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FRENCH EXPATRIATE FAMILY ADJUSTMENT DURING THE  
OL3-PROJECT

Degree Programme in International Business  
and Marketing Logistics  
2011

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Degree Programme in International Business and Marketing Logistics

March 2011

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Number of pages: 56

Number of appendices: 8

Key words: expatriation, cross-cultural training, culture shock, adjustment, repatriation

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The construction of OL3 nuclear power plant in Eurajoki started in 2004. Since then the increasing internationality and the expatriate families have challenged Rauma region. Along these years, hundreds of expatriates have had their residence in Rauma and consequently, the town has had to provide these families the basic services.

This thesis looks into the expatriate life from the family point of view. The success of expatriation mainly depends on the family and its ability to adapt to the new life, environment and culture. The expatriation of an unhappy family unable to adapt to the new environment can have a premature ending. Life of an expatriate employee and his adaptation to the new environment has been studied before, but unfortunately the families have been left without attention.

Cultural dimensions help in understanding why people behave or see things differently. With Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions, the differences between Finland and France are explored in the theoretical part of this thesis. Also the basic terms related to expatriation and the different research methods are studied in the theoretical part.

The empirical part of this thesis can be roughly divided into two main topics: expatriate families' thoughts and feedback, and the host town Rauma. The sixth chapter focuses on the families and their experiences; it explores how well the families were involved, which were the reasons for accepting a foreign assignment, and the differences and problems faced during the expatriation. The seventh chapter looks more closely into the town's performance, efforts and challenges.

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used for the empirical part. In late 2010, 32 families replied to an online survey which purpose was to find out among other things the families' challenges, worries and impressions. In March 2011 two expatriate mothers were interviewed in order to get deeper information. In addition, representatives from Bouygues Travaux Publics, town of Rauma and Adult Education Centre were contacted via email.

The research results revealed that the expatriates faced similar problems during their expatriation and did not get proper training before the expatriation. However, the expatriates were quite satisfied with the town. The town identified its biggest challenges and it should now allocate resources to overcome the difficulties.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Before going to France for my exchange student year in autumn 2008, I had the chance to learn a lot about culture shock and cultural differences. At that time, I was sure that I would not go through any of the related emotions or feelings during my stay abroad – after all, I was eager to go abroad and ready leave Finland even for good. To my surprise, I soon started noticing different kind of reactions related to the new environment and identified cultural differences between my own and the host country despite the fact that both of the countries are European and well developed. Once I was one with the culture and had settled down in the host country, I knew that for me the hardest part would be the re-entry in Finland. Even one year can have a major impact on how we feel, think and act.

I soon started wondering what the expatriate families go through, because even I as a young open minded single person went through all this. The idea for this thesis was born in autumn 2009.

There have been studies made about expatriate workers. Unfortunately, these studies do not take into consideration the expatriate's family. In summer 2004 the construction of a nuclear power plant, OL3, in Olkiluoto began. The OL3 is being implemented on a turnkey basis by the French-German consortium formed by AREVA NP and Siemens AG. This consortium uses a large number of subcontractors but the main subcontractor is the French Bouygues Travaux Publics. I have worked for this French subcontractor since November 2009 and have had the pleasure to meet and to get to know many expatriates and their families.

In September 2009 I contacted Jaakko Pullinen from Teollisuuden Voima Oyj. He found my ideas very interesting and was willing to help with the organization of the interviews and getting in contact with the right people. Still he felt that the subject would be more suitable and beneficial for example for the local Chamber of Commerce. Moreover, I contacted by telephone Areva's Human Resource Manager

who said that the company was not interested in a thesis that did not concern engineering.

After the more or less negative but encouraging replies, I contacted Maria Perrakoski and Jaakko Hirvensalo from the Chamber of Commerce. In October 2009, I had a meeting with the two of them and they were also willing to help me as much as possible – yet, the Chamber of Commerce was not interested in acting as the main client of the thesis. In their opinion, the subject was more beneficial for the town of Rauma. In October 2009, I contacted Paula Pullinen, Head of Culture Department (kulttuuripäällikkö) at the time. She discussed about my proposal within the organization and they were trying to find a service or sector which could be the client of the thesis. In the end of October 2009 I was still waiting for a confirmation and in the beginning of November 2009 Kaarina Nurmi, Research Manager (Tutkimuspäällikkö), contacted me saying that she could try to see if there are any chances for me to do my thesis for the town.

In November 2009 I started my new job in Olkiluoto, at Bouygues Travaux Publics. My manager told me that he would try to see if he could find a topic for my thesis in case I was willing to change my topic. Time passed by and in February 2010 I was still in the same situation: the thesis subject was still not decided. We agreed with my manager that I would try to do my thesis about the initial subject and that the company could forget about finding a subject for me.

In February 2010 the topic was finally decided on and the work got started without any actual client.

The subject of my thesis became even more important and current during its writing. Teollisuuden Voima Oyj submitted its Decision-in-Principle application for the construction of a fourth nuclear power plant unit at Olkiluoto to the Finnish Government in 2008. The Council of State gave OL4 Decision-In-Principle in May 2010 and this positive decision was ratified by Parliament in July 2010. (Teollisuuden Voima Oyj, 2010.)

Olkiluoto is situated in the municipality of Eurajoki, which is located close to Rauma. The OL3 project brought thousands of foreign workers and the families of some to a new country with a different culture. A big part of these families have lived and built their “new lives” in Rauma. This thesis explores how the families of the expatriate employees have experienced their stay in Finland.

These expatriates are people with same needs as any Finnish person or family. The goal of this thesis was to identify the possible problems, difficulties, and surprises – positive as well as negative – that the families have faced during their stay in Finland. These families are in a key role when finding out how the town of Rauma has succeeded in welcoming these new inhabitants.

The main purpose of the study was to give feedback, improvement suggestions and ideas for the town of Rauma in order to do well when the OL4 is built in Olkiluoto. If no one asks these families what kind of problems or difficulties they may have had during their stay in Finland, how can we do better the next time or even during this project as it is not yet finished? It is important to show the families that they are important and someone cares about them and their opinions. It is not yet known which company and from which country will the main contractor be for the next nuclear power plant but in any case, it is obvious that the project will once again bring a great number of foreign workers to the Satakunta region.

## 2 RESEARCH PROBLEMS

Very often it is the actual worker, the expatriate employee, who gets training before going abroad for the expatriation. This study found out the following:

- how the family members were prepared for the changes they were going to face abroad
- whether they got any kind of training at all before leaving abroad

- what kind of problems the families have experienced and were they related to culture

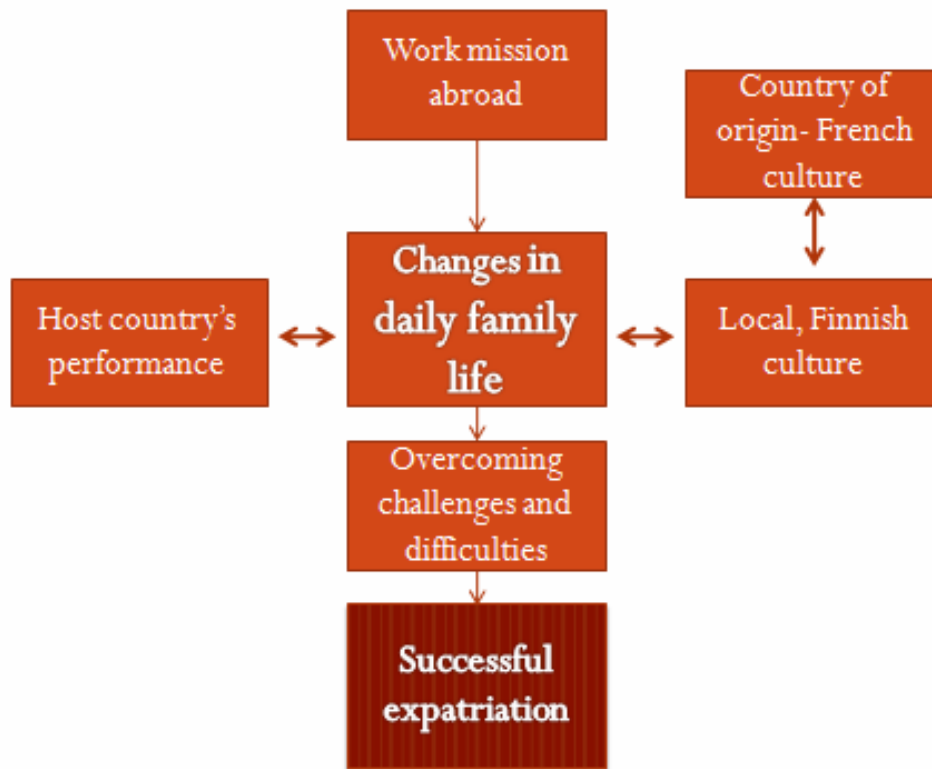


Figure 1. Family life adaptation to life abroad.

The expatriate family is sent abroad for a mission, which length might be unknown. Moving to another country makes the everyday life more challenging as the support network from home is no longer there. The family has to adapt to the new culture and still keep their own identity and roots, integrate themselves to the new society and reorganize daily life. Going to school or super market is no longer as easy as in the country of origin. The host country's support and performance can make a big difference in this experience.

If the family is able to overcome the challenges and problems in the foreign country, the mission abroad is most likely to turn out to be a successful one. If the challenges are too great to overcome the expatriation is likely to end in a failure or have a premature ending. The conceptual frame work was created by the writer of the thesis. (Figure 1)

The training prepares the families in advance for the difficulties or challenges that they might face during their mission. Identifying the problems that the families have experienced and whether these problems were culture related is very important. Once the main issues have been identified, it is easier to find ways to solve the problems and improve them. Everyone who goes to live abroad surely has expectations: after a while spent in the host country, the families are able to say if their expatriation has gone better or worse than expected.

The families are the ones who have dealt with the everyday life in the foreign country, and they are able to give their opinion about the host town's support and services. It is indeed the families who are able to give suggestions and feedback to the town of Rauma. The mothers of expatriate families gave their opinion about Rauma's success or possible non failure as host.

The theoretical part of this thesis takes a closer look at Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions, which aim at explaining the cultural differences between the Finnish and French societies. It is also important for the reader of this thesis to learn what the expatriation is really about. The expatriation process, its different phases, challenges and possible turn outs are described in the theoretical part.

For some families the mission in Finland was not the first foreign mission. These families were able to compare this experience to their previous ones. If they felt that the experiences were mostly positive, they could possibly identify the keys to this success. If the experience did not correspond to the expectations, the families were capable of pointing out what could have been done, and who could have helped them in order to change this experience towards a positive one.

These research problems are answered from a family life point of view in the empirical part of this thesis. The families, who participated in the survey as well as the two interviewees, were French. At least one of the families' parents needed to be French and the spouse should have lived in France for a longer time. Also women who have no children but who have followed their husbands or spouses to Finland were included in the survey. The online survey was sent to the wives of expatriates who mostly worked for Areva or Bouygues Travaux Publics. These expatriates are



usually white collar employees who have relatively high positions in the company: managerial, supervisor or other level.

The town of Rauma has had to take actions because of the expatriate families. I contacted by email Kaarina Nurmi who works as Research Manager (tutkimuspäällikkö) at the town of Rauma. She then contacted each department in order to find out the challenges faced and the actions taken by the town. Also the Head of Language Department of Rauma Adult Education Centre, Heli Kajaala, was contacted via email. These people were contacted after the analysis of the survey results was done.

### 3 HOFSTEDE'S CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

People in different cultures behave differently. When one is aware of the cultural differences, it is possible to avoid problems and to work and adapt more efficiently. (Hofstede 2001, xix.) Expatriates learn in advance what kind of cultural differences will make the working and business more challenging but who tells the families what is waiting for them once they arrive to their destination?

Geert Hofstede has done research on cultures to enable people to interact with people in other countries. It is said, that if these differences are understood and taken into account, the level of frustration, anxiety, and concern can be reduced. (Hofstede 2001, xx.)

Geert Hofstede's model of Cultural Dimensions (Figure 2) describes five different kind of cultural differences and value perspectives between national cultures. There are differences in power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, achievement vs. nurturing (masculinity vs. femininity), uncertainty avoidance and long-term vs. short-term orientation. These differences can be analyzed to understand the behavior and variation of work-related cultural differences. (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010, 31; Hofstede 1991, 14; Sinkkonen 2009, 57; Skierlo 2007, 27.)

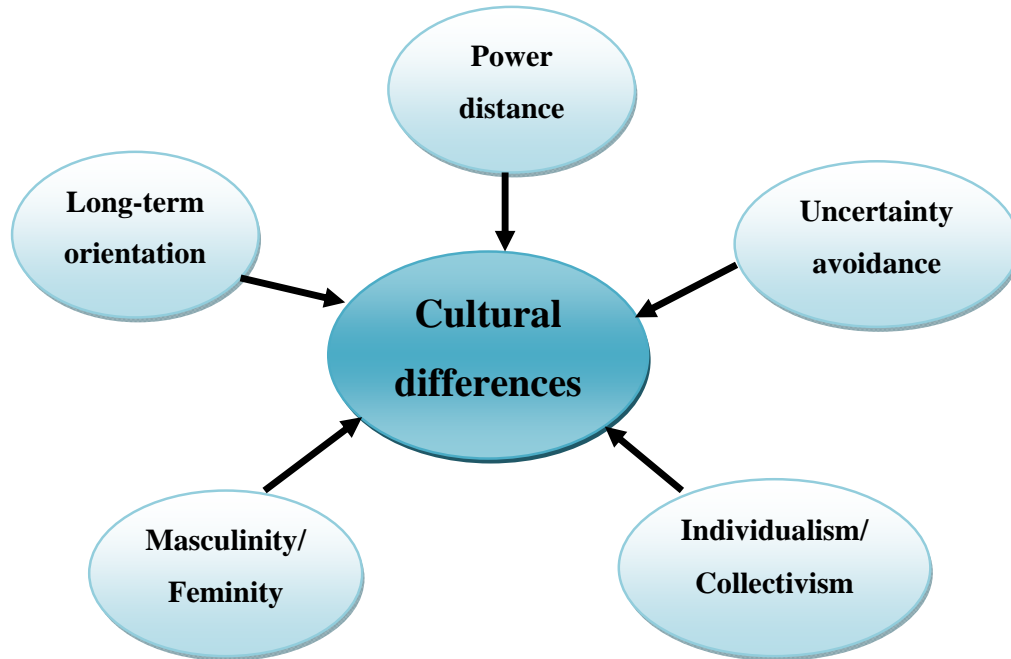


Figure 2. Geert Hofstede's model of Cultural Dimensions. (Hofstede 2001, xix-xx; Hofstede et al. 2010, 31)

*Power distance* means the degree to which the population of a country considers inequality normal between people. Low power distance means that the power is equally distributed and everyone has equal rights. It also tends to favor personal responsibility and autonomy. Then again if power distance is high, some people have more power than others. A high power distance culture prefers hierarchical bureaucracies, strong leaders and a high regard for authority. In Nordic countries power distance is often low and due to that for example Finnish workers have the need to be equal and they do not accept to be bossed around. (Hofstede 1991, 24-47; Sinkkonen 2009, 59; Skierlo 2007, 33-5.)

