

# Integration Compass

How do we ensure that every immigrant has access to education and working life?



# Multiculturalism is an opportunity

**A WAVE OF IMMIGRANTS** is sweeping through Europe. As of the beginning of October, over 18,000 asylum seekers have arrived in Finland this year. By the end of the year there will be an estimated 50,000 asylum seekers.

The reception centres are working at their limits and more facilities are needed. Although not all asylum seekers will stay in Finland, additional integration measures are needed quickly. The next weeks and months will determine if the refugee situation will blow up in our hands or if it will create a new opportunity for Finland.

Even without the wave of refugees, multiculturalism is an important and growing part of Finland and its future. OAJ wants to promote a multicultural and tolerant Finland that carries global responsibility and helps those in need.

OAJ sees internationality and multiculturalism as part of Finnish society and as an enriching component in the lives of Finnish people. That is why we have for years emphasised that education is the best integration policy. Even though it is a widely known and recognised fact, we still think Finland has not been able to take enough concrete measures to promote integration. That is why OAJ has devised the Integration Compass.

Under Finland's constitution, all pre-primary- and comprehensive-school-age children are entitled to receive free basic education even if they do not live in the municipality permanently or the municipality is not their home municipality. OAJ emphasises that immigrants of all ages need to gain access to education services as soon as possible after their arrival to ensure that integration begins immediately. Competent teachers want to work toward the goal of giving every person who arrives access to education and working life.

OAJ's Integration Compass provides methods for better integration of children, youth and adults from immigrant backgrounds. Language acquisition is an important factor in all education. Everyone should be provided with sufficient pedagogical support for learning. Teachers' multicultural competence also needs reinforcement.

Multiculturalism is an opportunity to take advantage of. Finland will gain more skillful working-age people as long as immigrants are provided with enough language instruction and other education opportunities. Multiculturalism also improves the ability of Finnish children and youth to succeed in the future world.

**Olli Luukkainen**

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# Goals

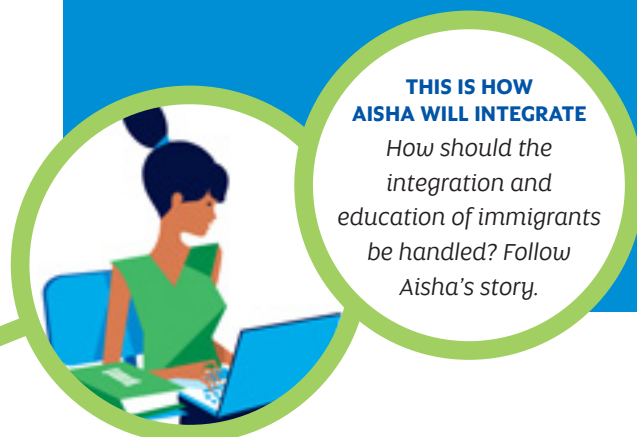
- The Finnish education system supports flexible and individual education tracks for immigrants.
- Every child, youth and adult has an equal and high-quality opportunity to study Finnish or Swedish and their own mother tongue .
- Multicultural competence is a defined part of teachers' professional skills and it is promoted through educational methods.
- The social exclusion of immigrant youth from education will decrease and their employment rates will increase.

# Methods

- Laws and regulations must be changed, teachers need to be trained and resources allocated to municipalities, daycare centres, schools and educational establishments to promote education for immigrants.
- The government must assess the need for additional funding and take it into account as the number of refugees grows.
- The government must provide municipalities with sufficient resources to receive children, youth and adults arriving in Finland and to organise childcare and education services that correspond to their needs.
- The government must instruct municipalities on organising the education of immigrants. Principals and directors must be heard and trained.
- Everyone who arrives in Finland must immediately be offered instruction in the Finnish or Swedish language. It also includes teaching literacy.
- All children younger than comprehensive school age must be provided with an opportunity to participate in early childhood education.
- Municipalities must also allocate additional funding to daycare centres and schools with a large number of immigrants.

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**THIS IS HOW  
AISHA WILL INTEGRATE**  
*How should the  
integration and  
education of immigrants  
be handled? Follow  
Aisha's story.*

# 1

## Quick start for integration training

**SETTLING INTO** a new country is a big change. Integration training consists of a year-long training programme for adult immigrants. It helps them learn the language and gain the necessary skills to find a job or a study place. At the same time, immigrants are able to make connections in Finnish society.

