

LIVING IN FINLAND: ENTRY AND RESIDENCE

This leaflet describes in general the regulations and procedures related to the student's staying in Finland. This information cannot necessarily be applied to each individual student. If you are uncertain of your own situation, please, contact directly the authorities mentioned in this paper. It is in your own responsibility to make sure that you have fulfilled all the necessary procedures for your entering Finland and staying as a degree student in Finland.

Before entering Finland

Before leaving your home country, there are certain things you must do. All foreigners except citizens of Nordic countries and EU member states need a valid passport. Citizens of EU and Nordic countries need an official identity card to prove their identity. There are different requirements as regards entry formalities depending on your citizenship.

The entry to and residence in Finland of foreign nationals are subject to the provisions of the Finnish Aliens Act and the Schengen Acquis. In general, the entry permits are visas and residence permits. More information on the Finnish legislation and on entry permits and residency is available at <http://www.uvi.fi> (Directorate of Immigration) and at <http://www.formin.fi> section Services > Foreign nationals arriving in Finland (Ministry for Foreign Affairs).

Visa

As from March 2001, the Schengen area was formed of thirteen European Union (EU) member states including Finland. The current Schengen member states Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden have jointly agreed about the rules concerning the movement of third-country nationals in their territories and decided which countries' citizens are required to present a visa. The Schengen area countries have uniform visa regulations and foreigners must fulfil the entry conditions.

Who needs a visa?

A visa is needed if the student is a citizen of a country that has not signed an agreement on the abolition of visa with Finland.

- The citizens of the Nordic countries may arrive, reside, study and work without visas or residence permits.
- The citizens of the European Union, EU and Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland need not apply for a visa or a residence permit before arriving in Finland. They must register their right to reside in Finland at a police department, if their stay lasts for longer than three months.
- Citizens of other countries are required to have a visa or a residence permit, depending on the citizenship and the length of the stay, already before coming to Finland.

Where and how to apply for a visa?

■ If you are a foreign national requiring a visa, you must always have one when entering the Schengen area. A Schengen visa is applied for from the embassy or consulate of the destination country. So when coming to Finland, you are requested to apply for it either from a Finnish embassy or consulate or from a mission of a Schengen country that represents Finland (see more at the website of the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs www.formin.fi). For admission of visa one is always required to have a valid travel insurance together with other documents. Check all the needed documents from the embassy or consulate in question. Please, notice that although a visa may be granted, the conditions of entry to Finland are re-evaluated on arriving in the country.

Residence Permit for Students

A foreign student must acquire a residence permit if his or her studies in Finland last for more than three months. When applying a residence permit a student must provide the details of comprehensive health insurance cover.

- EU citizens as well the citizens of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland must meet the following conditions in order to obtain the right to reside in Finland:

1) the main reason for the stay in Finland is to study at a Finnish educational institution and 2) the student has sufficient means to support his or her stay in Finland during the studies. The student may provide proof of funding in any way he or she chooses. Students from Nordic countries do not need to provide proof of funding.

■ Citizens from countries outside the EU who intend to stay in Finland for more than 90 days must obtain a residence permit from the Finnish diplomatic mission or legation in their home country before entering Finland. The permit is to be applied for in the country in which the student resides legally. In practice this means the home country of the applicant, or the country which has granted him or her a residence permit. Applicants must wait for the decision on their application abroad, because the residence permit must be in the student's passport when arriving in Finland. A fee is charged for processing residence permit applications.

International students from countries outside the EU area are required to demonstrate that they have sufficient funds to support themselves in Finland. Students must be able to prove that they have at their disposal at least 500 euros a month or 6000 euros for a year. Therefore, an applicant might need to open a bank account as soon as he/she arrives in Finland. In other cases students are required to demonstrate at the Finnish legation that they have the sum deposited in their bank account of their home country.

■ The citizens of the Nordic countries may arrive, reside, study and work in Finland without residence permits.

How long is a residence permit valid?

A residence permit granted to a student is temporary by its nature. If the studies last for more than a year, the residence permit is usually granted for one year at a time.

Is a student allowed to work while studying?

An EU citizen can work while studying in Finland and does not need to acquire a special work permit to do so.

Non EU citizens are permitted to do a limited amount of paid work under a residence permit issued for studies if the work in question is practical training included in the studies or final project work. Part-time employment is also possible, if the working time comes to an average of 25 hours per week at most. There are no limitations on working hours in full-time employment during holidays, specifically the summer and Christmas holidays.

Students' Health Insurance

Any student who submits a residence permit application on or after September 1, 2007 must attach details of their comprehensive health insurance cover to their application. Comprehensive insurance cover means insurance which includes the types of treatment and costs that are covered by municipal health care services and the health insurance system. It is a precondition for obtaining a residence permit that the student has valid health insurance cover with a reliable and solvent company or institution.

For studies of less than two years in duration, a student must have private insurance which primarily covers the costs of medical treatment up to 100,000 euros (cost level in 2007). Where the duration of the studies is two years or more, a student will usually have a home municipality in Finland and is therefore entitled to municipal health care services. In such cases, it is sufficient for the insurance to primarily cover the cost of medicines (in practice the cover extends to doctor's fees and costs of treatment and examination), up to 30,000 euros (cost level in 2007).

