

Labour market integration of displaced Ukrainians - Finland

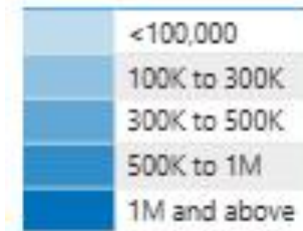
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European Network of Migration Councils
14.10.2024

The Number of persons under temporary protection in Finland

- Of all EU+ countries, approximately 1.5% temporary protection applications were registered in Finland.
- By the end of July 2024, Finland has received a total of **72 500 applications for temporary protection, which corresponds to ca. 1.3% of the country's population.** The number is high but manageable.
- For the time being, the number of Ukrainians arriving in Finland is estimated to either remain unchanged or decrease from the current situation (currently **8 000 applicants** in 2024).
- By the end of April 2024, **ca. 20 800 Ukrainians have become a resident of some municipality** with the same rights and obligations as other residents of the Finnish municipalities. According to Finnish law, this is possible - if you wish to do so - after one year of legal stay in the country.

Refugees from Ukraine recorded by country



Labour market integration of Ukrainians in numbers

- Ukrainians receiving temporary protection are entitled to work and study in Finland immediately after applying for temporary protection.
- Only some of the Ukrainians have found employment, primarily in entry-level jobs such as cleaning and seasonal agricultural work.
- July 2024, of all the persons receiving temporary protection, some **10 800** were wage earners (approximately 15%). Employment has been concentrated in sectors with a labour shortage, including agriculture and construction.
- As of April 2024, **11 900 Ukrainians** were registered as jobseekers, with **5 600** of them participating in various training programs.



A) What are the main challenges in dealing with refugees'/ asylum seekers'/ temporarily protected Ukrainians' job market integration? 1/2

Main challenges:

- Ukrainians are randomly distributed across the country. The local economic structure and job opportunities do not optimally match the newcomers' skills. This is most pressing in rural areas; in big cities it is more insignificant.
- It is difficult to get a job other than performing work due to the lack of language skills (Finnish, Swedish and/or English). Also, the Finnish labour market has a weak readiness to employ immigrants. For example, the strict language skills requirements reflect this.
- Identifying skills and transferring them to the labour market is slow. In Finland, work is often specialized, and skills are precisely defined and regulated. The competence and work experience of Ukrainians is often defined broadly, and it is difficult to transfer it as it is to our working life. Many would need either short additional training or completely new education. Here, too, the lack of language skills is often a challenge.

A) What are the main challenges in dealing with refugees'/ asylum seekers'/ temporarily protected Ukrainians' job market integration? 2/2

Possible consequences :

- A possible vulnerable position in the labour market. The number of Ukrainians doing manual work is now large here. Since labour can be replaced easily and is abundantly available, employments are often insecure and short, which produces economic uncertainty. Since they have almost no other options, employers can demand more and push working conditions into a “grey area”. So far, this has not happened much in Finland.
- A low-wage job does not bring a financial advantage compared to the received social beneficiaries (e.g. reception allowance). The result is a reluctance to do these jobs. However, this is also an advantage: Now the time can be used to learn Finnish, which improves one’s position on the labour market.
- If Ukrainians remain in a weak or vulnerable position in our labour market, human capital and potential will remain unused. This is a loss for both Ukrainians and Finland. In the future, this will also affect the status of Ukrainians as an ethnic minority in Finland.

B) How does the application of the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) in the EU states impact labour market integration, vis-à-vis other refugees/asylum applicants.

- The TPD enables an immediate, unrestricted right to work. Other refugees/asylum applicants, before they have a decision on asylum, have a very restricted right to work here. Therefore, Ukrainians could integrate into our labour market much faster than refugees/asylum applicants.
- The most positive effect of TPD has been that Ukrainians have been very integration- and labour market -oriented since the day one. Instead, other refugees/asylum applicants must wait for an asylum decision for an indefinite period and as a result often lose sight of their future.
- Paradoxically, TPD also strengthens a weak labour market position. TPD is granted for a certain period, which creates uncertainty about the continuity of the right to stay in the country and pushes Ukrainians to make bad short-term choices in the labour market. Education (language, new profession) is seen as a risk because it takes longer to achieve than the TPD period. Ukrainians strive for right to stay in the country by accepting any available job (often unfavourable for them), because work-based residence permit is perceived more reliable basis for staying in the country than TPD.

C) Lessons learned from the first two years after Ukrainian migration in 2022?

From the point of Finnish immigration policy, TPD has been a bold policy experiment that has shown positive results:

- TPD showed that in a situation of large-scale immigration, light and less regulated operating methods can be more efficient and produce better results than before. For example, the fact that Ukrainians were not placed in institutional reception centres. They were settled in apartments provided by the local municipalities (under the supervision of the centres) and they could immediately join the social communities. This has greatly supported social integration into Finnish society.
- TPD's strong social and labour market orientation has been reflected in the integration of Ukrainians. Unlike other refugees/asylum applicants, they have not been left to wait for the decisions of the bureaucratic apparatus but have been able to search for opportunities on their own initiative.
- Although the TPD has been a positive and bold policy experiment in many ways, it has not solved the practical challenges related to labour market integration. Acquiring language skills and moving their professional skills to the Finnish labour market is still slow and requires practical solutions.

The key problem is that TPD is only a temporary solution. A long-term plan regarding Ukrainian war refugees is still completely missing from the activities of both the European Union and Finland.

About Us

- The Migration Institute of Finland (established 1974) is the only institute in Finland specialising in both the research and documentation of migration flows. We are a national actor, and most of our work takes place in Finland but, in terms of expatriate Finns, our operating area covers the whole world.

Dr, Associate Professor Markku Mattila

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- **Google Scholar:** <https://scholar.google.fi/citations?hl=fi&pli=1&user=q5N8afsAAAAJ>
- Mattila has studied immigration, especially to rural areas. Key publications include:
 - *Alueellinen resilienssi ja työperusteinen maahanmuutto: Kasvihuoneteollisuuden ulkomainen työvoima Närpiön seudulla* [Regional Resilience and Work-Based Immigration: Foreign Workforce in the Greenhouse Industry in the Närpes Region]. Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö (2023)
 - Company Values Guiding the Recruitment of Employees with a Foreign Background. *Baltic Journal of Management*, 14:4 (2019), 658–675
 - *Onneen ei ole oikotietä tässä maassa: Kauhava ja Kauhavan vastaanottokeskus* [There is no Short Cut to Happiness in This Country: Kauhava Municipality and Kauhava Reception Centre]. Siirtolaisuusinstituutti (2017)
 - *Etelä-Pohjanmaan maahanmuuttajat*. [The Southern Ostrobothnia immigrants] Siirtolaisuusinstituutti (2011)

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We have concluded one research project on Ukrainian TPDs in Finland (Settling in, 2 publications, see next slide) and are currently working on another (Proper and fair employment) and yet another (Ukrainians in the province accepting refugees: Experience, cultural memory and receptivity in South Ostrobothnia).

Recently published material:

On the settlement of Ukrainians in Finland

<https://shorturl.at/D1S7a>



Policy recommendations for increasing resilience in the case of large-scale immigration (in Finnish, but easy to translate with modern tools)

<https://shorturl.at/R80pu>



Thank you!