The training programme should be a fixed part of pre-vocational education. The government platform states that vocational education will be restructured. It is essential that integration training be a part of other vocational adult education.

If integration training were a part of preparatory instruction, immigrants would have the chance to become familiar with the vocational school and plan their education track more efficiently. They could simultaneously take courses in the vocational school and integrate into working life faster. This has been done, for example, in Canada.

Integration training is important for all immigrants, including stay-at-home mothers and the elderly, in order for them to adapt to Finnish society. For this reason, families with children must be provided with information about Finland's early childhood education and other aspects of the education system.

Integration training is organised as an outsourced service that the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centres) have invited companies to tender for. The services will be part of the administration of the Ministry of Employment and the Economy. The ELY centres don't have to follow national quality and price requirements when inviting companies to tender for the integration training services.

Integration training must be developed further. Inviting companies to tender every few years hinders the development work and, therefore, also the quality of the training, because the organisers can't look far into the future. The system is inflexible and congested. Even before the current refugee crisis, more than one in four immigrants had to wait over six months before they had the opportunity to study Finnish or Swedish. <sup>1</sup> (TEM 2013,36)

Development Proposal <sup>2</sup> for adult immigrants' basic education (OKM 2014,23) states that the responsibility for literacy training should be transferred to the Ministry of Education and Culture. This is not sufficient. Integration training should be handled entirely by the Ministry of Education and Culture so that it can be put into practice more efficiently and with better results.

### OAJ'S PROPOSALS

- All integration training must be handled by the Ministry of Education and Culture.
- Integration training must be made a part of preparatory instruction as education under authorisation for provision.
- The practice of inviting companies to tender for organising integration training must be abandoned.
- The appropriation in the government budget for integration training must be increased tenfold in the long term.



*13-year-old Aisha arrives in Finland in the autumn, when the school year has already begun. The father, mother, Aisha and her little brother Aliha seek asylum in Finland. Aisha is admitted to preparatory instruction at a nearby comprehensive school in the same class as a few other people in the same situation.*

# 2

## Early childhood education helps to integrate

**THE ACQUISITION OF FINNISH OR SWEDISH** determines the kind of future an immigrant child is going to have in Finland. The best way for a child to learn the language of their new home country is to be in contact with other children under the supervision of a teacher.

In the daily routine of early childhood education, kindergarten teachers take into account the individual needs of children and special education teachers provide the necessary support. Problems are detected at an early stage. The government's intention to increase daycare group sizes makes language learning more difficult for children from immigrant backgrounds. In larger groups, teachers have less time for each child.

The government's motion to limit children's right to early childhood education to 20 hours a week if one of the parent is unemployed or taking care of younger siblings at home also makes the situation more difficult for immigrants. In the spring of 2013, almost half of female working-age immigrants who were not students were unemployed. <sup>3</sup> (Statistics Finland: Employment Statistics)

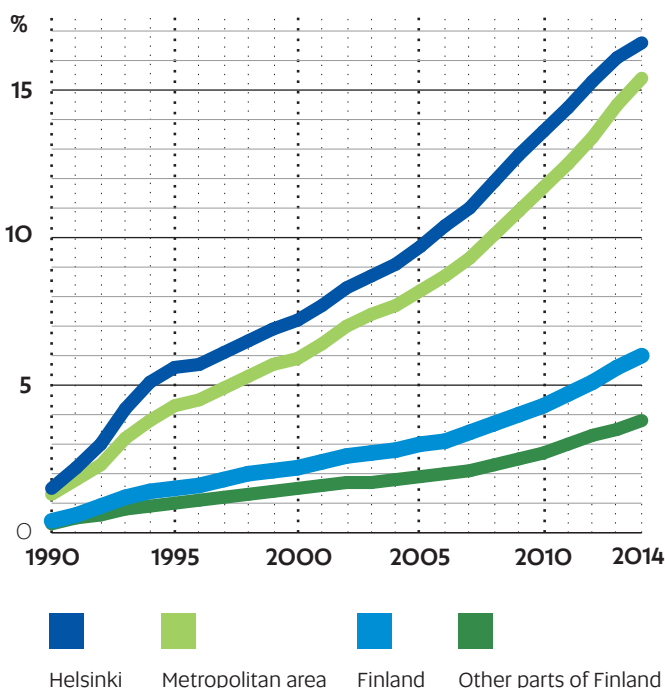
Many immigrant families have several children. OAJ opposes increasing daycare group sizes and limiting children's right to early childhood education. Daily, well planned and diverse early childhood education is especially important for children from immigrant backgrounds. Daily participation in a peer group at daycare develops their social skills and promotes learning.

