Facilitating Access to Essential Integration Services in Finland: Guide Leaflet

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Abstract

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This development-based thesis aimed to create a comprehensive guide leaflet for essential integration services in Finland, specifically designed to assist international healthcare students and professionals during their initial months in the country. Undertaken in collaboration with Fintrust Company, the project sought to promote support for newcomers, benefiting both the target audience and the company itself. The thesis encompassed a written report and a practical guide leaflet, supported by a theoretical exploration of immigrant integration dynamics, challenges faced by newcomers to Finland, and the significance of cultural competence. Information for the guide leaflet was meticulously formatted from service providers' websites and subjected to evaluation based on the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. The "Welcome to Finland" guide leaflet serves as a comprehensive resource for accessible integration services. The front-page features links to community centers in the Helsinki metropolitan area and promotes conscious and sustainable living. On the back of the leaflet, the integration process is outlined in three sequential stages: pre-arrival preparation with essential mandatory services linked, services available upon arrival, and post-settlement support in Finland. Each stage is designed to meet the unique needs of international healthcare students and professionals, while also providing valuable insights for all newcomers to Finland. The findings underscored the pivotal role of integration team support, with Fintrust's comprehensive assistance spanning from university applications to post-arrival guidance. The evaluation highlighted the critical importance of pre-existing knowledge and collaborative efforts for a seamless transition into Finnish society. This study underscores the indispensable nature of accessible integration services and advocates for concerted collaboration between service providers and integration teams. The guide leaflet emerges as a valuable resource in facilitating this integration process, offering essential information and guidance to international healthcare students and professionals navigating their entry into Finnish society.

Keywords: International Healthcare students, immigrant’s challenges, integration services, support system, guide leaflet.

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1 Introduction

My thesis is a development-based thesis with the title" Facilitating Access to essential integration services in Finland: Guide Leaflet". The idea arose when I did my work development skills placement in a company called Fintrust, a company dedicated to assisting healthcare students and professionals in their transition to Finland for study and work, this company collaborates with various universities in Finland to streamline the integration process for newcomers.

This thesis is motivated by my passion for empowering immigrant families, aiming to facilitate their successful integration into Finnish society. It outlines objectives, methodology, theoretical framework, and development plan for creating an information leaflet.

The leaflet is designed to swiftly connect newcomers with vital integration services and address the immediate social and mental challenges they face. Citing The National Institute of Health and Welfare in Finland (2024), the thesis aligns with authorities' efforts to enhance well-being, health, education, and employment for immigrants.

In Finland, integration is crucial for social cohesion, defined as feeling like an equal resident, having necessary skills, and stable livelihood (Väestöliitto, 2024). Integration is a two-way process aiming for immigrants to feel full societal membership (National Institute of Health and Welfare, 2024).

In addition, to align with global sustainability initiatives, the guidance leaflet actively addresses key United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), promoting eco-friendly practices and fostering a sense of responsibility toward environmental conservation among immigrant families. the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. (United Nations n.d.). By integrating them into the development process, the thesis seeks to enhance the relevance and impact of the guidance leaflet, fostering a conscious and sustainable lifestyle among new arrivals in Finland.

In this report, ChatGPT has been used to edit the language of the text and make the text smoot.

2 Background

Integration in Finland is a multifaceted process deeply rooted in the nation's commitment to social equality and inclusion. Defined by Väestöliitto (2024) as encompassing equal residency, societal participation, essential life organization skills, and stable livelihood, Finland's approach to immigrant integration is shaped by a robust legal framework. This framework, including the Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers, provides the foundation for policies and initiatives aimed at facilitating integration and promoting the well-being of immigrant communities (Integration, 2021). This legal apparatus delineates the responsibilities of various governmental bodies and agencies, signifying a comprehensive approach to integration.

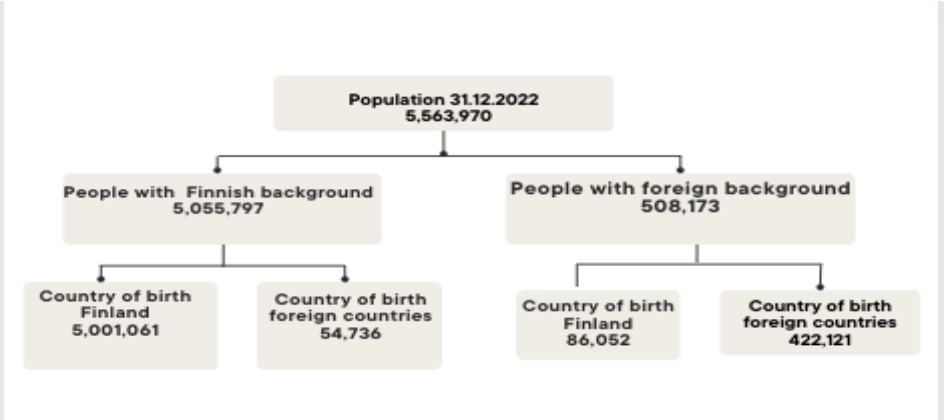

Figure 1: Population of Finland based on origin, country of birth, and language.

In 2022, according to Statistics Finland, (Figure 1) Finland's population stood at 5,563,970. The vast majority, totaling 5,055,797 individuals, hailed from a Finnish background. Within this demographic, 4,778,891 people identified Finnish as their mother tongue, with 287,052 reporting Swedish as their primary language and 2,035 belonging to the Sami community. Conversely, 508,173 individuals were categorized as a foreign background. Among them, 495,992 spoke languages other than Finnish, Swedish, or Sami, reflecting the diverse linguistic landscape within the country. As

At the heart of Finland's integration efforts lies a commitment to equality, non-discrimination, and respect for cultural diversity. These guiding principles permeate through governmental actions and initiatives, underpinning the provision of comprehensive support services. From education to healthcare, employment, and social welfare, Finland's approach emphasizes equal opportunities for all residents, regardless of their cultural or linguistic background. Such services are designed to empower immigrants to actively participate in Finnish society, reflecting a holistic understanding of integration (Ministry of the Interior, 2009).

Crucially, Finland recognizes the agency of immigrants in their integration journey. Minister of Employment Jari Lindström's acknowledgment of the importance of immigrants' roles in integration signifies a shift towards a more inclusive approach. This recognition is not merely rhetorical; it is reflected in tangible policy reforms, exemplified by the ambitious "Integration 2.0" initiative launched by the Finnish government. This initiative aims to rebuild the integration system, placing a stronger emphasis on the active involvement of immigrants in shaping their integration process (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland).

In essence, Finland's integration model embodies a holistic and inclusive approach, emphasizing both the rights and responsibilities of immigrants. By providing comprehensive support services, guided by principles of equality and respect for diversity, Finland strives to foster societal cohesion and promote the well-being of immigrant communities. This approach not only reflects Finland's values of social equality and inclusion but also serves as a testament to its commitment to building a vibrant and multicultural society (Väestöliitto, 2024).

