

Migration in Baltic Sea area: The case of Estonia as a sending country



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Introduction

In the early 1990s the predictions in the literature on migration were that the quicker and more successful the economic development in Eastern Europe becomes, the more transitory the migration push would be.

The goal of this paper is to view migration from the macro-economic viewpoint and to answer how migration from Eastern European countries to Western (or more generally, from poorer to richer countries/regions) is affecting the labour market and the overall economic development of the sending country (named also as emigration country, or country of origin).

The central questions of the macro-economic approach to migration are: does development enhance migration and/or does international migration trigger economic development; migration as a problem of allocation of resources for economic development; should the emigration countries fear and limit the process of emigration.

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To answer these questions, the case of Estonia is analysed. Estonia is a small country, which has been experiencing both very fast development and considerably increased emigration in the last decade (contrary to quite big-scale immigration decades before). During the Soviet period, the Baltic States were immigration countries with a strongly positive migration balance. These two processes in Estonia give us opportunity to study the causal relation between development and migration on this example.

In the public discourse of Estonia, fears of brain drain have been expressed. It is feared that higher wages and better living conditions in Western Europe tempt younger and better educated people to leave. This paper tries to answer the questions if the migration scale and pattern of Estonia is beneficial — or on the contrary disadvantageous for the economic development of the country as a whole, and if there is a reason to talk about a brain-drain effect in Estonia. In the public discourse there have been expressed fears that higher wages and better living conditions in Western Europe attract younger and better educated people to leave.

The causal relation between labour migration and economic development

In the literature on migration, there exists a model of the dynamic circular relationship between economic development and migration. Slow economic development tends to increase emigration, especially of well-trained workers and technicians, which tends to slow down the economic development (e.g. Wagner 1995, 250). But it is also suggested by some authors that fast economic development in the short run increases emigration, because some people who were unable to emigrate before due to financial reasons will get the possibility, and only in the long run reverses migration.

The relationship between international migration and economic development is twofold. The demographic and economic interaction can be described by four basic processes:

- 1) economic change causes change in the number and quality of jobs

- 2) the number and quality of jobs influences both immigration and emigration

- 3) migration determines the population change

4) population change in turn causes, as a feedback, a change in economy.

In classical macroeconomic migration theory, migration (as a free exchange of production factors) should be in the interest of both sending and receiving countries, because it functions as an equilibrating mechanism. Emigration from the less developed country reduces unemployment and underemployment there and increases the marginal productivity of the non-migrant population. The emigration of unemployed, underemployed or easily replaced workers, who consume more than they produce, frees a part of the national income for alternative use. It saves the sending country the current and future social support costs of those people. The remittances of expatriates directly increase the purchasing power of their families, and indirectly, of the rest of the population. The productive employment of remittances favours capital accumulation. If the migrants are poor, the distribution of wealth is improved. In the longer term, if the emigrants return with experience and qualifications and also savings, they can help to transform the production system.

However, for the most labour-sending countries, the benefits of emigration have been elusive. The first aim of emigrants is to improve the well-being of themselves and their families; they are more likely to put their savings into the increased consumption of their family, not into productive investment. Expenditures on housing, health care and education may be considered investments in themselves, but remittances may

even be harmful, because of the increased consumption caused by these, can result in misallocation of resources and an overvalued currency (Straubhaar 2000, 25). The effect of remittances on development depends on the other economic and social conditions in the countries – remittances promote economic development in those countries which have sufficient productive flexibility to respond positively to their stimulus (Arnold 1992, 215).

In the majority of labour sending countries, some passive dividends of emigration, such as degree of relief from unemployment and the repatriation of substantial funds, transfer of remittances, have indeed materialised. We also have to mention the fact that previously in their homeland unemployed people quite often stay unemployed also in the destination country and are therefore not able to send remittances. However, in this case, at least the expenses for an unemployed person shift from the sending to the receiving country. But in most instances, emigration has not provided a substantial, discernible, measurable developmental impetus (Papademetriou 1993, 214).

An important aspect deciding the benefit of emigration is the time period of being away. Temporary international mobility of the key personnel, international trainee exchanges, education and training abroad are developing the labour force and are therefore beneficial both for these people and the country as a whole. Remittances and other transfers by emigrants have been shown to

decrease markedly with increasing residence abroad. Barbara Heisler (Heisler 1999, 157) suggests that the optimal advantage of emigration for sending countries is attained by the emigration pattern that she names “temporary, but long-term”. Given that a country decides to export labour as a partial solution to its economic problems, it benefits only if the emigrants remain abroad for an extended period without settling permanently.

