

Breaking barriers – Inclusive employment practices for refugees and migrants in Finland and Estonia

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1. Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected world, businesses have the power to drive positive change by embracing diversity and inclusion. Yet, for many refugees and migrants in Estonia and Finland, the path to meaningful employment is fraught with challenges. Systemic barriers from language hurdles to unconscious biases, can often stand in the way of their full integration into the workforce. This report based on 60 in-depth interviews with refugees and migrants, sheds light on these barriers and offers actionable solutions that companies can adopt to foster more inclusive hiring practices.¹

Our report seeks to answer two key questions: What are the barriers that migrants and refugees face in the labor market in Estonia and Finland? And what corporate/firm-level policy recommendations can reduce these barriers and prevent discrimination?

Using thematic content analysis, we have extracted insights from interviews conducted in both countries, offering a nuanced understanding of the struggles these individuals encounter.

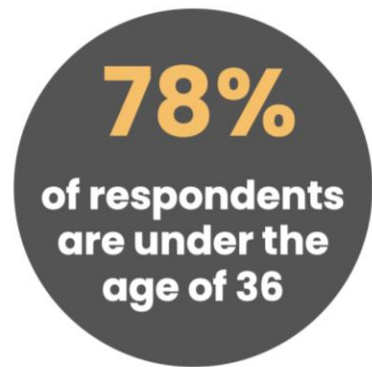
By understanding these unique challenges, companies and organizations can play a pivotal role in breaking down barriers, cultivating not only a diverse workforce but also contributing to a more equitable society. The report is structured to provide a clear and actionable framework for addressing these challenges. It begins by outlining the primary barriers to employment that refugees and migrants encounter, with recommendations provided under each thematic sub-chapter to guide companies in fostering inclusivity. This is followed by a dedicated chapter that delves into discrimination and exploitation, examining both the recruitment process and workplace interactions. Finally, all recommendations are consolidated into a comprehensive anti-discrimination policy menu, offering companies a practical toolkit to support equitable and inclusive practices at every stage of employment.

Now is the time for businesses to take the lead and create workplaces where talent is valued and equal opportunities are offered by abilities — not restricted by backgrounds.

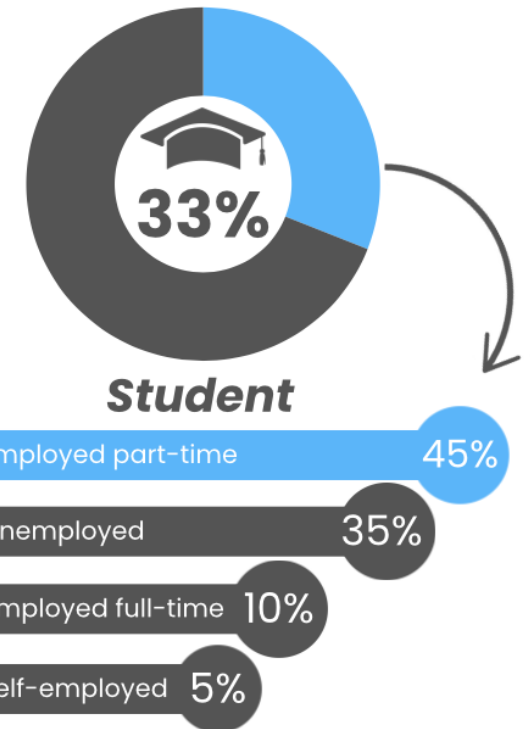
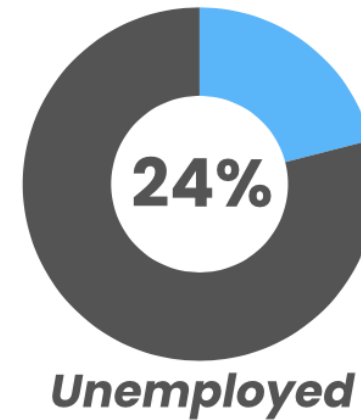
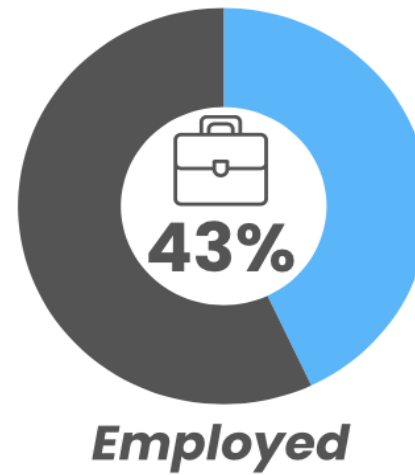
¹The total number of respondents is 61, as two individuals participated together in one interview, resulting in 60 interviews overall.

