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Country Report Finland

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HORIZON EUROPE

Executive Summary

The report aims to study the integration of Ukrainian forcibly displaced persons into Finnish society through three different topics: labour market, housing and education. This is done through data collected from previous research done on Ukrainian integration, national legislation and interviews we conducted with street level bureaucrats and representatives of civil society organizations. The results vary depending on the topic, but there were certain common challenges that connected experiences of Ukrainian FDPs in Finland.

Language barrier together with the lacking language skills are a major issue in both integration to the labour market and education. Finland has very unfriendly labour market for those who do not speak Finnish and a clear majority of the degree programs in Finland have knowledge of either Finnish or Swedish as an entry requirement. From both from our interviews and studies done among Ukrainians, we have seen a gradual increase in language skills. Together with other migrants, Ukrainians also have issues in getting their degrees and past work experience recognized. This has caused many to just start over with their studies, even if they already have a tertiary education degree.

When it comes to childhood education and housing, the Finnish system has mostly been able to adapt well. Finnish comprehensive school system together with the flexible preparatory education programs have been able to handle the massive influx of Ukrainian students. In housing things have mostly gone smoothly as well. The system has been able find accommodation quite flexibly, first through the reception system and then mostly through subsidized housing. This also helped by the social security benefits Ukrainians have eligibility for after living in Finland for a year and getting residency in a municipality.

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Abbreviations

Project abbreviations

HUG	Help Ukraine Gothenburg - Sweden
UPF	Universidad Pompeu Fabra - Spain
LSMC	Lietuvos Socialiniu Mokslu Centras - Lithuania
KKNU	V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University - Ukraine
UEF	Ita-Suomen Yliopisto - Finland
UG	Uniwersytet Gdanski - Poland
UGR	Universitaet Greifswald - Germany
ZAVOD APIS	Zavod Za Avtorsko Produkcijo Izobrazevanje Inovativnost In Sodelovanje - Slovenia
UGOT	University Of Gothenburg - Sweden

Other

TPD	Temporary Protection Directive (Council Directive 2001/55/EC)
TPS	Temporary protection status
FDP	Forcibly Displaced Person. The term “Ukrainian FDPs” refers to people who have fled to Europe because of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022.
SLB	Street level Bureaucrat
CSO	Civil society organization
KELA	Social Insurance Institution of Finland
Migri	Finnish Immigration Service
VATT	Institute of Economic Research
DVV	The Digital and Population Data Services Agency

Background

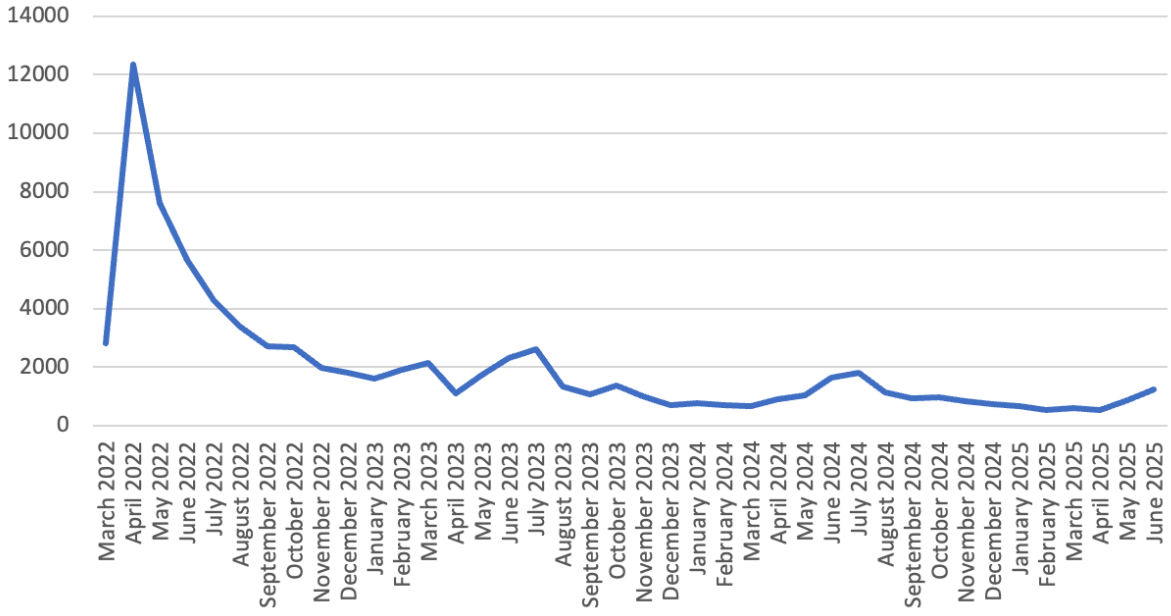
While Ukrainian issues may have historically been seen as distant to Finland, both the long history and border with Russia have made the Ukrainian case much closer to average Finns. This has been the case especially after Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The war made Finland rethink its historic geopolitical positions in a swift manner. Most of the economic ties Finland had been building with the Russian state after the fall of The Soviet Union went under reconsideration, that is if they hadn't already been cut since the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Finland started the process of joining NATO almost immediately after the invasion started, a notion that would have been inconceivable just a couple of months earlier (Lehto and Kauranen, 2022). The country was officially ratified as part of the alliance in April 2023. Since December 2023 the almost 1300-kilometer land border with Russia has been closed for all crossings, a policy that will continue at least until end of the year 2026 (INTERMIN, 2025). When the invasion started, Finland as well as other European countries, also saw an unprecedented number of Ukrainians fleeing the war come to seek shelter.