Figure 3 illustrates the differences between the French and Finnish societies and their value perspectives.

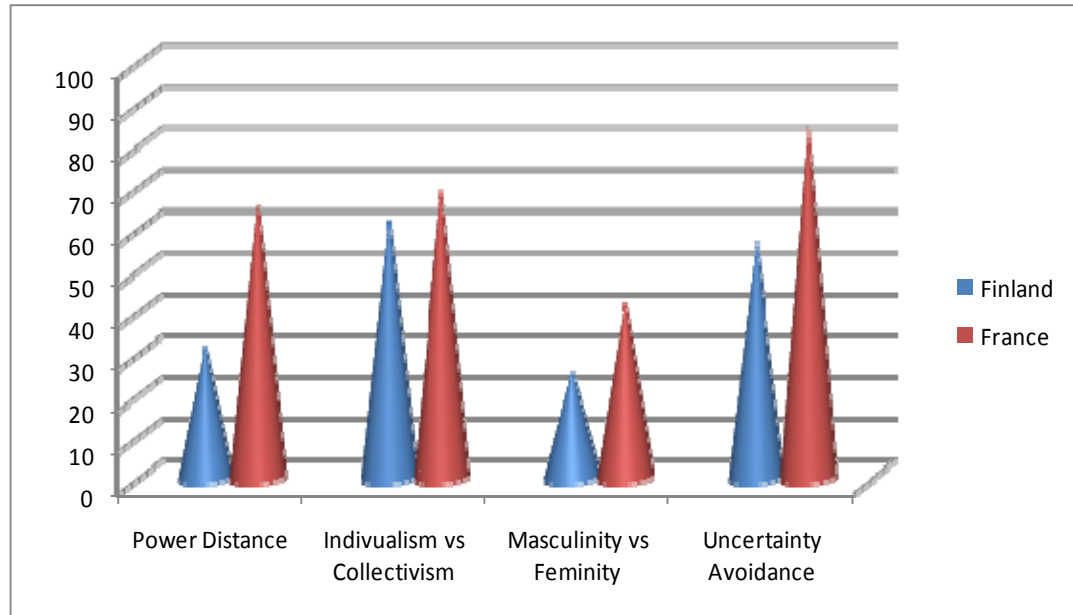


Figure 3. Cultural dimensions – Finland vs. France. (Itim International 2009.)

In Finland the power distance is much lower than in France. This basically means that the Finns distribute power more equally and everyone has equal rights. In Finland, people are responsible for their actions and have autonomy. In France the power distance is extremely high and it is acceptable that some have more power than others. France is much known for its hierarchical organizations and bureaucracy. (Hofstede 1991, 26.)

***Individualism versus collectivism*** refers to the degree to which people feel that they need to take care of their families and the organizations they belong to and base their actions on self-interest versus the interests of the group. Also, to which extent they should stand up for themselves and act as individuals and not as team members. In an individualistic culture, free will is highly valued. In a collective culture, personal needs are less important than the group's needs. (Hofstede 1991, 49-78; Sinkkonen 2009, 64; Skierlo 2007, 28-31.)

Both the French and the Finns are more individualistic than collectivistic. Yet, in France people are more self-centered than in Finland and they tend to emphasize mostly their individual goals. People from individualistic cultures tend to think only

of themselves as individuals and as “I” distinctive from other people. Finns are more team spirited. (Hofstede 1991, 75.)

***Achievement versus nurturing*** (masculinity versus femininity) measures the society’s goal orientation. Achievement means the degree to which people value money, position, material goods and competition. This refers to tough masculine society. Nurturing refers how much people value human relations, feelings, quality of life and the well being of others. Nurturing can be seen as feminine. (Hofstede 1991, 79-108; Sinkkonen 2009, 66; Skierlo 2007, 32-33.)

Both France and Finland are mostly feminine. However, the French are seen as more goal oriented than the Finns. For them their position, competition and wage are a bit more important than for the modest Finns. The French society is not masculine but the Finnish is more feminine. Finnish people value more the quality of life and relationships. (Hofstede 1991, 84.)

***Uncertainty avoidance*** means whether people prefer structured or unstructured situations and whether the individuals require set boundaries and clear structures or not. Cultures with low uncertainty avoidance allow individuals to cope better with risk and innovation. Unstructured situations are surprising, and one is not prepared for them as they are unknown and different from usual situations. These situations can cause stress, nervousness and aggressiveness. Some cultures try to cope with anxiety by minimizing uncertainty. Cultures with high uncertainty avoidance prefer rules about food and religion, structured situations. This kind of culture emphasizes a higher level of standardization and greater job security. (Hofstede 1991, 109-138; Sinkkonen 2009, 69-70; Skierlo 2007, 35-36.)

Finns are less worried about unstructured situations and do not really demand boundaries. The French prefer more clear structures and the degree of uncertainty avoidance is high. Still the uncertainty avoidance is not like in the Japanese culture. (Hofstede 1991, 113.)

The last one is time orientation: ***long-term versus short-term orientation***. In long-term orientation, the values are oriented towards the future and saving and

persistence are usual. In short-term orientation, the value is on past and present. Respect for traditions, reciprocation of gifts and favors and fulfilling social obligations is important. Hofstede added this fifth dimension afterwards. This dimension was applied to 23 countries and unfortunately, neither Finland nor France is included among these countries. (Hofstede 1991, 159-173; Skierlo 2007, 37-38.)

In my experience, French people are very much generous and invite people to eat, do favors and give gifts. If one has been invited to someone's house, the counter invitation must be done without a delay. A Finn can have dinner at another's house without feeling obliged to invite the other.

Studying these cultural dimensions makes it easier to understand cultural differences and why people think, feel and act differently in different countries and cultures. Both knowledge and empathy is needed to succeed in a diverse environment and with different kind of people. (Hofstede 2001, xix.)

## 4 EXPATRIATION

### 4.1 Preparation and training

“An expatriate is a citizen of one country who is working in another country.” (Hill 2005, 623)

In my opinion, it is important to make a clear difference between an expatriate and an immigrant. An expatriate comes to the host country for a certain amount of time and to work. He or she has every intention to leave one day and return to the country of origin or leave for a new destination. An immigrant comes to a country to take up permanent residence. The immigrants might come to a new country to look for a better life, work or simply to escape a war or danger that threatens their lives in the country of origin.

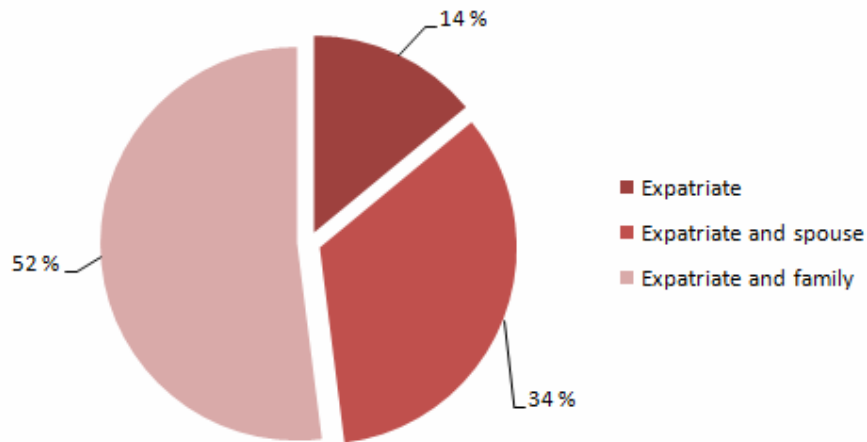


Figure 4. A portrait of today's expatriates. (Adler 2008, 275.)

Due to this, I feel that the town should have a separate strategy for the immigrants and expatriates. Their basic needs are of course the same but the reason for their stay Rauma is very different.

According to a study made by a professor of International Management Nancy J. Adler, most expatriates are married men. Her study's target was the American audience and the goal was to enable U.S. managers to see the business world from a global perspective. The married men represent 55 to 66 percent of the expatriates (Figure 4). The single men are the second biggest group. The latest accurate information about married expatriates being accompanied by their spouses or spouses and families is from 2003. That year 86 percent of the men had their spouses come abroad with them. The same year, 51 percent of married expatriates had their families come along. (Adler 2008, 275.)

The expatriates can benefit from intercultural training and learning when they need to manage cultural issues. It is extremely important to include the spouse or even the whole family in cultural training and support programs in order to avoid expatriate failure. (Simons 2002, 132; Harzing, & Van Ruysseveldt 2007, 274.)

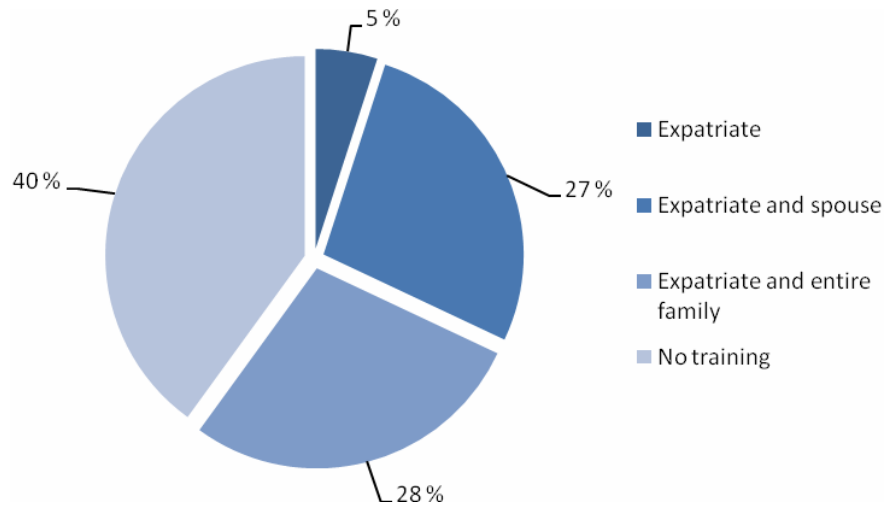


Figure 5. Companies offering training pre-expatriation. (Adler 2008, 275.)

However, only 60 percent of the companies offer some sort of cross-cultural training before the departure (Figure 5). Sadly, only 28 percent of the companies offering training offer it also to the worker's family and 27 percent only to the spouse. Five percent give the training only for the expatriate. (Adler 2008, 275.)

The family should find as much information as possible about the host country in advance. Learning together about the country, its history, geography, climate, politics, economics, and religion will help once the expatriates arrive to the host country. (Reuvid 2007, 167; Hill 2005, 629.)

It is believed that the companies, which offer language training to their expatriates and their families, improve their workers' effectiveness. This also enables the families to relate more easily to a foreign culture. Practical training helps the families in the day-to-day life in the host country. The quicker the families are able to establish the routine, the better are the prospects of the successful expatriation and adjustment. (Hill 2005, 629.)

The French company called Bouygues Travaux Publics (BYTP) is the company that built the reactor building of the nuclear power plant in Olkiluoto. This company has workers from several countries and since 2005, and Julien Biet who works for BYTP

as Administration and Finance Manager stated in this email of 25<sup>th</sup> of November 2010 that more than 200 expatriates have worked on this project for Bouygues. 16 percent of these expatriates have had at some point of their mission a family status. As an employee of this company, I have to state that at least currently most of the expatriates working for this company are young single men who do not have yet their own families.

#### 4.2 Culture shock

The term culture shock refers usually to the unpleasant experience that can be experienced when coming into contact with other cultures. The culture shock is a part of the adaptation phase and it has no negative intentions. It is expatriates' normal reaction when they face something unpredictable, unknown or foreign, and they have no indication of future success. (Browaeyns & Price 2008, 173; Skierlo 2007, 51-52; Sinkkonen 2009, 79-80.)

The expatriates lack an interpretation system based on the local culture and due to that they are forced to inappropriately and ineffectively use their home cultures' interpretive systems when they first come face to face with the new culture. It is important to notice that every member of the family experiences culture shock when adjusting to the new country. Actually, it is often the spouse who is more affected than the employee. (Adler 2008, 278-282.)

Physical differences, such as the cold weather, the humidity or the different nature, might be the cause of the experienced culture shock. The biggest reasons for culture shock are still connected to change of home, friends, job, lifestyle, loss of or separation from the marital partner. (Reuvid 2007, 163.)

Everyone can experience culture shock differently but the general symptoms are heightened anxiety and worry, feelings of isolation and helplessness, and a poor performance at work (Reuvid 2007, 165; Skierlo 2007, 56; Sinkkonen 2009, 81-82).