2. Demographics

AGE

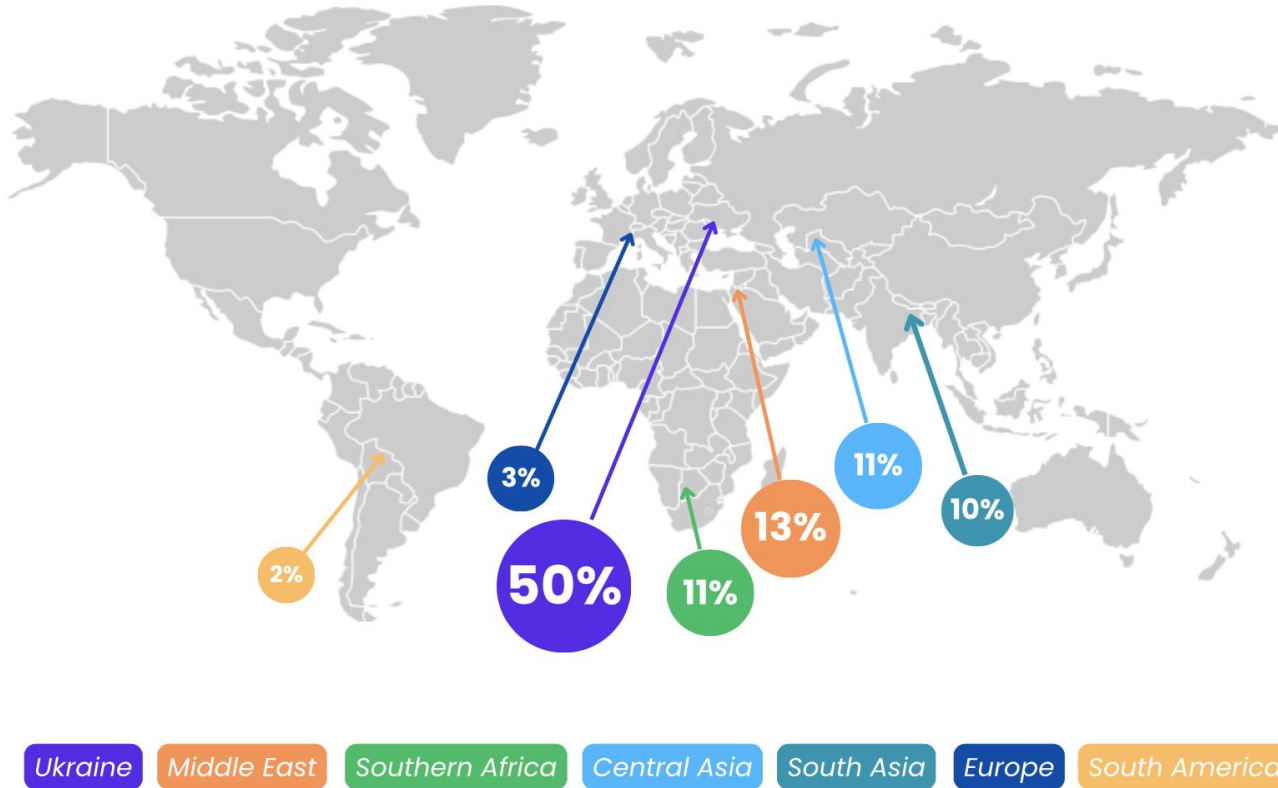


WORK STATUS



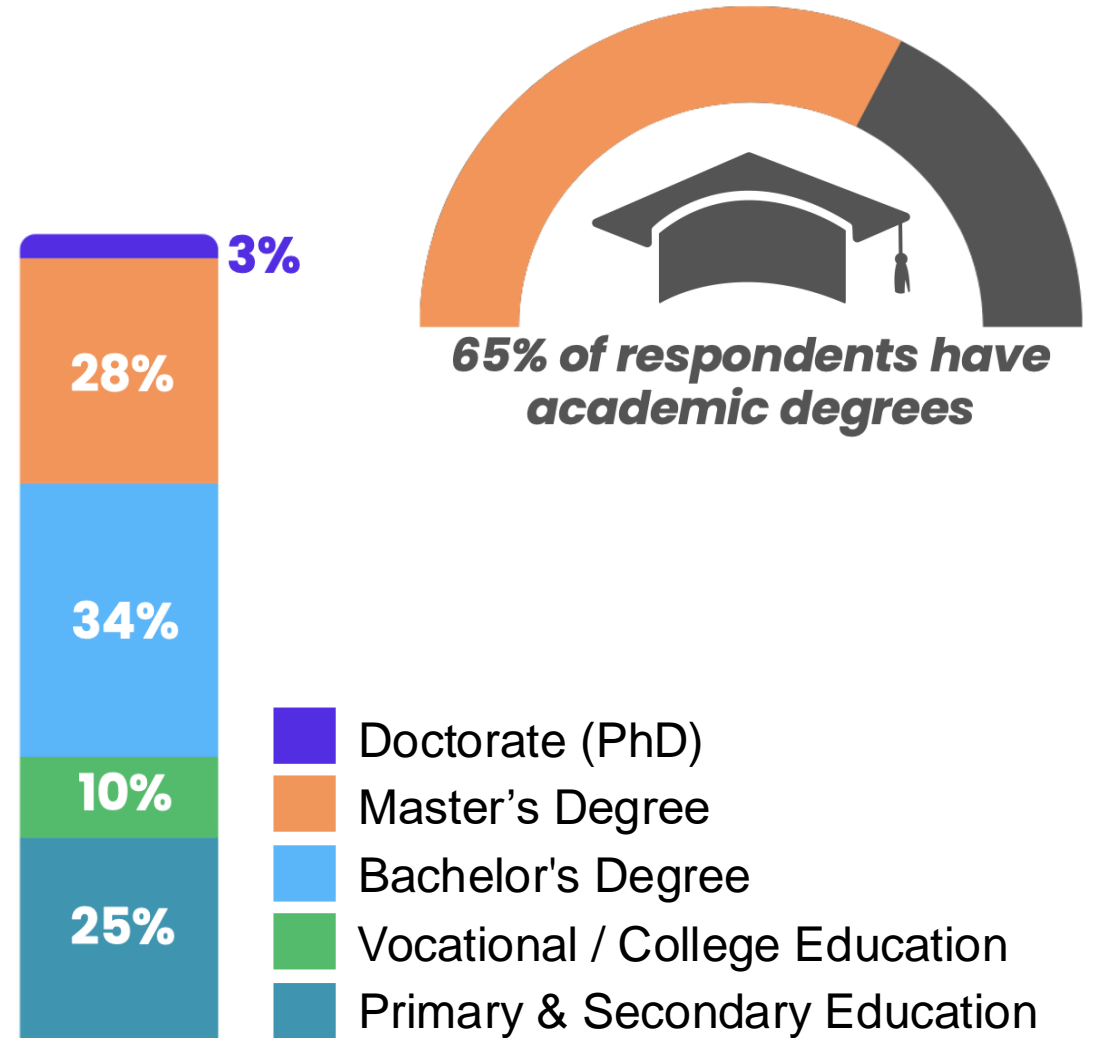
One student (5%) reported to be on parental leave.

REGIONS OF ORIGIN



The high percentage of respondents from Ukraine (49%) is due to the fact that all 30 participants interviewed in Estonia were Ukrainians, reflecting the significant Ukrainian refugee population in the country following the Russian invasion in 2022. In contrast, the 31 respondents interviewed in Finland represented various other regions, highlighting the diversity of Finland's migrant and refugee population. This distribution provides insights into both the experiences of Ukrainians in Estonia and the broader integration challenges faced by migrants in Finland.

EDUCATION



This graph shows the highest level of education acquired by respondents when the interviews were conducted, with most holding a Bachelor's degree (34%), followed by a Master's degree (28%). One-third of respondents reported to still be studying.

3. Socio-political context

To foster a more inclusive work environment, businesses must recognize the socio-political context that affects employees with foreign backgrounds. While companies may not control broader political trends or social norms, they can actively work to reduce the negative impact these factors have on their workforce. This report begins by examining the social and political landscape, as understanding these external influences is crucial for addressing the challenges refugees and migrants face in the labor market.



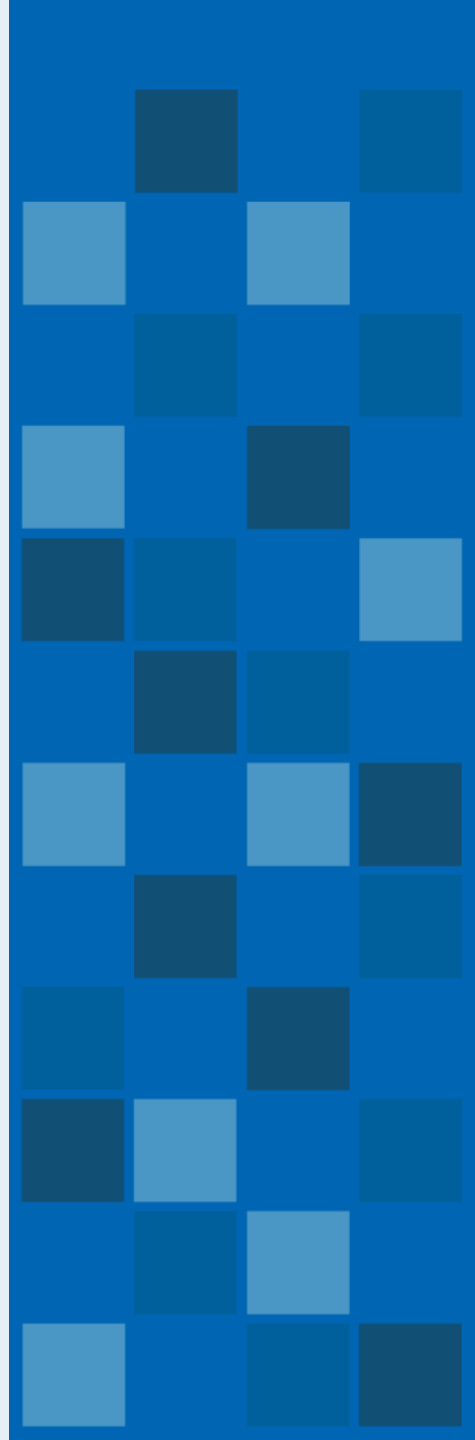
3.1 Social Context

Cultural differences and the lack of social integration present significant barriers to successfully including immigrants and refugees in Estonian and Finnish workplaces. Both nations are known for their reserved, formal social norms, which can create feelings of isolation for immigrants, particularly in professional settings. In Finland, for example, some informants noted that strict job roles and less social engagement outside of work were challenging to adapt to.

Similarly, in Estonia, many Ukrainian refugees and immigrants reported feeling isolated, with little interaction outside of work tasks, as their Estonian colleagues tend to socialize primarily with other Estonians. At times, the lack of social integration even extended to physical isolation in the workplace. As one respondent highlighted, office arrangements can unintentionally exacerbate the problem by creating divisions between local and foreign employees.

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However, some informants also found **positive cultural differences**, such as greater workplace equality and flatter hierarchies. Many female participants found gender equality better than in their home countries, making it easier to enter the workforce. Others highlighted the rule of law and lower corruption levels as key advantages. Additionally, many appreciated the improved work-life balance, which reduced stress and allowed for better harmony between family and work life.