2.1 Development based Thesis:

A development-based thesis focuses on creating practical solutions or applications to address real-world problems or challenges, emphasizing tangible outcomes over purely theoretical or Exploratory research. This type of thesis typically involves activities such as designing, building, implementing, or proposing solutions with direct applicability and impact. (Lunenburg et al. 2008).

It is essential to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical experience to create a functional thesis, as emphasized by Vilkka and Airaksinen (2003, 41-42). They highlight the importance of evaluating practical solutions critically by applying theories and concepts from the field to develop a robust professional culture. I chose a development-based thesis because this approach allows for the direct application of research to real-world issues, improves important skills like project management and problem-solving, and addresses current issues and knowledge gaps. Indeed, collaborating with diverse stakeholders while producing the leaflet offers me interdisciplinary insights, networking opportunities in my field, and practical support to address the unique challenges faced by immigrant families. That allows me to refine more skills while making a positive impact on individuals and communities.

2.2 Working life partner

Founded in 2021, FINTRUST Company is dedicated to facilitating opportunities for students and professionals from around the world to study, work, and integrate in Finland. Through collaboration agreements with top Finnish institutions, FINTRUST offers tailored programs and

support services designed to ease the transition for newcomers and enhance their prospects for success. Organizations and companies like FINTRUST play a vital role in bridging the gap between immigrant families, and essential integration services (Fintrust 2022).

Figure 2: Fintrust Company logo.

The Integration Coordinators at FINTRUST exemplify the company's dedication to supporting immigrant families through their expertise and guidance. Their pivotal role revolves around comprehending the distinct challenges encountered by immigrant families, particularly in education and healthcare, and collaboratively addressing these challenges to facilitate successful integration. Academic and social integration stand as crucial determinants of student success in higher education (Rienties et al., 2014; Severiens et al., 2006).

The demand for employees within the healthcare sector persists across significant parts of the country, with indications suggesting a continuation of similar trends in the future. Given the nature of this work, which places a premium on human interaction and carries substantial responsibilities, training plays a defining role in delineating tasks and division of labour. The sector requires a variety of skilled employees to meet its varied needs (Job Market Finland, 2024).

2.3 Aims of the thesis

During my initial weeks at Fintrust, I noticed integration professionals frequently encountering challenges in explaining the integration process and associated services to newcomers. Despite their dedicated efforts, the team unanimously agreed that developing a leaflet, instructional videos, or other informative resources would significantly improve their efficiency, saving time and energy.

The professionals articulated the need for a comprehensive resource guiding clients on essential services, community engagement, website navigation for finding services or accommodation, and access to Finnish language courses. Such a tool, they believed, would alleviate unnecessary stress and confusion among newcomers. Inspired by this feedback, I took the initiative to develop a guide

leaflet tailored to the company's needs, aimed at supporting their clients in accessing integration services.

The primary goal of this project is to assist international healthcare students by creating a practical and user-friendly guidance leaflet tailored to their specific needs, while also meeting Fintrust's requirement for tools to streamline the efforts of their integration team. The leaflet will focus primarily on facilitating access to essential integration services in the education and healthcare sectors. Additionally, the project aims to assess the impact of the developed leaflet on empowering newcomers and facilitating their successful integration into Finnish society through comprehensive evaluation process.

3 Theory and Framework

The theoretical framework for this thesis is grounded in fundamental concepts related to immigrant integration, support systems, and challenges faced by newcomers to Finland. Several key theories have been identified to deepen the understanding of immigrant integration and empowerment within the context of facilitating access to essential integration services for newcomers in Finland.

3.1 Immigrant Integration and Support System in Finland:

Defining integration remains complex, as it varies depending on the context or country. Yet, in general, immigrant integration is “The process by which migrants become accepted into society, both as individuals and as groups….[Integration] refers to a two-way process of adaptation by migrants and host societies…[and implies] consideration of the rights and obligations of migrants and host societies, of access to different kinds of services and the labour market, and of identification and respect for a core set of values that bind migrants and host communities in a common purpose" (IOM, 2011). Moreover, the process of integration, as described by the Macmillan dictionary (2007), involves becoming a full member of a group or society and fully engaging in its activities, indicating a deep involvement and commitment to the social fabric and norms of the group or society.

Immigrant integration in Finland adheres to the Non-discrimination Act (21/2004), ensuring equality, a fundamental right in Finland, integral to the integration process. This legislation, which prohibits all forms of discrimination (Finlex, 2004), including those based on gender, age, origin, nationality, language, religion, and sexual orientation, plays a crucial role in upholding equality and facilitating immigrant integration.

It is important to note that not every immigrant qualifies for integration support. For example, international students, the target group of this project, do not qualify due to their residence status. Additionally, immigrants who have come to Finland for work or who have secured a job shortly after arrival do not have access to free Finnish language courses, often relying on free courses offered by NGOs. To qualify for integration support, individuals must be 18 years old or above, unemployed, and registered as recipients of unemployment benefits. This support typically lasts only 3 to 5 years from the day of arrival in Finland (Koskela, 2014).
In Finland, immigrant integration is facilitated through a comprehensive set of official services designed to meet the diverse needs of immigrant populations. These official services, complemented by community-based initiatives, NGO programs, and social welfare provisions, form a comprehensive framework aimed at fostering the successful integration of immigrants into Finnish society, promoting social inclusion and participation. (Figure 3)