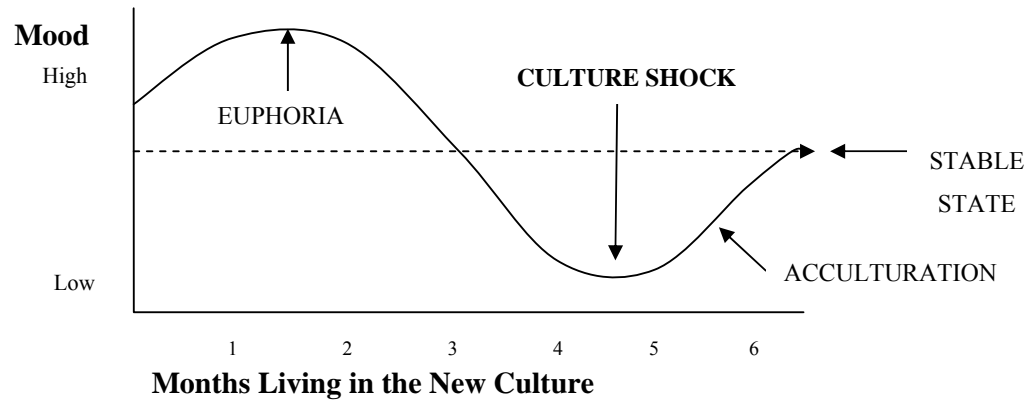


Figure 6. Culture Shock Cycle. (Modified. Adler 2008, 278; Skierlo 2007, 53; Hofstede 2001, 426)

The acculturation curve (Figure 6) demonstrates the cross-cultural adjustment to a country. The adjustment can be described with a U-shape. In the beginning of the expatriation the feelings are mostly positive and the expatriates are excited to get to know the new culture and explore the country. This initial phase is often followed by the period of disillusionment during which unknown is no more exciting. The honeymoon is finally over. (Adler 2008, 277; Sinkkonen 2009, 74-76.)

The lowest point of the curve is where the expatriate suffers from a culture shock. After the culture shock the adapting, acculturation, to the new culture begins. The adaptation starts usually after five months. Along the adaptation the expatriate gets back the positive feelings and the motivation to work more efficiently. (Adler 2008, 277; Sinkkonen 2009, 77-79.)

The adaptation is a continuing process and it lasts for the whole time spent in the host country (Schell & Solomon 2009, 325). Culture shock should be seen as a positive sign as it means that the expatriate has become deeply involved in the new culture. The other option is that the expatriate remains isolated and does not want to adapt to the new situation. (Adler 2008, 278.)

### 4.3 Adjustment

Adjusting to living and working abroad is not easy or simple. After three or six months in the host country the expatriates try to start living a normal life in order to escape the most severe level of culture shock. They learn to interpret the culture and the locals and begin to understand what is considered important or meaningful in the host country. The expatriates have to learn to appreciate the cultural differences and manage to solve day-to-day problems. This way they can overcome the culture shock. (Adler 2008, 280.)

No matter to which country an expatriate is posted, she or he will have to make some adjustment to life overseas. Every member of an expatriate's family will be affected by these changes. (Reuvid 2007, 163.)

The challenges in settling into a new place include organizing schooling for the children, sorting out a home and the daily basics, and supporting a partner through the early stages of a new job. The non-working parent has to integrate into the new society and create a social network for the children, and for her or himself and the partner. The families have to adjust to work, and also to interact with host country nationals and to living conditions in the host country, which might be very different from the ones at home. (Harzing & Van Ruysseveldt 2007, 271; Reuvid 2007, 103.)

Expatriate adjustment has two phases: the anticipatory adjustment and the in-country adjustment. The anticipatory adjustment can have an important positive impact on in-country adjustment. This is affected by cross-cultural training and previous international experience. Cross-cultural training helps to create accurate expectations about the future expatriation. If the expectations are accurate, the expatriate family is likely to have a lower level of uncertainty, fewer surprises and a lower level of culture shock. (Harzing & Van Ruysseveldt 2007, 271.)

Companies often make a big effort to ensuring the new expatriate family is quickly integrated into the expatriate community if it exists in the host country. The expatriate community can be a source of support, help and information when the new

family is adapting to a foreign country and trying to overcome culture shock. The families which have arrived earlier are most likely to have struggled with the same challenges and worries that the new families face. (Hill 2005, 629.)

The local expatriate community can be very supportive but still, it is not good to restrict one to expatriate circles and not to get to know with the locals. It might be easier for the expatriates to get to know locals who have some contact to the expatriate's country of origin. Some local people might have lived or studied in the country, speak the language or just in general are curious and culturally open minded. (Jones 2001, 102.)

Expatriation is a way of life to some people. This means that the families move often and try to live as normal life as possible wherever they are. Expatriation is becoming more and more usual, especially in Europe. Maybe the children of expatriates who have grown up and been educated in several different cultures are the first ones experiencing the future culture. The children feel like they are at home where ever they are living but they do not really feel like they belong anywhere. (Simons 2002, 132-133.)

#### 4.3.1 Failed expatriation

Expatriate worker is faced with not only work related problems but also with problems which are outside work and will involve his or her family and social life. Working abroad requires a substantial adjustment in attitudes towards work and life in general. The ability to adapt to the new environment is absolutely essential. Foreign employment can be a great opportunity but it can also result in broken marriages, ruined careers and disturbed children. (Reuvid 2007, 1-3.)

The success or failure of foreign assignments nowadays is more often than not affected by the family's willingness to relocate, and the pressures on an expatriate family should not be underestimated. Many families are organized around dual-income couples with equal weight given to both careers. The problems of accommodating two careers, or for one partner to give up his or hers for the sake of

the other, are considerable. Creating a fulfilling experience for both partner and children is the key to a successful assignment. (Reuvid 2007, 101.)

It is extremely important that the companies sending the expatriates abroad take responsibility for ensuring that the families are happy and content in the host country abroad. The company has to make sure that the expatriates remain in contact with the organization and stay enthusiastic about their career development. Without this, the expatriation cannot be successful. (Simons 2002, 130.)

Companies should invest in making sure that the expatriation is successful as the costs of expatriate failure are high. Nevertheless, everything starts from the well done selection and training. Expatriates are often chosen based on their technical competence and the family and personal issues and lack of cultural skills are left uninvestigated. (Hill 2005, 625.)

Consequently, expatriate failure is often due to the inability of either the expatriate or the expatriate's spouse to adjust or the expatriate's inability to cope with the larger international responsibility. The top reasons for failure are often inability of spouse, family or the worker to adjust, other family problems, worker's personal or emotional maturity, inability to cope with the overseas responsibilities, personal or emotional problems and difficulties with the new environment. Also sudden illness, new job opportunities in another country or new employer can cause the premature ending of the expatriation. (Harzing & Van Ruysseveldt 2007, 274; Hill 2005, 624-625; Sinkkonen 2009, 166.)

The failure of spouses or children to adjust to a foreign posting seems to be one of the main reasons for premature return to country of origin. Often spouses find themselves in a foreign country without the familiar network of family and friends. Also language differences make it difficult for them to make new friends. This might not be a problem to the worker who makes friends at work, but it can be difficult for the spouse who might feel trapped at home. (Hill 2005, 626.) A failure to adapt might mean having to terminate the contract early (Reuvid 2007, 163).

#### 4.3.2 Repatriation

The expatriation ends usually when the expatriate mission contract ends. The expatriation might also end prematurely but this is quite rare. Unfortunately the repatriation is often overlooked and the expatriate worker and his or her family are not prepared for the reentry into their home country. Impatriation means that the expatriate is returned to the head quarter and the family goes back to the home country. In order to ease the return to home land, the expatriates should be given a chance to participate in repatriation training seminars on the emotional response and lifestyle changes following the repatriation. This is as important to the family as the worker. It is not only the worker's lifestyle that is about to change upon return. (Harzing & Van Ruysseveldt 2007, 241; Hill 2005, 629.)

The expatriates often consider it hard when they need to return to their country of origin. They might feel insecure about their position in the company as the job that they had before might be given to someone else or the company might have experienced organizational changes during the expatriation. The work environment is no longer the same. (Sinkkonen 2009, 169.)

These issues influence directly the employee but also the family is influenced by the possible changes in the living standard and incomes. The time spent abroad changes the family and after the experience abroad the family might consider it hard to blend in their own society. For the family, the foreign mission is important and they might feel that the others are ignorant about the mission. The families can feel alienated from their families and friends who used to be their support network before the mission. Life itself in the country of origin can seem extremely difficult and strange after having adapted to the host country's way of life. (Sinkkonen 2009, 170.)

Up on the return to the country of origin, the family can experience reverse culture shock which can also be called re-entry shock. After spending a considerable amount of time abroad, the expatriates have adapted to the new culture and integrated in the host country. Once the family returns back to their home country, they are most likely to experience the reverse culture shock. It is not easy to go back home as the

people at home have continued their lives and things are no longer the same as before the departure. But after all, it is the expatriates themselves who have changed and they need to readjust to their home country. The expatriates need to allow themselves some time for the readjustment but in order to reduce the reverse culture shock; they should prepare themselves for it in advance. (Skierlo 2007, 76-79.)

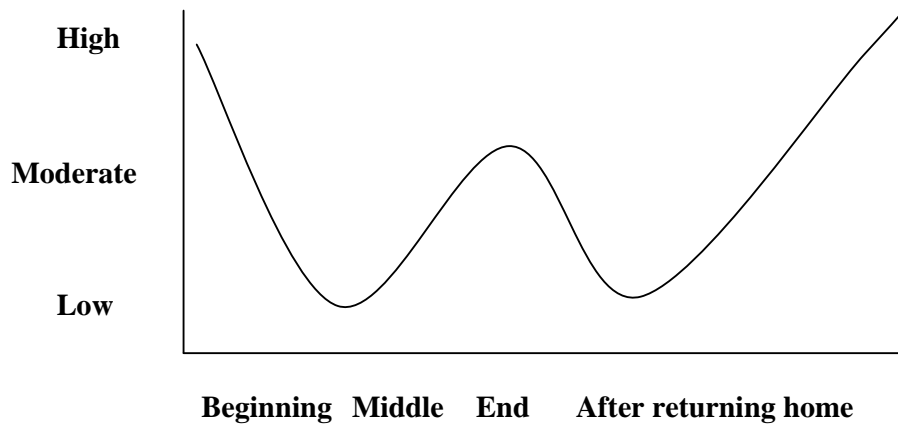


Figure 7: Feelings of satisfaction along the expatriation (Skierlo 2007, 62)

Some expatriates claim that the readjustment after coming back home from expatriation was actually more difficult than adjusting to the host country's culture (Skierlo 2007, 78). (Figure 7)

## 5 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESEARCH

### 5.1 Research methods

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used for collecting the research data. The quantitative research was not only numeric but included also answers expressed in writing. The quantitative approach, using an online survey, was able to provide valuable information before the qualitative approach, the interview, was used.

The initial idea was that the survey results would have provided background information for the interviews, and that the qualitative research would have been the main source of data. Moreover, the results from one method could have been used for cross-checking the results from another. These approaches complement each other. However, after analyzing the survey answers, which were very reliable and extensive, it was clear that many interviews would not be needed. Yet, two telephone interviews were made in order to get more information about certain aspects of expatriation.

The research method choices are justified in the following paragraphs. In order to understand the differences between these two research approaches, they are also described more in detail.

#### 5.1.1 Quantitative research

Quantitative data is based on meanings derived from numbers. The quantitative approach assumes that if something exists, it can be measured numerically and these numbers can be used for creating statistics. (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill 2003, 378; Jankowicz 1995, 174.)

This method reveals more details and is a good research method for a perfectionist. Researchers using the quantitative method are observing their target group from distance, which is the opposite of qualitative researchers, which are often considered as inside observers. When using the quantitative research method, the aim is to stay objective and a certain distance is usually kept. Quantitative research is more exact than the rich qualitative method. The quantitative method sees the world as still and static. With the quantitative research it is possible to easily compare the research results. Questions, such as “How many?, How many percent?, How often? How long?”, can be asked by using quantitative research method. Usually the respondents are given a scale to choose from or the possibility to answer simply yes or no. Quantitative research can reveal how many people feel in a certain way and how often. (Hakala 2008, 169-172.)

A survey, emails and interviews were chosen as the methods of data collection for the empirical research. Satakunta University of Applied Sciences' e-form was used for the questionnaire (Appendix 1 & 2).

The survey was chosen because the answers gave a general view of the situation and helped in identifying the common problems. The online survey was also a practical solution as the link could be easily sent to many expatriates and the respondents could answer in the privacy of their homes. The survey required the respondent some basic computer knowledge and an internet connection. There is the possibility that some expatriates started answering to the survey, but did not complete it once they noticed that there were also open-ended questions which required more than a yes or no answer.

If I would have sent the survey by postal mail, it would have caused me expenses due to printing and stamps. In addition, it would have been more time consuming for me and the respondents. The analyzing of the results would have been more complicated as the answers would have all been on separate individual questionnaire sheets. Moreover, I think that there would have been fewer answers if I would have sent the survey by post. The families would have had to send the questionnaires back and all of the families might have not done it. The expatriate community uses emails for communicating and keeping in touch and I had an access to the email address of these families. I knew that by email I would be able to reach many families and I did not need to know their postal addresses.

The survey could have been done by telephone but in my opinion, it would have been too complicated. I did not have the phone numbers of all the expatriates, and it would have taken a lot of time and money, too. As the survey was done anonymously, by telephone it would have been impossible in this case. I could not have called randomly to people. The survey could not have included as many open-ended questions if it was done by telephone.

In addition to conducting the online survey, Bouygues Travaux Publics, the Adult Education Centre and town of Rauma were contacted by email with a list of questions (Appendix 3, 4 & 5). This was done in order to get more adequate



information, and to find out what their opinions and thoughts were. The replies were very extensive, needed, useful and helpful for the writing of this thesis. An email was chosen as it allowed the people to reply once they had the time.

### 5.1.2 Qualitative research

The main features of the qualitative approach are the verbal discussions, and interviews and their recording, non-numeric answers, meanings and field work (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2009, 136).

Qualitative data is based on meanings which are expressed through words and has not been quantified. The data collected with this approach is non-standardised data which requires classification into categories. The analysis of the research results is done by using conceptualisation. (Saunders et al. 2003, 378.)

The problem of qualitative research methods is that these methods are firmly linked to certain data and theoretical approach. This data collecting method combines the information research and the analysis. Analysis skills are needed already when collecting the information because the information needs to be analyzed constantly. (Hakala 2008, 168-169.)