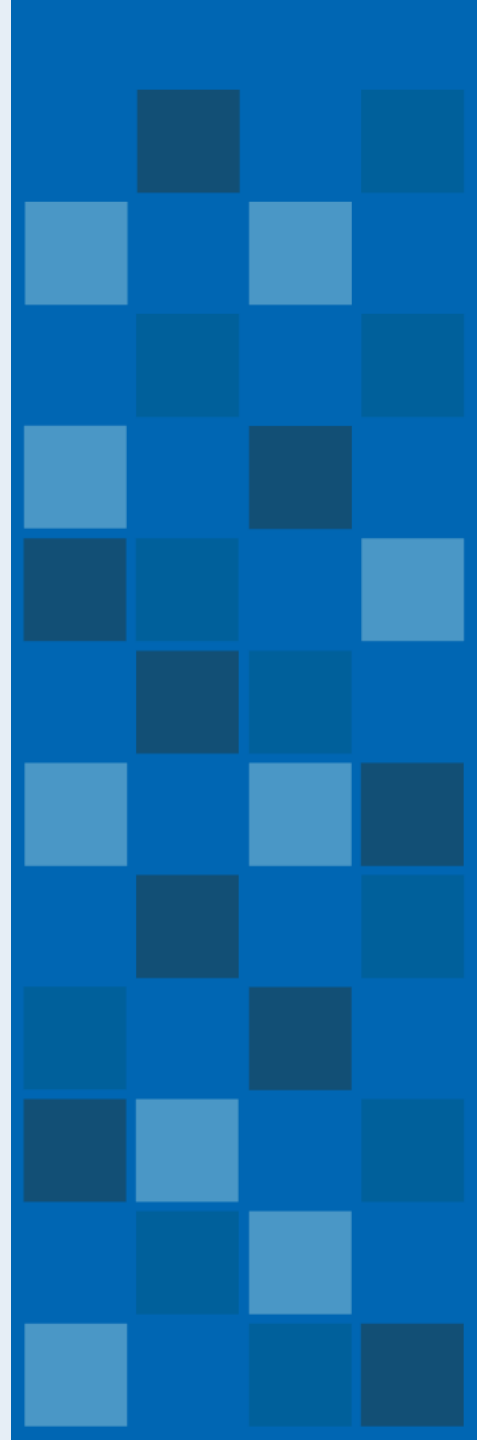
3.2 Political Atmosphere

Meanwhile, most of the Ukrainian respondents praised the support Estonia has provided to Ukraine since the start of the Russian full-scale invasion in 2022 and felt grateful for it. However, lingering tensions related to the war, often heightened by Russian-speaking members of Estonian society, can create a hostile work environment for Ukrainians. They may feel provoked by the comments made by their colleagues. One respondent has reported of instances where provocations occurred in the workplace, such as negative discussions about the Ukrainian president that were designed to elicit a reaction, provoking Ukrainian employees to engage in conflicts. Another interviewee recounted a situation involving a friend who worked as a waitress in Tallinn and suffered from the openly made highly negative comments directed at them by the Russian-speaking colleagues.

These accounts reflect how the broader political atmosphere surrounding immigration and the war influences interactions in the workplace, often adding stress and conflict to already difficult situations for refugees and immigrants.

Political landscape plays a significant role in shaping the experiences of immigrants and refugees in both Estonia and Finland. Interview data from Finland suggests a recent shift towards more conservative end restrictive immigration policies. One informant noted that "the current government is just making it worse," indicating a tightening of regulations or a less welcoming atmosphere for immigrants.

The data suggests that previous and present discriminative speech and even openly racist remarks from Finnish far-right and right-wing politicians, especially towards immigrants and refugees coming from outside Europe has a trickle-down effect on the experiences of immigrants in the Finnish working life. More of those experiences are noted in our section regarding discrimination and racism.



4. Barriers to employment

In this section, we explore the various barriers that migrants face in gaining employment and integrating into the workplace. Understanding these challenges is crucial for creating more equitable opportunities for all employees, regardless of their background.



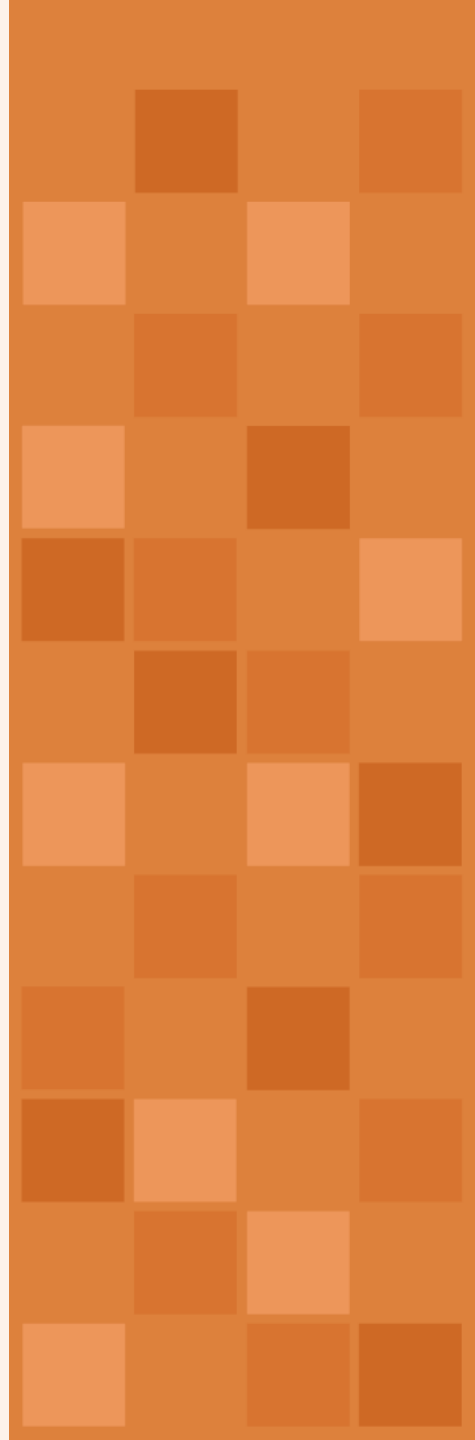
4.1 Language

The data reveals significant language-related challenges for migrants both in Finland and Estonia, which they felt affected both their access to employment and integration to the society. There were some differences in the level of local language skills the informants possessed; some had no Finnish or Estonian skills and relied on English or other languages to find work whereas some informants from Finland already spoke Finnish as a second or third language.

Either way, many of them expressed frustration over the high level of local language proficiency required for employment, even in positions where English or lower level of local languages would seem sufficient. Some Ukrainian respondents in Estonia also felt lack of language skills held them in unskilled and low-paid positions.

*“I’m very good at my job, and I know that I will be a very good asset for that company, like I’m a perfect fit. And then, they’ll just let me know, yes, you are, **you have impressive experience, but unfortunately, Finnish is compulsory.**”*

– Int. 29

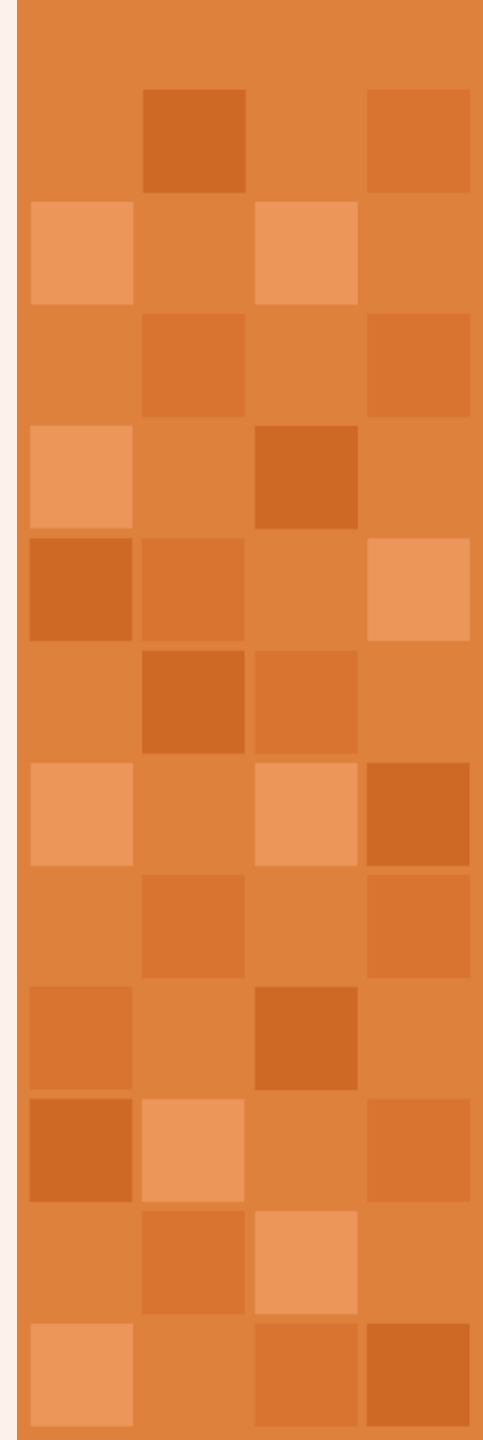


Some described that they felt non-native-level language skills or a foreign accent were used against them as a form of discrimination and that they weren't seen equally competent for the job simply because of that. This perception forced them to work harder than their Finnish colleagues just to be regarded as equals.

