

Migration flows between Finland and the Baltic Sea region

Elli Heikkilä & Taru Järvinen

In 2001 the number of immigrants coming to Finland was 18,955 (Statistical Yearbook of Finland 2002). The main immigrant groups in Finland come from Russia, Estonia and Sweden. The structure of the immigrant population and the reasons for their arrival here have changed over time. In the 1980s people moved to Finland because of a specific job or for family reasons, such as marriage to a Finn. The majority of the immigrants in the 1990s were Ingrian Finnish returnees and refugees who commonly did not have a job pre-organized, nor could they benefit from the existing social networks that promote employment and integration (Forsander 2001; Jaakkola 2000). The large number of Russian and Estonian citizens is mainly explained by the returnee status that was given to the Ingrians in 1991. The same year also marked the peak of Russian immigration to Finland. Return migration back to Russia has been small in numbers (Table 1).

Both of the authors are working at the Institute of Migration, Finland, Docent Elli Heikkilä as the Research Director and M.Sc. Taru Järvinen as a Researcher.

The new freedom to travel abroad from Russia, effective as of 1993, did not result in an explosive increase in emigration rates with great masses migrating to the western countries as was commonly feared in Finland, for example. The major change occurred already in 1990 when the rate of permanent migration to western countries doubled in comparison to the year before. Since then there has been little change in the annual emigration rate. The percentage of Russian emigrants migrating to Finland was 1.5 % in 1996. However, the statistics are not completely unambiguous. In the former Soviet Union the registration of emigrants was not very effective. A part of emigrants left with a tourist visa and remain to be registered as citizens in their original country (Kyntäjä 1998:35–36).

The majority of the Soviet immigrants in Finland are between 20 and 30 years of age, with a high proportion of children. There are also some older Russian immigrants, born in the 1920s and 1930s. Their immigration to Finland started somewhat later and the number of arrivals in this age group has remained more or less unchanged. Unlike the young, the older immi-

grants are mostly Finnish speaking. 60–70 % of all returnees are Finnish citizens, the rest comprising either their Russian or Estonian family members or individuals no longer in possession of Finnish citizenship but who, nonetheless, were granted the returnee status (Kulu 1998:76).

As yet, the number of refugees and asylum seekers from the Baltic countries has been extremely small and therefore generates no extra pressure on Finland in the form of transitory migration. Also other migration is likely to remain fairly insignificant, especially from Latvia and Lithuania. Emigration from Estonia, particularly to western countries like Finland, picked up after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, but has then decreased over the recent years. According to studies, people from the Baltic region will no longer be very eager to emigrate if the economic and social situations continue to improve, which will result in stabilization of emigration. Studies show that the Russians in Tallinn are more willing to emigrate than the Estonians in the same city, although the top country on their preference list is not Finland but overwhelmingly Germany (Karppi & Rantala 1997).

Table 1. Number of migrants by citizenship between Finland and some Baltic Sea states (minimum 6 moves for data value).

Year	Sweden			Poland			Lithuania			Latvia			Estonia			Russia			Former USSR			
	in	out	net	in	out	net	in	out	net	in	out	net	in	out	net	in	out	net	in	out	net	
2001																						
2000	701	457	244	41	53	-12	20	14	6	35	-	-	655	337	318	2516	241	2275	-	264	-	
1999	678	440	238	39	16	23	18	-	-	36	14	22	587	152	435	2180	127	2053	17	71	-54	
1998	799	422	377	28	13	15	18	-	-	33	-	-	675	159	516	2463	78	2385	25	41	-16	
1997	667	377	290	23	21	2	34	-	-	31	-	-	629	148	481	2387	109	2278	12	38	-26	
1996	644	356	288	27	61	-34	44	-	-	24	-	-	690	326	364	2012	148	1864	13	312	-299	
1995	598	289	309	24	21	3	12	-	-	11	-	-	951	166	785	1958	67	1891	52	153	-101	
1994	551	344	207	39	26	13	15	-	-	27	-	-	1361	154	1207	1901	83	1818	63	114	-51	
1993	442	384	58	40	15	25	9	-	-	32	-	-	1981	85	1896	2169	44	2125	169	120	49	
1992	567	361	206	66	48	18	12	-	-	26	-	-	2134	31	2103	2946	25	2921	132	152	-20	
1991	675	390	285	176	39	137	6	-	-	7	-	-	862	-	-	5601	-	-	5601	117	5484	
1990	754	335	419	191	8	183	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1885	86	1799	
1989	722	353	369	114	10	104	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	575	155	420	

The economic gap between Finland and Russia is among the largest in Europe (Figure 1). In fact it has only become deeper during the 1990s, while simultaneously the number of inhabitants living in the frontier regions of Finland and Russia has reduced. Hence, these regions have neither been able to lure people nor economic activity. The borderline and the associated differences in standards of living, has not become a decisive factor for the socio-economic change of Eastern Finland and the surrounding area. Although there are similarities in the economic gap between Finland and Russia and the situation in the US and Mexican border, the dynamics of economy is completely different. The frontier regions have not become areas of rapid economic growth that are run by the markets (Eskelinen 2001:119–120). Poor housing conditions and small pensions are the primary reasons for the migration of Russian population to Finland, whereas young people are concerned with actual or threatened unemployment. Additionally, too modest wages and, in

some Russian cases, even leaving the wages unpaid, are reasons for migration.

