



Country guide for new EPIET/EUPHEM fellows

Terveysten ja hyvinvoinnin laitos (THL)
(National Institute for Health and Welfare),
Helsinki
Finland

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Please note: This is a living document. If you find any information to be incorrect or out of date, or there is anything you wish to add, please amend the guide (and date it accordingly) and send the new version to your cohort representative for uploading onto the EAN country guides website. Thank you.

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EARLY ON AND GETTING STARTED

1. Registration in Finland

“Normal situation”

Your first point of call (after online registration for which see registration below) will be at the International House. This hosts offices of all agencies so that you can do all registrations (immigration, local registration, tax, social security and health, etc.) in one go.

Residence permit/card (if needed) & Visa (if needed)

As an EU-citizen, you have the right to live in any EU country, if you work there.

During the first 3 months of your stay, your host country cannot require you to register your residence. You can do so, if you wish. After 3 months, your host country may require you to register your residence with local authorities, to show that you are working there and obtain a document confirming your right to stay.

Source: https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/residence/residence-rights/index_en.htm

Registration, including social security number/ID/Person number

Finnish Immigration Service (Migri)

EU/EEA citizens (except Nordic citizens) must register their right to reside in Finland upon arrival, if their stay lasts for longer than three months. In order to obtain your personal identity code, you will need to fill an online application on this website:

<https://enterfinland.fi/eServices/info/europeancitizens>, which will guide you through every step, including making an appointment on <https://migri.vihta.com/public/migri/#/home> before you go to the Helsinki service point. The personal identity code (henkilötunnus) is required for almost everything, opening a bank account, renting a flat, getting health insurance, etc. Hence, it is important to register as soon as possible so you can proceed with other administrative issues.

Address: International House Helsinki, Albertinkatu 25, Helsinki OR Käenkuja 3aA, Helsinki

Website: migri.fi

Local Register Office (DVV, former Maistraatti)

Contact the Local Register Office at International House Helsinki (1st floor) in order to register an address and/or apply for a Finnish personal identity code if you do not yet have one. You need to bring along the following documents: a passport or a valid photo ID, an employment contract/certificate you will be employed by THL, an EU registration certificate (if you want to apply for a Finnish municipality of residence (kotikunta)). If you have accompanying family members, please note that they also need to visit the Local Register Office in person in order to register an address and familial relationships and/or apply for a Finnish personal identity code, if they do not yet have one. They need to bring along the following documents: a passport or a valid photo ID, a legalized original marriage certificate (if you are married), children's legalized original birth certificates (if you have children who are under 18), an EU registration certificate (if you want to apply for a Finnish municipality of residence (kotikunta)).

Please note that your documents must be legalized or certified with an Apostille. Documents must also be translated into Finnish, Swedish or English if they are in some other language.

Address: International House Helsinki, Albertinkatu 25, Helsinki

Website: <https://www.ihhelsinki.fi/>

ID card

This is not mandatory however you will realize that if you want to have some loyalty cards or subscribe to the library you will need it. You have then to ask it to the police station (<https://poliisi.fi/en/identity-card>) and will probably have to pay a fee around 50€. But really, you can live in Finland without it as soon as you keep the paper of DVV or immigration showing your Finnish ID number. This is then not an emergency to get it.

“COVID-19 situation”

The COVID-19 pandemic complicated the process, and whereas before the pandemic you could do everything at the international house (except immigration), at the moment of writing the international house is closed and its website instructs you to go through all the agencies individually. Each agency has its own process that needs to be completed.

What was said for immigration remains true, and the first step is to book an appointment on their website. However, finding an appointment has become more complicated. You will maybe see that on the online schedule there will be no time slot available: however, that is misleading. In fact, you can get access to cancelled appointments. To do that, you need to check for available spots multiple times per day by refreshing the search!!! Do not fear to press the refresh button many times. If possible, you should already attempt to book an appointment as soon as possible and before your arrival in Finland, given that it may be that the first available appointment is more than a month away.

Booking an appointment is less complicated for DVV (<https://www.ajanvaraus.fi/isl/frontend/>, <https://dvv.fi/henkiloasiakkaat>) and appointments are more available. Also, you can get an ID number at DVV without having gone through immigration, but you will still have to go to immigration to register as an EU citizen and complete that process, before your registration with DVV is finalized.

It is therefore very important for you to take an appointment at immigration as soon as you know that you are going to work at THL because as mentioned before, without an ID number you can't open a bank account, access health services for free, rent a flat, etc. And without a bank account you can't do anything! That is because ALL services online require identification (online banking credentials) that are obtained when opening your bank account. That includes registering at THL and obtaining a key to the building, a work computer and phone.

So here are the steps:

- book an appointment at immigration as soon as possible**
- book an appointment at a bank as soon as you have an ID number (see later in the document for bank registration)**
- book an appointment at DVV for residence registration**

Depending on the bank, you might have to complete your registration at DVV by registering a permanent residence (municipality) before you can open a bank account. This step requires the completion of the registration at immigration, after which you complete the DVV registration by sending an email with the details from the registration of the immigration. Danske Bank required

registration of residence, so no account could be opened there before all steps were complete. In contrast, Nordea only required the ID number, i.e. the initial DVV registration (see also below).