Before the war Ukrainian citizens made only a small but growing minority of Finnish immigrant population. At the end of 2021, the 7202 Ukrainian citizens living in Finland made up only the 11th most common foreign nationality in the country, though their number had been growing constantly in the last years before the war (OSFd; Migri, 2025b). All visa groups combined, Ukrainians made up the second largest migrant group to move to Finland between 2018 and 2021 with about 12 percent of all granted visas and the largest group when it came to labour migrants, with a share of about 28%. Most Ukrainians that migrated to Finland before the war were labour migrants and visas based on international protection were basically non-existent. Marriage migration has also contributed to the number of Ukrainians living in Finland, pre-war. At the end of 2021 there were 850 families where one of the spouses was Finnish and the other Ukrainian. About two thirds of these families had a Finnish husband and a Ukrainian wife. (OSFb). As most of the Ukrainians were labour migrants, about two thirds of Ukrainian citizens living in Finland at the end of 2021 where between the ages 25 and 50, with a slight majority of them being men. Area of immigration where Ukrainians were most visible was temporary labour migration.

Between 2018 and 2021 there were between 461 and 1411 yearly Ukrainian labour migrants with 3-to-6-month temporary visas and between 6684 and 13 287 with visas for less than 3 months (Migri, 2025b). The number of Ukrainians with temporary labour visas was increasing each year and they made up a clear majority of all migrants with such visas. Most of these migrants came to work in the agriculture and forestry sector (Eronen et al. 2022).

After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine started in February 2022, the profile of Ukrainians living in Finland changed rapidly as Ukrainian FDPs fleeing the war started arriving to the country in a major way in March (Migri, 2025b). Finland had faced major influxes of FDPs before, for example in 2015 -2016, but the scale and pace in which the events unfolded was new (Migri, 2023). Between the start of the war and end of June 2025 Finland has received 83 640 temporary protection applications of whom 1346 where non-Ukrainian residents who had lived in Ukraine. Out of the applicants, 81 000 received a TPS in Finland with 80 120 of them being Ukrainian citizens. Over half of them came in the year 2022, with about one third coming in between the months of March and May. After the first months the number of Ukrainians applying for temporary protection has gone down gradually, with minor bumps in the summer season in each year. About 60% of the recipients have been women and about 70% being between the ages 18 and 64.

Figure 1. Monthly TPS recipients from March 2022 to June 2025.



Children under the age of 18 make up about 28% of all TPSs. Most of the applicants who did not receive a TPS were those whos' application was deemed expired. Most of these cases happened between September of 2023 and the end of 2024. Only 153 applications have ever been denied entirely. (Migri, 2025b.) During 2022 most Ukrainians fleeing to Finland came from the eastern oblasts most affected by the invasion as well as Kyiv oblast (Svynarenko & Koptsyukh, 2022).

After arriving in Finland many Ukrainians were settled in reception centres all over the country. Most of the centres were established when the war started, as the population within the reception services quickly grew from about 5000 to over 40 000 (Migri, 2023). In total 85 new reception centres were founded in 2022 on top of the 27 that had already existed, with capacity within the reception centres themselves being around 28 000 at the end of the year. Of those Ukrainian FDPs arriving in the first months of the war, about 70% managed to find housing outside of reception centres with the number settling at about 40% by the end of 2022. Many of the reception centres were so-called apartment-based centres meaning they did not have a central location but were apartments rented by the organization responsible for running the centre. (Migri 2023.) Ukrainians have been able to apply for municipality of residence after staying in Finland for a full year after which they move from reception services organized by Migri (and its partners) to municipal services. Because of this, those with a TPS started to be recognized in the official immigration statistics from March 2023 onwards. After applying for municipality of residence started to be an option, Migri started downsizing and shutting down reception centres. At the end of September 2025 there were 51 reception centres in Finland, down from the peak of 112 at the end of 2022 (Migri, 2023 & 2025a). This development is set to continue in the beginning of 2026, as almost all Ukrainian FDPs currently in Finland will at that point meet the criteria for residency in a municipality (Löf, 2025).

Because of the policy of being able to apply for municipal residency only after a year of staying in Finland, and many Ukrainians not reporting if they move out of the country, the total number of Ukrainians residing in Finland has been difficult to estimate (Seppä, Alasalmi & Korpela, 2025). Still, most estimates round up to little under 50 000 Ukrainian FDPs currently living in Finland. At the end of 2024, Statistics Finland (OSFf) registered 41 403 Ukrainians living in Finland. According to the Institute of Economic Research (VATT) the number of working aged Ukrainian FDPs residing in Finland was between 27 000 and 49 000 at the end of 2024.

An article by the Finnish newspaper Karjalainen in September 2025 (Löf, 2025) combined the number of people who had already applied for municipal residency and those Ukrainians currently in the reception system was about 52 000 in July-August of 2025. According to the Ministry of the Interior (Koptsyukh & Svynarenko, 2025) the number in autumn 2025 is about 48 500, with 14 000 still in the reception system and 34 500 with a residence in a municipality.

Ministry of the Interior (Koptsyukh & Svynarenko, 2025) estimates that over 30 000 Ukrainians have left Finland after they have received their TPS. Still, as with the number of Ukrainians currently living in Finland it is difficult to get exact data on this. For example, Statistics Finland does not release emigration statistics based on nationality, just movement between countries. Between 2022 and 2024, the total number of people moving from Finland to Ukraine was just 260 (OSFb). This however only counts those who already had municipality of residence in Finland. The data also does not show if these were Ukrainian citizens. The estimation is also made difficult by many Ukrainians not sending an official notice of removal to Migri when they emigrate out of Finland (Seppä, Alasalmi & Korpela, 2025). There is also no available statistic on the number of people who have had their temporary protection withdrawn. In general, in the beginning of the war most Ukrainians thought that they will be either returning to Ukraine or were yet unaware about what they will do, but as the conflict has continued without an end in sight, many have started and want to build their lives in Finland (Koptsyukh & Svynarenko, 2025).