Qualitative research method was chosen as I like the personal contact with people. The semi-structured interviews with the expatriates allowed the conversation to flow and even change direction. A face-to-face interview would have allowed the interviewer to see the interviewees' reactions and gestures but the telephone interview was chosen due to lack of time and sicknesses. It was also more convenient for both the interviewee and the interviewer. In a face-to-face interview the respondents are most likely to tell the truth and give a more deep answer. Still, in my opinion the interviews over the phone did not make the quality inferior. The time spent on the interview was completely devoted for the subject, both of the interviewees were alone in a quiet place and there were no distractions.

The semi-structured interview was chosen as I had specific topics and themes of which I wanted to learn more during the conversation. I wanted to give the interviewees the possibility to speak freely after knowing that the topics were covered. The data that these interviews provided complemented the survey results and could be compared to the earlier data gathered with the survey.

Unstructured and structured interviews were possible alternatives. Unstructured interview is a formal interview during which the interviewer and interviewee speak with each other and recognize the situation to be an interview. The interviewer has a clear focus and a goal for the interview, which guides the conversation. The purpose is to get the respondent to open up and speak freely. The questions asked during the conversation are usually open-ended. As I needed to ask questions about a couple of specific themes, the unstructured interview was not an option. If I would have already had all the necessary information, I could have chosen the unstructured interview in order to test my preliminary understanding. (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2006.)

During a structured interview the interviewees are all asked the same questions which have been prepared before the interview. This kind of interview has only a few open-ended questions and there is not much room for variation in responses. The interviewer's opinions are not expressed during the interview as the interviewer needs to be neutral. As a structured interview does not involve the interviewer's own opinions, this type of interview can be conducted by an interviewer who simply follows the questions. (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2006.)

Hirsjärvi et al. (2009, 137) state that the quantitative approach can be used before the qualitative one. This was what was done with this thesis. The questions asked during the interview were made based on the information acquired from the questionnaire sent to a larger group (Appendix 6 & 7). After the survey result analysis I was able to identify some topics of which I wanted to learn more and have some additional thoughts from the expatriate spouses.

## 5.2 Research process

Julien Biet from Bouygues Travaux Publics was contacted by email in the end of November 2010 (Appendix 3). SAMK's Planning Officer Juha Hietaoja entered the questionnaire in the e-lomake software of SAMK. The survey was launched around the same time in November 2010.

The links to the online surveys were sent by email or Facebook to approximately 70 expatriate families working for OL3 project. The e-mail was sent to the e-mail addresses that the families used for communicating with the other expatriates. Two French expatriate wives transferred my e-mail to all the OL3 expatriates that they knew. 32 of them took the time to reply. In the e-mail the purpose of the survey was explained and the type of families looked for was described more in detail.

In the end of the form the families were asked if they would be available for an interview. Eight out of 32 respondents were not available or willing to participate in an interview. The online survey had questions for which the different alternatives were already given as well as open-ended ones. Please find the questionnaire forms in French and English in the appendices (Appendix 1 & 2). The survey was launched online on the 26 November 2010 and the expatriates were given until the 10 December to reply. Unfortunately on the 9 December only 13 people had replied. I contacted the expatriates again by email, explained them how important their answers were and politely asked them to take a moment to reply to the online survey. They were given time until Monday 13 December. This turned out to work quite well as I managed to get 19 answers more.

The questionnaire was first prepared in English and then translated to French. The expatriates were given a possibility to answer either in French or English. Links for both online surveys were sent to all of them. 29 replied in French and three in English. Once the French version of the questionnaire form was ready, I had it proof read by a native French speaker as I wanted to check that she understood the questions in the way that I wanted them to be understood.

The main reasons for not answering to the survey were that the family no longer lived in Finland as their foreign assignment was completed and due to that they did not want to participate or that the respondent faced some technical problems with the survey link. Several expatriates contacted me telling that the link sent to them did not work. Later I noticed that the respondents often had to copy the link to their web browser in order to access the survey. An email giving advice for this technical problem was sent to the expatriates and more replies were received.

The open ended questions took probably the respondents quite a lot of time to answer and consequently also the analyzing of the answers was very time consuming. The answers were in French and needed to be translated in English. The questionnaire received a lot of answers but unfortunately some of the people who did not answer might have not been either interested in answering or it was just too easy not to answer. There was the possibility that the respondent might answer the open ended questionnaire questions more shortly or even tell lies but once I received the replies I could see that the answers were similar and there was nothing shocking or any discrepancies.

Unfortunately due to some technical problems the online survey program did not produce the proper excel files and I needed to wait patiently. In the end of year 2010 and beginning of 2011, I finally got to the analyzing of the replies. Having read and analyzed the answers I sent a summary of the results by email to Kaarina Nurmi and Heli Kajaala on 17 February 2011. In my email I asked them some questions (Appendix 4 & 5). Kajaala replied before the end of the same month but Nurmi only on 9 March 2011. As the town did not have really anyone who would have been aware of all the aspects that concern the expatriates, Nurmi had to contact different services in order to gather the bits and pieces.

On 18 March 2011 two of the French expatriate housewives were contacted by telephone. As already mentioned, the respondents really took their time to answer to the survey and the open-ended questions got long and extensive answers. I expected the answers to be more shallow or short. The initial idea was to organize a group interview for four women. Due to the high quality of the survey results and the number of respondents, the group interview of the four women was no longer

needed. Yet, two telephone interviews were carried out on 18 March, 2011. The interviewees were contacted by phone and e-mail on week 11/2011 and the interview date was decided.

The interviewees were chosen based on several criteria. I was comparing the expatriates' profiles and tried to pick the most interesting ones who were willing to participate in the interview, which was the next step. The women had indicated in the end of the online survey their willingness to participate in an interview. The intention was to interview families or women who had already been in Finland for a while, because getting more information and knowledge was easier from these families. Also, I wanted to choose different kind of families in order to cover all the different aspects of the families' daily life.

These interviews provided more information about the reasons behind putting a child in a Finnish school instead of Areva's French school, opinions about the Maternity and child care clinic (Neuvola), and feelings about coping with the uncertainty that comes along expatriation (Appendix 6 & 7). These were the main themes of the interviews but the purpose was to let the conversation flow and allow the interviewees to talk about issues that they considered important.

The telephone interviews were held in the interviewees' native language, French. The interviews were held on 18 March 2011; one took 65 minutes and the other 55 minutes.

The expatriates who had indicated their interest in the research results were sent a summary by e-mail on 25 March 2011 (Appendix 8).

### 5.3 Reliability and validity

Every researcher needs to make sure that the results of their studies are valid and reliable. Reliability refers to the degree to which data collection approach is able to obtain consistent findings. This means that two researchers should be capable of getting the same results and making the same conclusions – personal opinions and views should not affect the results of the study. Also, it is important that there is

transparency in how the conclusions were drawn from the research data. The outcome can be considered reliable if the same person is investigated twice and both times the same results are obtained. (Saunders et al. 2003, 488; Hirsjärvi et al. 2009, 231.)

The research results need to be valid. This refers to the extent to which the data is real and to which degree the research approach has really succeeded to measure what it was supposed to measure. (Saunders et al. 2003, 492; Hirsjärvi et al. 2009, 231-231.)

To show that the research was valid, the researchers should indicate when and where the interviews were held, how much time they took and if there were some disturbances, and if it is possible that the interviewees misunderstood or misinterpreted some of the questions. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009, 232.)

32 people responded to the online survey which was translated also to French in order to make sure that the respondents understood the questions correctly and there was no room for misunderstandings. Also the cover letter was in French because the purpose was to get French respondents. The French version received 29 answers and the English version three answers.

Many families were asked for their opinion and due to this the results are reliable. The analyzing of the results, which were mainly in French, was not a problem as I speak fluently the language. The survey was well designed and provided reliable and relevant data. The respondents were able to answer anonymously which enabled the respondents to reveal their true thoughts. They were also informed about the reason why this thesis was done and how it was useful.

After the survey, the reliability of the results was cross-checked by interviewing two women who already filled in the online questionnaire form. During the interviews, the main points and new information were written down in order to make sure that no important details were forgotten.

Unfortunately I did not find a way to record the telephone conversations. As the subject was very familiar to me and the meaning was to go deeper in certain topics, I knew that I would be able to note down all the new comments and thoughts. The interviewees were alone in a quiet space and there were no disturbances – the children were taking a nap.

## 6 FAMILY LIFE IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY

32 French expatriate families answered the online survey. In every family, the working parent was the father of the family. Only one of the responding families lived in Pori, the rest of the families had their residence in Rauma. Two of the families had already finished their expatriation and returned to France. For 23 families the expatriate mission in Finland was the first foreign assignment as a family. For five families it was the second, for one the third and for three families the fourth one (Figure 8).

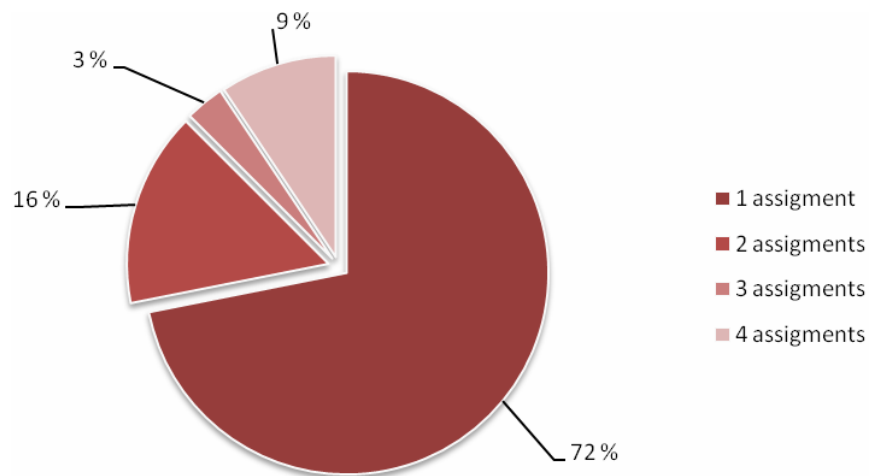


Figure 8: Amount of foreign assignments.

## 6.1 Reasons for accepting expatriation

The main reasons for going abroad as expatriates were career advancement and professional experience, money, new culture and country.

In the answers many of the respondents explained that the money enabled the spouse to stay home with the children and in general the quality of life was better due to the expatriation. The results showed that many of the women gave up their jobs in order to go abroad as a family. Only four of the 32 spouses did not work before the expatriation. These women were ready to abandon their own jobs to enable the career advancement of their spouses and that the families could share this experience together. Expatriation is a great job opportunity and definitely a good work experience that helps in the career development.

### *Family profile*

In average these expatriate families had two children. Two of the families had grown up children and four had children older than ten years. Many families had rather little children. Only three of the respondents did not have any children. The families considered Finland as a safe and great place to raise children. They were not afraid to have babies during the expatriation. Actually, according to one of the expatriate wives, until March 2011 at least 21 expatriate babies were born in Finland during the OL3-project – and more babies were expected to be born during 2011.

Most of the families wanted to come to Finland because they expected the mission to offer them better quality of family life, a good and secured living environment for the children and more activities. Some of the families thought that the families would have more time together abroad but soon noticed that the expatriates were very much tied to their demanding jobs. Almost all of the families accepted the foreign assignment due to a desire to explore a new country and its culture. The new unknown things attracted the expatriates. Of course the career possibilities, new interesting jobs and work experience motivated the expatriates. Also, the need to use



a foreign language for everyday things was interesting. Some were excited to see how they would be able to integrate themselves and adapt to the new environment.

When asked if their expectations were met, only five responded “no”. These respondents were expecting to have a new experience, interesting job or work experience and get to know with the locals and learn a new language. The rest, 28 families, agreed that their expectations were met.

#### *Willingness to work*

11 of the women worked also in Finland. Here I can see a weakness of the questionnaire. I should have asked the respondents to specify where they were working (Finnish company, distance work, OL3 project, French school, voluntary work). I doubt that all these women have a regular eight hours per day job. Some of the women might have indicated that they work when they actually meant that their old job is still available for them in their country of origin. This was the situation for the other interviewee.

Many of the expatriate spouses said that they were having trouble to find work in Finland. Especially some of the young women who used to work before in their country and who did not yet have any children found themselves extremely lonely as they had no daily jobs or occupations. Some of these women tried to get voluntary jobs but even working for free was hard. I learned that for example Bouygues was not very interested in employing the expatriate wives in the company – it was one or the other who worked in the company, not both. Finding a job in Finland was not even an option for some of the women, as they were needed home with their children.

The expatriates were intrigued by the new culture and country, and new experiences. The idea of family life abroad and experiencing all these things together was motivating. The enriching cultural discoveries for the whole family were one of the top reasons why the families decided to accept their foreign assignment. Discovering another culture and country, which are not too different from their own, were few of

the biggest reasons for accepting a foreign assignment. The interviewees both said that the expatriation was a safe adventure and an opportunity to experience something completely different.

### *Length of expatriation*

As most families were still on their foreign assignment in Finland, it was impossible for them to indicate the length of the mission. Of course the families were given some sort of estimation before the beginning of their stay but usually these estimations turned out to be completely false. A six month assignment was easily turned into a five years stay in the host country. The estimations of the length were somewhere between one and half years to five years.

One of the main reasons for making the telephone interviews was that I wanted to ask the expatriates what kind of pressure and stress it evokes when the families do not know the length of the stay. Most of the families live somewhat unsure life as they do not know when exactly they are leaving Finland, where they will go, or will they even have a job after this project.

The interviewees told me that coping with this uncertainty was one of the biggest challenges that they have faced. The families found it hard or impossible to plan their future because they had to live day by day. For couples, who do not have any children, expatriation is not as stressful, because the expatriation can be seen more as an adventure and an opportunity to travel and discover something new. If the couple does not have other obligations or commitments than the job abroad, they can be sent to a new destination with a short notice. The families consider expatriation as an opportunity and an adventure, too, but when there are children involved the expatriates have to consider the children's schooling and academic years, etc. But as the second interviewee said, it is all about the attitude. It is impossible to know about tomorrow.

The contract of the other interviewees' husband in Finland was for two to four years. In their case the expatriation was most likely to last for four years. The second

interviewee's husband had renewed and made new contracts. Once he needed to sign a contract, he needed to make sure that the contract would be at least until the end of the following academic year. This family's child was in a local school and they did not want to interrupt his school in the middle of the year.