Some informants from Finland noted the benefits of intensive language courses offered through government-supported integration programs. However, a recurring complaint was the disconnect between language training and actual job placement.

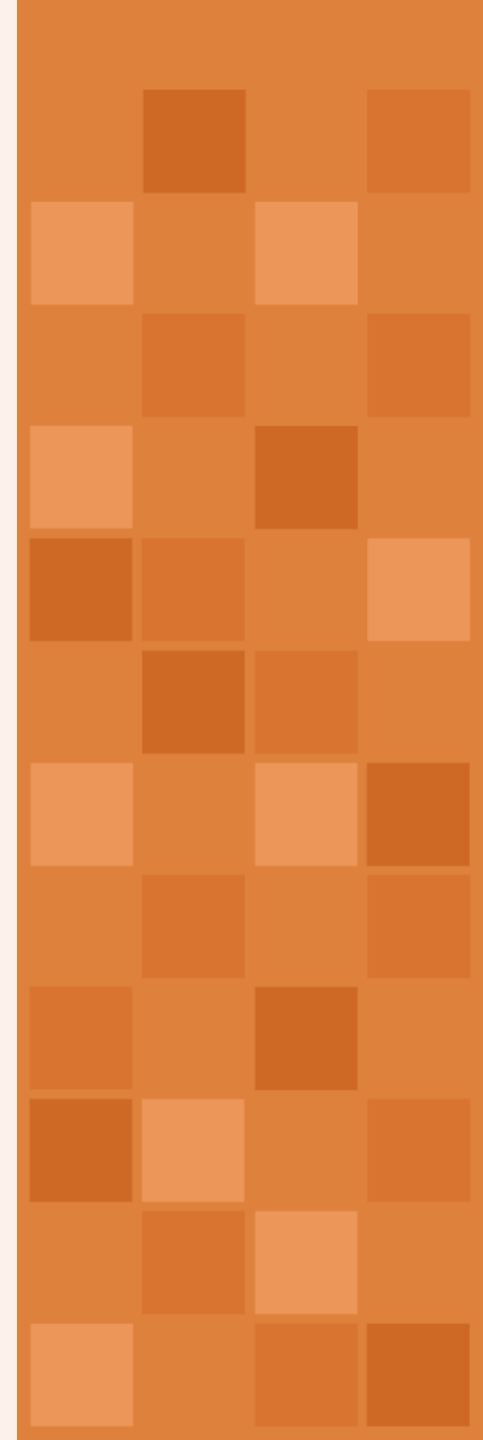
“Lack of language skills is used as a weapon against you. Even if you didn’t make any mistake, you’re made guilty, and they say [it’s because] you don’t understand the language. [--] “I have a friend who has difficulties with Finnish language, can’t speak Finnish well. They’re not respected at work, they put them in the kitchen to chop onion. [My friend] feels anxious that nobody appreciates them. People laugh at the way they speak.”

– Int. 2



The data suggests that migrants have different levels of language skills, related to the time they've lived in the host country, age and whether they had access to the language skills offered in the official integration programs or not. Migrants also have different abilities for learning languages due to their background, access to previous education, disabilities or other personal factors.

Many informants felt their level of language was enough for working, especially for the skilled or manual work as well as for companies where they could use other languages to communicate. Many wished there was a better tolerance for different accents and levels of language at work. They emphasized that a workplace is also a good environment to increase language skills and to give motivation for people to continue learning and practicing the local language.



Recommendations for language support and inclusion

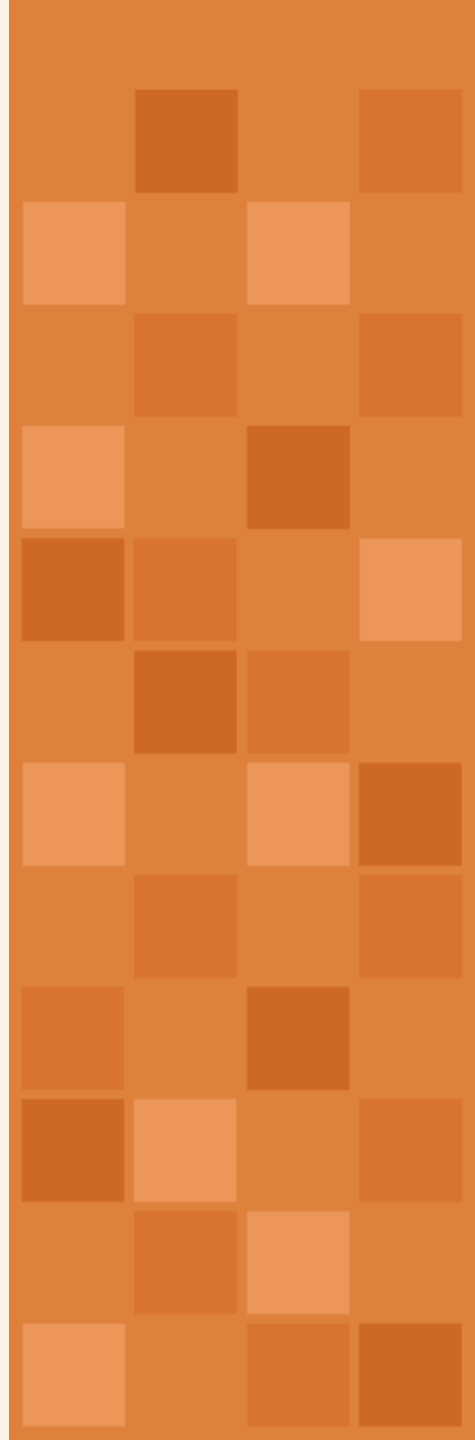
- ✔ **Provide language courses for employees** or facilitate their ability to continue language education while working.
- ✔ **Use simplified local language, English, repetition, and multimedia** (e.g. graphs, video materials) during onboarding.
- ✔ **If the company's working language is already e.g. English, encourage its use** not only in official meetings but also in daily interactions to foster inclusion and help non-native speakers feel fully integrated.



4.2 Lack of network and local experience

Another challenge immigrants face when entering the Finnish and Estonian job markets is the difficulty of building a professional network. In some of their home countries, networks might have been formed naturally through education or work. Meanwhile, in the new host countries these connections are harder to establish, especially for those who arrive without an existing local network. Many informants felt that without personal connections or recommendations, their résumés alone are insufficient to secure job interviews or opportunities.

“Even if you've been a cleaner in a Finnish company, that's a lot better than not having any experience whatsoever.” – Int. 30

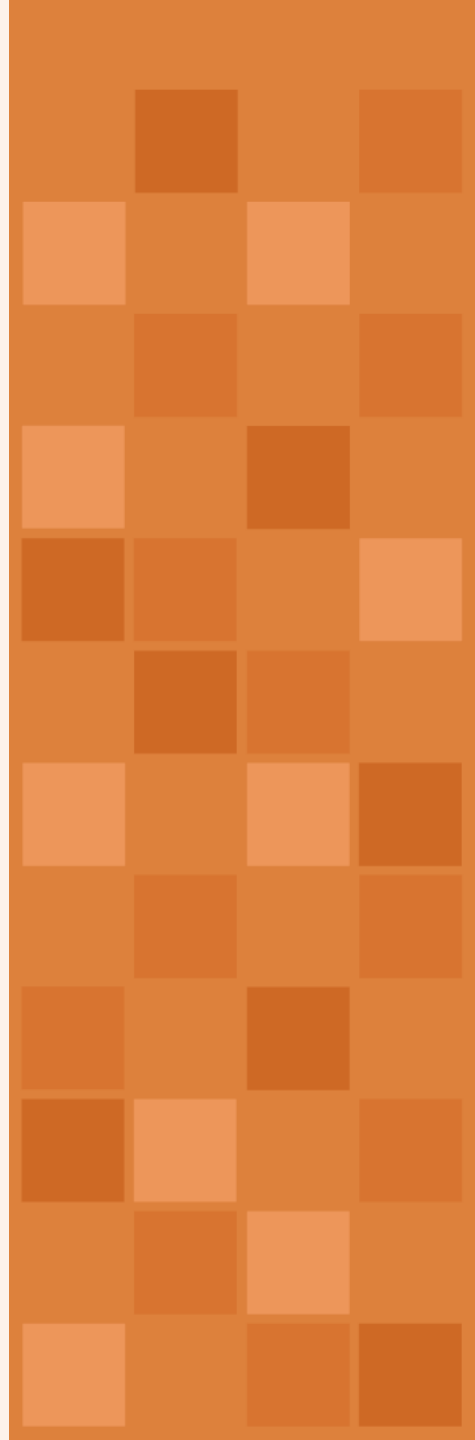


The issue is intensified by the expectation that candidates have local working experience. In both Finland and Estonia, employers often view prior experience in the country as crucial, which makes it difficult for newcomers to gain a foothold in the workforce, even if they have relevant international qualifications or work history. This creates a frustrating paradox: without a job, immigrants and refugees cannot expand their networks or gain local experience, and without previous local work experience, they struggle to secure employment.