2. Finding accommodation

Before contacting estate agents, it is a good idea to contact current EPIET/EUPHEM fellows or named contact at the host site, who may know of a place that is available to rent.

Areas to live

Helsinki is considered a safe city and choosing where to live will depend on the budget and how close to work or city centre you prefer to stay. A few popular neighbourhoods are Töölö, Kamppi, Punavuori, Kallio. In addition for example Munkkiniemi and Meilahti are nice areas to live and they are located closer to THL. They all have good public transport connection to THL and the city centre. Some of those neighbourhoods are located in the city centre ([Helsinki map](#)). THL is situated about 20 minutes from the city centre by tram or bus.

Type of housing

The majority of Helsinki's population reside in block of flats. The size of accommodation and the location will depend on your preferences and budget.

Terms – when looking for a flat

You will sign a contract with the landlord when you find the flat to stay. The contract will contain all the rules and obligations as well as other terms and conditions describing how to behave in your newly rented place. It is common in Finland to have to agree to a binding contract of 1 year.

Necessary documents to get accommodation – contract

The procedure to rent through the rental agencies might be impossible before your arrival as they request a Finnish personal identification code in order to rent a flat. However, you get the ID code only after having the working contract, followed by registration at the Finnish immigration service.

Amenities: Internet, Telephone, Television, Gas, Electricity, Water, Heating, Liability insurance

Depending on the landlord, the internet and heating might be included in the rent. Water, electricity, television and other amenities are usually extra. The electricity is around 20€ a month, water 20€. There are three major internet service providers in Finland: ELISA Saunalahti, SONERA and DNA. Further details can be found at: <http://saunalahti.fi/>, <http://www.sonera.fi>, <http://www.dna.fi>. You might be asked to give a deposit (100€) when subscribing to a provider, monthly cost around 30€ a month. To subscribe you may be asked for -guess what- an ID number and online banking credentials.

Furniture and household goods

Take into account that finding an apartment and applying process can take quite a while (around one month) and most apartments for rent in Helsinki are not furnished.

Housing alternative: Noli Studios

Since October 2019, there has been an alternative to the “classic” housing options in Helsinki. Noli Studios offers furnished apartments on short- and medium-term leases. As these are handled legally as hotels (they do not cost as much as a hotel) there is not traditional contract and also not

additional paperwork needed. In fact, the apartments (between 1 and 3 rooms) can be booked from abroad.

Useful websites

The following websites also provide details of properties available and give an idea of price range which can vary from around 800€ (for a studio flat) upward (depending on the neighbourhood):

<http://www.vuokraovi.com>

<http://www.vuokraturva.fi/english/>

<http://asunnot.oikotie.fi/>

<https://www.tori.fi>

<https://nolistudios.com/en>

Rental agency, where it is easy to find a flat ONCE you have online banking credentials:

<https://www.sato.fi/en>

Usually, the rent agreement is signed for one year. Deposit is common when renting an apartment (normally amount of 1-3 month rents) and is returned upon moving out. In Finland there is a law for residential leases, which details the conditions of rental contracts:

<https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/1995/en19950481.pdf>

3. Reimbursement of expenses

You are entitled to the relocation reimbursement from THL and this includes the flight tickets to/from Helsinki and the removal costs within budget limits. The rules for what you can be reimbursed change on a frequent basis, so we advise you to contact your supervisor before making any financial commitment. You will also be reimbursed for the expenses at immigration (around 60€ on enter Finland), if you have not exceeded your relocation budget. About the removal costs, you will be asked to give an estimated amount for your moving in by ECDC so that they can make a contract with THL. What you do not use, you have the right to ask ECDC to add it to the moving out budget but you have to ask as soon as possible (it was before end of November in 2020). You should check with you fellowship representatives.

Example:

In 2020, we had a budget of 4000€ for a single person, for moving in and moving out. I decided to allocate 1200€ for my moving in so automatically 2800€ were allocated for moving out. However I only used 600€ for moving in so the 600€ I didn't used I asked ECDC to add it to the 2800€.

Be careful, this is not really known and of course ECDC will not automatically tell it to you ;) Just be aware that it exists.

4. Finances

Bank account

The following documents are required to open a bank account:

- Valid passport (or identity card with your picture);
- Work contract from THL/certificate you will be employed by THL;
- Finnish personal identification code;

- Tenancy agreement.

Most banks have English-speaking staff. You can choose between, e.g. Nordea bank, Helsinki OP Bank (Helsingin Osuuspankki or briefly OP) or Danske Bank (but Danske Bank strictly requires completion of full registration). A smaller bank that can be of interest to Swedish speakers is Ålandsbank. You should go to one of the offices in person and ask for an appointment for opening a bank account, **the delays to get an appointment can be quite long**, so do not hesitate to try several banks and/or book one while taking care of the other administration issues. You will get your bank card by mail to your address, but first you need to notify your address in Finland at DVV. Keep in mind that for some banks it can **take a few weeks before you will get your account number**, which is required to be registered in THL personnel files. Therefore, opening a bank account should be one of the main priorities after moving to Finland.