Immigrants need more information on the significance of early childhood education. Social benefits related to child home care should not cause fewer children to participate in early childhood education. Parents who are taking care of their children at home with the child home care allowance need to be encouraged, instructed and educated about the significance of early childhood education.

### OAJ'S PROPOSALS

- Children's language skills must be taken into account when deciding about their right to full-time early childhood education.
- Group sizes must be adjusted so that children's participation and language acquisition and development can be supported.
- There is a requirement of two kindergarten teachers per daycare group at every daycare centre, as well as additional teachers of Finnish and Swedish as a second language at daycare centres that have many children from immigrant backgrounds.

### The number of immigrant children is growing



**Percentage of 4–16 year olds with a foreign language as their mother tongue in Finland over the period 1990–2014.**

Source: Statistics Finland: Population structure <sup>9</sup>

Ali goes to daycare. A teacher of Finnish as a second language works at the daycare. A different teacher comes regularly to teach Ali his own mother tongue.

# 3

## Developing language skills

**WEAK LANGUAGE SKILLS** in Finnish or Swedish are the primary cause of the social isolation of immigrants. Over 40 percent of pupils from immigrant backgrounds have mastered the language of teaching so poorly that it hinders their studies and completion of their basic education.

Teaching Finnish or Swedish as a second language (S2/R2) is not mandatory in basic education or in early childhood education and for this reason, practices vary. Many municipalities do not offer any S2/R2 instruction.

The size of the increased state subsidy for S2/R2 instruction in comprehensive schools and general upper secondary schools is insufficient in relation to the real cost. In early childhood education and in vocational upper secondary education S2/R2 instruction is not supported with state subsidies.

Current language level tests are not sufficient to properly assess the type of support each pupil needs. Tests are particularly important for those who came into the country as teenagers.

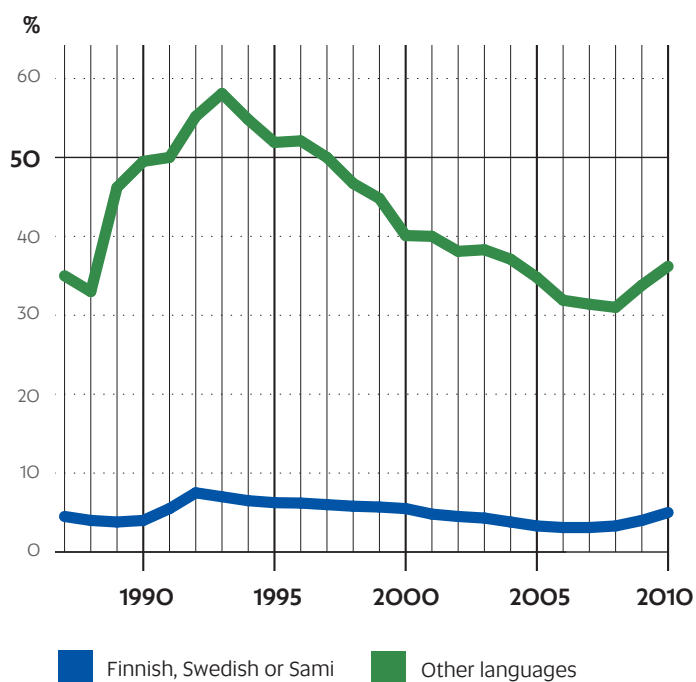
In basic education, children and youth are often transferred to groups where Finnish or Swedish is spoken as a mother tongue too soon without the necessary support. Very few Finnish teachers (class teachers and subject teachers) have been trained to teach the basics of a language. There is minimal opportunity to provide necessary support in a large group.

### OAJ'S PROPOSALS

→ Children, pupils and students who speak a language other than Finnish or Swedish as their mother tongue must be given the right to receive S2/R2 instruction starting in early childhood education until the end of upper secondary education.

→ Language proficiency tests must be developed by the Finnish National Board of Education for tools to help assess the language proficiency and identify the needs of pupils from different language and culture backgrounds in order to provide these pupils and students with instruction that corresponds with their language proficiency.

