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# PERSPECTIVES TO HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS' SIMHE WORK



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Reports and surveys 2023:6c

ISBN 978-952-13-6897-4 (pdf)

ISSN-L 1798-8918

ISSN 1798-8926 (pdf)

Layout: Grano Oy

[www.edu.fi](http://www.edu.fi)

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# 1. OBJECTIVES OF THE REPORT

This report looks at SIMHE services (Supporting Immigrants in Higher Education in Finland) in the light of the statistics that SIMHE higher education institutions have collected on their guidance activities and the qualitative information they have reported on their activities. Background for the information reported by the higher education institutions (HEIs) is provided with more general statistics describing students whose mother tongue is a foreign language and who have a foreign background.

The report is aimed at opening perspectives to the effectiveness of the SIMHE services at the national level and as a whole. The examination of the SIMHE services focuses on the year 2021, in particular. The report will also serve as a basis for monitoring the activities and the development of their effectiveness in future.

The report has been compiled at the International Higher Education Cooperation unit of the Finnish National Agency for Education and in close collaboration with the steering group that supported the drawing up of the report. The persons participating in the work of the steering group were Director of Internationality Virpi Laukkanen from Savonia University of Applied Sciences, Specialist Rebekka Nylund from the University of Helsinki and Senior Ministerial Adviser Kaisu Piironen from the Ministry of Education and Culture. The persons responsible for the report at the Finnish National Agency for Education were Senior Programme Specialist Sini Piippo and Counsellor of Education Maija Airas.

## 2. WHAT ARE THE SIMHE SERVICES?

SIMHE services are aimed at increasing participation in higher education studies, the completion of a degree and employment in the Finnish job market of persons who were born in a country other than Finland and of second-generation immigrants. SIMHE services include different education and training services, guidance and counselling that support access to higher education and employment, and measures supporting integration.

The aim of SIMHE activities is to develop higher education in a way that would make it equally accessible for different population groups. SIMHE activities strengthen models that help to improve and speed up the identification of prior learning of all persons with an immigrant or foreign background so that their educational and employment pathway does not become unreasonably difficult. The aim is to develop and create models for the identification and recognition of prior learning so that immigrants' prior learning and studies can be identified better. Preparatory education and training for immigrants has also been developed on the basis of the experiences and practices gained from SIMHE activities.

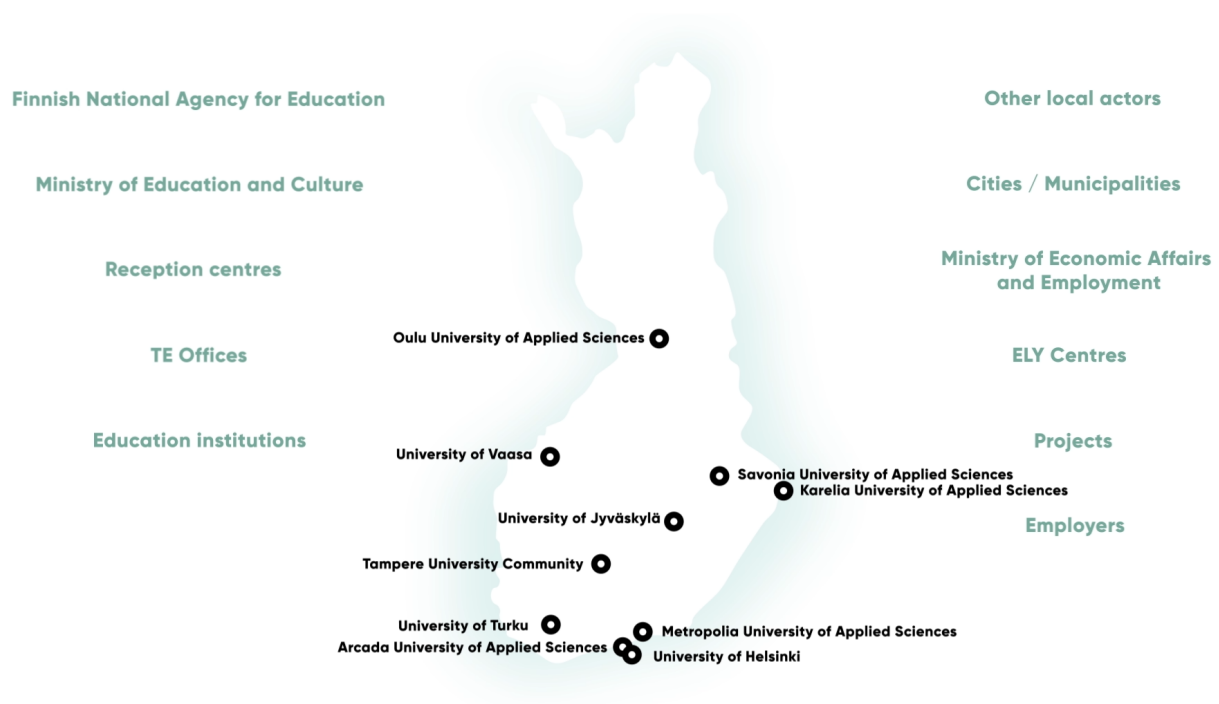
SIMHE services (Supporting Immigrants in Higher Education in Finland) were launched in 2016 when the first higher education institutions responsible for the SIMHE services – the University of Jyväskylä and Metropolia University of Applied Sciences – launched their SIMHE activities. In 2017, four new higher education institutions joined in: the University of Helsinki, Karelia University of Applied Sciences, Oulu University of Applied Sciences and the University of Turku. Later on, Arcada University of Applied Sciences, Savonia University of Applied Sciences, Tampere University of Applied Sciences and the University of Vaasa also became involved.