A student must have insurance cover when applying for a residence permit as without it a residence permit cannot be granted. In principle a residence permit cannot be issued for a period exceeding the period of the insurance cover

Although the health insurance is not compulsory for EU citizens it is strongly recommended that the students who are EU citizens have a valid health and accident insurance that covers them also during their travel to and from Finland. For the eventual leisure time excursions it is advisable to make sure that the insurance is valid also in Finland's neighbouring countries. Note that the European Health Insurance Card is not valid during your travels to and from Finland and during the excursions to the third country.

Once You Have Arrived Finland

Once you have arrived Finland you need to follow certain formalities concerning your stay. Depending on your country of origin you need either apply for residence permit to stay in the country from the local police department or register your right to reside in Finland. In any case you need to do the Notice of Moving to the Local Register Office within one week of your arrival. Please, see the chapter "Notice of Moving".

The residence permits for international students are only granted for a maximum of one year. Application for a new residence permit is submitted to the local police authorities.

Take with you to the police department:

- Certificate of attendance at HSE
- two passport sized photograph
- Passport or ID-card
- money for the payment for the application

To be able to renew the residence permit, the student must show that he/she has proceeded in his/her studies as planned. To renew your residence permit, take with you:

- Certificate of attendance at HSE
- Proof of deposit of EUR 6,000 on your bank account
- One photo
- Passport
- money for the payment of the application

Citizens of Nordic Countries

Citizens from the Nordic countries do not need a residence permit. Instead, if they stay for more than three months in Finland they need to register at the local register office (Maistraatti, Magistrat, see the addresses below) and if they intend to stay for more than six months they need to take the internordiskt flyttningsbetyg – which should be obtained from the home country – to the local register office.

Police Departments

- Helsinki Police Department (Helsingin kihlakunnan poliisilaitos): Viljatie 2 B, 00700 Helsinki, (local trains I, K and H) Tel: (09) 189 3220 Mon-Fri 9.00 – 11.00, Office Hours Mon–Fri 8.00–16.15 (The distribution of client numbers (necessary for all) will finish each day at 14.00 if there is a lot clients waiting)
- Espoo Police Department (Espoon kihlakunnan poliisilaitos): Nihtisillankuja 4, 02630 Espoo (bus no. 15), Tel: (09) 52541, Office Hours Mon–Wed, Fri 8.00–16.15, Thurs 8.00–17.15
- Vantaa Police Department (Vantaan poliisilaitos): Kielotie 21, 01300 Vantaa (in Tikkurila, take the local train I,K or H from the Helsinki railway station), Tel: (09) 873 01 Office Hours Mon–Fri 8.00–16.15

Notice of Moving

You should make a notice of moving (muuttoilmoitus) within one week of your arrival in Finland. This can be done by filling out a form at the post office or at the Local Register Office (see the addresses below). This must also be done when you leave Finland.

If you move inside Finland you should make a notice of moving as well, either by filling out a form at the post office or by calling 0203 456 456.

Registering at the Local Register Office (Maistraatti)

If you intend to stay in Finland for more than a year you have to register at your local register office (maistraatti), because all foreign residents have to be registered in the Population Information System. In the maistraatti you will

also get a personal identity number which is needed for taxation (in order to get a tax card) and may be required in many other practical things, such as opening a mobile phone connection.

It is necessary to register at the maistraatti office in order to purchase an electronic travel card (matkakortti), as you need to show that you reside (either permanently or temporarily) in the capital area. For purchasing an electronic travel card you will also need a special certificate that you are a student of HSE which is available in the information desk in the main building of HSE. Transportation Offices do not accept the Certificate of Attendance.

In any case, it is recommended that you register at the maistraatti, to obtain a permanent resident status of your municipality which is required, for example, to get the student reduction on local public transportation. A residence permit valid for at least one year is required in order to obtain a permanent residence status in Helsinki. In Espoo the criteria is stricter (e.g. a permanent job).

Take with you to the Local Register Office:

Passport or if you are an EU citizen also the official ID is sufficient

Fill in and sign the form: "The Registration Information on a Foreigner" available in Local Register Office
money for the payment of the registration

You will be given a certificate from the Local Register Office that you are living temporarily in Helsinki, Espoo or Vantaa. You can use this certificate for example for purchasing the electronic travel card.

For further information, please contact your local register office.

- Helsinki Register Office (Helsingin maistraatti): Albertinkatu 25, 00180 Helsinki (tram 6), Tel: (09)695441, e-mail: helsingin.maistraatti@eslh.intermin.fi
- Espoo Register Office (Espoon maistraatti): Itätuulentie 2 A, 02100 Espoo (in Tapiola), Tel: (09)5024270, e-mail: espoon.maistraatti@eslh.intermin.fi
- Vantaa Register Office (Vantaan maistraatti): Neilikkatie 8, PL 112, 01300 Vantaa, Tel: (09)8362480, e-mail: vantaan.maistraatti@eslh.intermin.fi