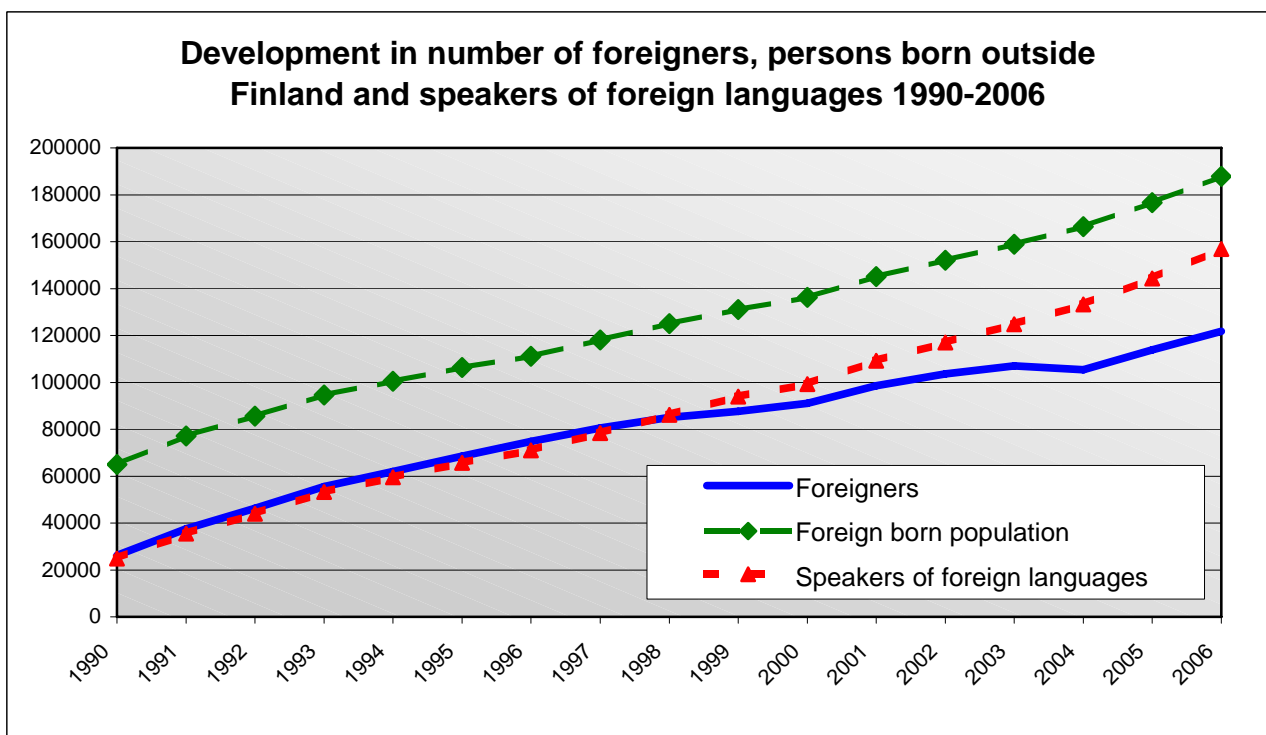


MIGRATION ISSUES IN 2006

The Ministry of Labour is responsible for issues related to labour immigration, integration and employment of immigrants, reception of refugees and asylum-seekers and securing ethnic equality and diversity. In practice, foreigners living in Finland on a permanent basis receive the same services and social security as Finnish nationals. Thus each administrative branch is also responsible for immigrants in its everyday operations.