Now, in 2022, there are ten SIMHE higher education institutions and the operation is supported through the strategy-based funding targeted to higher education institutions by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The activities have established themselves as an important part of the operating field of higher education institutions in the field integration of highly educated immigrants and international higher education students, and it has diverse points of contact, for example, with work on accessibility of higher education and supporting international experts in Finland. The Finnish National Agency for Education supports the SIMHE activities of higher education institutions in an expert role and a national SIMHE cooperation group supports the development work. The group has representatives not only from all the SIMHE higher education institutions, but also from the key stakeholders of the activities such as the student organisations, the rectors' organisations, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish National Agency for Education, which has the role of the chair of the cooperation group.

### **The network has power and enthusiasm for doing things together**

The persons providing guidance and advice at SIMHE higher education institutions form the SIMHE instructor network. The SIMHE instructor network convenes about four times a year to discuss topical themes. The higher education institutions take turns in convening the

meeting. The instructor network has also established a Teams area of its own for forwarding information on events and training. In the Teams area, case folders for different fields are now being built, for example, on good ways to provide advice to a foreign doctor or teacher. The network also serves as peer support. In the guidance of SIMHE clients, the best advice and support can sometimes be provided by another higher education institution rather than one's own community.



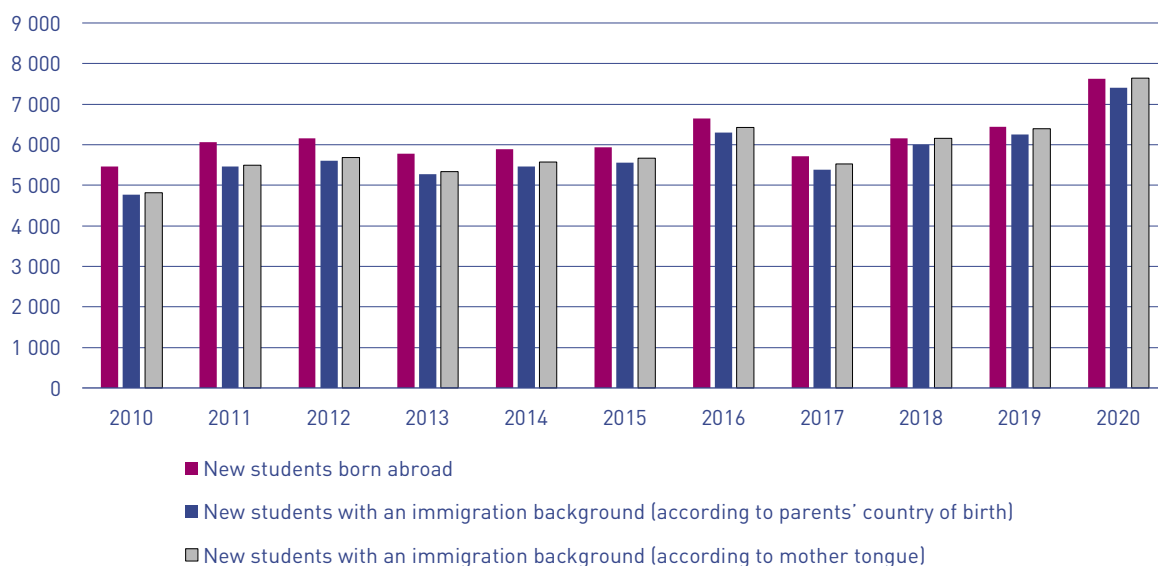
### 3. PERSONS WITH AN IMMIGRANT BACKGROUND IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE LIGHT OF STATISTICS

In this section, we use a statistical examination to create a more general situation picture of the development of the number of students with an immigrant background in higher education in Finland. In addition to the general number of students, the report also looks at participation in preparatory education for higher education and at the number of those who took the test in Finnish/Swedish as a second language in the matriculation examination in the student admissions of higher education institutions.

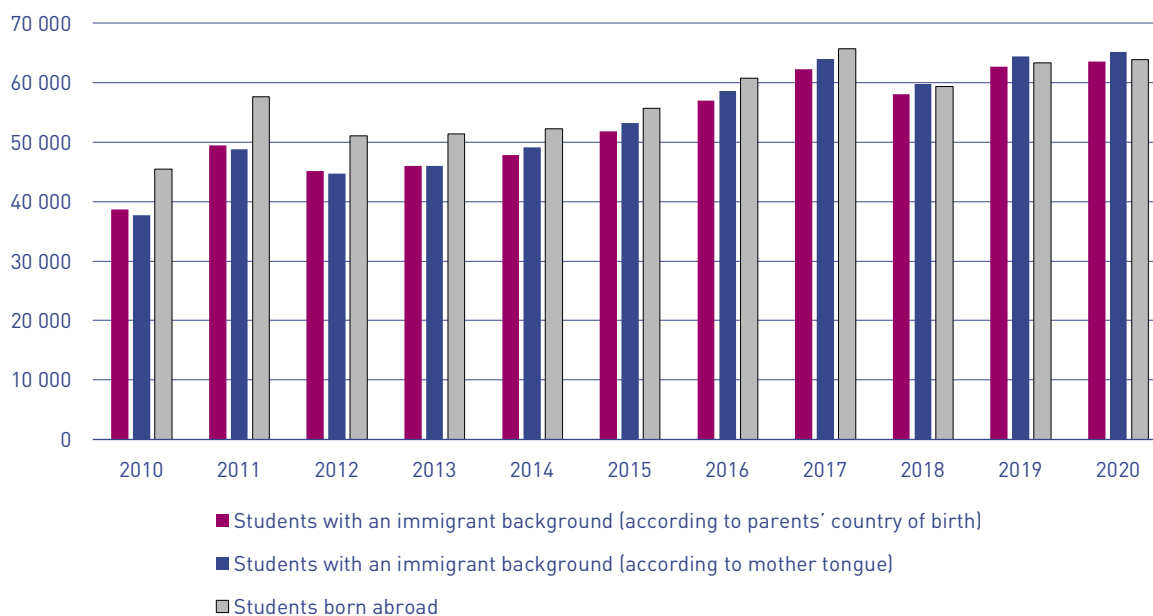
#### The number of students with an immigrant background has increased