Benefits or disadvantages of labour migration are also influenced by the phase of development in which the country is at the moment. Emigration depends not only upon the differences between in the emigration and immigration countries, but also upon the absolute level of development in the sending country. Michael S. Teitelbaum introduces the development paradox — the contradiction between short-term (few decades) and long-term (more decades or generation(s)) effects of the economic development (and overall) to emigration (in macro-economic migration theory this effect is named the inverted U-curve thesis).

It is clear that, in the long term, development would ultimately reduce the pressure for emigration by reducing the income gap, providing more job opportunities, expanding career opportunities for highly skilled professionals, and by providing the government with financial resources necessary to improve education, health, infrastructure and community services. In the short term, however, the successful and rapid growth tends to increase the impetus for

emigration. Improved transportation and communication links lower barriers to movement. The argument is that countries at some intermediate level of development are the most likely emigration countries (Teitelbaum 1993, 162).

The migration situation in Estonia since 1989

Starting with the end of the 1980s, both internal and international migration of Estonia decreased rapidly. Emigration increased in the first half of the 1990s to an unprecedented level but then decreased rapidly. By the end of the 1990s both immigration and emigration made up only about one tenth of the average level of the 1980s (Herm 2002, 6).

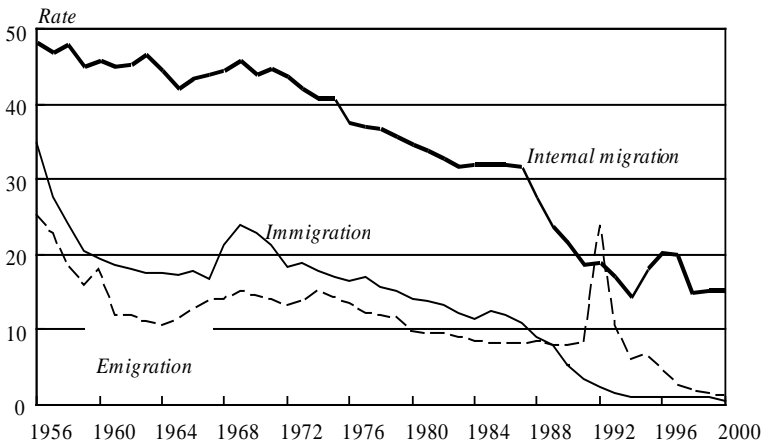


Figure 1. Rate of migration in Estonia, 1956-2000, per 1000 population (Herm, 2002, pg.5)

Compared with the 1989 Population and Housing Census, the de facto population of Estonia had decreased by the year 2000 with 215,985 persons, (i.e. 13.7%), and the usual residence population with 195,610 persons, (i.e. 12.5%) (Population de facto ... 2000, 8).

Reasons for the population decrease lie both in emigration and in the negative natural increase. According to the 2000 Population Census the population had decreased significantly both as a result of emigration and negative natural increase. On account of negative natural increase the population decreased by 42,074 persons in the period between 1989 and 2000 Censuses. As a result of registered emigration the population had decreased by 85,496 persons which is only a part of the actual negative net emigration, as the residents of Estonia do not have to register their place of residence (Population de facto ... 2000).

The main reason for the emigration since 1989 is the collapse of the Soviet Union, the separation of Estonia from the Soviet economic system and transition to market economy. This process has brought with it a considerable decrease in the

number of workplaces. While new production techniques brought new employment opportunities for a few specialists, many traditional occupations were no longer needed. Many skilled workers were forced to cope with the devaluation of their skills and found themselves unemployed. The labour market in Estonia is not balanced. Enterprises have vacancies but they cannot find suitable employees to fill the available positions – labour supply does not meet the demand due to lack of appropriate experience, skills and other factors; also the wage structure does not correlate with the level of educational attainment. Unemployment, devaluation of skills, lack of retraining opportunities and low wages are certainly one of the most important reasons to explain economic migration and is indicated by the fact that in the areas with higher unemployment rate the decrease of population has been relatively bigger (Population de facto... 2000).