### A third of immigrant youth are socially isolated



**Percentage of socially isolated 15–29-year-olds by mother tongue.**

**Source: Statistics Finland: Employment Statistics. <sup>10</sup>**

Aisha's preparatory class lasts for a year and a half. She learns Finnish language and culture and also receives instruction in her mother tongue. Aisha makes new friends and slowly starts to feel at home in Finland.





## Mother tongue creates the foundation for learning

**RESEARCH** <sup>4</sup> has found that bilingualism makes learning foreign languages easier. It also supports learning in other subjects. Without mastering their own mother tongue, it is difficult for immigrant children to return to their country of origin even if they wanted to.

Skills in one's own mother tongue create a foundation for learning the majority language and for other learning. Everyone is entitled to their own mother tongue and culture. If the mother tongue ceases to develop, the child or youth might not completely learn any language.

Immigrants' mother tongues are not taught enough. Only one fifth of education providers offered instruction in immigrants' mother tongues in the autumn of 2013. In basic education, instruction was provided in a total of 54 languages. <sup>5</sup> In early childhood education, instruction in the mother tongue is provided even more rarely.

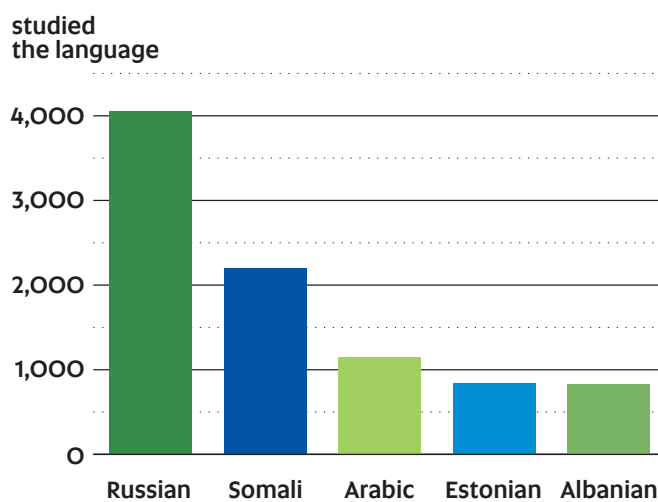
Teaching the mother tongue is challenging, because pupils' proficiency levels vary. Studying their own mother tongue doesn't appeal to all, because the lessons are usually scheduled for the beginning or the end of the school day and often in a location other than their own school.

### OAJ'S PROPOSALS

→ The goal is to provide instruction in the mother tongue from early childhood education until the end of upper secondary education.

→ Instruction in the mother tongue begins during pre-primary education in cooperation with early elementary education.

### Mother tongue instruction has been offered in Russian and Somali languages the most



*Students who received instruction in their own mother tongue during their basic education and upper secondary education in the autumn of 2012*

Source: OPH <sup>11</sup>



Aisha's parents participate in integration training. They learn Finnish and get to know the Finnish culture.



# 5

## Support is still needed during upper secondary education

**YOUTH FROM IMMIGRANT BACKGROUNDS** are generally much less likely to stay in general upper secondary schools than young people from Finnish backgrounds, and on average they end up being less educated than the original population.

Counselling is important when a young immigrant is thinking about their education opportunities in the future. An immigrant who ends up in a general upper secondary school might not know beforehand how demanding studying there is.

More and more students need support in their studies. Support for immigrants is especially important, because they also need to continue studying the language. In the General Upper Secondary Schools Act, no reference is made to special education, and many immigrants don't receive the necessary support in their studies.

Immigrants tend to be equally likely to apply for vocational education as people from Finnish backgrounds. In 2012, about 7 percent of all students in vocational education were immigrants.

A vocational teacher must know how students' cultural backgrounds should be taken into consideration. Additional training is also needed for this.

Immigrants are twice as likely to drop out of general and vocational upper secondary schools as the original population. <sup>6</sup> (Working papers 2/2014)

### OAJ'S PROPOSALS

- Instruction in Finnish or Swedish as a second language must be increased in general and vocational upper secondary schools.
- Group sizes in upper secondary education must be small enough to allow teachers to take account of the students' individual needs and backgrounds.
- General upper secondary school students must also be entitled to remedial education.
- Remedial education in vocational upper secondary schools must be reinforced.
- Students in general and vocational upper secondary education must have equal rights for support for their studies.