## 6.2 Preparation and training pre-expatriation

As mentioned, I work for Bouygues Travaux Publics Finnish Branch, and due to this I know the person who is responsible for the expatriates in this company. In November 2010 I contacted BYTP's Administration and Finance Manager Mr. Julien Biet by email. In my e-mail I explained the subject of my thesis and asked him about the company's expatriate policy and some other information.

Biet explained that BYTP has a guidebook for the expatriates. The guidebook handles such subjects as the work contract, payments, medical and administrative formalities, accorded help, social security, assurances, holidays, taxation and other helpful advice. This guidebook is given to the expatriates before their departure to make sure that they take care of all the necessary issues before leaving the country of origin. Biet stated that BYTP does not offer its expatriates any type of specific training before the departure. (Biet, personal communication on 25 November 2010) Unfortunately I was not able to get access to the guidebook.

Once the expatriates have arrived in Finland, BYTP gives its expatriates a "welcoming book" that explains more about Finland, the OL3 project, the local regulations, medical assistance, administrative procedures, sports and hobbies in Rauma. (Biet, personal communication on 25 November 2010)

One of the expatriate wives, whose husband works for Areva said that their company had them visit the host country and town before. They were staying in the host town with another expatriate family who had been in Finland for a longer time. The father of the family was shown the place where he would work and the family introduced to the everyday life in Rauma. They got to see how this other family managed their day-to-day life in Rauma.

One survey respondent also explained that their company sent them on an orientation week to Finland four months before the expatriation. The purpose was to get to know the living and working environment. In addition, this family participated in intercultural training after having stayed four months in Finland. This family states that the training and orientation week allowed them to see concretely both negative and positive aspects of living in Finland. Also, they had the chance to visit the school that their child was going to attend. The intercultural training made it easier to understand why it is difficult to adapt to this Nordic country.

Unfortunately, this type of ideal preparing and training is not offered to every family. Some other families have been sent to Rauma without knowing where they were going to stay and what they would need to take with them.

In fact, according to the survey answers only nine of the 32 expatriate employees received some sort of training before the mission. The families of six of these expatriates got to also participate in training. After analyzing the additional information given by the respondents, it turned out only four expatriate employees got really training before the expatriation. One of the families got reading material, two employees got technical training, and two families got training after their expatriation had already started.

The ones who really got training or even these info booklets felt that it was very useful. Still, personally I would not call an info leaflet a proper training. Yet, the families thought that the booklets helped them to better understand Finland and its natives and to understand the differences between the country of origin and the host country. Also, the administrative advice was needed.

For some expatriates the training was strictly technical and job related. This was considered necessary because working for the new project without more information on the nuclear power plant type etc. would not have been possible.

### 6.3 Cultural differences experienced by the French families

In the survey the expatriates were asked to identify the main cultural differences between Finland and their own country. All the respondents were able to point out several differences. The most important differences were the Finnish cuisine, the behavior of the Finns, the climate, the amount of affordable activities offered to children and adults, the daily rhythm and shops and restaurants' opening hours, and the language.

#### 6.3.1 Finnish food, opening hours and daily rhythm

France is known for its French cuisine, which is said to be one of the best in the world, and for the rare Michelin star rankings given to worlds' top restaurants. The French love good food, wine and cooking. The French Gastronomy was added by UNESCO to its lists of the world's "intangible cultural heritage" in 2010 (UNESCO, 2010). Consequently, most of the expatriates experienced difficulties during their assignment due to the Finnish food. The food was very different and the meal times very different from what they were used to with. The families needed to learn that the food was not served as late in the restaurants as in their own country.

Also the opening hours of the supermarkets and shops are different in Finland. In France, the shops are often closed for couple of hours during the day around lunch time and then stay open later in the evening. For example the shops and boutiques in old Rauma close quite early which was unfamiliar to the expatriates. I can personally relate to these expatriates as I found it extremely difficult to get to the boutiques during the opening hours as I got so used to the shops staying open late in the evening in France.

The daily rhythm is very different in Finland. In Finland a very normal work day starts at 8 am and ends at 4 pm. In France, the day starts a bit later, there is often a lunch break of few hours in order to go home to have lunch with the family or meet with friend for lunch, and the day ends a lot later. As the families get home later, they also eat the dinner or supper quite late in the evening. Once the Finns are going

to bed, the French are still enjoying the long dinner with their family or friends. The expatriates explained that they needed time to get used to the different daily rhythm, new meal times and working hours.

### 6.3.2 Finnish people

Finns are very often known as a shy and cold nation. The Finnish people do not talk too much, they can be said to be distant and more discrete. Some of the expatriates stated that the locals are very kind and helpful, but still they are more reserved than the Latinos. Few expatriates replied that in their opinion the Finns have been very welcoming, warm hearted, always on time and punctual, and not as arrogant as the French could be. One of the expatriates explained that once the Finnish families of whom they got to know understood that the family really had the intention to stay here for a longer time and settle down and it was not just a question of money, they were more welcoming and helpful.

### 6.3.3 The environment

The climate, cold weather, and bright summer was also a surprise to many families. The amount of snow had actually an influence on the daily life. While it was really cold, the families had to stay in sometimes, shovel snow, or cycle or drive the car in a snowy weather; these were quite new things to the expatriates. The families were surprised to notice the connection between the Finns and the Finnish nature. The expatriates admired the way the locals respect the nature and the environment. In their opinion, Finland is a very calm and secured place to live in, especially Rauma which has around 40 000 inhabitants. It is nothing like the city of Paris that already has more than two million inhabitants. But as one of the expatriates put it: “Less people less stress.”. The families considered Finland as a safe, quiet and calm place to raise their children. Finland is a place where everything is “made for children”. The day care and schooling systems were very much respected.

Both of the interviewees mentioned that one of the main reasons for feeling home in Rauma or in Finland was that it is more than safe. For them the thought of going

back home to France or going to another, less safe destination was sometimes scary. The parents worried that the children will not realize that their next new home might not be as safe as here as their children have now gotten used to the safety and carelessness.

#### 6.3.4 Activities

The expatriates were also happy that there are a lot of activities offered for the kids and adults. These activities are available for everyone, but the people have to just find out what is offered and by whom. Finland is known for its education system and citizens who speak several languages. Many of the respondents said that they were impressed by the language skills and at the same time shocked by the language barrier that they faced once they arrived in Finland. These families did not speak Finnish and some barely English. They knew that they were going to face difficulties because of the lack of language skills.

However, the interviewees both stated that they have been practicing a lot of sports with their families. Both agreed that activities and leisure opportunities are offered for everyone, but one must inform himself and take the most out of the activities offered. The children were ice skating, skiing, swimming, playing football or ice hockey. Also the mothers were going regularly to the swimming hall. The other interviewee would have liked to have more events and organized happenings during the weekends.

#### 6.3.5 Traditions and habits

The answers showed that the French expatriates thought Finnish people to have more respect for traditions, rules and regulations. Even though there are not so many holidays, still the Finns were said to be more patriotic. French have often a larger social network and the families have a lot of friends with whom they spend a lot of time. Some respondents had noticed that the Finns stay more with their own family and also the relationship with the children is different. The children are more

independent, free and get more responsibilities but yet close with their families and stay children for a longer time.

In France, the relationship is different and in my opinion more strict. It is not rare that families send their children to boarding schools and see them less often. The children always speak to their parents respectfully and to my experience, are not given as much freedom as the Finns. However, one has to remember that the living environment and its security have a big influence on this.

The expatriates had noticed that the Finns take their shoes off when entering the homes. This is not normal in France and surprised some of the families. I have had the possibility to visit several expatriates' homes in Rauma and I have to say that I soon noticed that they felt uncomfortable once I took my shoes off. For me, the idea to keep on my shoes was making me uncomfortable. When I asked these people about this matter they explained me that they understand why we want to take off our shoes and it seems more than wise to do it but they just are not used to it.

Other cultural differences were the religion, the sauna culture and the Finnish architecture. Most people in Finland are at least officially members of Christian church, Evangelical Lutherans, and in France the principal religion practiced is Roman Catholicism. In Rauma, there is no Catholic church and the closest one is in Turku. Some of the families would have liked to attend the catholic mass but it was not possible in Rauma.

Another reason for cultural shock was the Finns' nudity. Finns are known for the Sauna and the crazy people who roll in the cold snow after the Sauna. Few of the expatriate wives told me that they were shocked when they first went to sauna with other Finnish women and noticed that the women did not wear any towels around themselves but went naked into the sauna. This unexpected nudity was faced also at the swimming hall where the swimmers are not allowed to wear their swimsuits before they have taken a shower. This was a big step for some women who were not used to with this type of nudity.



### 6.3.6 Housing

Rental prices in Rauma have risen due to the huge demand. The companies have rented houses, row houses and flats to their expatriate workers. All kind and sized apartments were and still are needed.

The expatriates told me that when the main contractor arrived in Olkiluoto, the company bought houses in order to provide good houses to the expatriate families. The houses and flats were given to families based on the family's size and of course the expatriate's position in the company. The families are very often able to have a say on the house and its location. Some families preferred a smaller flat in the centre, some a house in old Rauma or near the school and some a house in the middle of the forest.

## 6.4 Difficulties during the expatriation

Biet clarified that in addition to giving the welcoming book, BYTP supports the expatriate families in the following ways: helps to find housing and helps with all the administrative steps, and also provides translation in case it is needed. During the expatriation, the company takes in charge all the double expenses. This means that the company pays for example the housing and the cars both in the host country and the country of origin. (Biet, personal communication on 25 November 2010)

The administrative steps and new habits were challenging for the families. The families also considered the health care system to be very different from the one with which they were used to.

### *Language*

According to the survey, the biggest problems experienced during the expatriation were language related. As the families did not speak Finnish, they were lucky to be in Finland, where most of the locals speak or at least understand English. The problem was the lack of language skills. The challenge for many families was

English but at the same time, some families were excited to learn some more English and the basics of Finnish. One of the respondents explained that her language skills have definitely improved but yet she does not speak very well English. Still, she is happy when she notices that she is being understood and the others get her point.

As mentioned, almost every respondent agreed that the Finnish language was a big barrier but fortunately, they were able to overcome this challenge by speaking English or learning a bit of Finnish. Of course they needed to get used to speaking in English or using basics of Finnish, which was not easy either. By using even little words in Finnish, the French showed that they were trying, and due to this they were treated differently. Some of the spouses participated in language courses. In addition, a simple dictionary or Google translator was a savior for many. The translation of letters etc. offered by the employer often helped with the language problems. Due to the language barrier, a few families felt like they were not able to take the most out of the local activities.

Several expatriates felt that putting the children into a Finnish school was a good solution and helped in the adaptation. This helped in creating contacts with the locals and other people. Also participation in different sorts of activities and sports clubs was considered helpful. Contact with the local people was considered very valuable and helpful. Several challenges were overcome by searching for information and simply by asking others. Different types of Finnish-French websites offer their own type of support and source of information.

The results showed that some expatriate parents thought that putting the children to a Finnish school was a good decision as there was something else in the life than the OL3 construction site and Areva's French school.

### *The expatriate community*

The expatriate community was seen as a support and as a threat. Unfortunately sometimes the women feel that in these groups they should never show that their families have experienced difficulties or problems. This is seen as a weakness.

Despite this very often every woman finds someone to talk to and to trust. The children find other kids in the same situation to play with. The results of the survey showed that friends and other expatriates who are going through the same issues were helping in overcoming the challenges. Going through the challenges together made it natural for them to start bonding and trusting each others.

It is really hard when the man is working long days and the family life is not getting enough attention. Many of the families thought that the expatriation would give the family more quality time together. Unfortunately, the reality was the opposite.

The integration to a new society in a new country was problematic for some families, mostly because of the language. Some of the spouses found it challenging to go out and make new contacts, and they were afraid of closing themselves in their homes and becoming lonely. The expatriates found that in the beginning of their stay they felt homesick, isolated, trapped home and frustrated because they were not understood. Once they started integrating themselves to the new society or into the French community, the life in Finland got easier. With time they made friends and contacts that helped when it was needed.

#### *Overcoming challenges*

The only way to overcome some of the problems faced during an expatriation, such as the weather and climate, is to adapt. It is not easy, but there is no other solution than to accept the differences. This of course requires patience. Even if the expatriates are able to overcome the challenges, they might have an influence on the adaptation, for example make the adaptation more difficult, slower or harder.

Eight respondents from 32 replied “No” when asked whether they got any help to overcome the experienced problems or challenges.

The expatriates were asked where they got help to overcome the challenges and problems that they have faced in the beginning or during their expatriation – local people, other expatriates and the company’s help were clearly appreciated. The

answers showed that most of the expatriates relied on the help of the Finnish people and the other expatriates who were facing the same issues. The Finns were the ones, who could help concrete way and the other expatriates were the trusted ones. Also, the employers have people to take care of the well-being of the families and to help them when it is needed. This was much appreciated. The website “Rauma des Français”( <http://raumafrance.blogspot.com/>), employees of the Adult Education Centre and children’s daycares, like Sinilintu, were said to be very helpful and useful as the people always tried to help out, give information and contacts to the expatriates.

Seven of the 32 respondents did not feel that they would have wanted help from someone that they did not get it. 11 of them would have wanted the employer to participate more. More than 34 percent of the expatriates thought that the company could have been more present and helpful. Many respondents suggested that the companies should have some sort of welcoming group that would take care of the family and its wellbeing in the beginning. Now the families felt that they needed to ask and of course they would have preferred that someone would have asked and showed that they care. Also, the company could have helped the newcomers to get in contact with the expatriates already present in the town.

In addition, 20 percent indicated that they would have needed a language course: either before coming to Finland or during the mission. The course could have been Finnish or English course taught preferably in French. Both, one or the other would have been useful. As many of the families have small children who are too young for school or daycare, they would have needed a language course, where kids could have come along. Also, the families would have needed more help for the healthcare and administrative issues.

### *Adaptation*

When asked what made the adaptation easier to the new country, culture and environment, 20 expatriates answered The French community. For three families it was the family itself that made the adaptation a bit easier, for four families the local

people and for two families the people working at school or with the children. The pre-departure language training was also experienced very useful by the expatriates who got it. Also friends were mentioned as a source of support. The results show that the support and help gotten from the expatriate community was extremely valued and useful. As a result we can conclude that the companies should use this and make sure that the newcomers are immediately integrated and welcomed by the ones who are already present in the destination.