The impact of the enlargement of the European Union

It has been estimated that immigration from the new East-European members of the EU would double by 2005–2009 in comparison to the current level. This would mean that each year 15,000 Estonian migrants would move to Finland together with another 1,000 from the other countries. The peak in immigration rates would be reached in 2010–2014 when 28,000 individuals would migrate to Finland on a yearly basis. By then the annual number of new Estonian immigrants would have reduced to the current level, i.e. approximately 700 individuals. Furthermore, this falling trend would continue even further, resulting in increased shortage of labour in Estonia (Hietala 2002:41).

The great differences in income per capita between Finland and the applicants' home countries, along with the improving employment situation in Finland, are acting as stimulants to migration. Taking note of purchasing power parity, income level in Finland is 3.3 times that of Estonia. Hence the difference in income levels is many times bigger than it was during the years of the great migration wave between Sweden and Finland. Increased numbers of individuals working across the border is one very probable alternative, which may have a significant impact on the employment markets both in Finland and Estonia. Measured in time, the weekly commuters from Estonia are not that far from Helsinki harbour (Hietala 2001:50; Työvoiman liikkuvuus Euroopassa ja Suomi -työryhmä 2001:5).

Active immigration policy

Recently many European countries have raised the status of foreign residents among the central

themes of domestic policy. Finland needs increasing numbers of immigrants, initially to fill the open positions as the great post-war generations reach retirement age, later to provide them with adequate care. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that there will be a significant migration wave to Finland from Estonia or from any other country presently applying from the EU. Immigration from Russia will be forming the largest single group. The common labour market within Europe has not significantly increased the mobility of the labour force within the European Union and its internal flows of labour have grown more slowly than migration between the European Union and the third world. In EU countries about 2 % of the labour force is from other countries in the Union (Miettinen et al. 1998; Heikkilä 2001; Itoniemi 2002).

The key principles for the government's immigration and refugee programs are openness, internationality, human rights, good management and legal security on one hand, and preventing illegal immigration on the other. Immigrants can stimulate the development of our economy and culture and act as a bridge in international communications. Observing the current development in economy and society, a controlled promotion of immigration is desirable. Flexible and efficient integration of all immigrants into the Finnish society and working life is the primary goal of immigration policy (Ministry of the Interior 2003).

From the Finnish perspective, the threat from illegal transitory

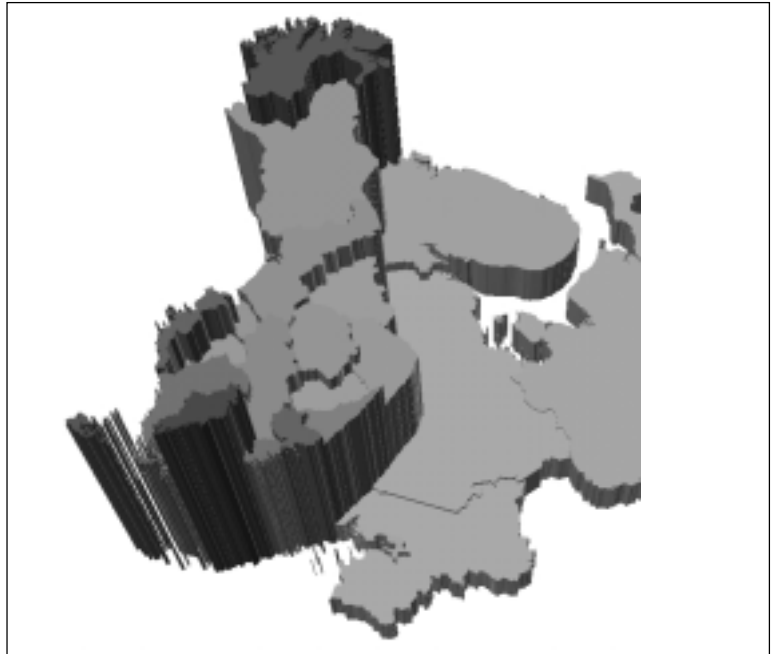


Figure 1. The economic gap between Finland and Russia toward the end of the 1990s: gross national product according to purchasing power parity (see Eskelinen 2001:120).

Russian migrants has not yet been very severe but it is a growing phenomenon. In 2000 there were 47 trial of illegal migration. According to ministry of interior about 10 % of cases are known (Munnukka 2001). More recently, the fact that in Finnish educational institutions tens of foreigners are enrolled every year with the ultimate aim of staying in the country illegally, or transiting to another country, has been addressed in the headlines. After receiving a residence permit, they do not necessarily intend to begin their studies at all or the completed studies will be very modest (Kerkelä 2003).