In a period of ten years from 2010 to 2020, the number of new students with an immigrant background admitted to higher education has more than doubled. This significant increase concerns the examination based on citizenship (the number increased from 8,472 students to 17,475 students by 2020), on the country of birth (the number increased from 12,843 students in 2010 to 26,430 students in 2020) and on new foreign language-speaking students (increase from 11,046 students in 2010 to 26,082 students in 2020).

FIGURE 1. NEW STUDENTS WITH AN IMMIGRANT BACKGROUND



**FIGURE 2. NEW STUDENTS, STUDENTS AND GRADUATES WITH AN IMMIGRANT BACKGROUND**



When looking at new students, students studying in higher education and graduates as a whole, the number of students with an immigrant background has also increased significantly in higher education between 2010 and 2020. Within this ten-year period, the number of students whose parents were born in a country other than Finland increased from just over 38,000 to 63,000 by 2020. Similarly, the number of foreign-language speaking students increased from 37,000 to 65,000 and the number of students who were born abroad from 45,444 to 63,897 students.

It is therefore clear that the number of immigrants and students with an immigrant background has increased significantly in Finnish higher education institutions.

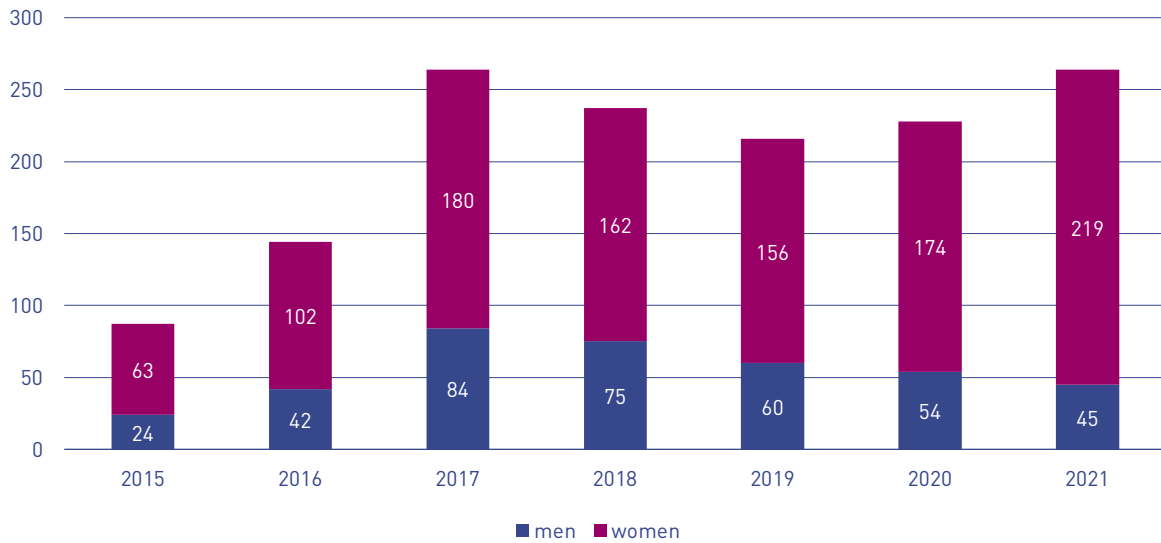
## **Demand for preparatory education and training for higher education studies increases**

Universities of applied sciences (UAS) provide free preparatory education for immigrants with the intention of providing immigrants with sufficient capabilities for applying for UAS studies and do well in them. The studies have an emphasis especially on strengthening the language proficiency required in higher education studies and on adopting an independent and exploratory way of studying.

The number of participants in this preparatory education has also increased considerably in the past few years. After 2015, the number of those who started in the education increased dramatically. In 2015, about one hundred immigrants started preparatory education, but since 2017, their number has been about 250 a year. From the start, the gender distribution of the participants has been unbalanced as every year, women have been more active in taking part in preparatory education than men. In 2021, a total of 264 immigrants started in preparatory education, of whom 219 were women and 45 men.



