market integration and meeting workforce demands). Migration and integration will be processed as part of statutory employment and integration services.	Migration and integration will be processed as part of statutory employment and integration services.	Particularly strong connection to the development programme's sub-themes of Settling in and the early stages of integration (language learning on the job, employment of international students) and Receptiveness, belonging and retention (employment of spouses).

Name	Core focus of the content	Connection with migration and integration	Connection with the development programme
Theme: Services, Social Services, Health Care and Rescue Services Division Service Strategy of the Helsinki Social Services, Health Care and Rescue Services Division 2026–2029	Planning the service system and organising services in a non-discriminatory manner. Competent staff	Population diversity and the growth of the foreign-language-speaking population influence service needs and service offerings. Organising principles consider: - Career paths of migrants - Access to services by people in a vulnerable position - Staff competence development must prepare for increasingly diverse work communities - Maternity and child health clinic services and family services will focus on the early identification of support needs and adopting an approach that takes the client's cultural background into account - Ensuring the availability and retention of skilled staff in health care, social services and rescue services through sustainable and proactive solutions	Ties in with the development programme, in particular with the section on the city's international recruitment and career paths.
Theme: Participation Participation plans for the divisions 2026–2029	Promoting non-discrimination and pluralism through participation; strengthening local influencing and regional participation, as well as ensuring smooth services and a positive client experience through participation measures.	Migration is connected to measures aimed at ensuring the pluralism of residents, making use of data and the staff's participation competence.	Particularly strong connection to the development programme's sub-theme of Receptiveness, belonging and retention (strengthening feeling of being at home in Helsinki).
Theme: Appeal and attraction Helsinki Partners strategy 2025–2027	The city's appeal, talent attraction and work-based migration as part of growth.	Migration is seen as a prerequisite for the inflow of skilled workers, settling in and investments.	Particularly strong connection to the development programme's sub-theme of International awareness and talent attraction.
Theme: Immigration, services International House Helsinki Strategy 2026–2030	Early-stage information and public authority services for migrants and their family members, as well as migration to work, study or set up a business.	On the IHH service platform, anyone moving to Finland or planning to move here can access pre-arrival support services and early-stage one-stop services as smoothly as possible. Information is provided proactively and comprehensively, and guidance continues to run smoothly. Digitalisation, partnerships and research findings will also be utilised.	The content of the IHH strategy relates in particular to the development programme's sub-theme of Settling in and the early stages of integration.

Helsinki