When it comes to domestic migration, Statistics Finland does not release statistics that can be sorted by nationality or language. This means it is difficult to get exact data on the movement of different migrant groups within the country. In general, domestic movement of foreign-born residents in Finland has historically been very much focused from the periphery to the south of the country. Between 2018 and 2023 about two thirds of foreign-born movement happened towards or within the regions of Uusimaa, Southwestern Finland and Pirkanmaa, which house the three largest metropolitan areas in the country: Helsinki, Turku and Tampere (OSFb). During that time only Uusimaa (Helsinki) had any major net growth of foreign-born population through domestic migration. However, when looking at the geographical distribution of Ukrainians between the years 2023 and 2024, this pattern is not visible (OSFf). The share of Ukrainians, at least for the moment, mostly correlates with general population distribution of Finland.

In Finland, while under reception services TPS recipients are entitled to a reception allowance, housing and basic health and social care. They are also entitled to employment and integration services, which since the beginning of 2025 have been run by the municipalities and employment areas formed by multiple municipalities. Children are also entitled to educational and childcare services (in most cases). After becoming a resident of a municipality, those with TPS transfer from services organized by the reception services to municipalities and other public actors. Those with residency have to move out of the accommodation provided by the reception system and can apply for social security benefits through KELA (Social Insurance Institution of Finland) or the municipal social services. The healthcare service provider will from now on be Wellbeing services counties. We will go through the services and rights Ukrainian FDPs are provided more thoroughly in the next chapter.

Governance and multilevel responsibilities in implementation of TPD in respective countries

The implementation of TPD (Directive 2001/55/EC) in Finland is done through the Aliens Act (301/2004) that legislates the entry, status and rights of immigrants in Finland. Temporary protection has been part of the Aliens Act since it came into effect in 2004. Officially the decision to give TPS to those fleeing the war in Ukraine was done through the Government decision 149/2022. Originally TPS could be given to Ukrainian nationals and to anyone who had residence or was receiving international protection in Ukraine. This also included Ukrainians who already lived in Finland before the war began. In September 2023 this was restricted through the Government decision 936/2023, which took away the ability to apply for new TPS for third country nationals other than Ukrainians and those who had come to Finland but had not applied for TPS before the implementation of the decision. The status ended for these groups all together in March 2025 (Government Decision SM/2025/9). For Ukrainian citizens and those who were receiving international protection in Ukraine before the start of the war, TPS is valid until the end of temporary protection offered by the European Union (Amendment to the Aliens Act, 64/2025).

The rights and services TPS recipients have access to differ substantially whether they have just arrived in Finland or have a municipality of residence in the country. These differences are described in Table 1. In general, those who receive TPS in Finland generally have very broad rights, but with a lot of them coming to effect after the person has applied and received a residency in a municipality. Still, even before residency in a municipality, those with TPS have the right to work freely, they can apply to study for a degree, and their children can receive educational and daycare services. Both groups also have access to employment services that up until the end of 2024 were operated by state after which the organization was transferred to the employment areas formed by municipalities (380/2023). This coincided with the transfer of integration services from the state to the municipalities and the Wellbeing regions (1100/2024).

Table 1. Services and rights Ukrainian TPS recipients have directly in arrival and after receiving the municipality of residence status.

Service/right	Responsible organization(s)	On arrival after receiving TPS	After receiving municipality of residence (after one year of stay)
TPS application	Police/Border Control Authority/Migri	Apply with the police or BCA, Application handled by Migri	-
Residence Permit card and social security number	DVV	Will receive automatically after getting the TPS	-
Municipality of Residence	DVV	Can apply after one year of stay	-
Work permit	Migri	no restrictions.	no restrictions.
Changing immigration status	Migri	Can switch to other forms of visa if conditions are met.	Can switch to other forms of visa if conditions are met.

Table 1 Continued

Permanent residency and citizenship	Migri	-	Permanent residency after 4 years of continuous stay on a residence permit other than through TPS. Citizenship can be applied for after 8 years of stay if requirements are met.
Employment services	Municipalities/employment areas	Access to employment services.	Access to employment services.
Unemployment benefits	KELA or unemployment fund if the person is using one.	No access unless the person meets the work requirement (12 months).	No access unless the person meets the work requirement (12 months).
Other forms of social security	Mostly KELA, municipality/wellbeing region in supplementary social assistance.	Access to Reception allowance.	Access to Social assistance, Housing allowance, Child benefit.
Studying (early childhood and childhood education)	Municipality	Municipality has an obligation to provide comprehensive education and are encouraged to offer daycare services.	Municipality has an obligation to provide daycare services and comprehensive education.
Studying (adult education)	Municipalities, regional educational operators, educational institutions.	Unrestricted right to apply to study. No access to student allowance or loans. No tuition fees for degree education.	Unrestricted right to apply to study. No access to student allowance or loans.
Housing	Municipality, private providers, Migri (reception centres)	Reception centres or private housing.	private housing or subsidized housing

Table 1 Continued

Healthcare	Migri (reception centres), Wellbeing regions	Through the reception centre, emergency care through the public services. Access to public/private services if employed.	Complete access to public services
Voting rights	Government	No voting rights.	Voting rights in municipal and regional elections after having residency for 781 days. Voting in national and EU elections after getting citizenship.

The application for TPS is first done after arriving to the country either through the police or border control authority (Migri, n.d.b). The application is handled by Migri. After receiving the TPS, the person will receive a Residence permit card and social security number from The Digital and Population Data Services Agency (DVV). (Migri, n.d.b.) Municipalities are not technically obligated to provide daycare services for those Ukrainians who do not have municipality of residence yet but are encouraged to do so by the government (OPH, n.d.). During the first year TPS recipients can get housing through the reception system and receive reception allowance if other means of providing are not available (719/2018; Migri, n.d.a). The amount of reception allowance varies between 191 and 300 [1]. Euros per person per month if the person does not receive meals from the reception centre, or between 57 to 88 euros if meals are provided.