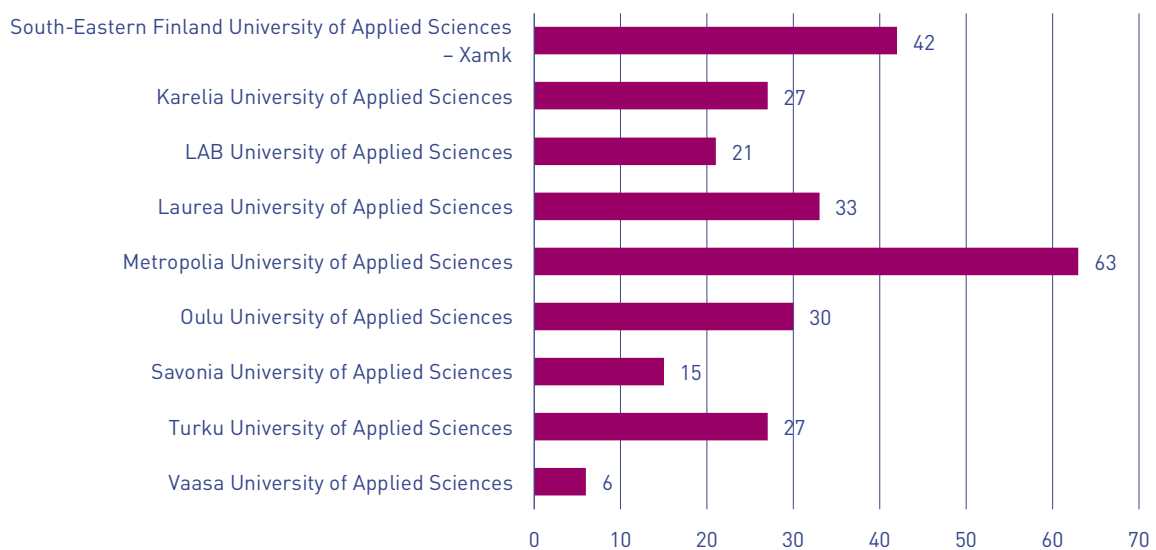
**FIGURE 3. PERSONS WHO STARTED PREPARATORY EDUCATION 2015–2021**



Fewer and fewer of those starting preparatory education have already completed a degree or have the right to degree studies. In 2021, 18 students had a degree, which corresponds to about 7% of the participants. In the same year, 60 of those participating in preparatory education, or about 32%, had earlier or later study rights.

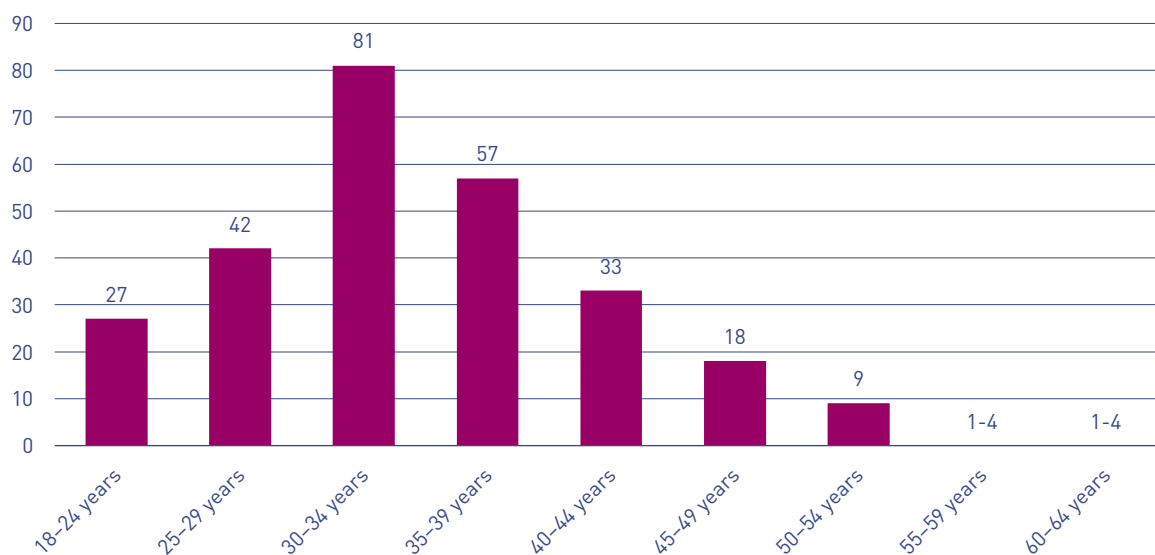
Between 2015 and 2021, preparatory education for immigrants has been offered in 13 different universities of applied sciences. Some of the universities of applied sciences have offered the education during several years, while others have offered it only once. In 2021, nine universities of applied sciences were involved: Savonia, Metropolia, Laurea, LAB, Karelia and the universities of applied sciences of Vaasa, Turku, Oulu and South-Eastern Finland. Preparatory education has been provided most by Metropolia University of Applied Sciences.

**FIGURE 4. PERSONS WHO STARTED PREPARATORY EDUCATION BY HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION IN 2021**



Immigrants of all ages participated in preparatory education. The majority of those who started in preparatory education in 2021 were aged between 18 and 44 years. Almost one in three were aged between 30 and 34, which makes this age group the largest. The second most active age group was persons aged between 35 and 39 years, and the third most active group persons aged between 25 and 29. Of these two groups, the first one had almost 60 people and the latter just over 40 people.