According to the 2000 Population and Housing Census de facto population of Estonia totalled 1,356,931 persons and usual resident population 1,370,052 persons, 17,797 of which were temporarily absent in foreign countries (for up to one year). Consequently 13,121 persons were being absent from Estonia for more than one year (Population de facto... 2000).

The percentage of temporarily absent people from the usual resident population of Estonia is 1.3% and for people being absent from Estonia for more than a year in foreign countries the number is 0.96 %. So there is no reason to talk about mass emigration. But

the interests for us in this research are the characteristics of these people. Table 1 shows the number of Estonian emigrants (and in comparison, also Latvian and Lithuanian) in the major receiving countries in 1998.

to the Finnish statistical office in 31.12.2000 among the population of Finland there were 10,839 Estonian citizens (of those 9,473 born in Estonia). The number of Estonians in Finland is very big compared to other Baltic countries, or even to Finland's EU neighbours.

The overall number of Estonians in Finland in 31.12.2000 was 12,428 (table 4).

The peak in the migration of Estonian nationals to Finland was the year 1992 when 2,134 Estonians in total moved there, in 1993 it was already less – 1,981 persons – and in 1994 1361 persons. Between the years 1995 and 2000 Estonian-Finnish migration comprised between 500 to 1000 persons per year. Although the migration of Estonians to Finland has been slowing down in the second part of the 1990s, and

	Germany	Finland	Sweden	Denmark	Netherlands	Italy
Estonia	3173	9689	1124	384	100	98
Latvia	6174	134	387	449	110	168
Lithuania	6631	163	358	555	260	174

Table 1. Stock of Baltic Population in the EU Member States, 1998

Source: Eurostat [www.europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat] 10.10.2003

Age	total	0–9	10–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60–69	70–79	80+	unknown
Total	17 797	758	1.520	5 262	3 911	3 128	1 550	1 128	437	60	43
Europe	15 205	678	1.337	4 348	3 384	2 619	1 329	1 021	399	53	37
Sweden	1477	40	140	538	311	228	118	56	32	10	4
Germany	1496	46	181	584	321	216	91	44	10	3	0
Finland	3242	187	344	871	711	536	290	218	71	8	6
UK	720	31	68	295	147	112	55	5	1	0	6
Russia	4245	213	277	861	831	782	448	547	247	27	12
USA	1279	38	116	571	219	185	67	58	17	4	4

Table 2. Population temporarily absent from Estonia by country of location and age, 2000

Source: Population temporarily absent from Estonia by country of location and age, *Population de facto...*, 2000

In table 2 data about temporarily absent Estonian population in year 2000 by the country of location and age is presented.

We see that the majority of people being temporarily absent from Estonia are young: in their 20s, 30s and 40s. The biggest numbers are residing in Russia 4,245 persons, Finland 3,242, Germany 1,496 and Sweden 1,477.

The major receiving countries for the Estonian emigrants are Finland, Germany and Sweden. In table 3 data from the statistical office of Finland about Estonian citizens residing in Finland, is presented. According

	Total	age 0-14	age 15-64	65 and older	male	female
Estonia	10 839	2 290	7 747	802	4 306	6 533
Latvia	227	48	173	6	81	146
Lithuania	204	27	168	9	75	129
Sweden	7 887	782	5 417	1 688	4 397	3 490
Norway	585	81	467	37	325	260
Denmark	580	53	482	45	375	205
Germany	2 201	174	1 920	107	1 436	765

Table 3. Population of Finland, citizens of selected foreign countries 31.12.2000

Source: Population by citizenship 31.12.2000. Statistics Finland's

[http://statfin.stat.fi/statweb/start.asp?LA=en&DM=SLEN&lp=catalog&clg=population_census] 03.09.2003

Age	0-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-54	55+	total
Estonian citizens	1 325	1 859	2 247	2 576	2 851	1 570	12 428
Born in Estonia	598	1 968	2 123	2 111	2 187	486	9 473

Table 4. Number of Estonian citizens in Finland by age in December 31, 2002

Source: The Finnish Institute of Migration [http://www.utu.fi/erill/instmigr/eng/e_05.htm] 16.10.2003

starting from 1992, also the out-migration of Estonian nationals from Finland has been steadily

7,623, Polish 668, Chinese 581, Latvian 483 (Immigration Affairs in 2002).