For your info and to share our experience: Nordea bank is less picky on the requirements than other banks, especially about the address → I just needed an ID number, a passport, a contract or certificate that you will be working at THL and to give an address even if was not registered yet at DVV. Also, here is the process for Nordea:

- You go to a branch to take an appointment and you present the documents mentioned above.
- You will receive a call within 2 weeks to talk about your requirements for your bank account (max amount that you can withdraw, will you make often transfers, will use your credit card often abroad, etc.). If it takes longer to be called, do not hesitate to call the branch or even better to go there personally to ask why it is so long (it might be a mistake on their side, it happened to some of us).
- After signing the contract, and after waiting a minimum 48-72h you can go to the branch and ask for your account number and codes for your app that you will need to register everywhere (as mentioned earlier in the document that bank apps are used in many different on-line circumstances for secure identification) and to pay online. From the bank they may sometimes tell you when signing the contract that you need to wait to receive this information by regular post, but that is incorrect. You can get the info by showing up in person, having downloaded two apps: the Nordea mobile app and the Nordea codes app
- You will receive your credit card by post normally within 10 days.

Besides the possibilities for online payment that you gain through the bank, a popular and useful app for transfers between friends, local producers, shopping etc is MobilePay, where you register with your bank account and phone number and can find the recipients just through their phone numbers.

Taxes

Contact the Tax Administration at International House Helsinki (2nd floor). You need to bring along the following documents: a passport or a valid photo ID, an employment contract. A tax card will be issued, which needs to be provided to THL. **You must have a Finnish personal identity code before you apply for a tax card.**

Address: International House Helsinki, Albertinkatu 25, Helsinki

Website: <https://www.ihhelsinki.fi/>

Also, you can go directly on their website and ask for everything online as soon as you have your bank codes and ID number to be able to connect (https://www.vero.fi/en/individuals/tax-cards-and-tax-returns/tax_card/).

Finally, it is also possible to ask for your tax card just by calling, before receiving the banking credentials. The phone number to be called can be found on the website.

5. Administration

Contract

The contract will be signed after the arrival to Finland and visit to THL. No extra documents are needed for signing. The contract will be in Finnish; however, an informal English translation is also available.

Salary corrections

Please enquire with the Fellowship Programme Office at ECDC if you need to know the correction factor for salaries in your host countries. These can change and the most up to date information should be available from the Programme Office.

Pension (public/private)

Public pension will be deducted from your monthly salary. For more information Contact the Finnish Centre for Pensions (ETK) at International House Helsinki (2nd floor).

Address: International House Helsinki, Albertinkatu 25, Helsinki

Website: <https://www.ihhelsinki.fi/>

6. Insurance

Health insurance

The Finnish Social Insurance Institution is called Kela. In Finland, each person paying taxes has the right to use the public health care system. To have access to the public health care system you need to have a Kela card. It usually takes up to a few months to receive a Kela card after registering at KELA and requesting a card (you do not automatically receive the EU Health Insurance Card along with your Kela card, you need to apply for it separately online at

<https://www.kela.fi/web/en/european-health-insurance-card-how-to-apply>). In case of need of medical treatment during that period, you need to cover all the expenses yourself. The costs will be reimbursed after receiving the Kela card and after providing the receipts to Kela. **You must have a Finnish personal identity code before you apply for a Kela card.**

If you need to visit a doctor during your employment at THL, you should use occupational health services provided by Terveystalo. At any time, you can apply for a regular occupational check-up. You can also check what is included in your occupational health contract in THL website:

<https://terho.thl.fi/wiki01/category/tyoterveys>

Address: Terveystalo Keskuskatu, Keskuskatu 7, Helsinki

Telephone: + 358 45 7734 9974

Online booking: <https://ajanvaraus-beta.terveystalo.com/fi/?epslanguage=fi&id=22>

Recommendations/suggestions

In addition to health insurance provided by Kela, you can take an extra health insurance from e.g. insurance companies recommended by the bank, where you opened an account.

Travel clinics/where to get vaccinations

Terveystalo clinic may provide extra vaccinations, if needed. Flu vaccines are given directly at THL by Terveystalo. Booking of appointments for these is done through the internal THL system.

Travel insurance

Information about ECDC Travel Insurance

ECDC travel insurance is provided by Cigna International Health Services. All staff and sponsored meeting delegates travelling on behalf of ECDC are covered by this insurance. The insurance takes effect as from the time one leaves their home/office for the meeting/mission and ends upon return to home/office. Times outside this period, including durations with private deviations, are not covered.

Coverage includes, among others, medical expenses as well as costs for repatriation in case of personal accident and/or serious illness, theft, riots etc. For medical expenses, the travel insurance is a complimentary insurance. Any costs or damages that are not covered by the primary insurance (private, national or corporate) will be supplemented by the travel insurance upon a written declaration that such expense had not been covered.

Please note that the ECDC Travel Insurance is only a "top-up" insurance and everyone are expected to have a travel insurance (professional or private) already.