17 out of 32 families, 53 percent, of the expatriates who replied to the survey, felt that the company did not participate or support the family enough in the adaptation. This result is quite alarming and shows that the companies should really change their welcoming policy.

The expatriates were given a possibility to give improvement suggestions for the employers. When reading through the answers a couple of themes were more clearly represented: intercultural and language training, help with administration, contact with other expatriates and locals, and paying more attention to the families. Several respondents would have liked to have intercultural training before departure abroad or once arrived to the destination. Language courses would have been useful before or during the assignment. The welcoming books should be given by every company to their expatriates and they should be in French and updated every once and a while. Some expatriates suggested that companies should have an employee who speaks the expatriates' language and who is reachable by phone once needed.

Some of the women said that they wish that the company would have helped them to find a job in Finland. Unfortunately, finding a job was a problem for many expatriate spouses. The expatriates also suggested the companies should organize more meetings, activities, get-togethers and evenings for the expatriates. More communication is needed and the families should be taken more into consideration. Moreover, the interviewees felt that the adaptation is still up to the family itself but yes, the companies could have done more.

### *Healthcare*

The differences in healthcare are not major between Finland and France but still, the system is quite different. In France there are so called home doctors – the patient either goes to the doctor's reception or the doctor comes to the patient's home. There are a lot of these doctors and due to this the way to the doctor is never far and it is possible to get an appointment fast. This is not the way it works in Rauma. The queues to the doctor are long even on the private sector, which is more expensive. In France, the family usually always uses the same doctor and bonds with the doctor. The relationship is quite different from the Finnish doctor-patient-relationship.

Some French mothers said they feel that it is impossible to get an appointment at the doctors. They even occasionally felt discriminated at the emergency room. They felt that they were not treated as well as the locals due to the fact that they were foreigners. Yet, some said that by talking to the locals they were able to find out which pediatrician they were using and get in contact with the same one.

In my opinion for example this feeling of discrimination might be a result of misunderstanding. At the emergency room the patients are not treated based on the arrival order but on the severity of the patient's situation. When I explained this to some of the expatriates, they were surprised as they had no idea about the way this system works.

As mentioned earlier, among the French community of Rauma, there are several expatriates who have given birth in Finland. Pregnancy, giving birth and check-ups for the baby could have been issues that worry the expatriates as they are not in their home country. The second interviewee was seven months pregnant at the time when the interview was held. I wanted to ask her more about her feelings about the local maternity clinic. I had already talked to other French pregnant women about the clinic and what kind of feelings they had about it and the interviewee agreed with the other women and said that the care was excellent and she could not have wished for better. She explained that some women prefer to do double check-ups and fly back to France every two months to have their own doctor's opinion. However, the

interviewee trusted the friendly local care and felt that there were no communication problems. In her opinion the situation might be different if Finland was not a European highly developed country.

## 7 RAUMA AS A HOST

Kaarina Nurmi from the town of Rauma was contacted by email with some questions. She kindly asked different service sectors to answer my questions. This chapter is mainly based on the summary made by Mrs. Nurmi and the email of Heli Kajaala from the Adult Education Centre.

### 7.1 Challenges and difficulties faced by the town

As the population of Rauma is much more international now than ten years ago, the town of Rauma has had to react to this change. The internationality can be seen for example in schools, daycares, after school activities, swimming hall, super markets, and church.

#### *Central administration*

The town formed a working group, which aimed at forecasting different things that different sectors were going to face during the OL3. A service brochure was done in cooperation with a wider area (Rauma-Pori-Tampere-Turku).

The town launched the construction of rental houses because of the OL3-project. In the beginning of the OL3-project, the town had a special coordinator, Anneli Savikurki, for about two years. Her job was to help the expatriates to find accommodation and help them to adapt to the Finnish/ Rauma society. State authorities, such as Kela (the Department of Human Services) and tax office, set up a service center in Olkiluoto.

The town agreed that the French Areva School could use the facilities of Nanu school. The town offered the school the facilities and free meals for the pupils. However, the teaching has followed the French curriculum.

The town has tried to take the internationality into consideration by providing information on its website in several languages. Also, a so-called immigration project funded by EU was started in Rauma. In early 2011, this project still employed two people. The town is working on its internationality program but internationality is already mentioned in the town's main strategy.

The OL3-project has taught the town that internationality requires an open mind and attitude from the town and also understanding towards different cultures. The town needs to improve its communication and information distribution. The central administration of the town found that new and several different ways to communicate with the expatriates and immigrants needed to be created.

#### *Tourism sector*

Many people working for the OL3-project have visited the local tourist office with different questions related to activities, guidance to certain places where the normal tourists would not be guided. These foreigners have been noticed in the services of tourist centre especially during the quiet seasons, autumn and winter. The tourism department stated that its job is to advice its customers, and usually they manage to find answers. However, the answers to OL3-people's questions are rarely simple; once the answer is found, the challenge is to find the same information in the client's language or at least in English.

The tourism sector of Rauma has organized for the local entrepreneurs and actors who work in the tourism field a couple of gatherings with the theme "What to offer and how to offer my services and products to the foreigners of OL3?". The participation to these events was not great and the actual outcome and benefit to the entrepreneurs and expatriates is unknown.



The tourism sector wishes that the town would organize things better for OL4. The responsibilities and tasks should be clearly divided between different actors. Each sector does its own brochures, which are available for everyone but for example the tourism sector is not aware of the daycare matters. However, they should be able to tell the expatriates the name of the person to be contacted when it comes to daycare issues. This might be taken care of now but during the couple of first year of the OL3-project there were constantly misunderstandings because of this. The tourism sector hopes to be wiser in these things when the OL4-project starts.

## 7.2 Adult Education Centre

Heli Kajaala works at the Adult Education Centre as Head of the Language Department. She teaches several languages at the centre. In 2005, Kajaala started her own language company which provides language services – for example language courses, interpretation – to both big and small enterprises in the area of Rauma. She has been teaching languages in the biggest companies in the Rauma region and in Oulunkylä. In addition, she works as interpreter.

This polyglot has been very actively in contact with the expatriates and the foreign companies because of her job. In addition, she started voluntarily a website “Rauma des Français” ([raumafrance.blogspot.com](http://raumafrance.blogspot.com)) with another Finnish woman in order to inform the French expatriates about the events and activities in Rauma.

I contacted Heli Kajaala by email and asked her some questions concerning the town and the Adult Education Centre’s input.

I asked her what kind of challenges the OL3-project’s expatriate families brought to the town and the Adult Education Centre of Rauma. She stated that the families must have been a challenging project for the town and unfortunately the town has not been able to face this challenge.

In the beginning, in 2005, the town offered the families a couple of visits, tours and made an English online version of its news leaflet. After that the town has not done

really anything even though Heli Kajaala has asked the town to inform the foreigners about the activities, etc. The church does some of its informing in English. The town says that they do not have enough of financial resources or people to do anything to change the current situation.

Kajaala said that the Adult Education Centre took up the challenge well and has organized info sessions and translated information in different languages on its website. Study counseling is offered in several languages and the centre has arranged French language interpreters for the crafts courses. The Adult Education Centre is a very flexible organization and can change its activities and functioning even weekly if needed.

Heli Kajaala explained that the Adult Education Centre has tried to help the expatriate families by being involved in the families' everyday life through different kind of activities. The expatriates get information about the courses also from mouth to mouth. The families already established in Rauma share their experience and knowledge with the newcomers. The expatriate wives sort of advertise the courses to each others. The centre also organizes English Clubs for the children. These courses are paid for and offered to the families by Areva.

The Adult Education Centre offers advising when needed – usually at least in English and French. Interpreter services are as well offered. She said that during the crafts, arts and language courses the Finnish and the foreigners have made quite a lot of new friends and contacts.

According to Kajaala the OL3-project has made the Adult Education Centre's functioning much more international. In 2010 the centre had 5 767 students: the mother tongue of 131 students was some other language than Finnish. They were mostly French, German, Russian or Polish speakers. In total, the students represented native speakers of 13 different languages.

The centre offers different level Finnish courses and there has been a pleasant amount of participants. It now offers more Finnish courses as the demand is much

bigger now during this project than before. Actually before it was mainly the exchange students who participated in these courses and now there are various types of people participating. The Adult Education Centre created as a project for the town of Rauma an Immigration website in several different languages, even in Thai-language (<http://www.rauma.fi/maahanmuutto/>). Even though the expatriates are not immigrants, the website can offer useful information in their own language for them too.

Heli Kajaala assumed that the centre will most likely know how to function correctly once the OL4-project starts. In addition, she hoped that the town would do the same as during the OL3-project the town has not invested almost at all in the foreigners. Indeed, the projects like OL3 and the foreigners who come along the project are not taken into consideration in the town's official strategy. Kajaala said that the town's strategy only talks about the repatriation of the ones who are permanently moving to the town (for example people who speak Russian as their native language).

There have been plenty of expatriates participating in the language courses. Some of the courses might have the limitation that the learning material is in Finnish but usually it is a barrier, which can be overcome as the teachers are often motivated to teach in another language. For example Heli Kajaala has on her Spanish courses Polish, Ukrainians, French and Germans.

The English courses have even more foreign participants as the material is completely in English, which makes everything a bit easier.

Heli Kajaala did not think that language barriers exist at the language courses. She felt that actually these barriers were broken down. The Finns were able to use their language skills in a familiar environment, in their home country.

### 7.3 School and daycare

The issue of schooling cannot be taken lightly. Not only can an unsatisfactory solution prejudice a child's chance of achieving academic success, it can also create

tensions that have an adverse effect on the home and working environment. In some cases it may lead to the premature termination of overseas contracts. (Reuvid 2007, 112.)

In Rauma, Areva NP, which is building the OL3 Nuclear power plant, has organized an expatriate school for the companies' employees' children. Despite this, more and more families have decided to send their children to local national schools. Finland is extremely known in France for its educational system; known as one of the best. By going to a Finnish school, the children integrate themselves differently to the new society, make friends, experience a different learning system and learn a new language.

In a local national school, the children get the chance to acquire proficiency in another language and to absorb a new culture. A complete immersion in another language and culture depends very much on the time spent in the host country, the age and ability of the children to adapt. (Reuvid 2007, 130.)

For example a seven-year-old can learn very fast even if the teaching language is not his or her native language. Children learn when they see, hear and follow the example of others. This is why several parents have felt good and calm about putting their children into Finnish schools. The children love the different way of learning and teaching. The school for little children is more playful and the children learn in a funny and effective way. The expatriates explained that they liked that in Finland the children learn by doing, playing and trying.

The second interviewee's 8-year-old child was put into a local national school and the family has not regretted this decision. After almost two years in this school, their child had learned Finnish and made a lot of friends. The beginning was not easy as the child had trouble to understand or communicate with the others. However, there was not any learning or social problem. The mother of this family was surprised as the other children in the class never made any comments about their child not being Finnish. Actually, on the contrary the other kids showed even interest towards him.

I also asked the first interviewee whether she would have preferred to put her children in a local or the French school if her children were enough old to attend school. She explained to me that she would have chosen the French school and that her child will actually start the French school in autumn 2011 at the age of three. She wants her child to socialize with other French children in order to learn more French. So far, this child has been going to Finnish daycare and has even learned some words in Finnish.

#### *Early childhood education-department*

The organization of the services was a big challenge to early childhood education-department as it was not prepared for the big demand. It was assumed that all the OL3-project's children would go to Areva's school at the age of two or three and until then stay home with the mothers. Several families have requested to have day care for their children, in total about 20 children, who were younger than three years. The mothers wished to have some time of their own, and found it important that the children would be surrounded by other children. The town offered halftime daycare, but the families requested for full time daycare on two or three days per week.

The families have been actively using also the services of open day care. During the autumn 2010 there were about 20 families using this service. The English Kindergarten is the only international daycare in Rauma. It only accepts children who have already turned three years and due to this it did not really serve the needs of the expatriate families.

In some of the families both of the parents work and in general their work days are long. Consequently some children, from six to four kids, have needed afternoon care after Areva's school. These children have been offered evening care.

In the daycares for kids less than three-year-olds, the nannies have considered the foreign families and especially the use of a foreign language from time to time difficult. Also the nursing and comforting of the child has been difficult as there is no common language.

The town has aimed at putting several French families' children into the same daycare. This way the families have gotten to know each others, as well as some local families. The users of the daycare services have been introduced to the Finnish daycare system, the Finnish way of functioning and partly to some Finnish families.

As the families' missions have very different lengths, it has been challenging to plan the children's day care and education. Some of the families have stayed in Finland already for a long time and might even stay for good.

More attention could have been paid on the internationality if the town and the early childhood education would have been aware of the amount of foreign children demanding daycare. OL3-project has brought of course French but for example also Polish and Estonian children to the day cares of Rauma. These children and families have made the daycare services more international. The daycares wished to serve the families better, for example translate some brochures or documents, but unfortunately the daycares were not offered help for this. The daycares have tried to manage by themselves and translate some of the papers in English.

The early childhood education department stated that the town should definitely offer translation help for the translation of the brochures and forms. Also, in order to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings, a translator should be present when the child starts at a Finnish day care or when the daycare has a meeting with the parents. This possibility should be offered not only to the expatriates but also the immigrants.

I have been asked a couple of times to participate in parent-teacher or teacher-pupil meetings at school. The child was French and even though it was clear and obvious that he understood a lot of Finnish already, the teacher wanted to make sure that there were no problems or misunderstandings. The presence of an interpreter made both parties feel more comfortable and confident. In addition, I have also worked as interpreter at the swimming hall during the swimming courses, informed the French about the upcoming courses and helped with the information exchange. The main purpose was to translate the swimming instructions and be there for the French kids

aged from four to eight years. The parents were able to leave their children as they knew that someone understood their children in case something went wrong.

## 8 RECOMMENDATIONS

### 8.1 How to have a successful expatriate experience?

If a company that send employees abroad for foreign assignments and notices that the expatriation very often ends prematurely or that the employees are not giving their full input, the company should change its expatriate training methods and expatriate selection policies. More value should be given to the importance of cross-cultural training. Not only can the expatriates work more efficiently after having had a proper training but also the possibility of premature ending of the expatriation can be lessened.