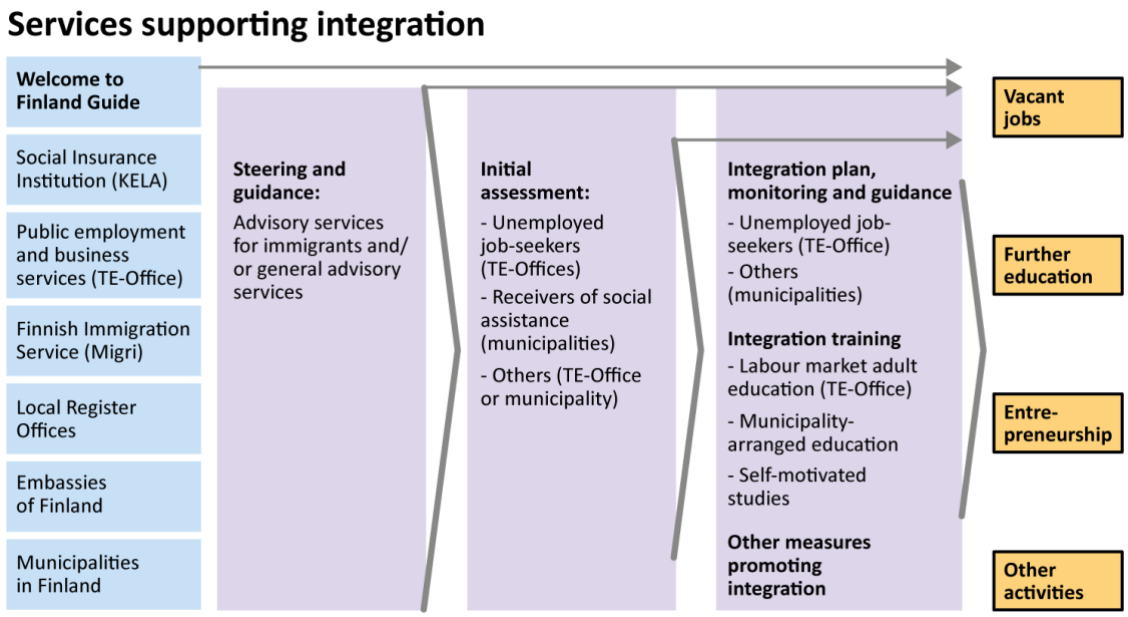

Figure 3: Services supporting individual immigrant integration and the organizations in charge.

Source: Ministry of the Interior & Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2015.

The process of integrating immigrants in Finland relies on a combination of official services, community-based support systems, and collaborative efforts, with a significant emphasis on immigrant involvement. Consequently, the Finnish government is undergoing a comprehensive reform of the Integration Act (681/2023), slated to be enforced from January 1, 2025. This reform grants municipalities an expanded role in integration services provision, focusing on enhancing integration, employment, and social inclusion of immigrants. Notable aspects include faster

integration through early-stage services, municipal oversight of integration services, improved employment prospects for migrant women, enhanced language education quality, and increased involvement of the third sector and liberal adult education (Integration, 2021).

Social capital, defined as the networks, norms, and trust within a community facilitating cooperation for mutual benefit (Putnam, 1993), plays a significant role in the integration process. Immigrant families can navigate integration more successfully by building strong social networks and engaging with community resources. Effective integration thus requires collaboration between official services, community organizations, and immigrant families themselves, leveraging Finland's comprehensive support network to address diverse immigrant needs (Integration, 2021).

3.2 Social and mental challenges faced by immigrants:

Immigrants often encounter a multitude of challenges upon settling in their host country. These challenges may include language barriers, cultural adjustment difficulties, experiences of discrimination, social isolation, and limited access to support networks (Zagelbaum & Carlson, 2010; Nshom, 2023). Language proficiency is crucial for effective communication and integration into society (Hillgren et al., 2021), yet mastering a new language can be time-consuming and challenging. Cultural differences and unfamiliar social norms may also pose obstacles to immigrants' sense of belonging and social integration (Nshom, 2023).
Additionally, discrimination based on nationality, ethnicity, or religion can exacerbate feelings of exclusion and hinder immigrants' ability to fully participate in society (Zagelbaum & Carlson, 2010).

Moreover, social isolation resulting from a lack of established support networks can contribute to feelings of loneliness and alienation among immigrants (Nshom, 2023). Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive support systems and policies that prioritize immigrants' needs and facilitate their integration into the host society.

Moving to Finland brings a mix of challenges and opportunities, as highlighted by Karaoglan, Kara, and Khalimzoda (2022). In their insightful blog on Sky (Finnish intercultural community), they present 10 themes or things every newcomer in Finland should consider. From navigating traffic rules and adapting to Finland's distinct weather patterns to integrating into the local culture through hobbies and voluntary activities, their advice forms a comprehensive guide. They emphasize the importance of networking and building friendships over time, while also stressing the significance of language acquisition, urging newcomers to learn Finnish for better social and professional integration (Karaoglan, Kara, & Khalimzoda, 2022). Practical tips range from daily life etiquette and time management to fostering a sense of trust and community involvement.

Embracing nature and sustainability also stand out as key aspects of Finnish life that newcomers should embrace (Karaoglan, Kara, & Khalimzoda, 2022).

According to Bradley (2000, 417-420), Studying in a foreign country may pose significant challenges for students, leading to stress or depression. These challenges may arise from various sources, such as anxiety about adapting to new environments, meeting personal or family expectations, academic stress, financial worries, relationship difficulties, and feelings of isolation or neglect. These challenges often contribute to the poor mental well-being of international students.

The mental health concerns of these students can be explored from different angles, including psychological disorders, socio-cultural adjustment struggles, limited social support, academic stress, and coping with the study environment's nature. New migrants are economically poor and exploited; hence the members of minority communities within the host society are typically perceived as the key issue according to Turner (2013).

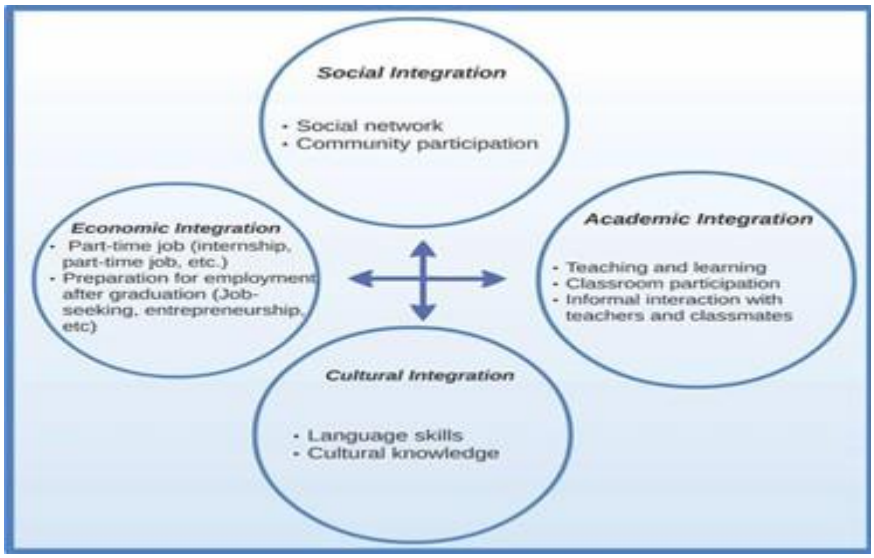

Figure 4: Conceptual Domains of International students' integration (Nordic Journal of Migration Research).

Figure 4 presents the conceptual framework employed in one study to explore the integration experiences of Chinese students in Finland. While the researcher identified the four integration aspects individually, it's important to recognize their interconnectedness and endogenous nature. Progress in one area of integration can significantly impact on the other aspects, demonstrating their interdependency.