Immigrants are twice as likely to drop out of general and vocational upper secondary schools as the original population.

*Aisha turns 15 and begins school in the 8th grade. An individual study plan is made for her. Aisha is able to study in her school until she receives her final report and her knowledge and skill levels are high enough to enter the preparatory class for the general upper secondary school. Aisha starts to play basketball.*

*Aisha enters a preparatory class for the general upper secondary school for one year in a new school. She reinforces her Finnish language skills and completes two general upper secondary courses in mathematics. The preparatory class also has a qualified teacher.*





# 6

## More preparatory instruction is needed

**PREPARATORY INSTRUCTION** for basic education is intended for pupils whose Finnish or Swedish language skills and other abilities are not sufficient for studying in a pre-primary or basic education group. The goal is to promote the pupil's Finnish or Swedish language skills and integration into Finnish society and provide them with necessary abilities to transfer to basic education

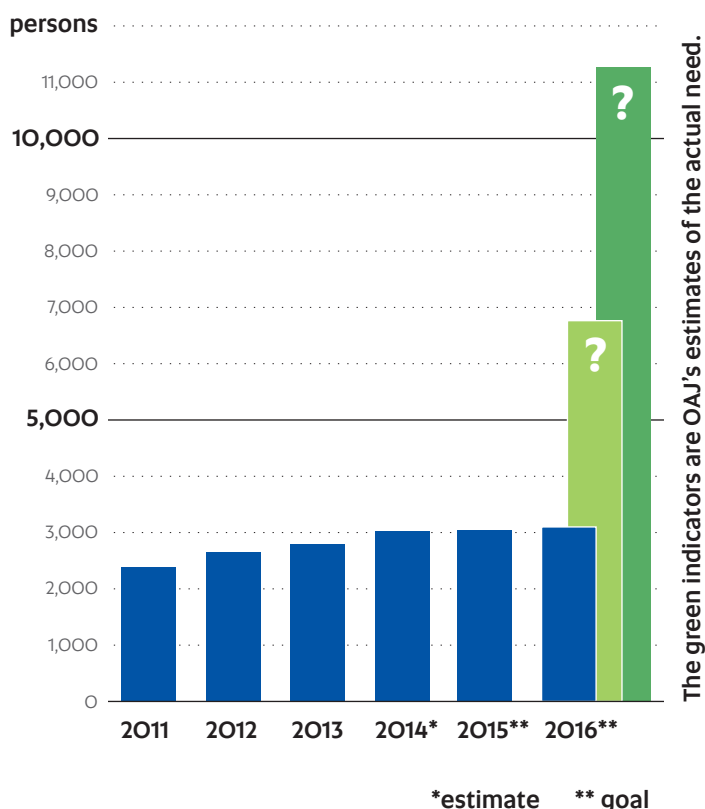
The number of students in preparatory instruction has nearly doubled since 2002. In 2013, 2,800 pupils participated in preparatory instruction. The need for instruction will grow with the refugee crisis as more underage asylum seekers arrive in Finland <sup>7</sup>. The need for preparatory instruction must be taken into account in the government budget and more funds must be allocated to municipalities for it.

School age and pre-primary education age children from immigrant backgrounds may be provided with instruction to prepare them for basic education, but municipalities are not obliged to organise it. The instruction's scope is a year's syllabus. In order for young people who arrived in Finland later to complete basic education, special attention and flexibility is required from the system.

### OAJ'S PROPOSALS

- Children and young people whose language proficiency is not sufficient to begin basic education or upper secondary education must be entitled to preparatory instruction.
- They must have the right to continue in the preparatory class for a period longer than a year until they have achieved the necessary abilities to participate in basic education or upper secondary education.
- Young people who arrived in Finland when they were older than 13 years old must be entitled to participate in basic education without being tied to age groups until they receive their final report.
- The number of young people without a final report from basic education must be counted in order to estimate the need for funding from the government.

### The need for preparatory instruction is hard to predict



**The number of participants in preparatory instruction and the estimate for the years 2014–2016. The estimated number of asylum seekers arriving in Finland in 2015 is 50,000. The need for preparatory instruction must be reassessed in the government budget as well.**

**Source: The government budgets for 2014–2016. <sup>12</sup>**

Aisha begins studies in a general upper secondary school, learns more and makes new friends. Her basketball friend Victoria has been participating in the preparatory instruction for vocational upper secondary studies and is admitted to the training programme for practical nursing.