**FIGURE 5. PERSONS WHO STARTED PREPARATORY EDUCATION BY AGE GROUP IN 2021**



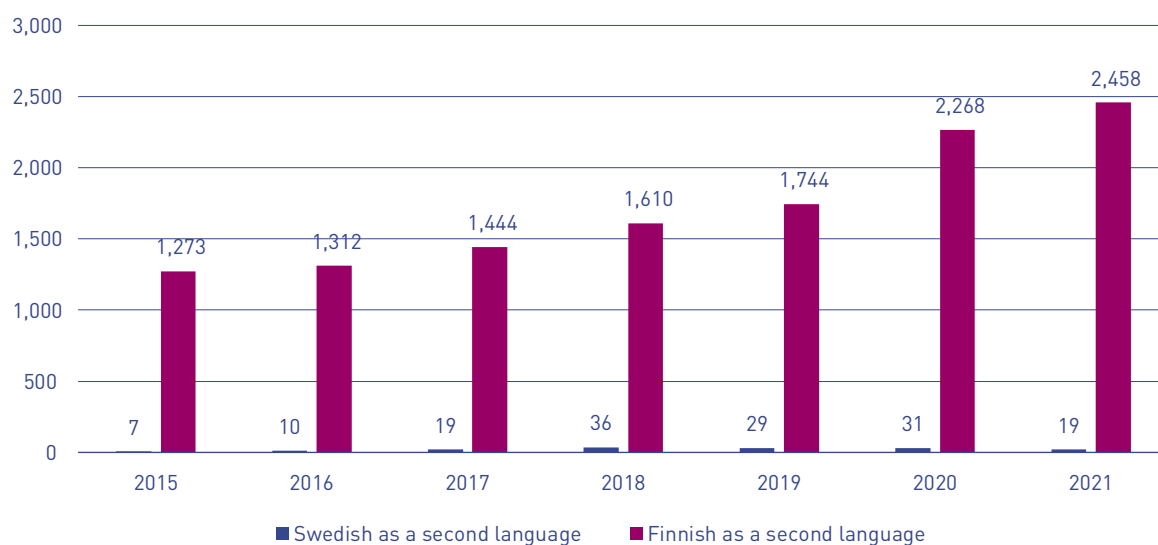
Universities do not currently have a statutory possibility to provide preparatory education for higher education studies but, in accordance with the recommendations of the Accessibility plan for higher education and the Strategy for continuous learning in higher education institutions, the preparation of the preparatory education provided by universities was initiated towards the end of 2022. Of the SIMHE higher education institutions, the universities of Helsinki and Jyväskylä have developed preparatory education. The AKVA I and II projects on academic skills (University of Helsinki), implemented with project funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Integra projects (University of Jyväskylä) have piloted a model for education preparing for higher education studies.

## Persons who took the test in Finnish or Swedish as a second language in the matriculation examination

The number of those who accepted a study place in higher education and those who took the test in Finnish/Swedish as a second language in the matriculation examination provides one statistical perspective for examining access to higher education of persons with a foreign background.

The number of those who took the test in Finnish or Swedish as a second language has doubled between 2015 and 2021 (Figure 6).

**FIGURE 6. PERSONS WHO TOOK THE TEST IN FINNISH/SWEDISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN THE MATRICULATION EXAMINATION**



However, only a fraction of those who accepted a study place in higher education took the test in Finnish or Swedish as a second language in the matriculation examination. The proportions have increased moderately in the past few years. In 2015, students who had taken the test in Finnish as a second language accounted for 1.3% of those who accepted a study place in higher education, while in 2021, 2.7% of those who accepted a place in higher education had taken the test in Finnish as a second language.

Instruction of Finnish as a second language had recently been evaluated in *the evaluation of the current state of instruction of Finnish/Swedish as a second language*, a report commissioned from Owl Group. Based on the evaluation, the challenges in high-quality instruction of Finnish as a second language and sufficient support for learning were often linked to the resources in use, in other words, to time, but also to how the instruction in small groups or suitable teaching groups is implemented when the number of students is small or the competence base of the students is very heterogeneous. From the point of view of the continuum of educational pathways, the challenges were mostly related to the practices of information transfer when transitioning to general upper secondary education and to opportunities to acquire a sufficient (academic) language proficiency as part of the educational pathway.

As a development need, the evaluation highlights guidance to learning Finnish as a second language. In early childhood education and care, children are guided to learning Finnish as a second language on the basis of their parents' mother tongue. In other education, this is done on the basis of their level of proficiency in the language of instruction. In basic education and general upper secondary education, the language recorded in the population register still fairly often plays a role in the background, although in reality, the language recorded for the pupil in the register does not always indicate the actual level of proficiency in the language of instruction. Furthermore, the mother tongue of children in multilingual families may often also be Finnish or Swedish.

In higher education, the provision of Finnish as a second language has been developed, but provision at a more advanced level is only just being developed. As for the degree structures, studies in Finnish as a second language should be a natural part of the studies throughout the education, and it would be important to be able to extend the provision of Finnish as a second language both within higher education institutions and in cooperation between institutions.

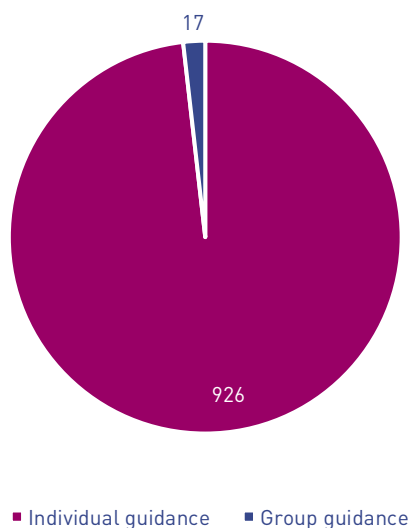
## 4. GUIDANCE ACTIVITIES AT SIMHE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

### SIMHE guidance reached one thousand clients

Higher education institutions compiled statistics on SIMHE guidance on the basis of what had been agreed together, but the framework for the data collection may have been interpreted in slightly different ways. The compiled information is therefore not entirely commensurate. Although the statistics are partly open to various interpretations, it is possible to use them to form a general picture of the SIMHE activities that were realised in 2021.