It is recommended to always bring your European Health Insurance Card when travelling in Europe.

Source: ECDC EVA

Travel health insurance

When you get the Kela health insurance, you will also be entitled to have the European Health Insurance Card for which you will need to apply separately (see above). Additionally, you are insured by THL when you travel for work.

Accident insurance

Can be obtained separately, e.g. from your bank.

Liability insurance

In Finland, the majority of the obligatory house insurance packages include also liability insurance. House insurance can be arranged at the bank/insurance company of your choice or by the real estate agency you used to rent your flat.

The liability insurance is taken privately and can cover major accidents etc that may occur in the apartment or the building, such as water damage. The type of coverage varies and can include additionally personal liability or small accidents, depending on what you wish to have covered and how much self-coverage you will select. A basic and cheap solution can be achieved with approximately 100-200 euros a year, where you would be liable for small accidents yourself, but the insurance would cover major accidents, such as flooding etc.

Expat insurance

Can be obtained separately, e.g. from your bank.

7. Leaving the country

Suggested removal companies

There several options available. Previous fellows used Niemi services:

https://www.niemi.fi/en/moving/ask_for_a_quote

For Scandinavian services (used from Copenhagen to Helsinki):

Alfa moving: <https://www.alfamoving.com>

With Alfa if THL pays directly for the service no VAT is paid, whereas substantial VAT is paid if the fellow pays himself and then has the amount reimbursed afterwards. In order for THL to be able to pay directly, one needs to ask Alfa to issue the invoice with a prospective date that is later than the starting date of the THL contract, despite the removal happening earlier than that.

Places to deregister from

You will need to notify Maistraatti before leaving Finland. Additionally, check with administrators at THL, as they will have the most up-to-date information.

AT WORK

8. Terveystieteiden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos (National Institute for Health and Welfare)

Getting to & from the city/institute

For more information about the public transport in Helsinki see “10. Public transport”.

National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), is situated about 4,7 km from the city centre at Mannerheimintie 166, Helsinki. If you come from the city centre, you can take a tram or a bus. Tram no. 10 drives on Mannerheimintie passing THL (17 min, 8 min intervals). The nearest stop to THL is called “Tilkka” as shown on a screen in the tram or the bus. See the tram 10 route from the city centre to (THL) Mannerheimintie 166

(<https://reittiopas.hsl.fi/linjat/HSL%3A1010/pysakit/HSL%3A1010%3A0%3A01>). Unfortunately, **tickets are not sold on trams**. You need to buy a ticket before you board it. Single tickets are available from ticket machines, R-kiosks and other HSL sales points. You can also download the HSL Mobile ticket app on your smartphone to buy tickets. They are charged via card payment to your Visa, Visa Electron or MasterCard. You can find information on tickets and sales points here: <https://www.hsl.fi/en>. Mobile SMS-ticket is available with the subscriptions of Elisa, Kolumbus, Saunalahti, Sonera, Tele Finland and DNA.

There are a lot of buses driving on Mannerheimintie passing THL. All the buses beginning with 4 leave from Eliel Square (Elielinaukio) near Central Railway station: 40, 43, 411, 415, 421, 431, 436. Bus tickets can be bought from the driver. Nearest bus stop to THL is “Tilkka”.

Your office space

THL does not have assigned desks but practices hotdesking which means that you might be sitting at a different desk every day. There will be a designated shelf space for work related items. Personal belongings can be stored in a locker.

Access card

In order to obtain THL credentials, you need to have a bank account registered in THL's system. You will also need to get a key fob to access the offices of the Department of Health Security that are located on lab floors. For this a lab tour is necessary.

Laptop and mobile

The administrators will assist you with obtaining a laptop and a mobile phone after the registration in THL's system.

Remote Access

More information will be available on arrival.

Holidays

Two vacation days are allocated every month during the first year and 2.5 days thereafter. You need to apply through the administrative system of THL (system called Kieku) to claim the vacation days. An approval from the head of the unit is required before you can leave for vacation.

Public Holidays

	Year 2021
New Year's Day	Friday 1.1.
Epiphany*	Wednesday 6.1.
Good Friday (movable)	Friday 2.4.
Easter Monday (movable)	Monday 5.4.
Vappu (May Day), Labour Day	Saturday 1.5.
Ascension Day (movable)	Thursday 13.5.
Midsummer Eve (movable)**	Friday 25.6.
Midsummer (movable)	Saturday 26.6.
All Saints Day - always on Saturdays	Saturday 6.11.
Independence Day*	Monday 6.12.
Christmas Eve	Friday 24.12.
Christmas Day	Saturday 25.12.
Boxing Day	Sunday 26.12.

*New legislation liberalising shop opening hours in Finland means that many stores are open on 6 December and Epiphany.

**Even though they are not official, public holidays, not all Finns work on Midsummer Eve. Some businesses are closed the whole day and some, such as grocery stores, are open for part of the day. This practice is dependent on labour union contracts. Moreover, public transport will run on special holiday timetables.

Working Time

Working time is 7.35 h per day ≈37h per week.