The application to receive municipality of residence is done through DVV after staying in Finland for a full year. As stated before, when a person with a TPS transfers to a municipality, the actors in charge their services change and also expand substantially. After going under the umbrella of municipal services, those with TPS can apply for a social security card as well as social security benefits like social assistance, housing allowance, child benefit from Social Insurance Institution of Finland KELA (Kela, n.d.c).

Notes

1. Depends on the age and potential roommates of the recipient.

Health care and social services are provided by the wellbeing services counties, which in most of Finland operate under the same geographical boundaries as the regions. The level of these services is similar with Finnish citizens and most other migrants [2]. People with TPS can vote in local elections after 781 days with municipal residency [3]. These rights have not seen any major changes since their implementation. On the local level, the municipalities and wellbeing services counties were later given the right to reimburse the cost of TPSs services from the government (681/2023).

Social assistance is the last tier of social security in Finland that is available for anyone who cannot provide for themselves through other means including other forms of social security payments (Kela, n.d.a). Social assistance can range from 314,58 to 676,65 Euros per month [4] depending on the recipient's age and family status. General housing allowance is a subsidy paid to those who are not able to pay for the full price of their accommodation. Kela can pay up to 80 or 70 percent of rental costs depending on region and income of the recipient's household (Kela, n.d.b). Child benefit is paid universally for each child living in the household who is under the age of 17. The amount ranges from 94,88 Euros from the first child to 192,69 Euros from fifth child onwards (796/1992, 7§). Only major restriction Ukrainian FDPs have when it comes to social security payments is the inability to receive student allowance or loans, as it is only given to those with permanent residency or citizenship (Act on Student Financial Aid, 65/1994), which means that Ukrainians who want to study for a degree have finance themselves through work or social assistance. They are, however, exempt from paying tuition fees for university degrees (Universities Act 558/2009) unlike student migrants from outside of the EU/ETA area.

Notes

2. Excluding other forms of temporary migration and students.

3. However, this made it so that even the first arriving and residency applying TPSs could not vote in the spring 2025 local elections held 13th of April as no one had yet had residency for 781 days at that point.

4. 2025 level. Source: KELA website

Temporary protection status holders can also apply to change the reason for their residency, for example to residency based on labour, studying or family. This is also something those with TPS must do after the temporary protection for Ukrainians ends (Koptsyukh & Svynarenko, 2025). When applying for residence permit based on other means than temporary protection the applicants need to meet the requirements for the specific permits (301/2004, 39§, 71§; 719/2018, 7a§). Labour migrants need a job, and their applications must meet other preconditions set up to ensure worker rights (301/2004, 71§, 72§). Student migrants must be approved as a student in a particular educational institution[5] before applying (719/2018, 7a§). Both labour and student migrants have to meet certain income thresholds that are dependent on the size of their family living with them (301/2004, 39§, 72§ & 1290/2002, 4§). From March 2022 up until August 2025, almost 3000 Ukrainians have applied for residence permit based on work, studying or family, over 70%[6] of which through employment (Migri, 2025b). Over 83% of these applications have been approved. Person under TPS can apply for asylum, but its handling is frozen for the duration of the temporary protection in most cases (301/2004, 111§). This also is the case for those who already had pending asylum applications before the war started. As TPS is separate from refugee status and other forms of residency permits, living in Finland with the status does not count towards the four years of continuous stay in the country necessary for permanent residency (301/2004). Citizenship will become a possibility for Ukrainian FPDs after they have stayed in Finland for 8 years and meet the other criteria for citizenship (359/2003). Ukrainians and other migrants can vote in the local elections even without a citizenship, after two years[7] with a municipal residency.

Notes

5. Degree education only.

6. Note : Out of the 2132 applications made based on employment 447 (21%) were made for seasonal work. Most of these were done in during the spring 2022.

7. 781 days to be exact

Methods and materials

The data for the report mainly comes from four sources: policy documents and reports, official national statistics, six interviews conducted for this report and previous research on the topic. The policy documents and reports consist of legal documents and reports from the government, government agencies and local administration. Official statistics are mostly collected from Statistics Finland's open database, but Migri statistics service and Education Statistics Finland database Vipunen were also used. The interviews were done on three different topics: labour market, housing and settlement and education. While the topic of this report investigates the case of Ukrainian FDPs on a national level, 5 out of 6 of the interviews were done in a single mid-sized city. This makes the interview data somewhat attached to local circumstances but when compared to the other data used, the experiences of Ukrainian FDPs within the fore-mentioned fields are somewhat similar all-around Finland.

Because Statistic Finland has multiple ways of calculating people with foreign descent, we have to be careful on what metrics we use when looking at data on Ukrainians living in Finland. Statistics Finland, for example, does not allow us to separate immigrants already living in Finland by reason of immigration [8], which would make it simple to just use those with TPS as our main classification. This means we needed another way of separating TPS recipients from the data. Of all the options that are imperfect in their own way, we have chosen to citizenship. Native language is not suitable as many Ukrainians have Russian marked as their native language and taking it into consideration would expand our focus outside of Ukraine. Country of birth is also not suitable because a lot of Ukrainians are registered as being born in Soviet Union or other post-Soviet countries. This leaves us with citizenship, that in our opinion is the best classification to use, even though not every TPS recipient coming to Finland from Ukraine is a citizen of that country.