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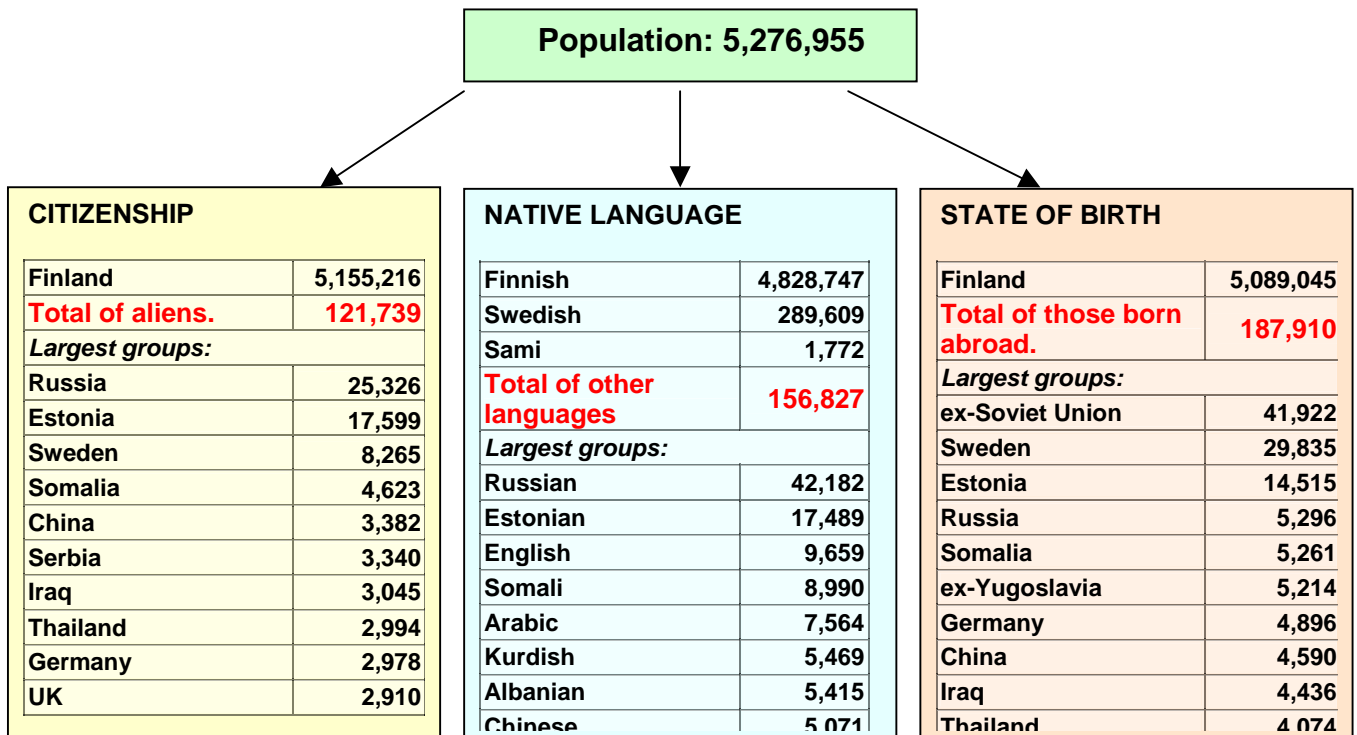
Source: Statistics Finland

Structure of immigration

About 22,000 people moved to Finland in 2006. About 12,000 people moved out of the country, for a net immigration of 10,000. Foreign nationals accounted for about 13,000 of the immigrants. The corresponding figure for the previous year was 12,700. At the end of 2006 a total of 121,700 foreign nationals lived permanently in Finland, representing 2.3% of the entire population. An estimated 55,000 of these were part of the labour force. The majority of foreigners, or 43%, lived in the capital area. An estimated 35,000 foreign workers worked temporarily in the country. Some 7,000 employee residence permits were granted to citizens of countries outside the EU/ETA.

A total of 633 returnees moved to Finland from the ex-Soviet area, mainly from Russia and Estonia, and of these the number of working age people, or those in the 15-64 age group, was 460. The refugee quota of Finland was 750 in 2006, and about 100 of these spots remained to be filled in the following year. Afghans from Myanmar and Iranians constituted the largest groups of the 547 quota refugees that arrived in Finland. The number of people within the scope of reception of asylum-seekers totalled 1,142 and they were placed in 46 municipalities around Finland. This figure includes quota refugees, reuniting of families and asylum-seekers that received a favourable decision. A total of 678 of these were of working age.