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Number	8 446	9 038	9 689	10 340	10 652	10 839	11 662	12 428

Table 5. Number of Estonian citizens in Finland 1995-2002

Source: Demographic statistics. Statistics Finland

[http://statfin.stat.fi/statweb/start.asp?LA=en&DM=SLEN&lp=catalog&clg=population_census] 03.09.2003

growing (while in 1992 there were 31 Estonian nationality emigrants from Finland, by the year 2000 this number had been growing to 337 persons) (Finland 2002, 8) the return migration has stayed moderate compared to migration to Finland and the total number of Estonian citizens residing in Finland has been growing in the second part of 90s (table 5).

The large number of Estonian (and Russian) citizens migrating to Finland can partly be explained by the returnee status that was given to the Ingrians in 1991. But there is also a big share of economic migrants. Most of the Estonian citizens in Finland are in working age (table 3 and 4). While in the beginning of 1990s Estonian migrants to Finland remained unemployed there, since then the unemployment rate of them has considerably decreased over the decade (from 63 % in 1994 to 20 % in 2001). By the purchasing power parity, the income level of Finland is 3.3 times higher than that of Estonia (Heikkilä, Järvinen 2003, 23). The biggest number of the total 21,807 Finnish work permits for foreigners (both new and extended) in the year 2002 were granted to Estonians – total 7,984. The following groups of nationalities were Russian

It is of interest in which fields Estonians are employed in Finland. According to the Finnish Ministry of Labour out of 7984 work permits granted for Estonians in Finland in 2002, the biggest numbers were for garden workers (2,004) (nearly all agricultural and gardening jobs take place seasonally in summer), farm workers (436), house-building workers (394) and transport workers (375) (Immigration Affairs...). In fields requiring higher skills, like data system managers, designers, programmers, consultants, engineers and technicians, Estonians had 89 work permits. Most of the Estonian labour immigrants to Finland are temporary workers: for example in 2000 out of 2,849 first residence and work permits granted by Finnish embassy in Estonia 2,527 were temporary (Estonians accounted for almost 74 % of Finnish foreign temporary workers in 2000), 366 fixed term contracts and only 56 long term permits. The temporary workers were largely employed in seasonal works in agriculture and horticulture, especially in strawberry fields (Finland 2002, 15). Quite often, Estonians who go to work temporarily in Finland are unemployed in Estonia. Of 2,238 job applications from Esto-

nians in 2001, 1,239 were from currently unemployed people. (Migration statistics and diagrams (31.12.2002) 2003; Foreigners moving to Finland to work are required to have a job in Finland upon arrival. Local employment offices investigate the labour market need for recruiting foreign labour, and the Directorate of Immigration or the local police investigate whether the individual concerned should be allowed to enter the country and obtain a residence permit).

While most of the living and working permits of Finland for Estonians are temporary, Estonian citizens are still forming one of the biggest group among the applicants for Finnish citizenship. In years 1994-2000 total of 1,013 former Estonian citizens received Finnish citizenship. That was the third biggest number after Russians and Somalians (Finland 2002, 25).

The second largest group of Estonian emigrants after Finland goes to Germany. According to the Statistical Office of Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt Deutschland) in 31.12.2002 there were 4.019 Estonian citizens residing in Germany (table 6), (in comparison 8.866 Latvians, 12.635 Lithuanians). Most of Estonian citizens in Germany in 2002 had resided there 1-4 years (table 7).

The majority of Estonian citizens in Germany are young. The biggest age group is 25-35 years, followed by age group 18-25. Interestingly, there are considerably more Estonian women than men living in Germany, especially in younger ages (table 8).