Moreover, insufficient social support for international students can aggravate their vulnerability to academic stress, leading to adverse effects on their mental health. International students often grapple with unique challenges such as language barriers, cultural differences, and homesickness, which can amplify the stress associated with academic demands. This heightened stress, when coupled with a lack of social support, can contribute to mental health issues like depression, anxiety disorders, and feelings of isolation.

Therefore, providing Extracurricular activities and social groups are crucial. Engaging in these activities not only aids in acculturation by facilitating cultural exchange but also serves as a stress reliever and enhances social support. These initiatives play a vital role in mitigating academic stress, fostering a sense of belonging, and ultimately promoting the overall well-being and success of international students in their host countries. Insufficient social support for international students can increase their sensitivity to academic stress and negatively impact their mental health, emphasizing the importance of providing extracurricular activities and social groups to aid acculturation (Poyrazli et al., 2004, 73–82; Prieto-Welch 2016, 55).

Fortunately, many universities in Finland including Laurea University of Applied Sciences, have established counselling centers where students can receive confidential assistance from trained professionals. Peer support programs further enhance the support network, with experienced students or volunteers providing guidance and mentorship to newcomers or those facing challenges. Furthermore, Finnish universities organize workshops, seminars, and online resources focused on well-being, stress management, and mental health awareness. These initiatives aim to equip students with the tools and knowledge needed to maintain good mental health. The Stress management course is one of the courses offered by Laurea and my attendance on this course last year was useful. Overall, Finland's proactive approach to student well-being underscores the importance of mental health in academic success and fosters a supportive environment for international students adjusting to a new educational and cultural landscape. Insufficient language skills can compound health concerns, escalating the risk of chronic mental health disorders such as stress, depression, and anxiety (Rao, 2006, 176). Stress expressed as anxiety and pressure is a natural response to the change of culture and surroundings (Mieli 2024).

Drawing on data collected from 103 immigrants living in Finland, the study shows that the challenges immigrants face integrating into Finnish society can be classified into four main categories: language barrier, discrimination in employment opportunities, racism and inequality, and fewer opportunities of integration (Journal of intercultural communication 2022).

Furthermore, Newcomers to Finland, whether students or professionals, typically receive support from their educational institutions or workplaces, which significantly aids in their social

adaptation process. SIMHE network includes all the Universities in Finland that support immigrant education paths and integration. The goal of Supporting Immigrants in Higher Education SIMHE activities is to guide and advise immigrants about higher education and employment in Finland and provide them with career counselling. The purpose is to accelerate the integration of immigrants and help them find employment to match their education (Finnish National Agency for Education 2024). by acknowledging these challenges, the framework emphasizes the imperative of addressing them effectively through targeted interventions while facilitating their access to the services needed.

3.3 Cultural Competence Theory:

Cultural competence in social work practice has many definitions. The National Association of Social Workers (2015) define cultural competence as the "process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, spiritual traditions, immigration status, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each".

Cultural competence is also defined as a set of identical behaviours, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals; enabling that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations (Cross et al, 1989).
Cultural competence refers to the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, spiritual traditions, immigration status, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each (NASW 2018).

Cultural competence is needed in social work, it is about more than just understanding different cultures, and it's about truly connecting with people from diverse backgrounds. It means recognizing and respecting the value of every individual, regardless of their cultural identity. Understanding another culture completely might not be possible, but cultural competence is about always learning and growing. It means staying open-minded and humble, ready to understand others better. "Cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviours, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system or agency or amongst professionals and enable the system, agency, or those professions to work effectively in cross-cultural situations" (National Center for Cultural Competence n.d.).

Cultural competence is crucial when assisting immigrants in their integration process. It involves understanding and respecting their cultural backgrounds and needs. For instance, according to

Mr. Mohamed Ghonam the integration expert from Fintrust with long experience working with immigrants, informing newcomers coming from The Middle East about halal shops where they can find food that aligns with their dietary restrictions, guiding them to nearby places of worship, and being aware of their religious practices can make a significant difference. Additionally, Cultural competence refers to the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, spiritual traditions, immigration status, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each (Fong, 2004; Fong & Furuto, 2001; Lum, 2011).

providing information in their native language, connecting them with community organizations from their cultural background, and offering a cultural orientation to help them understand local customs and norms are all important aspects of practicing cultural competence and delivering a culturally sensitive service in a welcoming and inclusive environment that supports immigrants in their integration journey.

Cultural competence requires social workers to examine their own cultural backgrounds and identities while seeking out the necessary knowledge, skills, and values that can enhance the delivery of services to people with varying cultural experiences associated with their race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, age, or disability [or other cultural factors]" (NASW 2015, 65).

According to Hook et al., (2016). Cultural competence is vital in social services, but there's a noticeable gap between its importance and how it's practiced. Despite knowing the harm of oppression, many social workers unintentionally perpetuate it due to not fully understanding diverse cultures, this results in problems such as discrimination and racism, negatively impacting both social workers and the individuals they serve. As communities become more diverse, social workers must understand and respect different cultures. Without this understanding, discrimination and biases can continue, going against the principles of social justice and equality. This raises questions about whether current training prepares social workers enough for the complexities of diverse societies.

Recognizing the need to challenge oppression and understand privilege (NASW, 2015) shows that cultural competence is crucial for transformative social work. There is room for improvement in how cultural competence is taught and practiced in social services, as it's essential for effective and meaningful support in today's diverse world.

Figure 5: Psychological frameworks for understanding cultural competence. (cross, T.1988)

Figure 5, representing fundamentally, that a professional's cultural competence is shaped by the processes forming their own cultural identities. These identities are influenced by both the professional's perspectives and those of their clients. Recognizing and addressing the differences between clients and professionals is essential for building trust and fostering acceptance in their working relationships. Achieving this level of cultural competence requires professionals to be conscious of their own attitudes and beliefs. They must also acquire the knowledge and skills needed to effectively engage with clients from various cultural backgrounds.

3.4 International Healthcare Students and Professionals in Finland:

When creating the information leaflet to guide access to vital integration services, a clear understanding of the target audience is essential. In this instance, the leaflet is tailored for healthcare students and professionals who have recently relocated to Finland. Many have moved with their families, drawn by Finland's renowned educational and healthcare systems, and are optimistic about securing a brighter future for their loved ones.

Healthcare students and professionals represent a diverse group of individuals who have chosen Finland as their destination to advance their careers or pursue further education in the healthcare sector. This group encompasses medical students, nurses, doctors, pharmacists, and various allied healthcare professionals. They bring a wealth of knowledge, skills, and experiences from their home countries, enriching the cultural diversity within Finland's healthcare landscape. Many have already gained valuable professional experience in their respective countries and aspire to apply their skills and expertise within the Finnish healthcare system. Among this group, healthcare

students may be enrolled in academic programs or undergoing additional training to augment their qualifications and further their careers in Finland. Those students and professionals may encounter challenges related to language barriers, cultural adjustment, navigating the Finnish healthcare system, and accessing essential integration services (Lu, w et al. 2024)

It is essential to recognize the unique needs and circumstances of newcomers transitioning to Finland. They require tailored support and information to facilitate their integration process, both professionally and personally. By addressing their specific needs and providing relevant resources, such as the information leaflet, we aim to help them navigate their unfamiliar environment effectively and contribute meaningfully to the Finnish healthcare sector.