In 2002 Finland received 3,129 applications from asylum seekers:

19 % of applications came from Romanians, Slovaks 12 % and Russians 8 %. The Directorate of Immigration refused entry from 2,312 asylum seekers, while 591 were granted entry. In 322 cases of the negative decisions the refusal was explained by a safe country of origin (Kuusela 2003). In 1999 a total of 496 residence permits were granted to asylum seekers in Finland. 54 % of these permits were given due to humanitarian reasons and 31 % to provide safety and protection. The rest were regular cases of asylum seekers (Yhteispohjoismainen tilastokatsaus 2001).

References

- Eskelinen, Heikki (2001). Itäraja: uuden kehitysvaiheen kokeuksia ja näkymiä. In Heikkilä, Elli (ed.): Muuttoliikkeet vuosituhatosen vaihtuessa – halutaanko niitä ohjata? Muuttoliikesymposium 2000, s. 117–123. Siirtolaisuusinstituutti, Siirtolaisuustutkimuksia A 24. Turku.
- Forsander, Annika (2001). Immigrants in the Finnish Labour Market – Is There Ethnic Segmentation? In Heikkilä, Elli (ed.): Muuttoliikkeet vuosituhatosen vaihtuessa – halutaanko niitä ohjata? Muuttoliikesymposium 2000, s. 250–266. Siirtolaisuusinstituutti, Siirtolaisuustutkimuksia A 24. Turku.
- Heikkilä, Elli (2001). Migration and the future challenges in an integrated Europe. In "Once a jolly swagman...", Essays on migration in honour of Olavi Koivukangas on his 60th birthday, p. 81–89. Siirtolaisuusinstituutti, Turku.
- Hietala, Kari (2001). EU:n itälaajentuminen ja maahanmuutto Suomeen. In EU:n itälaajentamisen vaikutukset työvoiman liikkuvuuteen, s. 1–55. Työministeriö, Työhallinnon julkaisu 291, osa II. Helsinki.
- Hietala, Kari (2002). EU:n itälaajentuminen ja maahanmuutto Suomeen. Maahanmuuttoasioiden ammattilehti Monitori 1/2002, s. 40–41.
- Iloniemi, Jaakko (2002). Suomi 2015: Monikulttuurinen osamaisyhteiskunta. Studia Generalia -luento. <<http://video.helsinki.fi/media-arkisto/Studia/031002a.htm>>
- Jaakkola, Timo (2000). Maahanmuuttajat ja etniset vähemmistöt työhönotossa ja työelämässä. Työministeriö, Työpoliittinen tutkimus 218. Helsinki.
- Karppi, J. Ilari & Heikki Rantala (1997). Ethnic and Social Determinant of East-West Migratory Trends in the Baltic Sea Area Transition Economies. In Yearbook of Population Research in Finland XXXIV, p. 87–101. The Population Research Institute, Helsinki.
- Kerkelä, Lasse (2003). Kymmenet ulkomaiset opiskelijat jäävät luvatta Suomeen vuosittain. Helsingin Sanomat 25.1.2003.
- Kulu, Hill (1998). Venäjän ja Baltian suomalaisväestö. In Kyntäjä, Eve & Hill Kulu. Muuttonäkymät Venäjältä ja Baltian maista Suomeen, s. 38–78. Siirtolaisuusinstituutti, Siirtolaisuustutkimuksia A 20. Turku.
- Kuusela, Anna (2003). Pikakäännytyspäätös heikentää turvapaikanhakijan oikeusturvaa. Turun Sanomat 28.1.2003.
- Kyntäjä, Eve (1998). Venäjän ja Baltian maiden uudet väestöliikkeet. In Kyntäjä, Eve & Hill Kulu. Muuttonäkymät Venäjältä ja Baltian maista Suomeen, s. 11–37. Siirtolaisuusinstituutti, Siirtolaisuustutkimuksia A 20. Turku.
- Miettinen, Anneli, Ismo Söderling, Anna Ehrnrooth, Elli Heikkilä, Reino Hjerpe, Tuija Martelin, Mauri Nieminen & Riikka Sheimeikka (1998). Suomen väestö 2031 – Miten, mistä ja kuinka paljon? Väestöliitto, Väestötutkimuslaitos E5/1998.
- Ministry of the Interior (2003). Hallituksen maahanmuutto- ja pakolaispoliittinen ohjelma. <<http://www.intermin.fi/suomi/ulkomaalaisasiat>>
- Munnukka, Antti (2001). Laiton maahanmuutto taloudellisesti hyvin kannattavaa liiketoimintaa. Etelä-Saimaa 23.11.2001. <<http://www.esaimaa.fi/arkisto/vanhat/2001/11/23/alueuutiset/index.html>>
- Statistical Yearbook of Finland (2002). Statistics Finland, Helsinki.
- Työvoiman liikkuvuus Euroopassa ja Suomi -työryhmän raportti (2001). In EU:n itälaajentamisen vaikutukset työvoiman liikkuvuuteen, s. 1–55. Työministeriö, Työhallinnon julkaisu 291, osa I. Helsinki.
- Yhteispohjoismainen tilastokatsaus (2001). Ulkomaalaiset Pohjoismaissa. <<http://www.uvi.fi/pdf/tikatsaus.pdf>>