Population by nationality, native language and state of birth 31 December 2006:



Source: Statistics Finland

General

The Government adopted the Migration Policy programme in October 2006. Its main emphasis is on promoting work-based immigration. Attempts will be made to increase the immigration of people coming from abroad to work in Finland in order to help compensate for the labour force leaving the labour market because of ageing.

Other central themes in the Migration Policy Programme included increasing the efficiency of the integration system for immigrants, improving ethnic relations between population groups and dealing with the commitments related to humanitarian immigration. The Migration Policy Programme is supplemented by the Council of State decision-in-principle concerning the Expatriate Finn Policy Programme 2006-2011 approved by the Government in May 2006. The programme defines guidelines and measures to help reinforce interaction between expatriate Finns and Finland with the additional aim of improving the conditions for expatriates to return to Finland.

An Advisory Board for the Integration and Reception of Asylum-Seekers was established in connection with the Ministry of Labour in order to improve the opportunities for involvement and cooperation between ministries, municipalities and NGOs. At the local level, cooperation between the municipalities and the employment offices was made more efficient both generally and as regards the integration of individual immigrants. The TE Centres have set up committees for immigration issues in order to improve the efficiency of regional cooperation.

A total of EUR 79.3 million in appropriations was used for the reception of refugees and asylum-seekers in 2006. The corresponding amount for the previous year was EUR 81.1 million. The reduction of EUR 1.8 million resulted from a decrease in the costs resulting from asylum-seekers.

Integration and employment of immigrants

The Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers was amended from 2 January 2006. Its aim is to accelerate and make more efficient the integration of immigrants. The division of labour and sharing of responsibility between the authorities was clarified at all levels of administration. In December 2006 Parliament approved provisions to the Integration Act concerning services for victims of human trafficking and an aid system to provide support measures. The amendment entered into force on 1 January 2007.

Immigrants are entitled to an integration plan for the three years following their entry if they are unemployed jobseekers entitled to labour market subsidy and/or to receive social assistance. Integration support is paid to an immigrant implementing an integration plan, consisting of labour market support and social support granted as necessary. According to the amendment to the Integration Act that entered into force at the beginning of the year, the plan can be extended by a maximum of two years under special circumstances. An extension can be granted in order to acquire reading and writing skills or complete comprehensive school. An extension can also be granted on the basis of an immigrant's age, disability, illness, child protection measure and maternity or paternity leave. The authorities that participated in drafting the plan for the immigrant and the immigrant will negotiate about the extension. The decision will be made by the employment office.

In 2006 integration assistance was paid to 10,800 immigrants. A integration plan was prepared for the first time for 4,281 people. Nearly 60% of these people were women and 1,114 were under the age of 25. The intention is that during the integration period immigrants can acquire the language skills and other social skills needed in Finnish working life. A total of 9,300 persons undergoing integration were involved in labour policy measures.

Those within the scope of integration support and their participation in labour policy measures and placement in the open labour market in 2002-2006:

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Within the scope of integration support during the year	9,096	10,000	10,445	10,600	10,800
Integration plans prepared for the first time during the year	3,807	3,058	3,048	3,506	4,281
Total of people within labour policy measures:	7,152	8,248	8,727	8,912	9,300
Measures directed at them:					
- labour policy training	6,610	6,589	5,785	5,817	6,015
- training that corresponds to labour policy training	1,526	2,522	3,571	3,851	4,363
- in measures financed by the ESF (training, rehabilitation, work practice)	712	617	416	488	451
-in work practice or working life coaching	1,478	1,743	2,166	2,217	2,322
- participating in career guidance or rehabilitation measures	78	54	42	34	24
Jobs found in the open labour market	4,046	5,033	5,504	6,363	7,616

At the conclusion of immigration training, the immigrants are encouraged to participate in the intermediate level of the National Certificate of Language Proficiency for Finnish. A total of 632 immigrants took the exam in 2006, and 88% achieved the required level.