Notes

8. Migri statistics only lists applications and arrivals, not those who are staying in the country (Migri, 2025b).

When selecting and contacting the informants (see table 2) we wanted to interview, we first established the extent of the geographical area we wanted the informants from. While the scale of the project concerns the whole country of Finland, we knew that we could not interview on national scale if we wanted the participants to be as close to street level as possible. Also, because our previous knowledge and experiences, we decided to focus on a single region in Eastern Finland. That is why, as stated before, five of the six interviews were done with the participants coming from a single city. All of the four public sector workers (SLBs) we interviewed were working for the city or an entity owned by it. One of two NGOs (CSOs) we decided to include in our research was also operating in the same city and the region around it. When looking for an NGO operating in housing, we had to look for national scale as there was no local NGO that had a major role in the field of housing. In total we interviewed 3 informants from two NGOs. The housing NGO requested to have two people join the interviews to give us a broader picture of the situation as the other informant had not worked for the NGO for a long time. We did not find an NGO to represent education sector, but we got useful information on the field from the CSO working in labour market integration (CSO1). This decision was also made because we wanted an informant from both a degree education provider and someone working in children's education. We chose a representative from vocational school to represent degree education as that is the most popular form of degree education among Ukrainians living in Finland.

Table 2: The interview informants and their roles within their affiliated institutions.

Number	Topic	Organization and role
CSO1	Labour market	The informant is working as a career coach in an NGO that among other things helps immigrants in integrating to the labour market.
SLB1	Housing	The informant is working for a city owned housing company that rents for both students and those in need of subsidized housing.
SLB2	Labour market	The informant works for the regional public employment services provider and specializes in immigrants.
CSO2/1	Housing	The informant works as a customer guidance specialist for a housing sharing NGO operating nationally.
CSO2/2	Housing	The informant works as a director for a housing sharing NGO operating nationally.

Table 2 Continued

SLB3	Education	The informant is an official in a vocational school, who works specifically with international students and matters.
SLB4	Education	The informant works as preparatory teacher for comprehensive school aged (7- to 13-year-old) immigrant children.

The interviews were conducted in June and August 2025 by Lauri Havukainen and Senja Ylipekkala. Three were done in person (CSO1, SLB2, SLB4) and three through Teams (SLB1, CSO2, SLB3). Five of the interviews were done in Finnish and one in English on the interviewees' request. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the interview citations used in this report were translated. For this report we have anonymized the interviewees by removing the names of their organizations and in most cases the locations of where they operate.

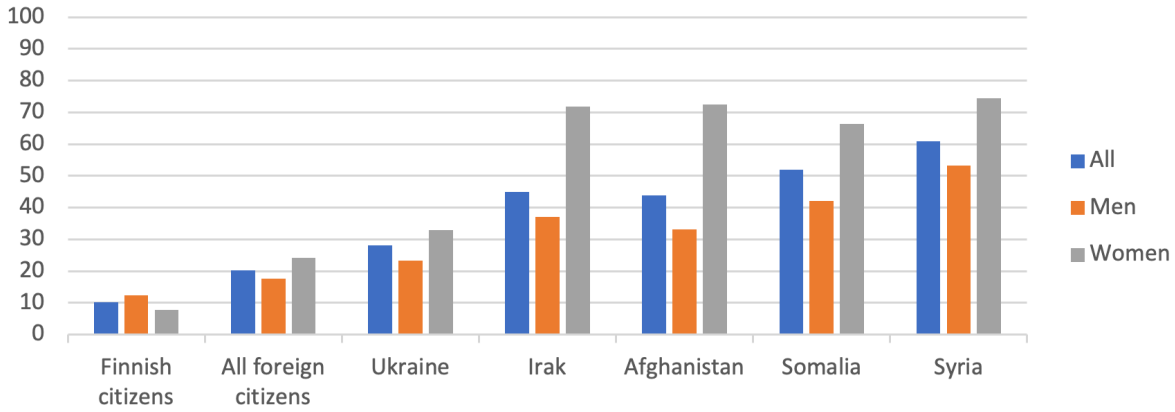
Policies and outcomes of the labour market integration

According to previous research, statistical data and our interviews, the labour market access to Ukrainian TPSs in Finland does not seem to differ from most other migrant groups. If the migrant is not already in the country with a labour migrant visa, the Finnish labour market for migrants can be summed up with one word: difficult. According both our interviews and past research, the combination of high language barriers and overall economic situation makes the labour market very inaccessible for non-natives (e.g. Himanen, Eteläaho, & Malinen, 2025 Koptsyukh & Svynarenko, 2025).

The growth of Finnish economy has been meagre at best for the last few years. This lack of economic development can be even more drastic depending on the region. For example, the region where we did most of the interviews, the unemployment rate was the worst in the country at 15,2 percent at end of June 2025 (OSFc). Still, it can be said that the unemployment rate has risen in all regions since the beginning of 2023. In the Summer 2025 Finland's unemployment rate was the second highest in EU, at 9,9% (YLE News, 2025). When it comes to looking at unemployment rates, the complete picture is hard to see as statistics comparable to the official unemployment rate based on nationality are not available.

The official unemployment rate is counted from 15- to 75-year-olds that are part of the workforce (OSFc), while the only employment statistic based on nationality counts the workforce participation from 18- to 64-year-olds (OSFa). Still, through this we can get at least somewhat of an estimate on the employment of Ukrainians living in Finland (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Unofficial unemployment rate among the largest FDP groups in Finland at the end of 2023.



By the end of 2023, the last full year with available Employment statistics (OSFa), there were 28100 Ukrainian citizens living in Finland with either TPS that had applied for municipal residency or had lived here before the war. Just under half (12 956) of those were considered as part of the workforce, and of those, about 28% (9311) were unemployed compared to the overall rate of 11% [9]. This means that at that point the Ukrainian unemployment rate was lagging all foreign nationals' unemployment rate of about 20% but was clearly ahead of the other large nationality groups that have mostly come to Finland as FDPs. The unemployment rate among women is also comparatively better among Ukrainians than in these other groups. (OSFa.)