Moreover, the terminology used in job postings can be misleading. Entry-level positions may suggest no prior experience is necessary, but in reality, hiring managers often favor candidates with local work experience, leaving immigrants feeling disheartened and confused.

“If you send an application there just as an outsider, it’s possible that it won’t even be considered. But if you send an application and have an acquaintance in the company who can provide you with a reference, then it’s 100% certain that your application will be considered, and then they will look at whether you are a good fit or not.”

– Int. 42



Recommendations for addressing lack of network and local experience

- ✔ **Value international experience** and recognize its transferability during recruitment.
- ✔ **Avoid relying solely on local references** or personal connections when making hiring decisions.
- ✔ **Offer mentorship and networking opportunities** to help immigrants build professional connections.
- ✔ **Provide pathways for immigrants to gain local experience** through internships, trainee programs, trial periods or entry-level positions.

4.3 Unrecognized qualifications and work experience

In both Finland and Estonia, immigrants faced significant challenges in having their qualifications and work experience recognized.

This issue has also been highlighted in other research, which shows that the appeal of employees with a foreign background does not necessarily increase in the eyes of Finnish employers, even when they possess significantly more work experience than their local counterparts. As a result, highly educated immigrants in Finland often find themselves employed in jobs that do not match their qualifications, leading to lower salaries (and consequently lower tax contributions) than what could be expected from their level of education.¹

Similarly, in Estonia, Ukrainian refugees and immigrants struggled with the recognition of their qualifications, as employers tended to prioritize local experience and market familiarity. This places foreign professionals at a disadvantage, complicating their efforts to enter the workforce and questioning the fairness of the hiring process in Estonia.

¹ Ahmad, A., 2020, Kotoutumisen kokonaiskatsaus 2019: Tutkimusartikkeleita kotoutumisesta. Helsinki: Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö, s. 15-27

*“I would come in and say that I want some kind of job, well, an analytical one, because I have a higher education. I want to. I know that I can, even if I don’t know the language, I can do it. Because I know myself. At least let me try. And they listened, nodded their heads, and then said, ‘There’s a factory somewhere where they cut up animals. Do you want to go?’ And **I realized that I wasn’t being heard.**”*

– Int. 45



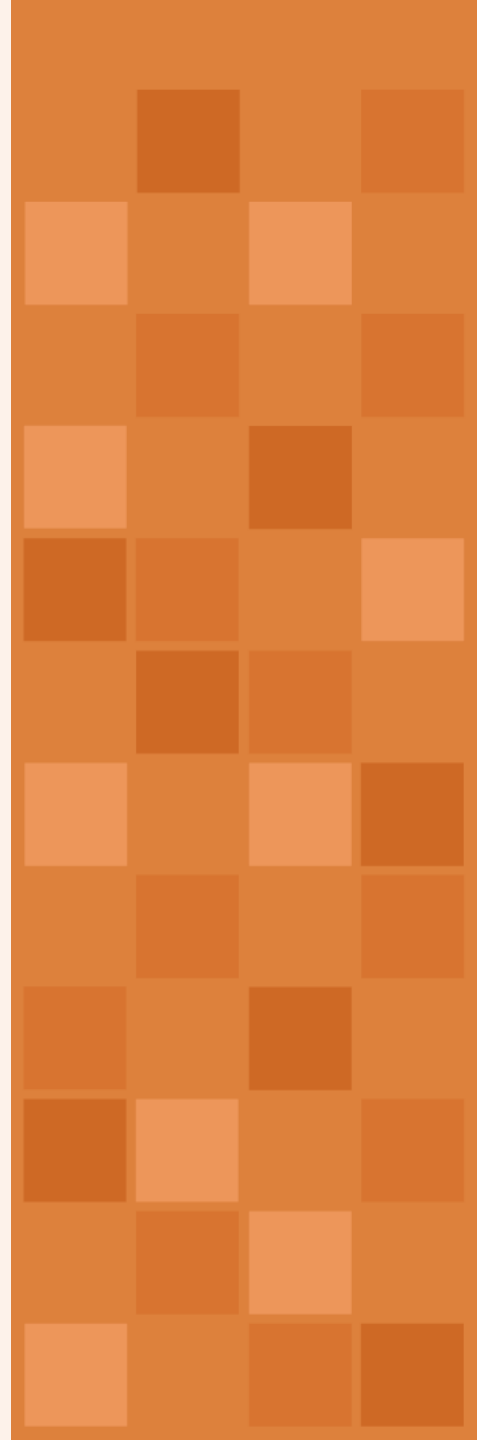
Recommendations for addressing unrecognized qualifications and experience

- ✔ **Recognize and validate foreign qualifications and degrees** as part of inclusive recruitment practices.
- ✔ **Implement standardized skills assessments** during the hiring process to ensure fair evaluation of all applicants.
- ✔ **Design job descriptions to be open to international experience**, emphasizing competencies and relevant skills over specific educational backgrounds.

4.4 Demanding and arduous application process

Both in the Estonian and Finnish context, the job application process was not seen very accessible for migrants. The informants experienced that almost all the job ads were written in Finnish or Estonian, even if the work itself could be done in English or with very little local language skills. The job descriptions and application forms were also often written in complicated terms and required a certain level of IT-skills to sort out.

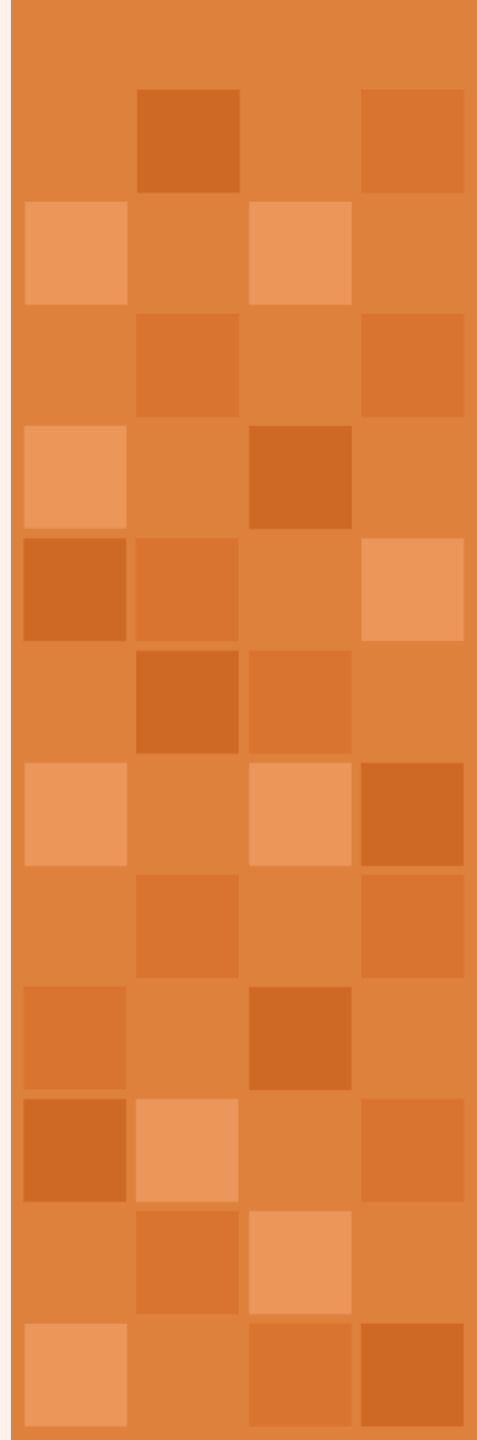
As for Finland, the informants found the local work application process especially complicated and arduous. Online applications took a long time to perfect and had often unnecessary repetition (e.g. having to fill in a questionnaire with the same questions as expressed already in the CV). Especially young migrants felt they needed support with the application process and found it frustrating that even summer work and manual jobs had such complicated application processes.