## More multicultural skills for teachers

**TEACHERS NEED MORE AND MORE** multicultural skills in their work. These skills include understanding different cultures, providing teachers with the necessary abilities for working in a multicultural environment with people from different language and cultural backgrounds. Every teacher is also a language teacher.

Whether multicultural skills are taught in teacher education varies. The improvement of teachers' multicultural skills must be included in the development programme of teacher training entered in the government platform.

Teachers from immigrant backgrounds are also needed in schools and educational establishments. These teachers will function as links between the two cultures for pupils, teachers and parents in the cooperation between school and home.

Many immigrants apply for teacher training unsuccessfully, because admittance to the programme requires excellent proficiency in Finnish or Swedish. On the other hand, it is difficult to find qualified teachers for instruction in the immigrants' religion and mother tongue.

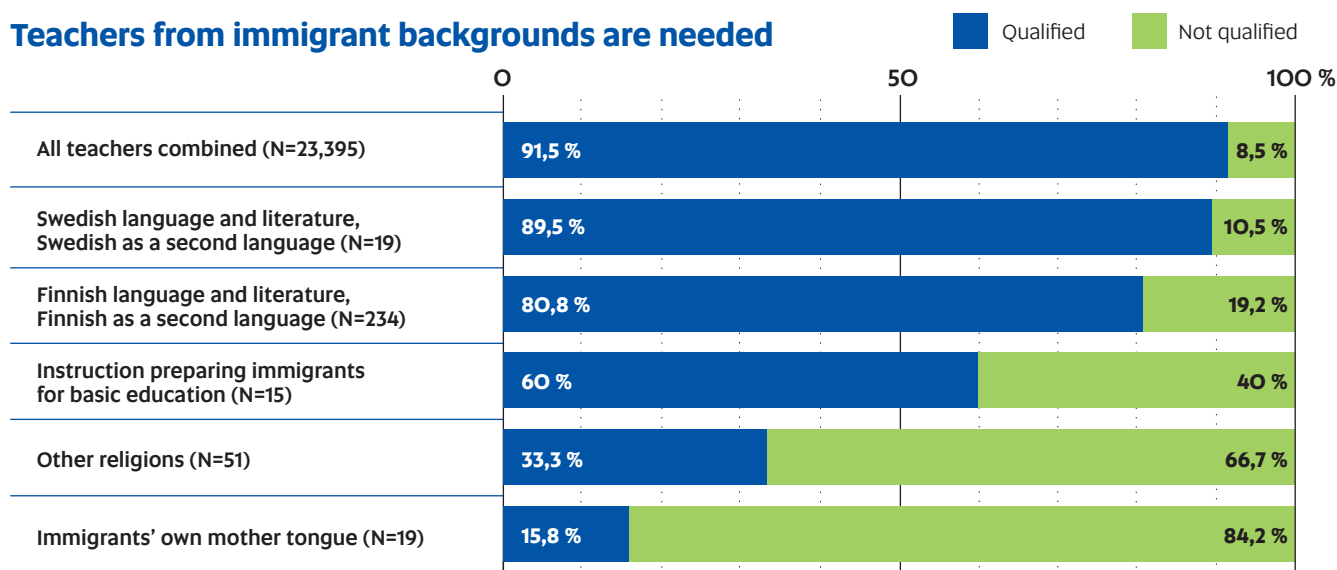
No qualification requirements have been set for teachers for basic education preparatory instruction. Some of the teachers haven't had any training in teaching Finnish or Swedish as a second language.

Not all immigrants have had the opportunity to attend school in their country of origin. Studying literacy in addition to studying the language is vital for them. Currently immigrants must wait too long for instruction.

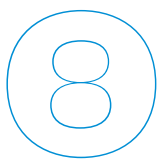
### OAJ'S PROPOSALS

- Multicultural skills need to be included in the mandatory curriculum of basic teacher training.
- Teachers' multicultural competence needs to be improved with additional education.
- All teachers who teach S2/R2 lessons or the preparatory syllabus must be provided with basic and additional education that gives them the necessary skills for the instruction.
- The question of how study places can be created and made more appealing to immigrants must be addressed in the development work of teacher education.
- The level of Nordic cooperation needs to be increased in teacher training.
- The competence training project Specima for teachers from immigrant backgrounds must be continued.
- Teachers in adult education must be trained to teach immigrants literacy.
- The amount of research into language consciousness and language learning must be increased in universities.