Every company that has foreign assignments should offer its expatriates and their families a proper training, a rich info package and support. The family should get help once arrived in the destination. It is obvious that if there is a language difference, the families need help simple even due to that.

The survey showed that the majority of the respondents did not get appropriate training or help during the expatriation. The expatriation as itself is already extremely expensive which should be an enough big reason for the companies to at least provide proper training and support for the whole family.

Also, the families should be open-minded and flexible. The quote “In Rome do as the Romans do” describes my thoughts very well. The families need to be prepared for big changes in their lives; life abroad is not the same as in their home country. The interviewees were both in Finland for almost two years. They both found it up to the expatriates to make their experience a success. These expatriates strongly agreed that the families need to have an open mind and do their best to adjust to the new way of

life. In their opinion, the town and company's help is secondary even though it was highly appreciated; the biggest support needs to come from the family itself and from its positive attitude towards the expatriation.

The interviewees stated that in order to succeed, the expatriates need to give their all and put themselves into the game. This means not staying at home with the children but putting the kids into a school or daycare, socializing with other people and making new friends and contacts. Any made effort, a few words in the host country's language or in English, asking help or advice from strangers, is a step towards a successful expatriation.

## 8.2 Feedback and improvement suggestions for the town of Rauma

Once I received the summary sent by Kaarina Nurmi, I realized that the town's different service sectors have been affected by the OL3-project in one way or another. These sectors were able to see what could have been done differently, what was challenging and where they would have needed help. I find it extremely important that all the service sectors would sit down and evaluate their own performance. This way they will know what could be continued the same way and what needs to be improved. The employees of each sector have faced the challenges on daily basis and they are the ones to indicate the problem areas.

In general, the families who participated in the survey were extremely happy with the way that Rauma has welcomed them to this town. Some said that the town has done even more than expected.

The improvement suggestions are not directed only to the town of Rauma. There are simple things that could make the life of these expatriates easier. Everyone needs to go to the super market and buy daily assumptions and food: why not make this purchasing experience a bit easier to the expatriates? Personally, I have noticed during these past couple of years that some super markets have started taking this new target group into consideration. The product ranges have become more extensive and more French products are now sold. At the cashier, the customers are



indicated in several languages instructions about the payment. This is great but why can it not start already in the shop before the payment procedure?

Some of the expatriates explained that they were having trouble at the fruit and vegetable section, where the goods need to be weighed. There is always a little sign with the name of the product written in Finnish and on this sign the reference number of this product is indicated. Once using the scale to weigh the product, the customer needs to know to reference of this product. But what can the customer do if he or she does not understand the name of the product in Finnish? Luckily there are some peer consumers who are willing to help, some just decide to guess and hope to guess correctly. One of the expatriates had a suggestion for this problem. The super markets could put on the sign or on the scale the pictures of the products. In my opinion, some super markets have this.

In the survey the expatriates were specifically asked if they had any suggestions for the town of Rauma. Overall, the feedback was very positive and the families felt that the town did a lot for them and was very welcoming. Almost everyone who had improvement suggestions wished to get information about the cultural or sports events in English or in French. They noticed very often that they were not getting the information and sometimes heard from someone by accident about an upcoming event. This type of event and holiday calendar in English could be easily added on the website of Rauma. From there all the foreigners living in Rauma could get the information.

An info leaflet in English with more information about the doctors, dentist and healthcare was also asked for. In this one the town could also add information for example about the parking and daycare. If possible, the town could try to organize more Finnish events or activities during the weekends as there is not much things to do in Rauma during that time. During these activities the expatriates would also get to chance to meet more local people.

Some of the expatriates' children go to Finnish daycare or participate in different activities or sport's clubs. Unfortunately the letters sent home are normally in

Finnish. The families wish that these letters could be in English in order for them to understand the message. Some families have started using Google translator or dictionary to translate the letters which is really time consuming and can give a completely wrong idea about the content of the message.

The town needs to include the expatriates in its official strategy and try to provide more help and support. During an international project like OL3 which brought thousands of foreigners to this town, there should definitely be few people whose only job would be to help the expatriates with their problems.

## 9 FINAL WORDS

After this long writing process which started in February 2010, I am finally able to say that this study was successful. Despite the fact that it took more time than expected, this study made it possible to know more about the expatriate families' opinions and the town's performance as a host for these families. The subject of the study was extremely interesting to me and that was the main reason why the topic was originally chosen. However, the subject is quite broad and several others aspects could have been studied.

The thesis could have been done faster but I do not think that it would be the same as now. During the time that this thesis was being written, one thing got clear and confirmed; the OL4 will be built in Olkiluoto, Eurajoki, in the near future. This piece of information made this thesis even more important and valuable. The construction of the fourth nuclear power plant in the Rauma region is again another big challenge for the citizens, town, clubs and other actors. Hopefully the OL3-project has taught everyone what could and should be done better next time.

As any other process, also this process could have been done differently. The process was very long and unfortunately the thesis took very long time to be finished. I was working at the same time and I was not able to devote myself completely to the

thesis. Once the survey was launched and some setbacks were overcome, things started rolling again. At the end of the thesis writing process, I started getting new ideas of whom to contact, what to study, etc. At that point of the process it was too late and impossible to add several new aspects in the thesis; the subject of this thesis needed to be limited and the borders had to be drawn somewhere. This was one of the hardest challenges during the process.

As already explained, during my studies at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences, I participated in the “Research Methods” course with the fellow students. We were given important advice on writing the thesis and about the process. We were constantly told “Write every day and keep a thesis diary!”. I did as I was told but only in the beginning. To my regret I have to admit that I did not follow the given instructions as strictly as I should have. My personal advice to all the students who have their thesis still ahead of them is to do as the teachers and thesis supervisors say. They know how the process should go and why the students might lose their motivation in the middle of the writing process. The more one puts daily time and effort into the thesis, the faster it will be ready and done. This way the subject of the thesis stays interesting and fresh in the writer’s mind.

The online survey was used in order to reach as many families as possible and to get reliable information. All of the families answered the same questions which made it easier to make conclusions and compare the answers. The families were able to take their time at home and answer the survey in their own language. As the replies were very abundant, the biggest challenge of this thesis was to set boundaries and limit the subject.

The study confirmed the assumption that the families are not taken enough into consideration by the companies or the town. The solution would be better communication in English or even in the expatriates’ native language, perhaps a contact person who will be helping the families in the beginning of their stay.

This study brought up new ideas for studies. In the end of the thesis writing process, I noticed that the Adult Education Centre’s activities are probably considered as the

town's activities. The Adult Education Centre has been able to welcome and integrate the expatriate families by organizing activities, language courses, language help, etc. Further studies could be made about the Adult Education Centre and the challenges that it faced during the OL3-project, the actions taken and its preparation for OL4. Its performance and ability to react have been excellent.

The OL3-project will be soon followed by the OL4-project. The results of this study can be used in the future to succeed even better in welcoming the expatriate families. The town should definitely try to do better during the next project as now it has become clear that the town has not taken the families really into consideration. These families are staying in Rauma for several years and that is why their opinions are important and need to be valued. The town of Rauma should definitely plan a strategy for managing the expatriate families.

I strongly believe that the fact that this thesis was done and the town was contacted, the different employees of the town woke up and realized that some things need to be changed or improved. I hope to have evoked some sort of discussion within the different services. As already by answering to my email questions for example the early childhood department was able to identify several challenges. What would they be able to notice if they gave it a bit more thought?

I also think that now it would be the right time for the town of Rauma to draw conclusions about its own performance, success, strengths and weaknesses during this OL3-project. The employees of different sectors who have been in contact with the expatriate families and who have been influenced by the increasing internationality should be listed. Those people are the ones who can help the town to improve its performance. For example the nannies face enough challenges when they suddenly start to take care of young children with whom they do not share a common language. I feel that the least that should be offered to these nannies is translations of the different forms and available interpreter service in case it is needed.

The town needs to evaluate its performance until now during this international project. Before any plans will be done for the OL4-project, we all need to wait and

see which nationality the OL4's main contractor and its subcontractors will present as the nationality might bring us even bigger challenges.

This thesis has given me the possibility to open the eyes of the town and show the expatriates that someone cares about their opinions. Moreover, it allowed me to look deeper into a subject that I found extremely interesting. I am satisfied with the outcome and thankful for all the help and encouragement that I got, especially from the thesis' supervisor Nea Saarinen and the positive expatriate women.

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APPENDIX 1

Dear Expatriate,

I thank you already in advance for the time and effort invested in replying to this questionnaire. This questionnaire is conducted in order to find out how the expatriate families have adjusted and integrated in Rauma - and to see if you feel that the assignment has been a success.

The information gotten from this questionnaire will be used for my thesis but everything will be kept anonymous.

---

1) Nationality

---

2) How many children do you have?

---

3) Please indicate their ages:

---

4) In which town are you living?

Rauma

Eurajoki

Pori

Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

5) How long time have you been in Finland?

---

6) Is the expatriate employee the father or the mother of the family?

Father

Mother

7) Do you also work in Finland?

Yes

No

8) Did you work in your own country before the expatriate assignment?

Yes

No

9) On how many expatriate assignments have you been?

---

10) How long time have they lasted?

---

11) What were the main reasons for you when choosing to accept the international assignment?

---

---

12) What were your expectations of the assignment?

---

---

13) Have your expectations been met?

Yes

No

14) Did the expatriate employee from your family get any training or preparation before the assignment?

Yes

No

15) Did the entire family get training or preparation before the assignment?

Yes                  No

16) If yes, please describe what kind of training.

---

---

17) Was the training useful?

Yes                  No

18) If yes, please describe how it was useful and why it was needed?

---

---

19) What were the main issues that you felt difficult in the adjustment process?

---

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20) How did you overcome these issues?

---

---

21) How did these issues impact the adjustment process?

---

---

22) Did you get help in overcoming the problems?

Yes                  No

23) If yes, from whom and what kind of help?

---

24) From whom would you have wanted and needed help?

---

25) What made the adjustment easier in the new country, culture and environment?

Friends  
The expatriate community  
The company  
Family  
Local people  
Pre-departure training  
Other? Please specify:

---

26) Has the company participated and supported enough the whole family in its adjustment?

Yes            No

27) Improvement suggestions for the company:

---

---

28) Improvement suggestions for the town:

---

---

29) What are the main cultural differences that you have noticed between your country of origin and Finland?

---

---

30) Free speech:

---

---

31) Would you be available for a one-on-one or a group interview?

Yes            No

32) If yes, please write your e-mail address or phone number:

---

33) Would you like to be informed about the findings of this research?

Yes

No

I thank you for your time and the answers!

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Pauliina Kivimäki

Tel.:

pauliina.kivimaki@student.samk.fi

Satakunta University of Applied Sciences/ IBML06

## APPENDIX 2

Chères expatriées,

Je vous remercie d'avance pour le temps et les efforts investis en répondant à ce questionnaire. Ce questionnaire est élaboré dans l'objectif de savoir comment les familles d'expatriés se sont adaptées et intégrées à Rauma - et de voir si vous estimez que cette mission a été un succès.

Les informations obtenues à partir de ce questionnaire seront utilisées pour ma thèse « L'adaptation des familles expatriées », vos réponses restant anonymes.

Ce questionnaire est destiné aux expatriées qui vivent en Finlande dans la région de Satakunta et qui sont soit Françaises, soit qui ont vécu longtemps en France.

Pour répondre, je vous prie de cocher les cases appropriées ou d'écrire la réponse.

1) Nationalité

---

2) Combien d'enfant avez-vous?

---

3) Merci d'indiquer leur âges:

---

4) Dans quelle ville habitez-vous?

Rauma

Eurajoki

Pori

Ailleurs? Veuillez préciser: \_\_\_\_\_

5) Combien de temps avez-vous passé en Finlande?

---

6) Le salarié expatrié, est-il le père ou la mère de la famille?

Père

Mère

7) Travaillez-vous en Finlande?

Oui

Non

8) Travailliez-vous dans votre pays avant de partir en expatriation?

Oui

Non

9) Combien de fois êtes-vous partis en expatriation ?

---

10) Combien de temps ont-elles durées vos missions?

---

11) Quelles étaient les raisons principales pour lesquelles vous avez fait le choix d'accepter la mission à l'étranger?

---

---

12) Quelles étaient vos attentes de la mission?

---

---

13) Est-ce que vos attentes sont satisfaites?

Oui

Non

14) Est-ce que le salarié expatrié de votre famille a participé à une formation ou une préparation avant la mission?

Oui

Non

15) Est-ce que toute la famille a participé à une formation ou une préparation avant la mission à l'étranger?

Oui Non

16) Si oui, merci de préciser quel type de formation ou préparation.

---

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17) Est-ce que la formation ou la préparation vous a été bénéfique?

Oui Non

18) Si oui, merci d'indiquer comment cela vous a aidé et pourquoi aviez-vous besoin de la formation ou de la préparation ?

---

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19) Quelles étaient les questions délicates ou difficiles au sein du processus d'adaptation ?

---

---

20) Comment avez-vous surmonté ces problèmes?

---

---

21) Comment ces problèmes ont-ils influencés le processus d'adaptation ?

---

---

22) Avez-vous obtenu de l'aide pour surmonter ces problèmes?

Oui Non



23) Si oui, de qui et quel genre d'aide?

---

24) De qui auriez-vous voulu et eu besoin d'aide?

---

25) Existait-il quelque chose rendant l'adaptation plus facile dans le pays, la nouvelle culture et l'environnement?

Les amis

La communauté des expatriés

La société

La famille

La population locale

La formation pré-départ

Autres? S'il vous plaît, veuillez préciser.

---

26) L'entreprise a-t-elle participée et soutenue suffisamment toute la famille dans son adaptation?

Oui

Non

27) Suggestions d'amélioration pour l'entreprise :

---

---

28) Suggestions d'amélioration pour la ville:

---

---

29) Quelles sont les principales différences culturelles que vous avez remarquées entre votre pays d'origine et la Finlande?