Lunch

THL cafeteria is a good place to have lunch. It serves several meal options including vegetarian dishes; prices vary from 6-9€ for a complete meal. In addition, there is a possibility to warm your own cooked food. 30 minutes lunch break is reduced from your working hours each day.

LIVING IN FINLAND

9. Culture (dos and don'ts)

<https://www.edunation.co/studyinfinland/blog/dos-donts-finland/>

10. Public transport

The public transport service in Helsinki is called 'HSL'. For all details on tickets visit:

<https://www.hsl.fi/en>. On 'Reittiopas' (<http://www.reittiopas.fi/en/>), you will find a nice journey planner for Helsinki region, not only for the public transportation, but for cycling and walking routes too.

Travel within Helsinki:

In Helsinki region there is an integrated ticket system that includes different cities. HSL's tickets are valid on buses, trams, metro, commuter trains and Suomenlinna ferry. You can also transfer from one vehicle to another with the same ticket. The price of a ticket depends on whether you travel within one municipality or between municipalities. Helsinki transport system is divided into 3 zones (unless you are travelling to the outskirts of Helsinki a zone 0 or 1 ticket will cover your journey). In March 2019, the reorganization of zones is planned in Helsinki. More information can be found on HSL website.

Available tickets:

- Single tickets;
- Day tickets (for 1-7 day periods);
- Travel cards.

Note, that the travel card has two different types: 1. **multi-user travel card**, which can be purchased from R-kiosks as well as from other sales and service points and can be used by any person holding the card. 2. **personal travel card**, which is available only for those who are registered as permanent resident in Finland and can only be purchased from HSL service point at Rautatientori metro station.

Tickets purchase options:

- Buy single tickets, day tickets for 1-7 days from ticket machines;
- Buy and reload your Multi-user Travel Card from R-Kioski or the ticket machines at larger stations;
- Buy your Personal Travel Card from HSL Rautatientori Service Point and reload it at R-Kioski or the ticket machines at larger stations;
- Buy your ticket on the HSL Mobile app on your smartphone.

You can load the Travel Card with a period ticket (14-366 days) and/or value (5-400€). The validity of the period ticket can begin immediately or within 0-60 days from the moment of purchase. A Travel Card (both types) costs 5€ and it can be used for several years.

Also, you can use the app from HSL and buy your tickets/monthly cards directly via the app and use the app as a ticket. The system works really well and there are barely any issues with the internet network: welcome in Finland where quite everything is digital! For your information, to buy a monthly ticket you will have to have a Finnish bank account...

To and from airport:

Helsinki Airport is located in Vantaa, about 20 km from the centre of Helsinki. The commuter train connection between Helsinki city centre and Helsinki Airport was opened in July 2015 with five new stations. Daytime, trains on the Ring Rail Line (P and I trains) operate from Helsinki railway station every ten minutes and stop at all stations on the route. Both terminals can be reached smoothly through a direct indoor route from the station by walk and elevators/escalators. The exit/entrance opens at the corridor between Terminal 1 and 2 (arriving from the station, Terminal 1 will be on your right, Terminal 2 will be on your left). The journey takes about 30 minutes to/from Helsinki Central railway station.

Bus 615 and the Finnair City Bus operate between the airport and Helsinki Central Railway Station. Line 617 operates between the airport and the Hakaniemi market square on rush hours from

Monday to Friday. You can purchase the ticket from the driver. The journey takes about 40 min.

Bus 415 operates between airport and Elielinaukio. It takes about 40 min. to get to THL (get off at the bus stop "Ruskeasu" or "Tilkka").

Timetables of commuter trains and buses are available in the HSL Journey Planner:

<http://www.reittiopas.fi/en/index.php>.

Travelling by train outside Helsinki:

The Helsinki Central Railway Station (Rautatieasema) serves as a hub for all major cities and local VR commuter rail network. The station also hosts the Rautatien metro station, which is the busiest station of the Helsinki Metro. More information on routes, timetables and tickets at:

<https://www.vr.fi/cs/vr/en/frontpage>

11. Cycling in the city

Helsinki has a very well-developed city biking system and many locals are using this service during the season, which begins in April and ends in October. The price for the whole season for a 30 min. free ride costs 30€. Multiple 30 min. free rides are allowed per day. Other payment plans are available at <https://kaupunkipyorat.hsl.fi/en>.

12. Language schools

You can browse and find information on Finnish language courses open to all and held in the Helsinki region (including Espoo and Vantaa) on www.finnishcourses.fi. The University of Helsinki Language Centre's Language Services unit offers open-enrolment fee-based *Finnish for foreigners'* courses. You do not need to be enrolled as a student at the University of Helsinki to participate in these courses. Courses are organized all through the year: autumn courses begin in September (you should enrol in August!), and spring courses in January; summer courses run in June, July and August. Website:

<https://www.helsinki.fi/en/cooperation/finnish-for-foreigners#registration>.

The Institute of Adult Education in Helsinki ([Helsingin Aikuisopisto](http://www.helsingin-aikuisopisto.fi)) also organises open-to-all Finnish language courses that are held during the day or in the evening and on weekends.