Country of citizenship	Total	Born in a foreign country	Born in Germany
Denmark	21 390	19 853	1 537
Finland	15 827	15 069	758
Estonia	4 019	3 865	154
Latvia	8 866	8 418	448
Lithuania	12 635	12 259	376
Poland	317 603	300 138	17 465
Sweden	19 417	18 202	1 215
Russia	155 583	151 511	4 072

Table 6. Foreign population in Germany by the country of birth 31.12.2002
Source: The Statistical Office of Germany [<http://www.destatis.de/basis/d/bevoe/bevoetab10.htm>] 11.11.2003

Total years	under 1	1-4	4-6	6-8	8-10	10-15	more than 15
4000	500	1100	700	800	500	300	200

Table 7. Estonians residing in Germany 31.12.2002 by the length of residence
German Office for Foreigners [<http://www.auslaenderstatistik.de/azr.htm>] 04.11.2003

	Total	under 10	10-18	18-25	25-35	35-45	45-55	55-65	Over 65
Total	4 000	200	200	1000	1500	400	300	200	200
Men	1 300	100	100	300	400	200	200	0	100
Women	2 700	100	100	700	1100	200	100	200	100

Table 8. The age structure of Estonian citizens in Germany 31.12.2002
Ausländerstatistic (Statistics on foreigners) [<http://www.auslaenderstatistik.de/azr.htm>] 04.11.2003

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
In	20	141	216	193	173	156	172	166	211	264	271
Out	0	2	3	6	21	25	41	4	43	35	51
Net	20	139	213	187	152	13	131	121	168	229	220

Table 9. Estonian migrants to Sweden 1991-2001

Source: Elli Heikkilä, Taru Järvinen, Jörg Neubauer, Lars Olof Persson, *Labour Market Integration in the Baltic Sea Region Before and After EU Enlargement*, Draft paper submitted to WRSA 42nd Annual Meeting in Rio Rico/Tucson, Arizona, Feb 26-March 1, 2003, p. 29

Sweden is on the third place in receiving Estonian emigrants. In table 9 migration flows between Estonia and Sweden in the years 1991-2001 are described. (In comparison there are also presented data of some other selected countries).

From table 9 we see that the number of Estonian migrants to Sweden has been constantly growing, as has also emigration of

	1990	1995	2000	2001
Denmark	28 586	26 485	25 567	26 627
Estonia	0	938	1554	1662
Finland	119 669	104 967	98 571	97 521
Iceland	5275	4954	4057	4136
Latvia	0	282	694	780
Lithuania	0	227	574	727
Russia	0	2970	5658	5925

Table 10. Foreign citizens in Sweden by country of citizenship 1975-2001
Source: The Swedish Immigrant Institute [<http://www.immi.se/migration>] 07.11.2003

Estonian citizens from Sweden, but the latter in much smaller scale; immigration has always exceeded emigration and net migration has been growing. As a result the number of Estonian citizens residing in Sweden has also been constantly growing (table 10).

According to the data of the Swedish statistical office (Statistical reports, Statistics Sweden 2003), the majority of the Estonian citizens (almost $\frac{3}{4}$) emigrate to Sweden because of family ties, 13.5 % for work reasons and 10 % to study. But the reason for this result may also lay in the very restrictive labour market policies of Sweden. In principle, immigration purely for reasons of employment is only allowed if the labour demand cannot be met within Sweden.

As can be seen from the numbers above, mainly young people, (of working age) are

permanently or temporarily emigrating from Estonia. We could suppose, that it is disadvantageous for Estonia that young people, who have got their education and training in Estonia, so to say into whom the state has invested, are leaving with their human capital to work abroad. Several scholars (for example Werner 1993, 84) have argued that young people are normally better qualified than the rest of the labour force.

But in the case of Finland we saw that the employment structure of Estonian nationals in Finland seems to be rather beneficial for Estonia – mainly less skilled Estonians go to work in Finland and mostly temporarily, and many of them have been previously unemployed in Estonia. In the following we try to find out if the emigration of younger people in the case of other receiving countries may be disadvantageous for Estonia. For this we analyse the relation between age and unemployment in Estonia.

Unemployment in Estonia is rather high. According to the 2000 Population and Housing Census, in year 2000 total 88,199 persons, 7.9 % of the whole Estonian population, were unemployed. Of unemployed Estonian citizens, people in their 20s, 30s and 40s comprise each around 25 % of all unemployed people (Economically Active Population 2000, 21-23). Thus, the proportion of younger people is also relatively large among unemployed Estonian citizens.

One reason to explain this is of course the incapacity of the state to plan the education system optimally, but in Estonian public

discourse also young people themselves are criticised for the undue conviction that expensive higher education automatically guarantees a good job and income. Work opportunities which do not correspond to the abilities and small wages force young people to think of earning opportunities abroad.