Integration training may also include the identification of previously acquired skills and the recognition of degrees, as well as vocational planning and career guidance. If necessary, immigrants are also taught reading and writing skills. Integration training is implemented as labour market training (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland no date).

4 Guide leaflet of Existing Services and a developmental idea:

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the planning and implementation process for the guide leaflet. It begins by detailing the initial planning stages and subsequently delves into the execution phase. Feedback from professionals is then presented, followed by my own evaluation of the extent to which the guide leaflet achieved the thesis's objectives.

According to Oxford Learner’s Dictionary (2024), a functional guide leaflet is a concise informational document designed to provide practical guidance or instructions on a specific topic or task. It typically includes clear, step-by-step explanations, diagrams, or illustrations to assist readers in understanding and implementing the content effectively. These leaflets are often used in various settings, including healthcare, education, and community organizations, to communicate essential information in a user-friendly format.

All these aspects were taken into consideration when creating the guide leaflet for essential integration services. I wanted to state the objectives and purposes of the chosen method and pay attention to the justification of the chosen themes with the help of theory. I wanted to keep everything simple and compact so that the leaflet would serve the objective of being as low-threshold as possible.

Project stage	
1. Pre-planning	Project idea. Project suggestion. Critical observation. Is the project needed?
2. Planning	Information on the background. Aim and objective. Action plan. Timetable.
3. Execution	Following the project plan. Making changes when appropriate
4. Closing	Presenting the result of the project. Discussing the project journey
5. Monitoring	Collecting feedback. Evaluating if aims and objectives were reached

Table 1: Five stages of a project

(Lööw 2002 & Silfverberg 2007 & Virtanen 2000)

4.1 Pre-planning process of the guide leaflet:

Along with my working life partner, we have recognized a pressing need to develop multimedia resources, including videos, booklets, and leaflets, to support the integration of their clients. These resources aim to serve a range of purposes, from training materials to onboarding guides, benefiting both internal and external stakeholders.

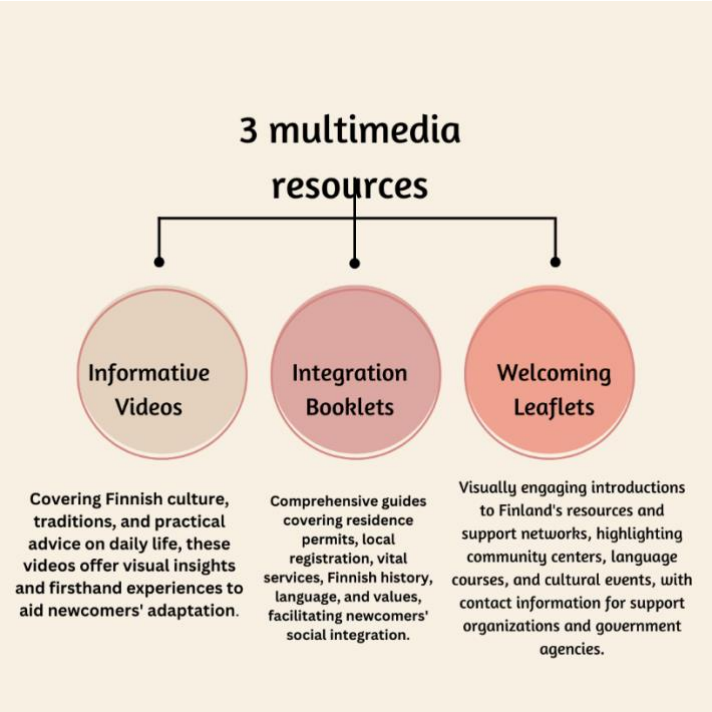

Figure 6: Multimedia resources needed by Fintrust.

Amidst my thesis project's time constraints, I have prioritized crafting a guide leaflet while my partner works on other resources. We aim for efficient assistance to newcomers, recognizing the leaflet's quicker delivery compared to videos or booklets. It is designed for easy access to valuable information through hyperlinks.

4.2 Planning

In the initial phase of implementing my guide leaflet as a thesis project, a comprehensive topic analysis was conducted. This analysis outlined the objectives of the thesis, the chosen methodology, and the foundational literature and knowledge that would inform the project. Subsequently, the topic analysis was presented to the thesis supervisors at Laurea University of Applied Sciences, who provided approval for the topic plan, with final approval granted at the end of January.

Following approval, a detailed thesis plan was crafted, setting the various sections of literature and research to be explored in the final thesis and presented to the thesis supervisors. The development-based thesis method was adopted, with a specific focus on creating a practical guide leaflet. Moreover, a timeline was established, with the ambitious goal of completing the final thesis by May 2024. This plan underwent further scrutiny and refinement, with final acceptance achieved in February 2024.

Six thesis guidance seminars were planned to provide support and feedback on the project's progression. Adhering to instructions and respecting deadlines were crucial elements for the project's success and continual improvement.

During this stage, project evaluation commenced with the gathering of information from multiple sources. This included consulting with integration experts at Fintrust, as well as engaging with their clients and two additional professionals specializing in collaborating with immigrants during their early integration stage. Through discussions with these stakeholders, the project requirements and focus areas of the guidance leaflet were refined, ensuring alignment with the needs and challenges faced by newcomers in Finland.

My project targets healthcare international students and professionals in Finland, primarily English-speaking individuals who are pursuing degrees in English. At the outset, I planned to translate the guide leaflet into Arabic, considering that many of Fintrust's clients come from the Middle East and North Africa. However, due to time constraints during my thesis and after consulting with Fintrust clients, I realized that an Arabic translation was unnecessary. All the students and professionals are proficient in English, which serves as their academic language.

Using an immigrant's native language is crucial for successful integration activities, particularly when dealing with a diverse group of individuals with varying intellectual backgrounds. “Early integration requires utilizing the language skills of the person who has migrated to Finland, right from the beginning of the integration process. In addition, the interaction between the professionals and clients in basic services should support integration” (IOM 2020).