During the reporting year the employment offices had an average of 28,600 foreign jobseekers, 14,000 of who were unemployed. The unemployment rate amongst immigrants was in 2005 25%. The estimate of the unemployment rate in 2006 was 24%. In terms of nationality; the largest jobseeker groups were Russian and Estonian nationals, who comprised about 43% of all foreign jobseekers. Improved employment of immigrants is particularly evident in the regions of Uusimaa, Pirkanmaa, Southwest Finland and Ostrobothnia.

The placements of foreign jobseekers were divided as follows:

Employed on the public labour market	14,600
Placed through measures	12,500
Started in labour force training	15,100
Started in other training	2,200

There are some 9,400 returnees and their family members from Ingria queuing for a returnee's permit of residence. Returnee coaching courses and language examinations for those people on the waiting list have been arranged in the St. Petersburg area, Carelia and Estonia. Together with the municipalities and employers, migration has been channelled to meet regional labour market needs.

Since 2000, the Ministry of Labour has conducted an inquiry for the municipalities concerning the implementation of the Integration Act. The aim is to obtain general information about the state of integration services, the direction of development, actors and resources. In 2005 a total of 250 municipalities responded to the inquiry. All municipalities in which more than 500 foreigners live responded to the inquiry. More than 93% of foreigners live in municipalities that responded to the inquiry and more than 90% in municipalities that have an integration programme. The results show that the integration of immigrants receives diverse support in Finnish municipalities. The scope of actors has expanded and there is more cooperation across administrative and municipal borders.

Services to promote integration are most accessible in large cities. On the other hand, services in small municipalities are individual and take the customer's life situation into consideration. Integration services appear to work well for those under the age of 16 in all areas, while plenty of improvement in availability of services is needed for the elderly, those over the age of 64. Responses showed the same challenges as in previous years: insufficient human resources, little training and induction.

Interpretation and translation services

If a person registering or registered as a jobseeker is a foreigner, interpretation or translation services must be used when providing information in compliance with the Administrative Procedure Act. In particular, interpretation and translation services must be utilised when drafting and revising integration plans for immigrants. Since 2003 the State Budget has allocated funds for interpretation and translation services to the employment offices' operating expenses.

The employment offices have responded to the increasing range of languages spoken by their customer base by hiring personnel with language skills to work in initial phase services at the larger employment offices. The Ministry of Labour and employment offices have drafted and translated brochures and forms into the most common immigrant languages, which has made it easier to provide services. However, the range of languages spoken by customers is so extensive that interpretation services are also required, especially during the initial phase of residence. In cooperation with the municipality, the employment office has been able to use State funds to arrange language services to promote and support integration of immigrants or returnees that are customers of the employment office as part of the reception of refugees and compensation paid for returnees.

For example, interpretation services are available at the eight municipal interpretation centres for administration assistance operating around the country. The centres offer services in nearly 70 languages. In addition to the municipal interpretation centre, private companies and freelance interpreters also offer interpretation and translation services. The interpretation sessions either take place on site or as remote interpretation over the phone or via a video link. In recent years, investments have been made in increasing remote interpretation. Its share of all interpretations today is some 20%. Remote interpretation brings about savings in travel costs and time, thus increasing efficiency.

Foreigners working in Finland

The permit system concerning work-based immigration is based on the Aliens Act that entered into force on 1 May 2004. Pursuant to the Aliens Act, to work in Finland foreigners mainly require an employee's permit of residence.