---

---

30) Commentaires éventuels:

---

---

31) Seriez-vous disponible pour une interview ou un entretien en groupe?

Oui          Non

32) Si oui, merci d'indiquer votre adresse e-mail ou votre numéro de téléphone.

---

33) Souhaitez-vous être informée des résultats de cette recherche?

Oui          Non

Je vous remercie encore pour votre temps accordé et vos réponses. Si vous avez des questions, n'hésitez pas à me contacter.

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*Questions sent by e-mail to Mr. Julien Biet*

Sent to Bouygues Travaux Publics' Administration and Finance Manager Mr. Biet on 23 November 2010

- How many expatriates have had their families (spouses and/or children) come along on expatriation? How many percent?
- How does Bouygues Travaux Publics prepare its expatriates before they are sent abroad?
- Are the expatriates offered some sort of training or something similar? If yes, is the training offered only for the expatriate employee or for the family as well?
- How does Bouygues Travaux Publics try to support the expatriate family?

The questions were sent in French.

*Questions sent by e-mail to Kaarina Nurmi and Heli Kajaala*

Sent on 17 February 2010.

- What kind of challenges the town of Rauma has faced due to the OL3 expatriate families? (Healthcare, hobbies and activities, communication, school, etc.)
- How has the town tried to help these families in the adjustment?
- How has the internationality been taken into consideration?
- What has the OL3-project taught the town of Rauma? What could the town do better when we think about the OL4-project?

The questions were sent in Finnish.

*Questions sent by e-mail to Heli Kajaala*

Sent on 17 February 2010.

- What kind of challenges the town of Rauma and the Adult Education Centre have faced due to the OL3 expatriate families?
- How has the Adult Education Centre tried to help or take into consideration these families?
- How has the internationality been taken into consideration?
- Has the OL3-project taught the Adult Education Centre something? Do you think that something could be done better for OL4?
- Have the expatriates participated in the language courses organized by the Adult Education Centre? Have there been language or communication problems during the courses?

The questions were sent in Finnish.

*Interview questions/themes to first interviewee:*

- Maternity clinic and pregnancy during expatriation
- Healthcare
- Abandoning her own job for the husband's expatriation
- Unknown length of the mission and its consequences
- Finnish or French school?
- Adjustment
- Challenges

*Interview questions/themes to second interviewee:*

- Abandoning her own job for the husband's expatriation
- Unknown length of the mission and its consequences
- Finnish or French school? Why Finnish school? Its advantages and challenges
- Daycare
- Adjustment

Dear expatriates,

In November/December 2010 you participated in a survey which was conducted in order to find out how the expatriate families have adjusted and integrated themselves in Rauma. Moreover, the research aimed at revealing the main reasons for going abroad as expatriates, and the challenges that the families have faced.

Below you may find a summary of the survey results.

\*\*\*\*\*  
32 families filled in the questionnaire form. In every family, the working parent was the father of the family. The results showed that many of the women gave up their jobs in order to go abroad as a family. Only four of the 32 spouses did not work before the expatriation.

**Reasons for accepting expatriation**

The main reasons for going abroad as expatriates were *career advancement and professional experience, money, new culture and country.*

The expatriates were intrigued by the new culture and country, and new experiences. The idea of family life abroad and experiencing all these things together was motivating. The enriching cultural discoveries for the whole family were one of the top reasons why the families decided to accept their foreign assignment. Expatriation was a safe adventure and an opportunity to experience something completely different.

Most of the families wanted to come to Finland because they expected the mission to offer them *better quality of family life, a good and secured living environment for the children, and more activities.* Some families thought that they would have more time together abroad but soon noticed that the expatriates were very much tied to their



demanding jobs. Money enabled the spouse to stay home with the children and in general the quality of life was better due to the expatriation.

Also, the need to use a *foreign language* for everyday things was interesting. Some were excited to see how they would be able to *integrate themselves and adapt to the new environment*.

When asked if their expectations were met, only five responded “no”. The rest, 28 families, agreed that their expectations were met.

### **Preparation and training pre-expatriation**

One survey respondent also explained that their company sent them on *an orientation week* to Finland four months before the expatriation. The purpose was to get to know with the living and working environment. In addition, this family participated in *intercultural training* after having stayed four months in Finland. This family states that the training and orientation week allowed them to see concretely both negative and positive aspects of living in Finland. Also, they had the chance to visit the school that their child was going to attend. The intercultural training made it easier to understand why it is difficult to adapt to this Nordic country.

Unfortunately, this type of ideal preparing and training is not offered to every family. Some other families have been sent to Rauma without knowing where they were going to stay and what they would need to take with them.

In fact, according to the survey answers *only nine of the 32 expatriate employees received some sort of training before the mission*. The families of six of these expatriates got to also participate in training. After analyzing the additional information given by the respondents, it turned out only four expatriate employees got really training before the expatriation. One of the families got reading material, two employees got technical training, and two families got training after their expatriation had already started.

The ones who really got training or even these info booklets felt that it was very useful.

For some expatriates the training was strictly technical and job related. This was considered necessary because working for the new project without more information on the nuclear power plant type etc. would not have been possible.

### **Cultural differences experienced by the French families**

In the survey the expatriates were asked to identify the main cultural differences between Finland and their own country. The most important differences were the *Finnish cuisine, the behavior of the Finns, the climate, the amount of affordable activities offered to children and adults, the daily rhythm and shops and restaurants' opening hours and the language.*

#### *Finnish food, opening hours and daily rhythm*

Most of the expatriates experienced difficulties during their assignment due to the Finnish food. The food was very different and the meal times very different from what they were used to with. The families needed to learn that the food was not served as late in the restaurants as in their own country.

Also the opening hours of the supermarkets and shops are different in Finland. In France, the shops are often closed for couple of hours during the day around lunch time and then stay open later in the evening. For example the shops and boutiques in old Rauma close quite early which was unfamiliar to the expatriates.

The daily rhythm is very different in Finland. In Finland a very normal work day starts at 8 am and ends at 4 pm. In France, the day starts a bit later, there is often a lunch break of few hours in order to go home to have lunch with the family or meet with friend for lunch, and the day ends a lot later. As the families get home later, they also eat the dinner or supper quite late in the evening. Once the Finns are going to bed, the French are still enjoying the long diner with their family or friends. The

expatriates explained that they needed time to get used to with the different daily rhythm, new meal times and working hours.

### *Finnish people*

Finns are very often known as a shy and cold nation. The Finnish people do not talk too much, they can be said to be distant and more discrete. Some of the expatriates stated that the locals are very kind and helpful, but still they more reserved than the Latinos. Few expatriates replied that in their opinion the Finns have been very welcoming, warm hearted, always on time and punctual.

### *The environment*

The climate, cold weather and bright summer, was also a surprise to many families. The amount of snow had actually an influence on the daily life. While it is really cold, the families had to stay in sometimes, shovel snow, cycle or drive the car in a snowy weather; these were quite new things to the expatriates. The expatriates admired the way the locals respect the nature and the environment. In their opinion, Finland is a very calm and secured place to live in, especially Rauma. As one of the expatriates put it: "Less people less stress.". The families considered Finland as a safe, quiet and calm place to raise their children. Finland is a place where everything is "made for children".

### *Activities*

The expatriates were happy that there are a lot of activities offered for the kids and adults. These activities are available for everyone but the people have to just find out what is offered and by whom. Finland is known for its education system and citizens who speak several languages. Many of the respondents said that they were impressed by the language skills and at the same time shocked by the language barrier that they faced once they arrived to Finland. These families did not speak Finnish and some barely English. They knew that they were going to face difficulties because of the lack of language skills.

The day care and schooling systems were very much respected as well.

### *Traditions and habits*

The answers showed that the French expatriates thought Finnish people to have more respect for traditions, rules and regulations. French have often a larger social network and the families have a lot of friends with whom they spend a lot of time. Some respondents had noticed that the Finns stay more with their own family and also the relationship with the children is different.

The expatriates had noticed that the Finns take their shoes off when entering the homes. This is not normal in France and surprised some of the families.

Another reason for cultural shock was the Finns' nudity. Finns are known for the Sauna and the crazy people who roll in the cold snow after the Sauna. Few of the expatriate wives told me that they were shocked when they first went to sauna with other Finnish women and noticed that the women did not wear any towels around themselves but went naked into the sauna. This unexpected nudity was faced also at the swimming hall where the swimmers are not allowed to wear their swimsuits before they have taken a shower. This was a big step for some women who were not used to with this type of nudity.

### *Language*

According to the survey results, the biggest problems experienced during the expatriation were language related. As the families did not speak Finnish, they were lucky to be in Finland where most of the locals speak or at least understand English. The problem was the lack of language skills. The challenge for many families was English but at the same time, some families were excited to learn some more English and the basics of Finnish. One of the respondents explained that her language skills have definitely improved but yet she does not speak very well English. Still, she is happy when she notices that she is being understood and the others get her point.

As mentioned, almost every respondent agreed that the Finnish language was a big barrier but fortunately, they were able to overcome this challenge by speaking English or learning a bit of Finnish. Of course they needed to get used to with speaking in English or using basics of Finnish which was not easy either. By using even little words in Finnish, the French showed that they were trying and due to this they were treated differently. Some of the spouses participated in language courses. In addition, a simple dictionary or Google translator was a savior for many. The translation of letters etc. offered by the employer often helped with the language problems. Due to the language barrier, a few families felt like they were not able to take the most out of the local activities.

Several expatriates felt that putting the children into a Finnish school was a good solution and helped in the adaptation. This helped in creating contacts with the locals and other people. Also participation in different sorts of activities and sports clubs was considered helpful. Contact with the local people was considered very valuable and helpful. Several challenges were overcome by searching for information and simply by asking others. Different types of Finnish-French websites offer their own type of support and source of information.

#### *The expatriate community*

The expatriate community was seen as a support and as a threat. Unfortunately sometimes the women feel that in these groups they should never show that their families have experienced difficulties or problems. Despite this very often every woman finds someone to talk to and to trust. The children find other kids in the same situation to play with. The results of the survey showed that friends and other expatriates who are going through the same issues were helping in overcoming the challenges. Going through the challenges together made it natural for them to start bonding and trusting each others.

The integration to a new society in a new country was problematic for some families, mostly because of the language. Some of the spouses found it challenging to go out and make new contacts and they were afraid of closing themselves in their homes

and becoming lonely. The expatriates found that in the beginning of their stay they felt homesick, isolated, trapped home and frustrated because they were not understood. Once they started integrating themselves to the new society or into the French community, the life in Finland got easier. With time they made friends and contacts that helped when it was needed.

### **Overcoming challenges**

The only way to overcome some of the problems faced during an expatriation, such as the weather and climate, is to adapt. It is not easy but there is no other solution than to accept the differences. Even if the expatriates are able to overcome the challenges, they might have an influence on the adaptation, for example make the adaptation more difficult, slower or harder.

Eight respondents from 32 replied “No” when asked whether they got any help to overcome the experienced problems or challenges.

The expatriates were asked where they got help to overcome the challenges and problems that they have faced in the beginning or during their expatriation – local people, other expatriates and the company’s help were clearly appreciated. The answers showed that most of the expatriates relied on the help of the Finnish people and the other expatriates who were facing the same issues. The Finns were the ones who could help concrete way and the other expatriates were the trusted ones. Also, the employers have people to take care of the well-being of the families and to help them when it is needed. This was much appreciated. The website “Rauma des Français”(<http://raumafrance.blogspot.com/>), employees of the Adult Education Centre and children’s daycares, like Sinilintu, were said to be very helpful and useful as the people always tried to help out, give information and contacts to the expatriates.

Seven of the 32 respondents did not feel that they would have wanted help from someone that they did not get it. 11 of them would have wanted the employer to participate more. More than 34 % of the expatriates thought that the company could

have been more present and helpful. Many respondents suggested that the companies should have some sort of welcoming group that would take care of the family and its well-being in the beginning. Now the families felt that they needed to ask and of course they would have preferred that someone would have asked and showed that they care. Also, the company could have helped the new comers to get in contact with the expatriates already present in the town.

In addition, 20% indicated that they would have needed a language course: either before coming to Finland or during the mission. The course could have been Finnish or English course taught preferably in French. Both, one or the other would have been useful. As many of the families have small children who are too young for school or daycare, they would have needed a language course where kids could have come along. Also, the families would have needed more help for the healthcare and administrative issues.

### *Adaptation*

When asked what made the adaptation easier to the new country, culture and environment, 20 expatriates answered The French community. For three families it was the family itself that made the adaptation a bit easier, for four families the local people and for two families the people working at school or with the children. The pre-departure language training was also experienced very useful by the expatriates who got it. Also friends were mentioned as a source of support. The results show that the support and help gotten from the expatriate community was extremely valued and useful. As a result we can conclude that the companies should use this and make sure that the new comers are immediately integrated and welcomed by the ones who are already present in the destination.

17 out of 32 families, 53 percent, of the expatriates who replied to the survey, felt that the company did not participate or support the family enough in the adaptation. This result is quite alarming and shows that the companies should really change their welcoming policy.

The expatriates were given a possibility to give improvement suggestions for the employers. When reading through the answers a couple of themes were more clearly represented: intercultural and language training, help with administration, contact with other expatriates and locals and paying more attention to the families. Several answered asked for intercultural training before departure abroad or once arrived to the destination. Language courses would have been useful before or during the assignment. The welcoming books should be given by every company to their expatriates and they should be in French and updated every once and a while. Some expatriates suggested that companies should have an employee who speaks the expatriates' language and who is reachable by phone when needed.

Some of the women said that they wish that the company would have helped them to find a job in Finland. Unfortunately, finding a job was a problem for many expatriate spouses. The expatriates also suggested the companies should organize more meetings, activities, get-togethers and evenings for the expatriates. More communication is needed and the families should be taken more into consideration.

\*\*\*\*\*

I have also been in contact with the town of Rauma and the Adult Education Centre. The Adult Education Centre has been very pleased to welcome so many of you on the courses. The different service sectors of the town, for example the daycares, have been able to identify some difficulties which were also mentioned in your survey answers. The challenges very mainly language related.

I would like to thank you once again for your replies which enabled this study to be successful. I wish you all a sunny spring and much success for the rest of your expatriation!

Best regards,

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