In 2021, more than one thousand people participated nationally in SIMHE guidance. The number has doubled when compared to earlier available comparison data from 2017, when there were just over 500 guidance clients. A total of 943 SIMHE guidance sessions have been reported, of which the majority, or 926, are individual guidance sessions. The other 17 guidance sessions were either group or pair guidance. The size of the groups varied from a few participants to almost 40 participants. Because there is no individual-specific information on group guidance, the number of guidance sessions in the statistics is smaller than the number of the participants.

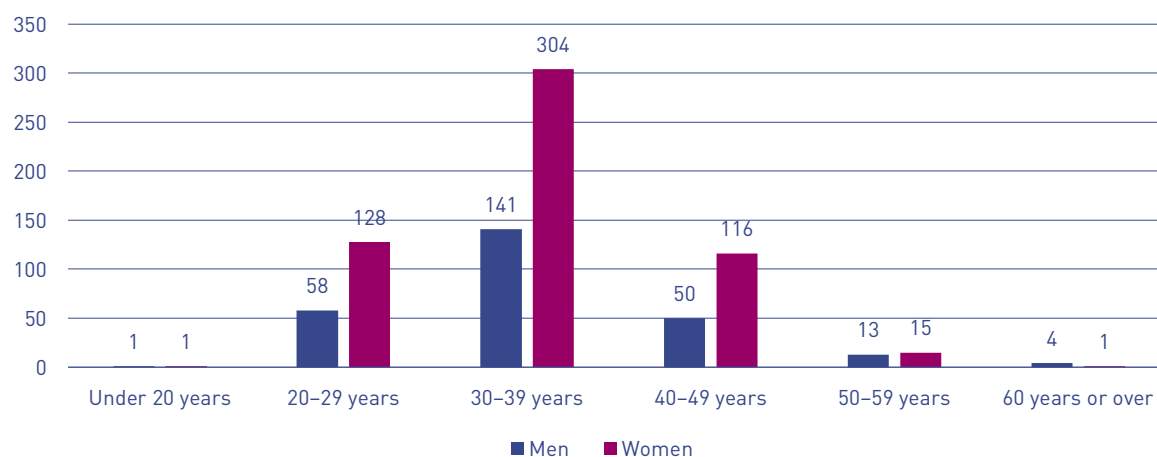
**FIGURE 7. NUMBER OF SIMHE GUIDANCE SESSIONS**



## The average participant in SIMHE guidance was a woman aged 30–39 years

The majority of those participating in guidance during 2021 were women, and their number was approximately double the number of men. Clearly the largest number of participants in SIMHE guidance were aged between 30 and 39, as about one in three participants represented this age group.

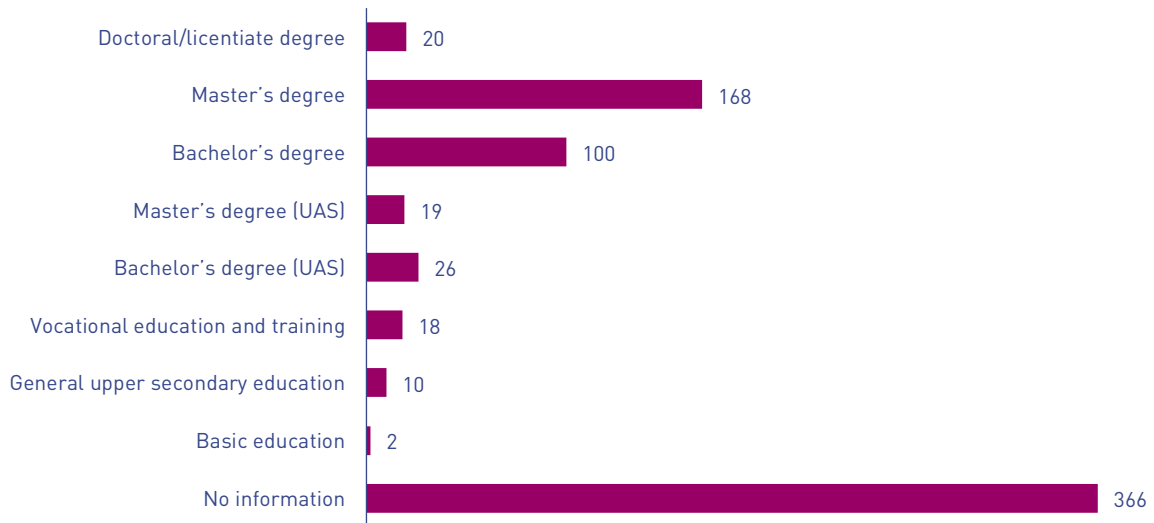
**FIGURE 8. PARTICIPANTS' AGE BY GENDER, INDIVIDUAL GUIDANCE**



The immigrants participating in SIMHE guidance come from many different backgrounds. Almost 70 different nationalities were recorded in the statistics, and the largest nationality groups were Russian, Turkish, Indian, Finnish and Iranian. The participants had also lived in Finland for various lengths of time. The participants' stay in the country was distributed evenly, as the number of those who had lived in Finland for 1–3 years, 3–5 years and more than 5 years was about 250 participants in each category. There were only 70 persons who had lived in the country for under a year, and only few no longer lived in Finland. SIMHE activities cover a nationally extensive geographic area as, according to the statistics, people came to receive guidance from almost all of Finland's regions and some even from abroad. However, by far the largest number of participants, about two thirds of all participants, came from the area of Uusimaa.