An employee's permit of residence is issued in two steps: the permit includes the partial decision of the employment office and the residence permit decision of the Directorate of Immigration or the Police Department of the population register district. First the employment office assesses the availability of suitable labour force for the work in question on the labour market within a reasonable time. In addition, the employment office evaluates the adequacy of the working conditions, the preconditions of the employer to act as an employer and the adequacy of the foreigner's livelihood. After a positive partial decision, the Directorate of Immigration grants the first permit of residence and the police a continued permit, unless there are reasons for not granting a permit associated with public order and safety, or the application is regarded as an attempt to circumvent the provisions of the Aliens Act.

In some cases, the Aliens Act enables foreigners to work without the consideration of labour availability. Such consideration will not apply to persons in the upper or middle management of a company, various experts, professional athletes and coaches, professional artists, professional journalists, those working for an international organisation, or seasonal agricultural workers.

In 2006, the employment offices granted 3,656 partial decisions as regards permits of residence for citizens of so-called third countries. The highest number of partial decisions concerned chefs, cooks, refrigeration experts, horticultural and agricultural workers, cleaners, drivers of lorries and articulated vehicles, and musicians. Nearly half of the employees were Russian. The next largest groups were Ukrainians, Turks, Bulgarians, Chinese, Thais, Romanians and Croatians.

A total of 3,290 partial decisions were issued to continued applications for the employee's permit of residence. The most partial decisions were issued for drivers of lorries and articulated vehicles, chefs, cooks, refrigeration experts, cleaners, horticultural and agricultural workers, construction workers and plumbers. Half of the employees were Russian. The next largest groups were Chinese, Turks, Ukrainians, Thais, Indians, Romanians, and Filipinos.

The validity of the two-year Transition Period Act that entered into force in Finland in conjunction with enlargement of the EU in May 2004 ended on 30 April 2006. The Act limited the free movement of labour from new member states. A total of some 6,000 approvals pursuant to the Transition Period Act were issued. The majority of these decisions concerned Estonian employees. The Act did not apply to foreign labour that arrived through employee leasing companies, so discontinuation of the transition period did not significantly increase the number of employees coming from new EU countries.

The Act respecting registration of information about work performed by citizens of certain member states of the European Union entered into force on 5 June 2006. Registration of information applies to citizens of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia. According to the Register of Aliens, work information for a

total of about 1,000 new EU nationals was registered in 2006. Since the beginning of January 2007 this has also been possible for citizens of Bulgaria and Romania.

Employees' residence permit issues were concentrated in three work permit units as of 5 June 2006. The Uusimaa Work Permit Unit still handles applications from the Uusimaa Employment and Economic Development Centre region. The Tampere Employment Office is responsible for applications in Western Finland. The Lappeenranta Employment Office decides on applications submitted in the provinces of Eastern Finland, Oulu and Lapland, and Southern Finland (other than in the Uusimaa Employment and Economic Development Centre region). The Åland Islands Employment Office handles residence permit issues in accordance with the Aliens Act in that province.

A website presenting the rules of Finnish working for foreigners and employers, www.mol.fi/finnwork, was launched in September. The website explains the rules of working life, permits needed for work and Finnish working culture in Finnish, Swedish, English, Estonian and Russian. It includes information making an employment contract and minimum wage as well as taxation and social security. The website has been compiled by the Ministry of Labour in collaboration with the Social Insurance Institution of Finland SII, Tax Administration, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, central labour market organisations, and the Federation of Finnish Enterprises.

The Aliens Act was amended in 2006 in order to promote the entry of students from the so-called third countries in the Finnish labour market. After completing a degree or qualification, foreign students has the opportunity to apply for a six-month residence permit for the purpose of seeking employment. After finding work, the foreigner can apply for a residence permit without the need for consideration of labour availability. The Government's Migration Policy Programme proposes that a residence permit for seeking employment could be granted for ten months rather than the current six months. A further proposal involves traineeships directed at foreigners that have completed a degree and training in the Finnish and Swedish languages.