Claiming money back for language classes can become complicated for budget reasons – if you are planning to claim back money, please talk to financial department of THL to find out how they have budgeted this and talk to them about when you are planning to take classes and what the expected costs will be. Consider doing this at the beginning of your fellowship and ask the coordinator team at

the introductory course for a description of the funding allocations, as the rules are written in the contract between ECDC and the host site, but it is not explained in the director's decision.

13.Recreational activities, sports, worth visiting, meeting people

As an employee at THL, you are entitled to an amount of 150€/year (~50€ for the 4 months in the first year of your fellowship) for sport/cultural activities at certain places (<https://www.epassi.fi/>). Beforehand, you need to obtain a private Finnish mobile number, which will be listed in the internal THL "HOT" system. At the site of your interest (e.g. gym, opera etc.) you will use your mobile number and the payments will be done automatically through the e-Passi system.

Worth visiting

- Visit some of Helsinki's finest museums: the Finnish National Gallery (<http://www.kansallisgalleria.fi/en/>), Kiasma – Museum of Contemporary Art (<http://www.kiasma.fi/en>) and Ateneum Art Museum (<http://www.ateneum.fi/en>).
- Suomenlinna Island is one of seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Finland. Suomenlinna is a maritime fortress that was built off the coast of Helsinki in 1748. The island is accessible only by water. A ferry service runs from the Market Square throughout the year. The trip to Suomenlinna takes 15–20 minutes and offers magnificent views of Helsinki and the surroundings from the sea. During the cold winter months, the trip through the ice-covered waters is a unique experience. More info: <http://www.suomenlinna.fi/>.
- Seurasaari Island is a popular open-air museum and recreational area located 15 minutes by bus from the city centre. The wooden buildings represent Finnish building traditions from 18th to the 20th century. More info: http://www.nba.fi/en/museums/seurasaari_openairmuseum.
- Helsinki Zoo, established in 1889, is one of the few zoos located on an island. It is home to 150 animal species and almost 1000 plant species and open throughout the year. More info: <http://www.korkeasaari.fi/helsinki-zoo/>.
- Sightseeing cruises: during the summer time you can take the ferries/boats from the Market Square and experience the archipelago.
- Getting around Finland: Turku, Porvoo, Rauma and Lapland all worth a visit.
- Major cities close to Helsinki: Tallinn (»82 km), Saint Petersburg (»300 km), Stockholm (»400 km).

You can also subscribe to the library in Helsinki! (<https://www.oodihelsinki.fi/en/>). It is free but you should need your Finnish ID card if you want it to be fully done. You have access to books in different languages and also online magazines from multiple countries and in foreign language. Worth it!

14.Supermarkets

Supermarkets '*S-Market*', '*K-market*' and '*Alepa*' are located close to THL (they sell all the basic things you need including a selection of meats and fruits). Larger supermarkets ('*K-SuperMarket*', '*Lidl*') are located in the city centre (e.g. inside shopping centres '*Stockmann*', '*Kamppi*', '*Sokos*'). The largest and more upscale supermarkets are K-CityMarket (some branches are open 24h) and Prisma. Big shopping complexes tend to open Mon-Fri 9:00-21:00, Sat 9:00-18:00 and Sun 12:00-18:00, local shops follow similar hours, some closing earlier from 20:00 onwards on workdays.

The main shopping streets: Aleksanterinkatu, Esplanadi and Mannerheimintie.

Shopping centres and department stores located in the city centre: 'Stockmann', 'Sokos', 'Forum', 'Kamppi', 'Kluuvi'. Another big shopping mall is by Pasila station, called "the mall of Tripla". 'R-kioski' is a chain of convenience stores, with >600 shops in Finland. They sell a range of products, such as books, magazines, stamps, tobacco, ready meals, snacks, drinks, etc. R-kioski shops also provide services such as prepaid mobile phone top-up vouchers, the sale of public transport tickets and topping up of HSL travel card. Selected shops are also able to sell national rail and bus transport tickets.

Products from local producers (such as a wider selection of fish and meats) can be found in marketplaces, for example at the Hakaniemi city market or at REKO exchanges (the latter is through Facebook events where one needs to order in advance).

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

15. Moving in with a family

Finland is a very family-oriented country and one of the easiest countries to move in with a family. There are public playgrounds everywhere, a big section/indoor playground for families at the National Library in Helsinki, a nice zoo as well as numerous happenings and activities for families organized by the municipality.

The following points are to be taken into consideration when moving to Finland with a family for EPIET:

- *Removal costs*: ECDC offers a larger relocation allowance for people moving with families. This is, however, at the moment quite underestimated and is insufficient to cover the removal, let alone the tickets, immigration registration fees etc, especially in the case of larger families.
- *Social benefits for families*: KELA, the social security authority, offers significant benefits for families. There is a guide to the social benefits that can be claimed (they can all be claimed online when having the online bank credentials, but paper forms in English are also available). The guide can be found here:

<https://www.kela.fi/web/en/families>

The amount received for the benefits depends partly on the family income, but, overall, one can expect to receive:

- a) child benefits for each child under the age of 17 (at the level of about 100 euros/month/child, but depending also on the number of children)
- b) maternity/paternity leave allowance, in case of childbirth
- c) childcare allowance (for types of childcare see below). This can either be some subsidy that reduces the amount that needs to be paid to a daycare institution (private or public), or an amount that can be paid to someone caring for the child, be that a private person/nanny or the parent him/herself. Regarding the latter, be aware that there is currently discussion about abolishing the right to parental allowance when a parent is taking care of his/her own child, so that may not be an option in the future. However, at the moment this is available, and it even includes partial allowance, when the parent is only caring for the child part-time, while working part-time.