We can compare the previous number of Ukrainians working to the estimate by VATT (Seppä, Alasalmi & Korpela, 2025) at the end of 2024 when around 10 000 [10] Ukrainian FDPs residing in Finland received monetary compensation in form of a salary.

Notes

9. The official unemployment rate in Finland at the end of 2023 was 7,1% (OSFc).

10. Between 8000 and 13 000 depending on the season during 2024.

This means that the number of Ukrainians that were employed rose quite slowly between 2023 and 2024. The rate of Ukrainians working has been higher during the summer as a lot of them work seasonally in agriculture, the field where many Ukrainians came to work before the invasion. Most common fields, outside season agricultural work, are in cleaning, manufacturing and construction. The median salary was about 2000 euros per month, which is clearly below the national median of about 3300 Euros per month. (Seppä, Alasalmi & Korpela, 2025.)

The language barrier as entry threshold into the labour market can be even higher for Ukrainians, as when they first come to the country many could not even speak English. This is seen both in past research (e.g. Svynarenko & Koptsyukh, 2022) and in our interviews (CSO1, SLB2, SLB4). For example, according to the Ministry of the Interior (Koptsyukh & Svynarenko, 2025) the lack of Finnish/Swedish language skills is the most common reason why Ukrainians that have never applied for a job in Finland have not done so. In the Helsinki Metropolitan area (Himanen, Eteläaho & Malinen, 2025), 75% Ukrainian FDPs said that the lacking language skills in either of the native languages hindered their employment chances. The language barrier can also vary regionally. For example, one interviewee saw the local language requirements in his rural region even higher than those in bigger cities in the south.

> *CSO1: "...we, especially in [name of the region], have perhaps higher than average language requirements, even though the job may not necessarily always require a high level of Finnish. Generally, here we want people to speak Finnish fairly well or very well in order to get a job. We have seen that in other parts of Finland these language requirements are often lower..."*

While the language barrier is still seen as a major problem it has decreased over time as Ukrainians have lived in the country for longer. According to the studies done by the Ministry of the Interior (Svynarenko & Koptsyukh, 2022; Koptsyukh & Svynarenko, 2025) the number of Ukrainian FDPs stating that they have good enough Finnish skills to work or study has risen from under 1% in 2022 to 38% in 2025.

One practice that that has been created to lower the language barrier is the integration courses organized by the employment areas (SLB2). These often combine language learning with work life focus.

Degree recognition and de-skilling also play role in the difficulties Ukrainian TPSs face in the Finnish labour market. Both Ukrainian degrees and work experience often go unrecognized in Finland. These topics are discussed more thoroughly in the chapter about education.

Policies and outcomes on housing and settlement

One thing that separates the topic of housing from the topic of labour market integration and education is the fact that there is very little in form of openly available statistics based on citizenship. This is why we have had to rely on the few surveys (e.g. Svynarenko& Koptsyukh 2022; Koptsyukh & Svynarenko, 2025) that have asked about it and our interview data. The living situation of Ukrainian FDPs migrating to Finland is unique in comparison to other FDP groups Finland has had before. This was due to changes made in how the reception centres are set up and the housing desires of the newcomers. Most Ukrainians did not move to centralized reception centres but much more often to private housing or rental housing provided to them through the reception centres (Migri, 2023). Some Ukrainians also used their previous ties as temporary seasonal workers in Finland and first moved into the dormitories close to the farms they have worked in previously(Penttilä, 2023). This is very different to the previous times Finland has received a major influx of FDPs in short time frame, when most were housed in the centralized reception centres, often in rural areas outside of major population centres (e.g. Pöllänen, 2020).

Both according to our interviews and previous research, when Ukrainian FDPs started coming to Finland in March 2022, they either figured were to live on their own or moved to reception centres (CSO2/1, CSO2/2 & SLB1). At the beginning, most Ukrainian refugees found housing in private accommodation with friends, relatives or volunteers instead of staying in reception centre. Those who went to live in reception centres seemed to want to move to their own accommodations as quickly as possible (Svynarenko& Koptsyukh 2022; Rimpiläinen, 2023).

For most with TPS this is possible only after getting municipality of residence, after which they can apply for social assistance and general housing allowance. As many Ukrainians are dependent on subsidized housing paid by these social security benefits (CSO2/1), the housing provider after getting municipal residency is often the same provider as through the reception system. In the case of the city we did most of our interviews in, most of these apartments were rented by the actor [11] running the reception centre from the city's own subsidized housing company (SLB1). Often family units rented from this company housed multiple separate families, meaning the apartment could get quite crowded (SLB1, CSO2/1). In the Greater Helsinki area, the lack of available housing and expectation of being able to sign and move in very short period of time, has also led to grey market renting with unofficial and precarious contracts (CSO2/1).

The third option for housing is home accommodation where Ukrainians would live with locals in their own homes free of charge (CSO2/1, CSO2/2). This kind of housing was organized by the NGO we did one of our interviews with. Voluntary based accommodation was especially common in the early months of the war, but it waned as the number of both the volunteers and new arrivals dwindled and Ukrainians wanted a more permanent form of housing. Home accommodation was meant to be housing option just on arrival as the person applying for this type of housing has to be a client in reception centre. (CSO2/1, CSO2/2.)

Another unique factor about Ukrainians fleeing the war was that many of them brought their pets with them (CSO2/2), which was something Finland had not experienced in previous influxes of refugees such as in 2015-2016. Finnish reception centres would not allow animals in their facilities, which meant if Ukrainians wanted to live there, they would have to be separated from their pets. In one region it took lobbying from NGOs to finally have one established, few months after the Ukrainians started arriving to Finland (CSO2/1, CSO2/2.)