Reception of asylum seekers

In 2006 2,324 persons applied for asylum in Finland, which is 35% less than in 2005, when the number of asylum seekers was 3,574. The largest group was Bulgaria with a total of 463 asylum seekers, followed by Serbia (277), Iraq (225), Russia (176), Belarus (97) and Afghanistan (107). In 2006 107 minor unaccompanied asylum seekers entered the country. The corresponding figure for the previous year was 218.

There were fifteen reception centres in operation during the year, three run by the State, ten by municipalities and two by the Red Cross. The scope of the reception activities included some 2,300 beds at the beginning of the year. During the spring, the housing capacity was adjusted to the lower number of arrivals and the Ministry of Labour's target of a 70% occupancy rate by reducing the number of beds to 1,900. In the autumn a decision was made to close two reception centres at the beginning of 2007 and another by summer 2008.

The Metsälä reception centre in Helsinki also serves as a 40-bed holding unit for asylum seekers and other foreigners taken into custody on the basis of the Aliens Act. In addition

to providing accommodation, the Metsälä reception centre functioned as an information point for asylum seekers living in private accommodation in the capital area.

Reception for minor unaccompanied asylum-seekers was arranged in group homes and subsidised housing facilities operating in conjunction with the reception centres. The accommodation at the group homes was adjusted to meet the decreased number of arrivals by a decision to close the Perniö group home by the end of March 2007.

In December 2006 Parliament approved provisions to the Integration Act concerning services for victims of human trafficking and an aid system to provide support measures. The amendment entered into force on 1 January 2007. Victims of human trafficking can receive services and support measures that can include legal and other counselling, crisis support, social and healthcare services, interpretation services and other support services, accommodation or housing, social assistance and other necessary care as well as support of safe repatriation. The Joutseno and Oulu reception centres are responsible for implementation of the aid system.

Safeguarding ethnic equality and diversity

The Ministry of Labour's multireasonal Equality Plan was completed in December 2005, and the first follow-up was carried out at the end of 2006. Tools, materials and examples for supporting the equality plan have been gathered on the www.yhdenvertaisuus.fi (Equality.fi) website maintained by the Ministry of Labour. The equality information and training programme has been continued in 2006 and a study on the implementation of the Non-Discrimination Act was commissioned.

The Ministry is involved in a number of European equality projects, coordinating a broad-based national information campaign, and the preparation and implementation of the European Year of Equal Opportunities For All – 2007. A proposal for a national monitoring system for discrimination and a handbook on discrimination issues were completed at the end of 2006.

The partially ESF-funded MoniQ development project to support multiculturalism in the workplace ended on 31 December 2006. The project collected, modelled and spread good experiences from immigrant programmes around the country that have succeeded in promoting diversity in workplaces and the employment and integration of immigrants into Finnish society. The results were compiled into four publications: *Toimintamalleja ja kokemuksia monikulttuurisuudesta* (Operating models and experiences of multiculturalism), *Monikulttuurisuus työyhteisössä* (Multiculturalism in the workplace), *Tavoitteena toimiva monikulttuurinen työyhteisö* (A functioning multicultural workplace) and *Maahanmuuttaja työhallinnon asiakkaana* (Immigrants as Labour Administration Customers).

The Advisory Board on Ethnic Relations (ETNO) has produced a proposal for work to oppose racism by the Advisory Boards and developing goodwill ambassador activities. In addition, a working group to handle dialogue between different religions and cultures, a group to handle ethnic relations in the capital region and a working group to survey good practices in working life operated within ETNO. The three Regional Advisory Boards for Ethnic Relations have each promoted good ethnic relations in their respective areas, implemented an EU-funded project to support unionisation of immigrants and cooperated

with the National Advisory Board. The first ethnic relations forum was held in January 2006.

The European Refugee Fund (ERF)

The Ministry of Labour administers the European Refugee Fund (ERF) in Finland. ERF resources are intended to promote and develop the reception of refugees and the asylum procedure, the integration of refugees and their voluntary repatriation. Funds from the ERF are allocated to member states in proportion to their reception of asylum seekers and refugees during the three preceding years.