When looking into private daycare and kindergarten facilities one should always call the specific daycare/kindergarten to ask what the actual payable amount is, as a significant amount (about 500 euros of the nominal tuitions) is covered by KELA and the municipality.

- d) In addition to the above, children receive free healthcare service through KELA. Dental care is also free for children.

Healthcare

Healthcare for children is through Neuvola, which handles both regular checkups as well as vaccinations. For Helsinki all info can be found here: <https://www.hel.fi/sote/perheentuki-en>

The parent needs to book the appointment him/herself.

The City of Helsinki also offers some additional/general support for families, including international families: <https://www.hel.fi/sote/perheentuki-en>

Public transport

At the moment of writing, one parent traveling with a child in a stroller can ride for free in all public transport in the Helsinki area, and also in many areas outside Helsinki. However, there is currently discussion for this to be stopped, so one needs to check the updated status on that.

Daycare and kindergarten

Finland is renowned for its educational system, most notably for school-level education. In the early ages, children do not follow strict schedules, but are allowed more free play. Children go out to play once or twice a day every day regardless of weather conditions, unless the weather is really poor, i.e. below -15 and heavy snowfall. There are also “forest” daycares and kindergartens, where children spend their whole day in the forest.

The public childcare institutions are in general considered of high quality and most Finns would opt for public daycare and kindergarten for their children. Usually, kids are allocated to institutions that are close to their place of residence, which makes dropping off/picking up quite convenient. The opening hours are quite extended, and typically kids can stay there until 17:00-17:30.

Children until the age of 3 go to daycare, from 3-5 to kindergarten, from 5-6 to preschool, and at 7 years they start the first grade of primary school.

For all of the above, there are options in Finnish, Swedish, English or bilingual English-Finnish.

Also, there are options for both public and private care/schooling. The government subsidizes part of the expenses of the private childcare facilities, which means that in some cases it can be equally or not much more expensive to opt for private options. There are still, however, private options that are significantly more expensive.

Daycare (children less than 3 years old)

Daycare options:

A full list of daycare options for the city of Helsinki (including temporary care, part care etc) can be found here: <https://www.hel.fi/helsinki/en/childhood-and-education/day-care/options/>

Public daycare centres usually serve from 6:15 to 17:30 on weekdays.

The main daycare options are:

- Public or private daycare facility, which may also include a kindergarten, to which the child will effortlessly move to at the age of three. For these ages the ratio of adults to children is maximum 4 children per one adult, and a typical class consists of 12 children.
- Family daycare. These are public small facilities that run under a similar premise as the regular daycare centers but are very small and with only a few children. These are really good options for small kids, but they may be hard to get into.
- Private person hired to take care of the child. This person could be taking care of the child with or without other children, at his own home or at the home of the child. The person does not need to be a qualified educator. It can also be a relative or a friend, for example. However, a contract needs to be signed between the family and the carer and the municipality needs to approve it.
- Parent taking care of the child at home full-time or part-time. Depending on the hours of employment, a non-fully employed parent is at the moment of writing (January 2021) entitled to homecare allowance for taking care of his/her own child, provided they do not attend any daycare facility.

Subsidy/costs of daycare: The costs are partly dependent on the income of the family. The subsidy comes from two parts: one part comes from KELA (it is not a very large amount, and the amount is based on family income), and another, more significant, part comes from the municipality, e.g. the city of Helsinki. The total subsidy would be around 400-500 euros. This means that for public daycare a typical amount to be paid after the subsidy would be around 200-300 euros for one child and 100-200 euros for the second child. In private daycare the charges differ depending on the individual school fees, but one would in most cases need to pay after the subsidy around 400-500 euros a month.

For a private person caring for the child, the respective amount would be subsidized, and the family would need to pay the remainder of the salary, which depends on the specific agreement. Link: <https://www.hel.fi/helsinki/en/childhood-and-education/day-care/home/hiring-a-caregiver-at-home/>

A parent taking care of his/her own child is eligible for homecare allowance, and the amount depends on KELA's calculations. You can check the range of the expected amount here: <https://www.hel.fi/helsinki/en/childhood-and-education/day-care/home/allowance/allowance>.

Kindergarten/Preschool

Kindergartens start at the age of three and many include also preschool classes, so the kids can stay in the same place until the calendar year they turn 7, at which point they move to the primary school. However, sometimes kids need to transition to preschool at the age of 6, when preschool is not available at their kindergarten. All kids start the preschool during the year they turn six years. Before then daycare/kindergarten is not mandatory. Preschool hours are less than normal working hours, so you may need to organize kindergarten for the child for the afternoon hours.