The Ukrainians can get support from Kela for housing and overall living costs after getting their municipality of residence. They are eligible to get general housing allowance, social assistance and supplementary social assistance.

Notes

11. At first, by the Red Cross and later by a private company.

Supplementary social assistance given by the municipality can be used for example to buy new furniture. (Kela, n.d. & CSO2/1, CSO2/2.) Recent cuts to general housing allowance have put pressure on Ukrainians to find cheaper housing (SLB1, CSO2/1, CSO2/2). This, together with the rising rent levels, has led to situations where accommodation cheap enough to meet Kela standards has been difficult to find (SLB1). Also, while over time the desires for quality of housing have increased among Ukrainians, many of them are still stuck in subsidized housing unit as it much cheaper than living in completely private accommodation (SLB1).

Policies and outcomes on education of adults and children

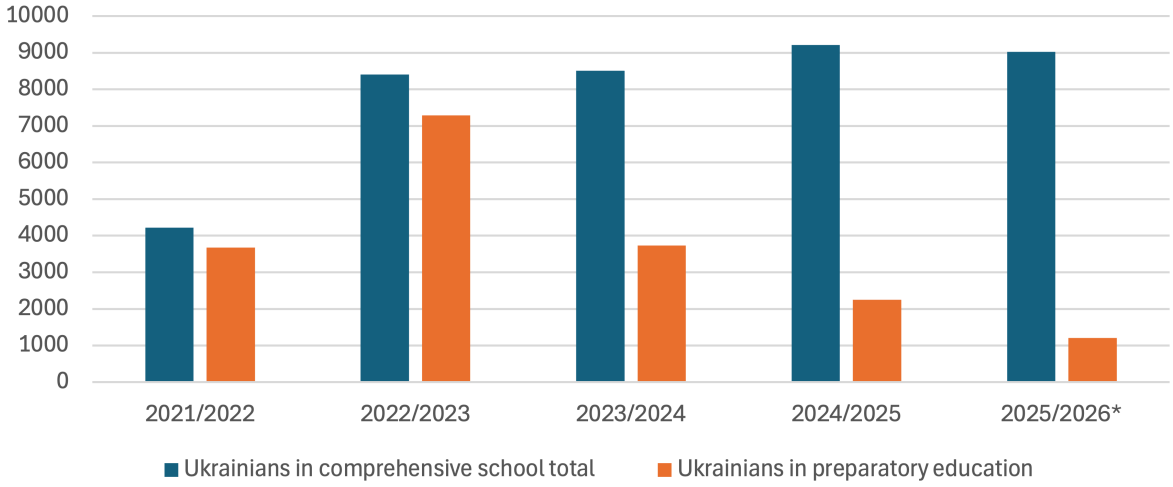
Accessing education for children is made easy in Finland. This also applies to immigrants. In comprehensive school (1st to 9th grade) all immigrants go through a year of preparatory education (valmistava opetus in Finnish) where they are slowly introduced to the Finnish system and language. This happens in separate classrooms with teachers specialized in immigrant education, especially teaching of Finnish as a second language. They start to integrate students into normal Finnish classrooms as soon as the first week. This usually happens through going to certain classes during a school day or, for example, one day a week. With Ukrainians the integration in comprehensive school system started almost immediately after arrival. In the city we did our interviews in, first Ukrainian FDPs started in preparatory education in April of 2022, just a month after they first started arriving in Finland. While the situation in Ukraine was well known, the suddenness of it did strain the system somewhat.

Interviewer: *Did this affect your work in any way when things like this happened so quickly?*

SLB4: *It had an effect. So in a way, the fact that in April you're already planning a little bit… you already have the spring planned and you're sliding towards the summer holidays and then suddenly you practically have almost a class full of new students, who are probably coming from quite traumatic circumstances. So of course you won't slide towards the summer holidays after all…*

As the preparatory education lasts a year and the overall number of the new Ukrainian arrivals has been decreasing from the beginning of the war, the number of Ukrainians in preparatory education has also gone down (Vipunen, 2025a). As can be seen in the figure 3, the number of Ukrainians in comprehensive school seems to have stabilized to around 9000 pupils. Ukrainians in adult comprehensive education are not counted in the statistic. (Vipunen, 2025a.)

Figure 3. The number of Ukrainians in comprehensive education and preparatory education between the schoolyears 2021 – 2022 and 2025 -2026. The numbers for the last schoolyear are only preliminary.



When it comes to adult education, the situation for Ukrainians is more complicated. While technically Ukrainian FDPs with TPS have right to apply to study for free, the language is one of the main obstacles in the way of access. Most programs have language requirements in Finnish or Swedish. It does not help that only 43% of Ukrainians feel they have good enough English language skills to study with it (Koptsyukh & Svynarenko, 2025). The lack of English skills was also noted in our interview with the preparatory teacher (SLB4). When it comes to representation in different levels of degree education, it is clear that Ukrainians favour vocational education.

First of all, the number of Ukrainians within Finnish tertiary education is small. In 2024[12] there were only 114 Ukrainian students in Finnish universities, and another 174 in universities of applied sciences (OSFg). It must be said though, that compared to 2023, the number of Ukrainians in universities of applied sciences nearly doubled from 90. In 2024 there were 4 772 Ukrainians in vocational schools up from 2 529 in 2023 and 306 in upper secondary schools, up from 205. (OSFg.) This means that vocational school is clearly the most popular form of degree education for Ukrainian FDPs. Its popularity can partly be explained with TUVA[13] -training, which is a program for those without secondary degree (high school or vocational) but wish to get one. Outside of summer months there has been around 1000 Ukrainians attending TUVA each month since August 2023 (Vipunen, 2025b). In TUVA, each student is provided with a personalized study plan based on their needs and skill deficits. According to the primary school teacher working in preparatory education we interviewed, most immigrant students need extra education before they can go forward from comprehensive school.