The second period of the ERF began in 2005 and will continue until 2007. According to guidelines issued by the European Commission, the national strategic programme for the period specifies national needs in the sector of immigration questions and the focal points on the basis of which projects will be selected to receive financing from the Fund on an annual basis. The general aim of the ERF during this period is to support the implementation of legislation within the member states of the Community in order to develop a common European asylum system. National focal points in Finland include supporting initial integration of asylum seekers and increasing their resources. Finland's share of the ERF in 2006 was EUR 765,446, and financing was granted to a total of 13 projects that promoted the reception and integration of asylum seekers. The projects were implemented by municipalities and organisations.

Research and publications on immigration

Maahanmuuttajayrittäjyys Suomessa - Nykytilanne ja toimenpide-ehdotuksia (2007): Kauppa- ja teollisuusministeriön työryhmän loppuraportissa selvitetään maahanmuuttajayrittäjyyden edellytyksiä ja edistämiskeinoja Suomessa. (Immigrant Entrepreneurship in Finland- the current situation and proposals for measures): The final report of the Ministry of Trade and Industry's working group examines the preconditions for and means of promoting immigrant entrepreneurship in Finland.

http://www.ktm.fi/files/17081/279raportti1312_mamu.pdf

Monitoring of discrimination in Finland (2007). Monitoring discrimination in Finland – A proposal. Labour Administration publication 374 also contains Swedish and English versions.

http://www.mol.fi/mol/fi/99_pdf/fi/06_tyoministerio/06_julkaisut/07_julkaisu/thj374.pdf

Government Migration Policy Programme (2006). Labour Administration publication 371 also contains Swedish and English versions.

http://tyonhakukskus.fi/mol/fi/99_pdf/fi/06_tyoministerio/06_julkaisut/07_julkaisu/thj371.pdf

Government Policy Programme for Expatriate Finns 2006-2011 (2006). Labour Administration publication 369 also contains Swedish and English versions.

http://www.mol.fi/mol/fi/99_pdf/fi/06_tyoministerio/06_julkaisut/07_julkaisu/thj369.pdf

Ihmiskaupan uhrien auttaminen (2006). Työryhmän ehdotus palvelujen ja tukitoimien toteuttamiseksi. Työhallinnon julkaisu 368. (Helping Victims of Human Trafficking (2006). Proposal by the working group for implementing services and support measures. Labour Administration publication 368)

http://www.mol.fi/mol/fi/99_pdf/fi/06_tyoministerio/06_julkaisut/07_julkaisu/thj368.pdf

Maahanmuuttaja- ja turvapaikanhakijalasten katoamiset (2006). Työhallinnon julkaisu 370. (Disappearances of immigrant and asylum seeker children (2006). Labour Administration publication 370)

http://tyonhakukeskus.fi/mol/fi/99_pdf/fi/06_tyoministerio/06_julkaisut/07_julkaisu/thj370.pdf

Handbook on Integration for policy-makers and practitioners. A handbook published by the European Commission.

http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/doc_centre/immigration/integration/doc/handbook_1sted_fi.pdf

How Do Municipalities Integrate? (2006). Results from the inquiry on the implementation of the Integration Act in 2005. Also contains Swedish and English summaries.

http://www.mol.fi/mol/fi/99_pdf/fi/04_maahanmuutto/03_kotoutuminen/kuntaseuranta05.pdf

Työministeriön selvitys eduskunnan hallintovaliokunnalle maahanmuuttajista aiheutuvista kustannuksista (2006). (Ministry of Labour report to the Administration Committee of the Parliament concerning the costs resulting from immigrants. 2006.)

http://www.mol.fi/mol/fi/99_pdf/fi/04_maahanmuutto/07_aineistot_kirjasto/02_julkaisut_raportit/kustannusselvitys2006.pdf