An additional issue raised by several respondents was the lack of communication from the companies regarding job application rejections. Many described situations where they submitted applications, only for them to be ignored without any formal rejection notice or feedback. This left applicants feeling frustrated and uncertain about why they were not selected for positions.

“They [applications] were considered, but there was no answer. It was being considered, and that was it. They don't even send a rejection (...) Out of 50 or 60 applications, only three or four would result in a 'declined' response. Mostly, they just don't write anything.”

– Int. 37



Recommendations for job application process

- ✔ **Simplify job application forms and processes** to make them easier for both applicants and recruiters.
- ✔ **Use English or simplified local language in job applications** to increase accessibility for people with reading difficulties or disabilities.
- ✔ **Provide answers** (even if automated) **to all job applications** and be open to offering more detailed feedback if requested to help applicants improve their chances for future opportunities.

5. Discrimination

The data suggests that barriers to employment can lead to or manifest as open or covert discrimination in the labor market. In some instances, barriers to access labor market, such as extensive language requirements, seemed to mask underlying discriminatory attitudes. Preference for local candidates limits opportunities for immigrants and refugees while also preventing the workforces in Finland and Estonia from becoming more diverse and inclusive.

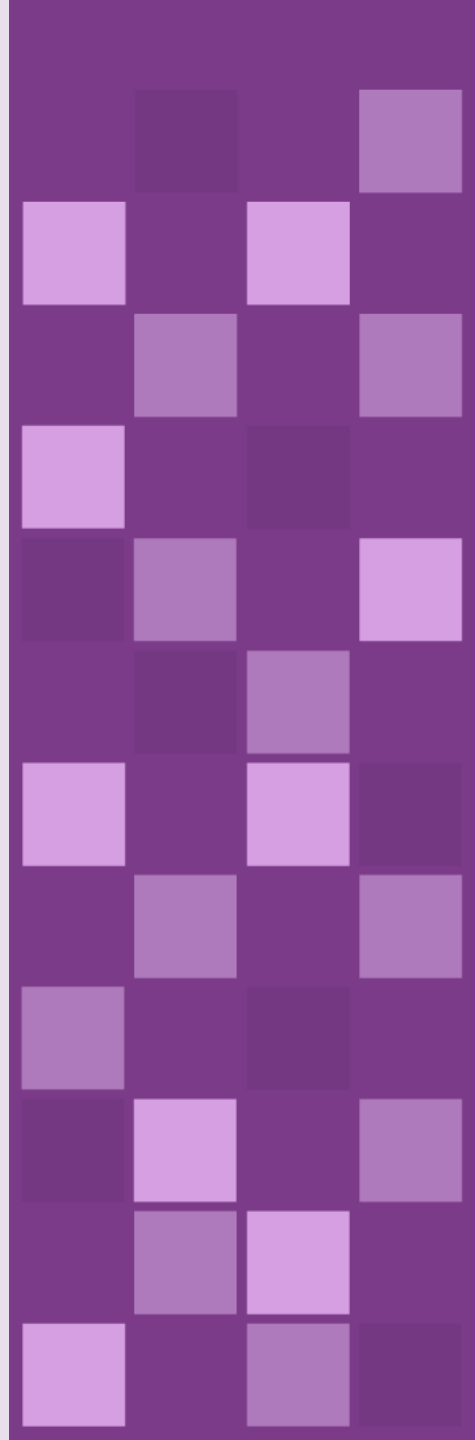


5.1 Discrimination in the recruitment process

In both countries, the majority of informants expressed a belief of companies **prioritizing local candidates over foreign workers**, even when the latter might be more qualified. The preference for local candidates went beyond language skills and touched on perceived cultural fit and familiarity with local work environments. Many pointed out that employers seemed to favor local candidates to migrants purely because they were native.

One Ukrainian refugee recalled a real-life situation where they competed with an Estonian candidate and lost the job despite working tirelessly and outperforming the local counterpart. Meanwhile, another respondent felt that compared to Estonians, Ukrainians were only considered for low-paid manual jobs.

*“If we are talking about relatively low-paid work, for example, in a warehouse or at a factory somewhere—then yes, because Ukrainians are hired for those positions, and it is not a problem in principle. However, when it comes to positions that require more responsibility, I still think that **Estonians are given preference.**” – Int. 31*



According to the informants, in Finland having a **foreign-sounding name further complicated job prospects**. Other research has highlighted this issue as well ¹. Almost all of the informants felt a foreign name affected their job application process negatively. One interviewee shared that after changing their non-Finnish last name to a more Finnish-sounding one, they quickly found success in the job market, whereas before, they had applied to hundreds of jobs with no luck. Others shared similar experiences, believing their name alone led to rejection before they had the chance to showcase their skills or qualifications. This reflects a deeper bias in Finnish hiring practices, where foreign names can lead to automatic dismissal of applicants, often before the interview stage.

¹ Ahmad, A., 2020, Kotoutumisen kokonaiskatsaus 2019: Tutkimusartikkeleita kotoutumisesta. Helsinki: Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö, s. 15-27

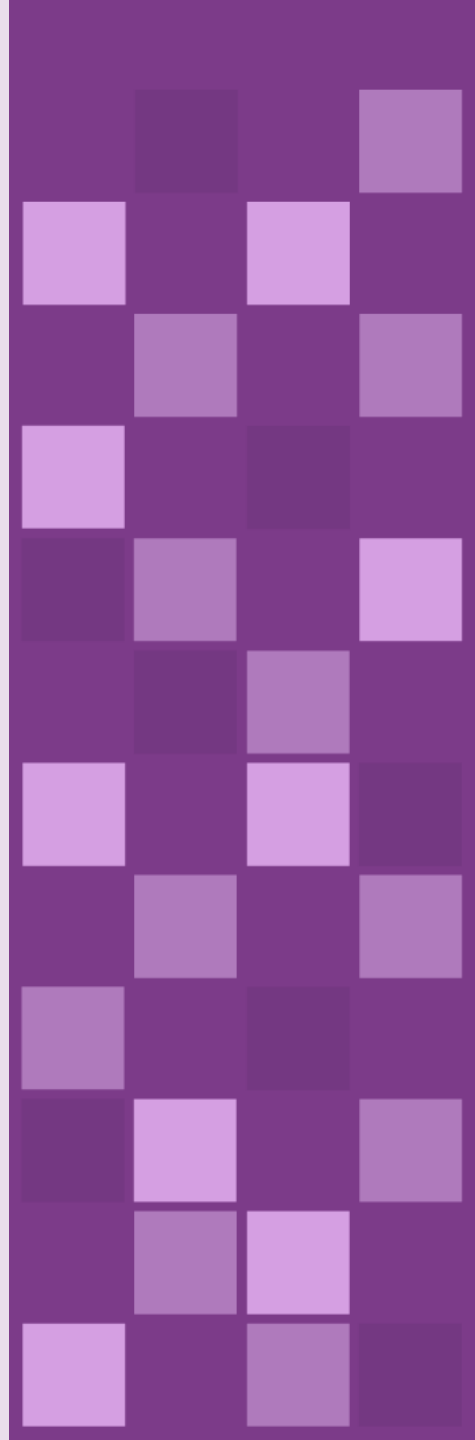


5.2 Discrimination and racism at the workplace

The systemic preference for local candidates not only limits opportunities for migrant workers but also contributes to **wage disparities**. Informants in both countries reported experiences of earning less than their local colleagues, even when they had more or the same achievements and responsibilities at work. The respondents found themselves in a cycle of being offered lower wages, limited contracts and fewer opportunities for advancement.

Respondents from Finland shared how foreign workers were often placed on 'zero-hour contracts' while locals enjoyed more stability with permanent contracts and better pay. One informant reported experiences of the employer using the trial period as an excuse to pay a lower salary to foreign employees while not applying the same protocol to Finnish employees. Another respondent shared an experience where a Finnish colleague, with less responsibilities and fewer accomplishments in the workplace, earned significantly more, simply because they were Finnish.