The level of education has been recorded for about 40% of those who participated in SIMHE guidance. A master's degree had been completed by 168 people and a bachelor's degree by one hundred. Twenty-six participants had a bachelor's degree (UAS) and 19 a master's degree (UAS). Twenty participants had a doctoral or licentiate degree. Only a few of those who participated in the guidance had completed only basic education. In addition to degree holders, just over twenty participants had started to study in a degree programme, but had not yet completed their studies. The immigrants were also from many different fields of study. The most popular ones were business, administration and law, health and welfare, education and engineering.

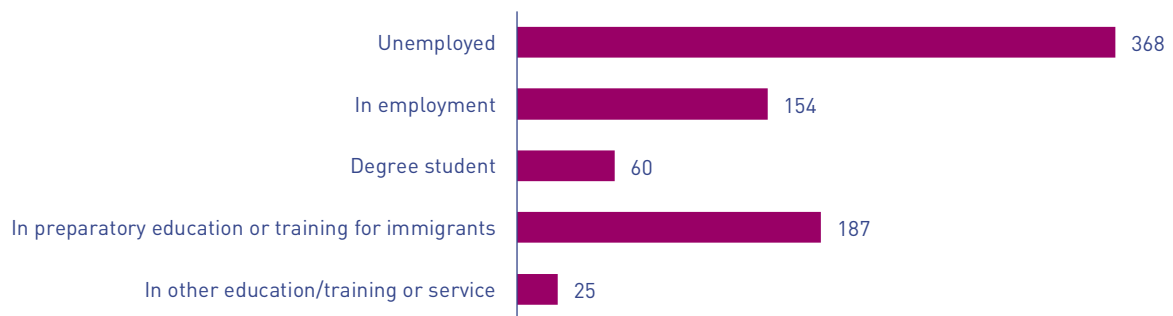
**FIGURE 9. COMPLETED DEGREES, INDIVIDUAL GUIDANCE**



### Most of those applying for SIMHE guidance are unemployed

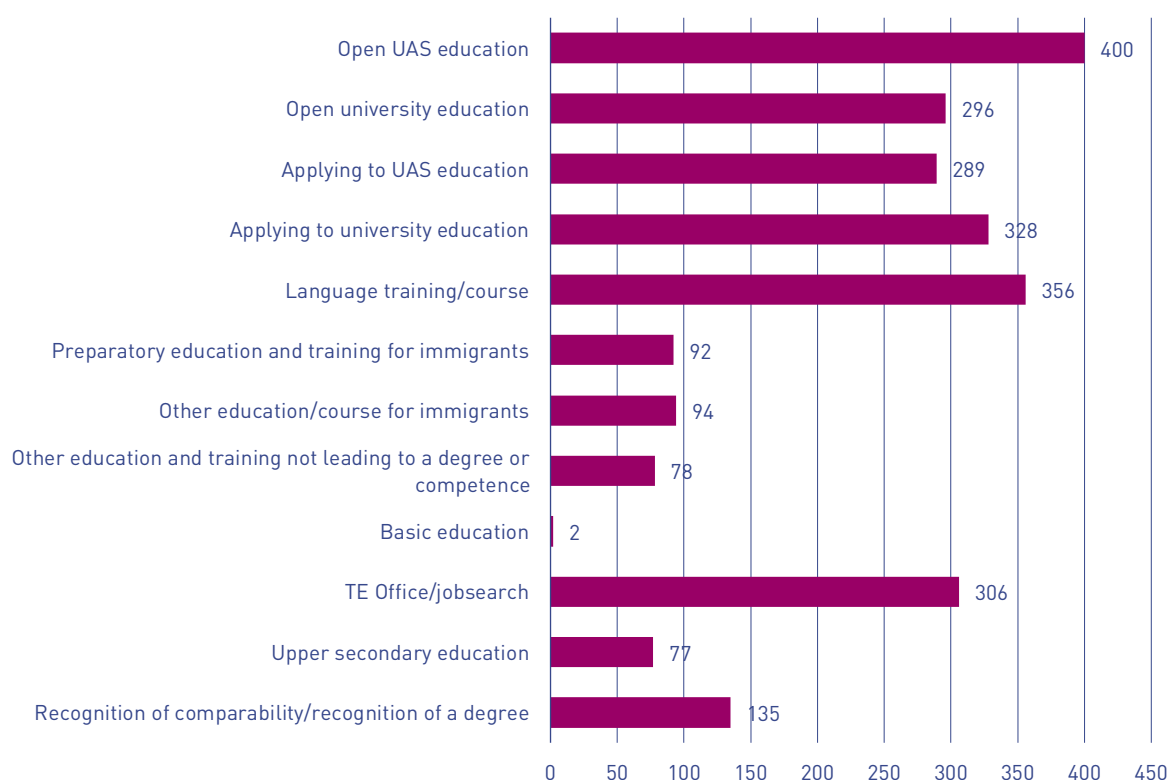
Those who have applied for SIMHE guidance include degree students, persons studying in education and training targeted at immigrants, participants of other training or service, persons in employment and persons outside employment. The participants have mainly been unemployed, employed or persons studying in education and training targeted at immigrants. More than 350 participants reported they were unemployed, while about 150 were working. Almost 200 participated in education and training targeted at immigrants.