However, it is essential to note that the target group, the international students were unanimous in their agreement that using English was adequate for their needs. While integration efforts aim for unity, research and statistics indicate that the process varies among different migrant groups. Nonetheless, there is a dedicated commitment to translating the other multimedia resources into additional languages as Fintrust expands its outreach to students from other continents. This proactive strategy underscores a commitment to ensure that the information provided remains accessible and valuable to all incoming students, irrespective of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

4.3 Execution

In the development stage of the guide leaflet, we adopt a comprehensive approach, beginning with gathering insights from the integration team of my working life partner and interviewing their clients. This strategy ensures the content is finely tuned to address the specific challenges and needs faced by newcomers in Finland, with a primary focus on accessibility, relevance, and effectiveness. The leaflet itself is meticulously designed to be both comprehensive and concise,

offering essential information in a clear and easy-to-understand format. Each section is logically organized to cover various aspects of the integration process, such as education, healthcare, housing, and social services. The content includes up-to-date contact details links to relevant service providers and links to additional resources, and social media pages ensuring practicality and usefulness. Moreover, the development approach is grounded in principles of cultural sensitivity and inclusivity.

As we moved into February and March, the focus shifted toward content development, utilizing our initial insights, I created content that was clear and easy to understand, while also following established readability and accessibility guidelines (Bradley, 2011).

Bradley (2011) suggests that simplicity can offer benefits based on the target audience, potentially enhancing a product's usability by making it more straightforward to follow and utilize. While a simple design doesn't guarantee usability, it can lower barriers and facilitate independent use. Collaboration with stakeholders was a crucial aspect of this process, as their input ensured that the leaflet addressed their concerns and resonated with their experiences, resulting in a valuable resource tailored to their needs. In crafting the content, we tailored our approach to cater to diverse needs, considering varying demographic segments such as students or professionals accompanying families and singles seeking guidance on various aspects of integration (Saukkonen, 2016).

In March, acknowledging the influence of social media, relevant links were incorporated into our content, aiming to boost engagement among newcomers by offering additional avenues to access information and support. The leaflet is designed to be printed on standard A4 paper, simplifying the printing process, and eliminating the need for additional cutting or trimming. The choice of an A4 size strikes a balance by providing ample space to include information about various service providers while remaining compact enough to be easily manageable for the reader.

For the design, I used PicMonkey platform, known for its user-friendly interface and comprehensive editing features. Welcoming and relevant pictures were selected, with a palette of calming blues and greens with vibrant accents chosen to create a warm and inviting atmosphere, considering the cultural significance of colours to resonate with both Finnish culture and the diverse backgrounds of the newcomers. The leaflet underwent refinement based on feedback, ensuring a streamlined and user-friendly resource.

The title "Welcome to Finland" was chosen to convey a warm and inviting message to newcomers, signalling that they are valued members of the community. An effective guide should clearly outline the anticipated services provided and clarify the responsibilities expected from newcomers, ensuring a smooth integration process (Parkkunen, Vertio & Koskinen-Ollonqvist, 2001). The users

must understand immediately that the text is meant for them. In addition to the headline, the first sentence should tell the meaning of the leaflet (Torkkola et al. 2002, 36). Throughout the execution stage, adherence to ethical standards and copyright regulations was maintained, refraining from incorporating unauthorized material.

4.4 Closing

In the closing stage of our project to produce a guide leaflet for international healthcare students, we focus on presenting the culmination of our efforts. Throughout the development process, we

utilized prototyping and feedback mechanisms to iteratively enhance the leaflet, ensuring its effectiveness in meeting the evolving needs of our target audience. Stakeholder engagement, particularly with international students and the integration team at Fintrust, remained a top priority at every stage, enabling us to continuously refine the content, design, and format of the leaflet.

As we reflect on the project journey, we acknowledge the collaborative efforts of all involved parties. From the initial planning stages to the final execution, each step was guided by a shared commitment to supporting newcomers in their integration journey. Challenges were met with resilience, and lessons learned were embraced as opportunities for growth. The dedication and passion of our team, alongside the invaluable input from stakeholders, have been instrumental in shaping the leaflet into a valuable resource for international healthcare students in Finland.

Moving forward, we recognize the importance of sustaining the impact of our project. By sharing the outcomes of our efforts and engaging in transparent discussions about the project journey, we aim to inspire continued collaboration and innovation in supporting newcomers. Additionally, we remain committed to leveraging the insights gained from this project to inform future initiatives aimed at enhancing the integration experience for international students in Finland.

In conclusion, the closing stage of our project marks not only the completion of the guide leaflet but also the beginning of a new chapter in our ongoing efforts to foster inclusivity and support newcomers in our community. Through effective presentation of the project outcomes and thoughtful reflection on the journey taken, we reaffirm our commitment to creating a welcoming and supportive environment for all.

4.5 Monitoring

In the monitoring stage, the focus shifts to collecting feedback and evaluating if the aims and objectives of the project were achieved. From April to May, my primary focus was on sharing and

evaluating the last version of the guide leaflet. Collaborating with Fintrust, we distributed the leaflet in PDF format via email to fifteen newcomer students who are clients of Fintrust.

The feedback received was overwhelmingly positive. Many expressed gratitude for the comprehensive information provided, noting that the leaflet was clear, informative, and user-friendly. Some newcomers mentioned that the leaflet alleviated some of their initial anxieties about settling in Finland by offering practical guidance and useful resources. Additionally, several newcomers appreciated that the leaflet saved them time by consolidating information in one place, eliminating the need to navigate multiple websites to find service providers. Overall, the positive feedback validates the efforts put into creating a valuable resource for newcomers, reaffirming the leaflet's effectiveness in supporting their integration process. Currently, the leaflet is undergoing final minor edits. It features a simple design without official logos or colour themes. Further enhancements, including the addition of official logos and colour schemes, may be considered in the future, potentially following client feedback.

In developing the guidebook, I ensured compliance with copyright regulations by incorporating freely available images and visuals from the PicMonkey platform. These visuals served to enhance the material and aid in comprehension, aligning with research indicating their effectiveness in capturing and retaining readers' attention (Karolyi, 2023).

Moreover, I maintained cultural sensitivity throughout the process by respecting the target group and users' cultural norms and avoiding potentially offensive content. This included carefully managing topics like mental health and acknowledging the sensitivity of such issues within the target community. Cultural sensitivity, as defined by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL, 2022), underscores the importance of understanding and respecting diverse backgrounds.

Our commitment to continuous improvement remains steady. I documented every decision we make, from content to design, with transparency and accountability. I refined the guidance leaflet for newcomers by regularly gathering feedback from stakeholders from the beginning till the end. This helps to identify emerging needs and ensure that the leaflet evolves to meet the changing requirements.

5 Ethical considerations:

In the research process, ethics play a crucial role, and the same applies when composing a thesis. The development of this thesis focused on creating a guide leaflet for international healthcare students and professionals, as newcomers to Finland, ethical considerations were paramount. The primary aim was to provide accurate and reliable information, ensuring integrity and respect for

intellectual property rights through proper citations and references (The Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity). I prioritized sensitivity and inclusivity in crafting content that was culturally appropriate and avoided bias or discrimination. Moreover, I maintained cultural sensitivity throughout the process, by respecting the target group and users' cultural norms and avoiding potentially offensive content.