### Teachers from immigrant backgrounds are needed



Teachers with formal qualifications in the spring of 2013. Source: OPH 2014:8, Opettajat Suomessa. <sup>13</sup>



## Educated immigrants must be integrated into the labour market

**FOREIGN STUDENTS** in upper secondary schools and higher education institutes are the fastest-growing group of immigrants in Finland. One in every four highly educated immigrants is unemployed.

Currently, many working age and educated immigrants are arriving in Finland from Iraq, when previously they came from Russia, Estonia, Sweden and China, among other places. <sup>8</sup> (University of Helsinki 2014)

Immigrants' chances of being employed in Finland in their own field are low both for people with little education and for those with high education. Even if the arrivee had completed a degree from a higher education institution in their country of origin, it might not be recognised in the Finnish labour market.

Education and language skills promote employment. Two thirds of foreigners studying in Finland stay in Finland, but finding employment is difficult.

Educated immigrants are an important economic investment when they do become employed in Finland. Internships and skills in Finnish or Swedish are an essential part of finding employment.

Applying for a residence permit during studies and when searching for a job is complicated. Not enough instruction in Finnish or Swedish is given to students who come to Finland to complete a master's degree, which hinders their integration into the working life.

### OAJ'S PROPOSALS

→ The identification and recognition of skills that immigrants have acquired earlier must be made more flexible.

→ In addition to their degree studies, foreign students in higher education institutions must be provided with a year-long instruction programme (60 credits) in language and culture to ensure that they are able to qualify for the labour market.

→ Students who come from outside the EU and ETA countries must be granted a residence permit for the instruction programme.

→ Higher education students' residence permits and student benefits must support work-related immigration.

*Aisha's mother participates in the Specima competence training. An individual study plan is made for her, in which her earlier studies in her home country are credited. She becomes a teacher of her own mother tongue.*



*Aisha graduates from the general upper secondary school and is admitted to the university to study mathematics. She wants to become a teacher like her mother. At the university, Aisha is provided with a personal tutor who helps her and encourages her in her studies and everyday life.*



*Aisha's father was a dentist in their home country. He receives additional education and work in his field of profession. Aisha's mother has given birth to a son in Finland. She visits a nearby playground with him daily to learn Finnish and meet other mothers. Ali continues to attend early childhood education.*

# 9

## The right education track for everyone

**IMMIGRANTS FROM** very different backgrounds arrive in Finland. Previously, most immigrants came to Finland because of marriage or a partner. This autumn, thousands of asylum seekers fleeing the difficult conditions in their country have arrived in Finland. When they become customers of the TE Offices (Employment and Economic Activity Office), the services become even more congested.

The TE Office makes an initial assessment and the educational establishment makes a starting-level estimate to help direct the customer to the appropriate instruction group. The initial assessment is carried out by the TE Office or municipality before the integration plan. Now educational establishments often have to redo the assessment due to a lack of resources at the TE Offices.

Instruction and language proficiency assessments are already provided at many adult education establishments. Better use should be made of this facility.

In areas where integration is a new phenomenon, adult education teachers need additional education. 23 percent of adult education teachers are currently unemployed. This resource must be utilised in the integration of immigrants.

Many immigrants have participated in language training on their own instead of participating in the instruction organised by the TE Offices. <sup>8</sup> They are not provided with instruction services for studies and employment as systematically as TE customers. Adult education establishments could offer these people instruction and guidance for their studies and career.

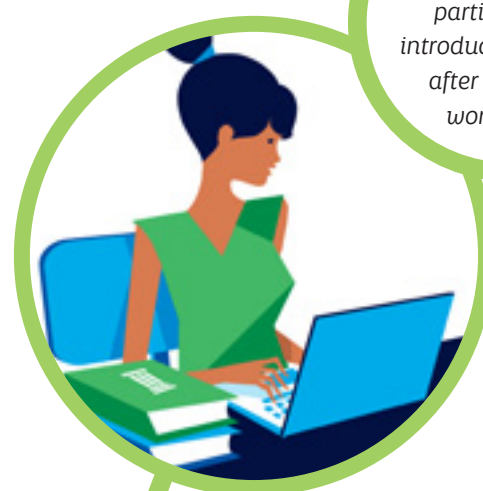
For many immigrants, the first link to Finnish society and education is the reception centre. Irrespective of which centre the immigrant is placed in, they should immediately receive instruction in the language and culture.