*“In our workplace, there is no practice of openly stating that one person has such a salary and another has such a salary. It's clear that everything is kept secret from us, but we are not stupid people. (...) They [Estonians] are definitely getting paid more for this. They don't earn the same amount as we do. (...) **We are working just as hard as others but are paid less.** Why is it like that?” – Int. 46*



Many informants also reported feeling **alienated, discriminated and judged because of their foreign background.** In the Estonian context, Ukrainian refugees with lower language proficiency and education levels were the most vulnerable to discrimination in the workforce. What was interesting in their case, however, was their reluctance to share their own experiences of discrimination or label it as such. Instead, they shared, for example their acquaintances stories or online discussions of unfair treatment.

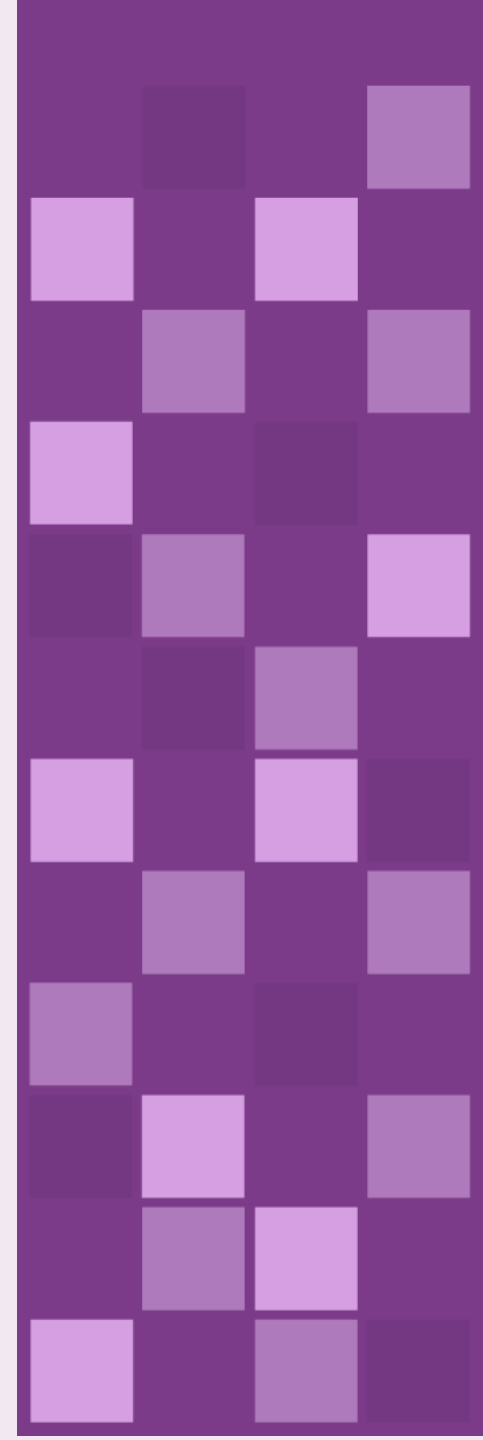
Similarly, migrants of color or coming to Finland from outside Europe seemed to be more vulnerable to discrimination and racism at work. They were, however, ready to share their experiences. One informant described how working as a cleaner in a kindergarten, the head teacher refused to speak English with him despite speaking it with the children's parents and refused to give him the key to the storage room to get the cleaning devices thus making it impossible for him to do his job. When asked why the respondent faced such treatment, they responded:



“Of course, I'm brown. Of course, I'm brown, that's why.” – Int. 7

The data shows that **discriminative behavior in the working team** could vary from subtle racist remarks, not speaking or greeting migrant workers to laughing at their accent. At worst, racist behavior came to bullying, openly racist or mean comments, screaming and cursing. Some female informants had also faced discrimination for wearing hijab as per their religion. The data shows that the informants in Finland experienced discrimination on behalf of their colleagues and even management.

“One day I was working in construction. I told him [the owner of the company], I’m a painter, but he said to come anyway. He was a very angry person, all the time he shouts and curses at me. When we start the work in the morning, he curses and shouts. (...) I noticed all the time he curses and screams, I was there until the afternoon and then I said I won’t come anymore. Maybe he was a racist maybe not. The problem was in his head.” – Int. 9

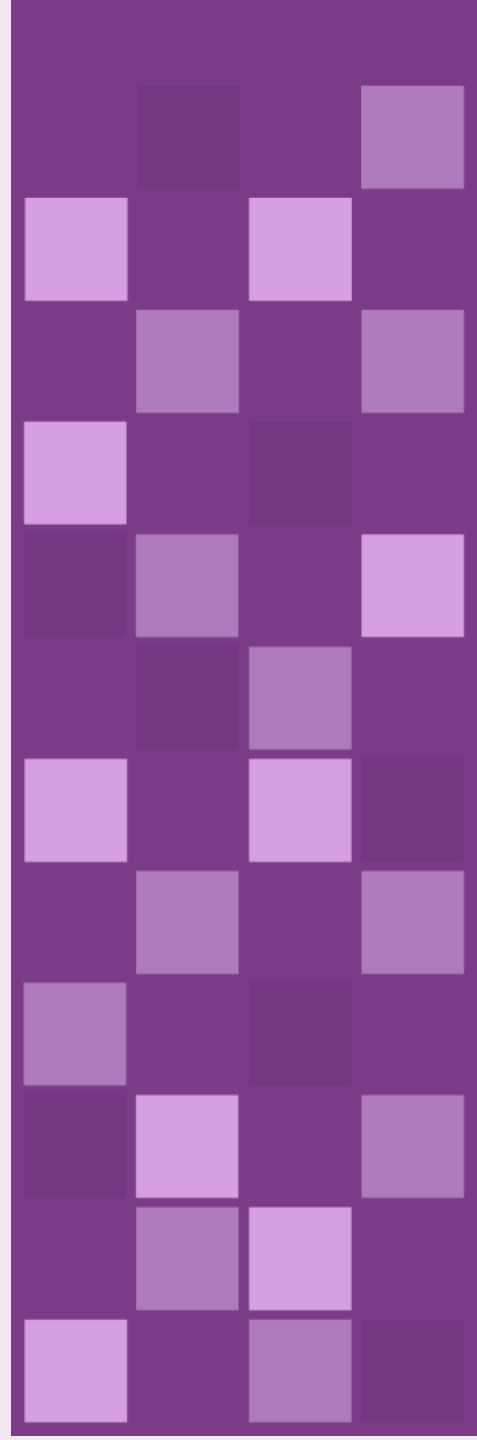


In many cases the informants' only solution was to avoid or ignore racist colleagues, but some also stated they had reported the incidents to the management. None of them however had had experiences where the reported racist behavior led to any repercussions. Often the victim of racism or bullying was the one resigning, because of the toll it took on their mental health or because they no longer felt safe at work.

*“There were no outcomes or investigation [to the colleague’s racist behavior], but I was happy in the end that we discussed what happened. I reached my goal which was to explain that also this kind of behavior exists. And after that I resigned from the job, because **the atmosphere there didn’t feel safe enough for me to work there.***

Because it has to first feel safe or that there is support. After that you can help others. But it felt unsafe. Of course I didn’t want to be there anymore.”

– Int. 15



Recommendations for promoting fairness and reducing discrimination in the workplace

- ✔ **Reduce biases in hiring** by using anonymized resumes and objective evaluation processes to avoid discrimination based on names, ethnicity, or nationality.
- ✔ **Implement transparent pay structures** and conduct regular pay audits to ensure equal pay for equal work.
- ✔ **Ensure contractual fairness** by offering permanent contracts to all employees who have proven their capabilities, regardless of nationality.
- ✔ **Limit the use of zero-hour contracts** for temporary or clearly defined roles, ensuring that foreign workers are given the same stability as local employees.
- ✔ **Always comply** with minimum wage laws and provide fair pay to all employees.
- ✔ **Provide training on anti-racism, anti-discrimination, and inclusivity** for both employees and management to foster a more inclusive work environment.
- ✔ **Establish protocols to investigate and address discrimination or racism** in the workplace, with clear consequences for staff's racist behavior or bullying.
- ✔ **Conduct external DEI (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion) audits** and create anonymous reporting channels for addressing bullying or discrimination.