While maintaining transparency, I sought regular updates and feedback from professionals in the field to ensure openness in the development process. I upheld Confidentiality by not collecting or storing any personal or sensitive data of individuals accessing the guide. In obtaining feedback, explicit consent was sought for recording discussions, with professionals assured of their anonymity and recordings deleted post-thesis completion. Ultimately, the user-centric approach ensured that the guide was tailored to the needs and preferences of international healthcare students and professionals, reflecting a commitment to ethical standards throughout the development process.

6 Evaluation and Feedback

The implementation of the guide leaflet project was largely successful in achieving its objectives within the allocated timeframe. The quality of the guide leaflet was positively received by the target audience, as indicated by feedback collected from 15 international healthcare students and professionals. To gather this feedback, the leaflet was emailed to these individuals with a request for their insights on various aspects, including content accuracy, organization, clarity, and overall usability.

The feedback collected on the leaflet can be categorized into three main types: positive feedback, constructive feedback, and minor suggestions.

Positive feedback centered around the leaflet's content relevance and user-friendly format. Respondents appreciated the comprehensive information provided, describing it as essential and well-organized. They also found the layout and design intuitive, making it easy to navigate and locate relevant information.

Constructive feedback focused on areas for improvement, such as content organization and clarity. Some respondents suggested reordering sections to enhance the logical flow of the document, while others recommended including more detailed explanations of certain services and resources.

Minor suggestions included formatting adjustments, such as using larger font sizes for headings to improve readability. Additionally, feedback pointed out issues with colour contrast, particularly

with the orange text on the back side of the leaflet, which was deemed hard to read. Respondents also proposed including more visual aids or images related to Finnish culture and academic life to enhance the overall appeal and usefulness of the leaflet.

Upon receiving the feedback, several measures were taken to incorporate the suggestions and improve the guide leaflet. Firstly, I revised the content organization based on the feedback received. I reordered sections were to improve logical flow and coherence. For instance, the section on climate was moved to precede healthcare information, aligning with a more intuitive progression. Secondly, improvements were made in formatting and colour contrast. Headings were adjusted to a larger font size, aiming to enhance readability. Additionally, the orange text on the back side of the leaflet was replaced with a darker colour to improve contrast and readability. Lastly, visual enhancements were considered for future iterations. The inclusion of more images and visual elements was explored to provide readers with a better cultural and academic context.

Reflecting on this process, the project provided valuable insights into project management, content development, and stakeholder engagement. The feedback loop was crucial in refining the guide leaflet to better meet the needs of its users. By actively soliciting and implementing feedback, the final product was significantly enhanced, ensuring its practicality and usefulness for international healthcare students and professionals. In terms of self-evaluation, while I acknowledge the overall success of the project and the positive feedback received, I recognize that challenges were encountered along the way. Ensuring the accuracy and currency of information in selected links was crucial to avoid user confusion or frustration. Verifying the authenticity of some official pages and social media accounts presented challenges, especially with multiple sources claiming to represent the same organization. Additionally, language barriers posed difficulties in identifying and accessing relevant links, as the primary languages for the target group were English and Arabic, differing from Finnish and Swedish used on some official websites. Despite these challenges, my performance was satisfactory as I effectively navigated and addressed these issues to ensure the successful completion of the guide leaflet. Moving forward, I aim to refine my content organization techniques and strengthen my strategies for engaging stakeholders more effectively. I am committed to further enhancing my project management skills and fostering stronger collaboration with stakeholders to deliver even more impactful results in future projects.

7 Conclusion and Discussion

The Finnish government's dedication to providing thorough integration training for migrants underscores its commitment to building an inclusive society. Extending this support to international students is imperative to ensure they feel included and can contribute to Finland's social fabric, as many tend to leave after graduating. Ongoing proposals for reforms to the Act on Immigrant

Integration demonstrate an initiative-taking toward enhancing immigrant inclusion and integration efficiency. By prioritizing early-stage integration services, the government aims to facilitate immigrant employment and enhance societal integration.
Successful integration relies on active engagement from both migrants and the host community, recognizing the multifaceted nature of the process. Improving immigrant access to the job market is crucial for enhancing their social involvement and integration outcomes. Advancing immigrant-friendly policies, promoting awareness of diversity benefits, and addressing negative perceptions are pivotal in fostering greater integration and inclusivity.

The shortage of healthcare professionals in Finland poses a significant challenge to the country's healthcare system, impacting the quality and accessibility of healthcare services. To address this issue, companies like Fintrust play a crucial role in attracting healthcare students and professionals to Finland. By collaborating with other companies and service providers, Fintrust facilitates the recruitment and relocation process, easing the transition for foreign healthcare workers. These efforts not only alleviate the shortage of professionals but also contribute to the overall improvement of healthcare delivery in Finland, ensuring citizens receive timely and adequate medical care.
The government is implementing various measures to address the shortage of healthcare and social welfare personnel, including improving service delivery, strengthening prevention and digital services, and enhancing workforce management practices. Additionally, the launch of the "A Strong and Committed Finland" program with a EUR 9 million allocation aims to ensure sufficient personnel through cooperation between wellbeing services counties, developing substitute pools, and optimizing staffing costs and efficiency.

Reflecting on the learning process, this project provided valuable insights into project management, content development, teamwork, and stakeholder engagement. The experience gained has enhanced my understanding of user-centric design, effective communication, and iterative feedback loops in project development. Feedback received from international healthcare students, professionals, and the integration team was overwhelmingly positive, appreciating the comprehensive information and user-friendly format of the guide leaflet.

Future Needs and Services for Migrant Workers in Healthcare: Moving forward, supporting international students at the beginning of their journey is crucial in helping them adapt to a new environment and overcome challenges they may face. Research has shown that early and comprehensive support for international students can have long-lasting positive effects on their academic success, well-being, and overall satisfaction with their study abroad experience (Prasath, 2022). By continuing to provide valuable support and resources to international students, Finland

can foster a more inclusive society while benefiting from the contributions of diverse talents and perspectives.

Responsibility and Cooperation: To effectively address the needs of migrant workers in healthcare, a coordinated effort is essential. Government agencies, including municipalities, should take primary responsibility for creating and implementing policies that facilitate integration and employment. These agencies should work closely with educational institutions, healthcare organizations, and private companies like Fintrust. Collaboration between these stakeholders is critical to ensure that integration services are comprehensive, addressing both the professional and personal needs of migrants. This includes language training, cultural orientation, employment support, and community engagement activities.
Moreover, promoting an inclusive work environment within healthcare institutions is vital. Employers should adopt practices that value diversity and foster a welcoming atmosphere for international professionals. This can be achieved through diversity training programs, guidance schemes, and opportunities for professional development tailored to the needs of migrant workers.