### OAJ'S PROPOSALS

- The congested situation at the TE Offices could be eased by asking the adult education establishments to get involved in arranging the instruction.
- Unemployed teachers or teachers at risk of unemployment are offered additional education so they can work as teachers and counsellors for immigrants.



Instruction and language proficiency assessments are already provided at many adult education establishments. Better use should be made of this facility.

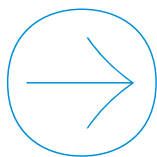


*Aisha graduates as a teacher and participates in introductory briefing after she enters working life.*

*In the evenings, Aisha and her mother study Finnish at a workers' institute.*



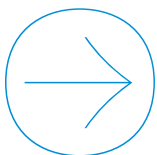
23 percent of adult education teachers are currently unemployed. This resource must be utilised in the integration of immigrants.



## What else should be done?

### OAJ'S PROPOSALS

- Multicultural parent meetings are organised for all families. International, independent organisations for migration, culture centres and youth departments are invited to become partners.
- Municipalities' interpreter services are increased for the sudden needs of administrative branches. Interpreters are used more widely to help parents and daycare personnel when early childhood education begins.
- Clubs in the immigrants' own mother tongue are organised as part of other morning and afternoon activities.
- Handouts on early childhood education and basic education are translated into different languages.
- Resource teachers are hired for early childhood education and basic education in areas with many immigrants.
- Compensation for demanding work is to be allocated to teachers in areas with many immigrants.
- Tutor-systems in higher education should be developed also for foreign students.
- New cooperation channels for teachers are created so that they can share their experiences and receive peer support.
- Meeting places for immigrants and original population are organised in cafes and libraries.



## How much does integration cost?

**IT IS DIFFICULT TO ESTIMATE** the resources that are needed for the training of immigrants. Preparatory instruction for basic education costs about 14,000–15,000 euros per year for each student. Early childhood education costs about the same amount. Integration training costs about 6,000–8,800 euros and instruction in literacy about 6,500 euros per person.

# Glossary

## **LITERACY TRAINING FOR ADULT IMMIGRANTS**

The goal is to learn basic verbal and written skills in Finnish or Swedish. The length of the training is determined by the goals set in the individual study plan.

## **PREPARATORY INSTRUCTION FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION**

It lasts for about a school year (60 credits). During the training, the abilities needed for transferring into vocational basic degrees are practised.

## **INTEGRATION**

Part of the work of many authorities working for the government and municipalities. The goal is to become familiar with societal rights and obligations and to develop a feeling of being a welcome member of Finnish society. Integration is governed by the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration. The Ministry of Employment and the Economy is responsible for preparing matters related to integration.

## **INTEGRATION EDUCATION**

Includes instruction in Finnish or Swedish language and other training that promotes the transfer of immigrants to working life and further education and promotes societal, cultural and life management abilities. The goal is to acquire working basic proficiency in Finnish or Swedish.

## **PREPARATORY INSTRUCTION FOR GENERAL UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION**

A year-long training programme intended for immigrants and other foreigners preparing for general upper secondary school (LUVA). Intended for people without sufficient language or other abilities to cope with studies in general upper secondary education.

## **INSTRUCTION IN MOTHER TONGUE**

Instruction in the mother tongue as a part of basic education that supports the development of the pupil's personal identity and mental balance. Lessons in their own mother tongue reinforce the connection with the pupil's cultural background and provide more information on their own culture.

## **PREPARATORY INSTRUCTION FOR BASIC EDUCATION**

Intended for all pre-primary and basic education aged children from immigrant backgrounds whose abilities are not sufficient for study in a basic education group. The instruction lasts for about a year.

## **INSTRUCTION IN FINNISH (S2) OR SWEDISH (R2) AS A SECOND LANGUAGE AND IN LITERATURE**

Develops the pupil's proficiency in Finnish or Swedish so as to enable them to study in Finnish or Swedish and function in a Finnish or Swedish speaking community.



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\* Source text available in Finnish only. Our translation.

OAJ emphasises that education is the best integration policy. Competent teachers want to work toward the goal of giving every person who arrives access to education and working life.



**ASK FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

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