To decide about the (dis-) advantageousness of the present migration situation in Estonia the knowledge of the level of education of Estonian emigrants and immigrants is important. Of the emigrated males 18.7% had a higher education, 59.8% had secondary education (incl. professional secondary education) and 17.2% had a lower education than secondary, (4.3% — education attainment unknown). Of the emigrated females 13.8% had a higher education, 63.4% had a secondary education (incl. professional secondary education) and 18.8% had a lower education than secondary (4% – educational attainment unknown) (Education Completed. Religion, 2000). In table 11 these and comparative data about the educational attainment of the immigrants to Estonia and the whole Estonian population is presented.

The educational attainment of persons aged 15 and older who had emigrated from Estonia in years 1992–1999 was considerably higher than the average of the Estonian population. The education level of immigrants is even higher than that of but the number is 5.5 times less.

Conclusions and suggestions

The basic rule of economic migration is: all countries with wages substantially lower (for equivalent skill level jobs) than their neighbours or/and higher unemployment rates, tend to show higher emigration. Emigration from Estonia, particularly to western countries, picked up after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, but has then decreased over the recent years.

Major economic reasons for the emigration from Estonia since 1989 lay in the separation of Estonia from the Soviet economic system and transition to market economy, which has brought with it decrease in labour demand, devaluation of many skills, labour market imbalance and considerable unemployment. But the fast economic development of Estonia, its liberal trade regime and the inflow of western capital (in the

	Higher education	Secondary education	Lower than secondary
Male emigrants	18,7 %	59,8 %	17,2 %
Female emigrants	13,8 %	63,4 %	18,8 %
Male immigrants	29 %	55 %	14,2 %
Female immigrants	25,2 %	55,3 %	17,3 %
Estonia total	12,8 %	46,7 %	38,3 %

Table 11. The education of migrants 1992-1999 (15 years and older)
Source: *Education Completed. Religion, 2000 Population and Housing Census, vol. IV*, the Statistical Office of Estonia, pg.26 [<http://www.stat.ee/section=67811>]; author's calculations

form of foreign direct investment) helped certainly to decrease the migration pressure. The likelihood that the development paradox takes place, depends on the overall level of economic development, compared to the destination countries. As the difference in the of development between Estonia and the Western countries is not as big as it is for example in case of Third World countries, and the communication and transportation barriers were not too high even in the beginning of nineties, the development paradox has not occurred.

Many studies have shown that emigrants are relatively younger, better educated and more entrepreneur than the average member of population. Emigration of these well-educated effectively employed people in search of higher wages and/or better working conditions is called the brain drain effect and it explains the human capital losses that the state has invested in (mainly in the form of state-financed education and training).

The time of being away is an important aspect when deciding the benefits from emigration. Temporary relief of unemployment, temporary migration of specialists, international student and workers' exchanges etc are improving skills and giving experience to migrants; also they spend big share of their earnings in home country.

Estonian labour migrants are interested in working abroad mainly temporarily, either with the goal of getting experience or earning some money. Although the average education level of

emigrants is higher than the average of the population, quite big share of them is also with the lower education level, and currently unemployed.

The scale of emigration in Estonia is not very high and emigration has slowed down in recent years. Also the characteristics of Estonian emigrants show that emigration from Estonia can not be classified under typical brain drain case. But as the immigration scale and pattern in Estonia differs considerably from the emigration scale and pattern, Estonian migration cannot also be classified under the brain exchange term. Probably because of these reasons Estonian governments have not paid much attention to emigration and possibilities to regulate it. It is true that in the long run the major influence for emigration is the level of (economic) development in the country and to lift it is what Estonia is striving, but in shorter term changes in country's human resource planning and education system are needed.

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Apurahoja suomalaisen siirtolaisuustutkimuksen edistämiseen ja tukemiseen on haettavissa seuraavista rahastoista:

- Kaarle Hjalmar Lehtisen rahasto
- Niilo ja Helen M. Alhon rahasto

Rahastoista on jaossa yhteensä 10 000 euroa. Hakulomake on saatavana Siirtolaisuusinstituutin internet-sivulta osoitteesta **<http://www.migrationinstitute.fi/sinst/apurahahaku.php>**

Hakemukset liitteineen pyydetään lähettämään 15.4. mennessä osoitteeseen:
Siirtolaisuusinstituutti
Linnankatu 61, 3. krs, 20100 Turku

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