> ***SLB4:*** *So, based on last spring, it's a fact that there's a very small percentage of immigrant students who leave [comprehensive] school and are able to apply directly to vocational school or upper secondary school, so they do need some adult primary education or some kind of training...*
>
> ***Interviewer:*** *TUVA education?*
>
> ***SLB4:*** *Yes, TUVA. ...*

Notes

12. Situation in 20th of September

13. Stands for Tutkintokoulutukseen Valmentava koulutus, roughly translates to preparatory training for degree education.

Those Ukrainians who are studying for full degrees, make just under half of Ukrainian vocational school attendees, and the rest are studying for parts of a degree or in some other specialty program. Open university courses have been free for TPS recipients in most universities (OKM, 2022), but statistics on them based on nationality are not available. Some of these programs are ending in 2026 (e.g. University of Helsinki, 2024). As it has been just over three years from the beginning of the war, the number of those who have graduated from degrees is small, as most degree programs take at least 3 years to complete. In the year 2024, 180 Ukrainians completed a vocational degree, with the combined number of university degrees being given was just 30.

The popularity of TUVA and studying for parts of a degree in vocational school brings us back into de-skilling and hardships concerning degree recognition. The degrees required in many fields of Finnish labour market are highly regulated [14] and thus need the applicant to go through degree recognition, which cost hundreds of Euros. According to one of our interviewees this difficulty and cost is what pushes many migrants, Ukrainian FDPs included, to just start over with their studies (CSO1). This is also visible in previous research. In the study made in the Helsinki area (Himanen, Eteläaho & Malinen, 2025) one third of Ukrainians required more assistance with the recognition of their qualifications.

Both the popularity of vocational education and need for additional training and degree recognition are in stark contrast with the educational background of Ukrainian FDPs. According to the surveys made by the Ministry of the Interior (Koptsyukh & Svynarenko, 2025) around 60% [15] of Ukrainians living in Finland in 2025 have a tertiary degree. The high share of Ukrainian FDPs with tertiary education has also been noticed elsewhere, as in multiple surveys the number has been even higher than in Finland (OECD, 2023).

Notes

14. These include most jobs in education, health and social care, logistics and construction. Finnish National Agency for Education has a full list of professions needing degree recognition on their website. https://www.oph.fi/en/services/recognition-qualifications/regulated-professions-finland

15. Down from 66% in 2022 (Svynarenko& Koptsyukh 2022).

Considering all of this, it is clear that Ukrainian FDPs face major de-skilling when they come to Finland. Difficulties with language skills as well as degree and experience recognition play part in this. There have been attempts to combat this, for example, through degree programs with language support in Russian in the university of applied sciences (SLB2) and in vocational degree programs in English and Russian (CSO1, SLB3). The problem with the vocational school programs was that many Ukrainians could not apply to the English language programs due lacking language skills (CSO1). In the city we did our interviews in, most of the English language programs ended in spring because of the bad economic and employment situation in the region. Moreover, the Finnish language education in the regular programs was deemed inadequate, which left lot of the responsibility of learning to the students own motivation and to pastime activities. (SLB3.)

Conclusions

When it comes to the three topics through which we have looked at the integration of the Ukrainian FDPs into Finnish society, the situation is different depending on the topic and the lens we look at it. While the lengthened time of stay has brought up Ukrainians Finnish language skills, they still face language barriers based on language as do all other migrant groups. These barriers are visible especially in labour market integration and in education. Still the rate Ukrainians finding work has increased over time and many have found their way into degree programs, especially in vocational education. Housing has been much smaller issue for many as it is often organized through or with the assistance of different public actors.

Labour market integration of Ukrainians has been quite difficult, as it is for most migrants. The Finnish economy has been in a slump in previous years. This has been felt even harder in the border region where we did most of our interviews in. In this and other border regions the sanctions on Russia and border closure have had even worse effect than in other regions of the country. Finnish labour market is also quite closed to non-Finnish (or Swedish) speakers, with the opportunities being even lesser regionally. System-wise the unemployment system has been under massive changes for the past few years as the role of running the services has been transferred from the state to the municipalities (or regional operatives in some cases). Still, the overall economic situation and language barriers play a much bigger role in difficulties in accessing the labour market than any systemic change. More openness in hiring people with lacking language skills is definitely needed in order to integrate Ukrainians and other immigrants into the Finnish labour market in a more meaningful way.

Educational system, especially in its early stages, have adapted quite quickly to the influx of Ukrainians. Finnish preparatory education programs tend to be quite flexible in situations like this and has, for the most parts, been able to integrate all the newcomers, even if it has meant establishment of new classes mid school year. In adult and youth education the situation is more complex. While technical and financial barriers are much easier on Ukrainians TPS recipients compared to most other migrant groups, there still major hurdles in language acquisition and degree recognition.

There are programs, like language supported degree programs, set up to combat these. The overall effect of these is yet to be seen. Over time more Ukrainians have acquired enough language skills to feel confident in both working and studying in Finland and it is likely that this will lead to better integration in these fields of life.

Housing has not been a major issue for Ukrainians in Finland, as first the reception system played a major role in settling them, and later, when the Ukrainians have gotten residency in municipalities, they have been able to receive quite ample social benefits. In the beginning voluntary accommodation played a larger role in the housing of Ukrainians, but its role has been diminished after Ukrainians have gotten residency in municipalities. Still, there are uncertainties caused by cuts to the benefits and many still lack the opportunity to pay for their own housing, and maybe through that, to move out of the subsidized housing system.

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