In kindergarten classes the ratio of kids to adults is higher than that for younger kids and classes are larger.

The costs for kindergarten depend on the age of the age but are at similar levels as those for daycare. In the preschool year there are some hours per day of mandatory attendance, and those hours are for free (both for private and public preschools). Also in the year before the preschool (age 5-6) all children are entitled to a couple of hours of free education, so those hours will be paid by the municipality.

European School of Helsinki: The European School of Helsinki accepts kindergarten and school-age kids and has 3 branches: a Finnish-speaking, an English-speaking and a French speaking. Kids are additionally offered classes in their mother tongue (about 20+ languages available). The school system and classes are different at the EU school (following the class system and curriculum of the EU schools), meaning that children start primary school at 6 years instead of 7. Upon insistence, I managed to get the European School of Helsinki to consider my children as category I applicants, based on ECDC being an employer of mine (this is grey zone, so it is not certain that each school principal will agree to this). In the case of Category I applications the EU school is obliged to find a spot for the applicant's child(s), even when the applications are otherwise closed and even when the child is not proficient in the language of the school. For category I children (i.e., whose parents work in the EU), the EU agency where the parents work would also normally pay for the fees. ECDC was not helpful on this matter, so the agreement has so far been that the fellow would pay individually. It is also possible for fellows to apply as category II (i.e. normal applicants without affiliation to the EU), provided that there are free spots available, and that the children are fluent in the language of instruction.

How to apply for public daycare/kindergarten/preschool:

For Helsinki the instructions for applying for daycare can be found here:

<https://www.hel.fi/helsinki/en/childhood-and-education/day-care/daycare/applying/>

And for kindergarten/preschool here:

<https://www.hel.fi/helsinki/en/administration/administration/services/eservices?id=506>

Normally, in order to apply one needs to have obtained both the ID number and the online banking credentials, and applications are filled in online after secure log-in. If you do not have the online credentials yet, it is also possible to apply with a paper form, which you hand over to the institutions of interest (the form can be found on the website above).

You normally select three places of interest, and then they contact you if and when they have a spot. They can guarantee a spot at some facility after a certain amount of time. However, in that case you may be offered any spot anywhere and not necessarily close to your home or to the facilities of your choice. You then either have to accept this offer or lose your seniority on the list and submit a new application.

IMPORTANT: For the public system, the whole application process takes 4 months, i.e. you need to apply for a spot 4 months before you need the spot, in order for a spot to be guaranteed. This is typically something that cannot be done in the case of EPIET, because you only get the ID numbers after coming to Finland. You can try, however, to make some preliminary contacts before arrival to enquire regarding availability. Alternatively, you can apply to private places. For some of those there are also long waiting lists, so it is smart to contact the ones of interest as soon as you accept the fellowship, in order to be placed on the waiting list.

There is also a 2-week guaranteed urgent placement by the municipality. This option is reserved for people that have an urgent need for placement and could not have applied earlier, and this includes the circumstances of EPIET fellows when they arrive in Finland. In these cases, they are obliged to offer a spot 2 weeks after the application. However, the options offered in this case are often far from the family home; but one can always get lucky... For the application to be considered urgent, the relevant boxes need to be ticked when applying and additional info, including copies of contracts, may need to be provided.

Primary and secondary school

No fellow has been in Finland with school-aged kids. The public schools in Finland are held in high esteem internationally. As far as English-speaking schools are concerned, the most famous ones include the European School (see above; EU school system), the International School of Helsinki (considered very good but very expensive; IB system), RESSU (IB system) and Espoo International School. There is also the English School of Helsinki, which is bilingual, and follows mainly the Finnish system. Many of the English-speaking schools require advance application and tests, which may take place as early as the winter of the previous year. If there are spots available, some schools still consider applications. And, as mentioned above, fellows' children are guaranteed a spot at the European School, if they are accepted as Category I applicants.

CONTACT

16.Key contacts at your institute

Secretariat

- Palander Marja, marja.palander@thl.fi,
- Pentikäinen Laura, laura.pentikainen@thl.fi

HR

If you need to get in contact with HR representatives at THL consult with your supervisor first.

Finance

- Räisanen Tiina, tiina.raisanen@thl.fi

17.Contact information of current and previous fellows

Feel free to contact the current fellows. They have lots of additional information that they are happy to share with you.

Name	Cohort	Email	Nationality, moved from→to	Moved with partner/family
Dorothee Obach	2020	dorothee.obach@thl.fi	French, France-Finland	No
Dafni Paspaliari	2020	dafni.paspaliari@thl.fi paspaliari.dafni@gmail.com	Greek, Denmark-Finland	Yes
Charlotte Hammer	2019	charlotte.hammer@thl.fi	German, Germany-Finland	No
Sohvi Kääriäinen	2020	sohvi.kaariainen@thl.fi	Finnish, Finland-Finland	No

RECAP

- Book an appointment at immigration as soon as you know you are going to Finland
- Ask Marja Palander for a certificate of employment
- Book an appointment at DVV and, as soon as you have your ID number, at the Bank