Importance of Cultural Competence and Other Competencies in Integration Services and Social Work: In the sphere of integration services and social work, cultural competence stands as a cornerstone for effective support, particularly for immigrant healthcare students and professionals. It serves as a bridge between diverse cultural backgrounds, facilitating understanding and respect amidst differences. This competency encompasses self-awareness of one's own cultural biases, an acquisition of knowledge about various cultural practices and perspectives, and the honing of skills for cross-cultural communication.

Beyond cultural competence, other competencies such as empathy, adaptability, and effective communication play pivotal roles in social work, especially in the context of integration services. Empathy allows social workers to connect with individuals on a deeper level, understanding their unique challenges and aspirations. Adaptability enables them to flexibly tailor their approaches to meet the evolving needs of their clients, particularly crucial in the dynamic process of integration. Effective communication serves as a tool for building trust, clarifying misunderstandings, and advocating for the rights and needs of immigrants.

The synthesis of these competencies empowers social workers to provide holistic support to aiding them in navigating the complexities of a new environment and overcoming integration barriers. By fostering cultural competence and other essential skills, social workers can facilitate the seamless integration of immigrants into society, ensuring their contributions are fully recognized and valued. This not only enhances the well-being of immigrants but also enriches the social fabric and strengthens the economic landscape of the host country.

In conclusion, my internship at Fintrust has afforded me invaluable insights into the intricate process of integrating international students and professionals into Finnish society. Through reflection and strategic planning, it becomes evident that a multifaceted, collaborative approach is paramount for successful integration.

By placing emphasis on cultural competence and a holistic array of essential skills in social work, we can provide the necessary scaffolding for immigrant healthcare professionals. This, in turn, fosters a more inclusive and effective healthcare system in Finland, where every individual, regardless of cultural background, can thrive to their fullest potential.

8 Guide Leaflet

Community Centers:

Helsinki/ Espoo/ Vantaa:

• Helsinki Central Library Oodi: Oodi is not just a library but also a vibrant community hub offering various events, workshops, and activities. www.Oodihelsinki.fi

• Kanneltalo: A cultural center in the Kannelmäki district of Helsinki, offering diverse cultural events, workshops, and performances. www.kanneltalo.fi

• Helmet network (Helsinki Metropolitan Area Libraries) consists of the city libraries of Helsinki, Espoo, Kauniainen, and Vantaa. www.helmet.finna.fi

• Finna is home to millions of items of cultural and scientific material in Finland. Hundreds of Finnish organisations such as archives, libraries and museums bring their unique content to Finna. www.finna.fi

• Espoo Cultural Centre: A major cultural venue in Espoo hosting concerts, theater performances, art exhibitions, and other events. Espoo Cultural Centre. www.espoo.fi/fi/espoon-kulttuurikeskus

• Entresse Library: Apart from being a library, Entresse offers various cultural events and activities for the community.

www.facebook.com/Entressenjirjasto

www.helmet.fi/tapahtumavarausespoo

• Tikkurila Library: www.facebook.com/Tikkurilankirjasto

Local Events and Festivals:

www.myhelsinki.fi

https://www.visitespoo.fi

Find out how you get involved at globalgoals.org/halftime or explore more about each of the Global Goals below.

Dear Nursing Students,

We are thrilled to welcome you to a country celebrated for its excellence in healthcare and education. As you embark on this exciting journey, here are a few key points to help you prepare:

Climate: Finland's weather varies significantly with the seasons. Pack accordingly, especially warm clothing for the winter months.

Language: While English is commonly used in academic settings, learning some basic Finnish will enrich your experience and help with daily interactions.

Culture: Finnish culture values punctuality, privacy, and directness. Embracing these aspects will help you integrate more smoothly.

Studies: Expect a rigorous academic environment. Stay proactive in your studies and practice sessions, and don't hesitate to ask for help.

Healthcare and Insurance: Ensure you have appropriate health insurance to access Finland's excellent healthcare services.

Networking: Take the opportunity to engage in university life and activities to enhance your experience and professional development.

We look forward to helping you succeed in your nursing education and career here in Finland

FinTrust Services

Welcome to Finland

This guide will help you navigate your way through your new life in Finland and facilitate your integration into Finnish society

Contact

www.fintrust.fi

info@fintrust.fi

+358413141963

@Fintrust

@Fintrust

@Fintrust

Appendix 1: Welcome to Finland Leaflet frontside

Before

• Application for residence permit:
www.migri.fi
www.interfinland.fi
• Finding a house for example:
www.nuorisosaatio.fi
www.m2kodit.fi
www.lumo.fi
•About Finland (Cultural Customs):
www.finland.fi
www.visitfinland.com

Congratulations on your new adventure in Finland! You're about to embark on an incredible journey that will surely enrich your life and broaden your horizons. Finland is a place of stunning natural beauty and deep cultural heritage, renowned for its world-class education system and innovative spirit.

As you settle into this unique and welcoming country, remember that every challenge is an opportunity to grow and every experience is a step toward achieving your dreams. Embrace the chance to learn and explore, both academically and personally. Dive into Finnish traditions, enjoy the beautiful landscapes, and don't forget to try a sauna—the Finnish way!

We are all rooting for you back home and can't wait to hear about all the new experiences you will gather. Make the most of every moment, keep an open mind, and take care of yourself as you navigate this exciting chapter.

Within

• Registering with Local Authorities:
www.dvv.fi
• Personal Identification card :
www.poliisi.fi/en/passports-identity-cards-and-permits
• Tax office for the tax card:
www.vero.fi/en/individuals
• Social insurance Kela, for kela card:
www.kela.fi
• Public Transportation:
www.hsl.fi
• Finnish Language courses:
www.ilmonet.fi
• Employment Assistance:
www.infofinland.fi
www.toimistot.te-palvelut.fi
www.tyomarkkinatori.fi
• Healthcare, Education, Transport, Housing, Culture & leisure:
www.espoo.fi
www.vantaa.fi
www.hel.fi

After

Associations and organizations:
Hakunila International Organization, for an immigrant advice center, multicultural events, and collaborations addressing youth engagement, anti-racism, and integration issues. www.hakunila.org
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland:
www.evl.fi (Seurakunnat)
MONIKA – Multicultural Women's Association, an umbrella organisation of multicultural women's organisations that helps and supports women in different languages.

www.monikanaiset.fi
Mental health Finland:
www.mieli.fi
Kaliolla association:
www.kaliolla.fi

@MyHelsinki
@HerFinland
@Egyptian Nursing in Finland 2024

Appendix 2: Leaflet backside

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