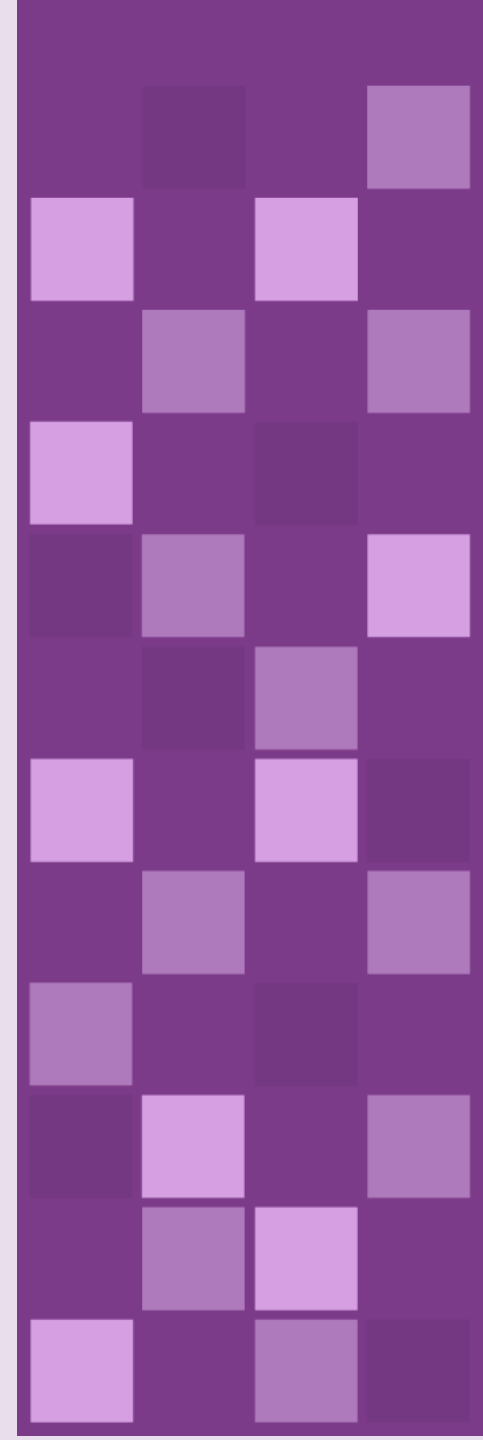
5.3 Exploitation

Both Estonian and Finnish data included reports of the exploitation faced by refugees and immigrants in the workplace, often due to their lack of knowledge about local labor laws and their rights. In both countries, foreign workers face challenges such as unstable contracts, unpaid work, and discriminatory practices, which make them more vulnerable to exploitation compared to local workers.

In Estonia, the practice of dismissing workers without payment is not uncommon, and many respondents reported having learned about these exploitative practices from their social networks or through online groups. Language barriers and lack of familiarity with the local system often leave Ukrainian refugees vulnerable to exploitation in the workplace.

While Estonian workers are more aware of their rights and can take action when treated unfairly, Ukrainian refugees, especially those with limited language skills, may face challenges in understanding work-related discussions or navigating legal protections.

Similarly, in Finland, immigrants reported being exploited through zero-hour contracts, excessive working hours under harsh conditions, and being denied permanent employment or career progression. One female informant had also shared her negative experience of being sexually harassed by the company's owner. A common tactic used by employers is to misuse trial periods to underpay or dismiss employees without notice.





The gathered data reflects how the lack of knowledge about labor laws, language barriers, and insecure contracts allow employers to exploit refugees and foreign workers, leaving them in precarious and unfair working conditions.

“So, you end up working and maybe you're going back with minus 50 euros from the money you've made. So, it's just quite bad. And then, that's just so many hard rules, like when you cause an accident, there's this [own risk policy] that you need to pay as a driver which is like 1000 euros. So, yeah. So, it was quite rough.” – Int. 2

Recommendations to promote awareness of labor rights and support fair employment

- ✔ **Provide training sessions on local labor laws, employee rights, and protections** to all workers, especially foreign workers, covering topics like legal working hours, contract types, and payment terms.
- ✔ **Distribute multilingual resources** (pamphlets, videos, guides) explaining workers' rights, with attention to contract law, payment terms, and dispute resolution processes.
- ✔ **Offer written employment contracts to all employees**, clearly outlining responsibilities, payment terms, and protections, while prohibiting verbal agreements or informal trial periods.
- ✔ **Create anonymous reporting channels** where workers can report issues of exploitation, unpaid wages, harassment, or unfair treatment without fear of reprisal.

6. Anti-discrimination policy menu

Recommendations for language support and inclusion

- Provide language courses for employees or facilitate their ability to continue language education while working.
- Use simplified local language, English, repetition, and multimedia (e.g. graphs, video materials) during onboarding.
- If the company's working language is already e.g. English, encourage its use not only in official meetings but also in daily interactions to foster inclusion and help non-native speakers feel fully integrated.

Recommendations for addressing lack of network and local experience

- Value international experience and recognize its transferability during recruitment.
- Avoid relying solely on local references or personal connections when making hiring decisions.
- Offer mentorship and networking opportunities to help immigrants build professional connections.
- Provide pathways for immigrants to gain local experience through internships, trainee programs, trial periods, or entry-level positions.

Recommendations for addressing unrecognized qualifications and experience

- Recognize and validate foreign qualifications and degrees as part of inclusive recruitment practices.
- Implement standardized skills assessments during the hiring process to ensure fair evaluation of all applicants.
- Design job descriptions to be open to international experience, emphasizing competencies and relevant skills over specific educational backgrounds.

Anti-discrimination policy menu

Recommendations for job application process

- Simplify job application forms and processes to make them easier for both applicants and recruiters.
- Use English or simplified local language in job applications to increase accessibility for people with reading difficulties or disabilities.
- Provide answers (even if automated) to all job applications and be open to offering more detailed feedback if requested to help applicants improve their chances for future opportunities.

Recommendations for promoting fairness and reducing discrimination in the workplace

- Reduce biases in hiring by using anonymized resumes and objective evaluation processes to avoid discrimination based on names, ethnicity, or nationality.
- Implement transparent pay structures and conduct regular pay audits to ensure equal pay for equal work.
- Ensure contractual fairness by offering permanent contracts to all employees who have proven their capabilities, regardless of nationality.
- Limit the use of zero-hour contracts for temporary or clearly defined roles, ensuring that foreign workers are given the same stability as local employees.
- Always comply with minimum wage laws and provide fair pay to all employees.
- Provide training on anti-racism, anti-discrimination, and inclusivity for both employees and management to foster a more inclusive work environment.
- Establish protocols to investigate and address discrimination or racism in the workplace, with clear consequences for staff's racist behavior or bullying.
- Conduct external DEI (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion) audits and create anonymous reporting channels for addressing bullying or discrimination.

Anti-discrimination policy menu

Recommendations to promote awareness of labor rights and support fair employment

- Provide training sessions on local labor laws, employee rights, and protections to all workers, especially foreign workers, covering topics like legal working hours, contract types, and payment terms.
- Distribute multilingual resources (pamphlets, videos, guides) explaining workers' rights, with attention to contract law, payment terms, and dispute resolution processes.
- Offer written employment contracts to all employees, clearly outlining responsibilities, payment terms, and protections, while prohibiting verbal agreements or informal trial periods.
- Create anonymous reporting channels where workers can report issues of exploitation, unpaid wages, harassment, or unfair treatment without fear of reprisal.

7. Conclusions

Interviewed migrants and refugees reported facing not only practical challenges in the job market but also a deeper personal struggle when placed in roles that don't reflect their true skills or aspirations. Many informants shared the emotional and psychological toll of navigating these mismatches, expressing feelings of isolation, frustration, and discouragement. Common themes included feeling undervalued despite their qualifications and experience, and a sense of disconnect from their potential due to roles that underutilize their skills. Moreover, not feeling a sense of belonging or connection with coworkers can further amplify these emotional challenges for migrant workers.

Recognizing these barriers and their effect on foreign workers opens up numerous opportunities for companies in Finland and Estonia to enhance recruitment and integration practices for individuals with foreign backgrounds.

Addressing these issues can help cultivate more inclusive work environments, offering significant benefits to both employees and organizations.

By fostering open communication, providing cultural sensitivity training, and encouraging social integration, companies can help bridge the divide between local and foreign workers. This awareness not only reduces workplace tension but also promotes a more collaborative and harmonious environment, ensuring that all employees feel respected, included, and supported in their professional and personal development. While these actions may not yield instant solutions, even initial steps in the right direction can lead to substantial progress.

Thank you for taking the time to review this report and for your dedication to creating a more inclusive workplace for all!