**FIGURE 10. CURRENT SITUATION, INDIVIDUAL GUIDANCE**



All in all, a total of almost one thousand SIMHE guidance sessions were reported during 2021. The largest number of clients, 400, have been guided to UAS education. The second largest number of clients have been guided to different kinds of language training and courses. Individuals have been guided to open university education almost 300 times, and a similar number of participants have been guided to the TE Office or to apply for work as well as to apply to degree studies either at a university or a university of applied sciences.

**FIGURE 11. GUIDANCE SESSIONS CARRIED OUT IN SIMHE ACTIVITIES, INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP GUIDANCE**



## Perspectives to developing SIMHE activities

Higher education institutions report SIMHE activities to the Ministry of Education and Culture as part of the mid-term evaluation of the agreement period 2021–2024 of higher education institutions. Extracts from this reporting from spring 2022 provide an understanding of how the SIMHE activities have developed in higher education institutions.

### **New higher education institutions strengthened the SIMHE network and established actors continued to develop their services**

SIMHE activities in Swedish strengthened when SIMHE services were launched at Arcada University of Applied Sciences. Arcada has promoted cooperation with the other Swedish-speaking higher education institutions in Finland to promote Swedish-speaking integration. The University of Vaasa also began the development of the SIMHE services as a new institution. The expanded SIMHE operating model has been planned together with the other actors in the Vaasa region.

Of the established SIMHE institutions, Metropolia University of Applied Sciences has strengthened the learner-orientation of guidance: as part of the SIMHE services, services in strengthening competence and promoting integration are provided to international experts and learners with an immigration background.



Karelia University of Applied Sciences has implemented preparatory education that supports study skills, developed practices for the identification of highly educated immigrants' prior learning and developed educational pathways.

The University of Jyväskylä has further emphasised the development of the higher education pathways of students with an immigration background, education modules in continuous learning and guidance services.

### **PRIORITIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SIMHE ACTIVITIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI, REBEKKA NYLUND, SPECIALIST, UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI**

At the University of Helsinki, the beginning of the SIMHE activities was strongly labelled by the guidance of SIMHE clients and the development of application processes for applicants with a refugee background and no possibility to verify their competence with official documents. Because of the war in Ukraine, this development work has proven very useful. The University of Helsinki has also been able to share with the other SIMHE institutions its expertise in guiding Ukrainian refugees in Finland to the services of higher education institutions and especially in applying without official certificates. Free elementary courses in Finnish have also been organised to Ukrainian refugees as open university studies.

One of the priorities of the University of Helsinki has also been to promote networking from the point of view of both the clients and the SIMHE activities. The cities in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area have been important partners, as have different organisations. The development of the SIMHE instructor network and active participation in it has been found meaningful.

The other priority in the development of the SIMHE system is to develop the eligibility pathways to the regulated professions for which the education is the responsibility of the University of Helsinki in cooperation with other higher education institutions. For example, these include doctors, dentists and education professionals who have completed their degree abroad.

Twenty-four persons who had completed a degree in education abroad started the studies piloted in the Pätevänä töihin project. With sufficient support and guidance, the students in the project are integrated to the same courses with the other Finnish-speaking students of educational sciences in order to be able to better network with their future colleagues and, on the other hand, improve their proficiency in Finnish. In addition, tailored studies in the Finnish language provide the students with an important peer group of their own.

The development of the educational pathways leading to eligibility in the education sector continues. In spring 2023, a separate application process developed for separate studies providing the eligibility to work as a teacher in accordance with the decision on comparability will be implemented on the basis of the experiences gained from the Pätevänä töihin project and earlier similar projects.

The University of Helsinki has had two projects developing preparatory studies for persons whose eligibility for higher education has been obtained abroad and/or highly educated immigrants: AKVA I and AKVA II (AKVA = academic preparatory). Students' capabilities to study in Finnish higher education institutions or work in expert positions has been strengthened especially with studies in the Finnish language, but also by supporting their study skills and by investing in career guidance for the target group.

In its SIMHE activities, the University of Helsinki also aims to stimulate debate both within the university and in the wider world on the challenges international experts have in finding employment.

## **Russian invasion of Ukraine created new types of needs for higher education institutions' SIMHE services**

Based on the national Virta data collection, a total of 1,464 Ukrainian students who had fled from Ukraine were studying in Finnish higher education institutions in December 2022. Of them, 1,019 were studying in open higher education.

As part of the national action plan to support higher education students and researchers who have fled from Ukraine, the Finnish National Agency for Education opened an information website on the studies and support measures provided by higher education institutions. The website was opened in May 2022. Centralised advice on study opportunities in Finland has been created together with SIMHE instructors for those students who have found their way to the information website. The Ministry of Education and Culture allocated a total of EUR 2 million to the SIMHE higher education institutions to support the guidance and counselling services. In addition, higher education of those receiving temporary protection has been supported with a separate project appropriation of EUR 5.5 million. The granted aids will be used to fund English-speaking education provision, the development of functionally bilingual degrees and the increase in preparatory education for the higher education of immigrants in universities of applied sciences.

### **WHAT KIND OF NEEDS DID THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE CAUSE FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ? WHAT KIND OF SOLUTIONS HAVE BEEN CREATED TO MEET THE NEW NEEDS? MARITA HÄKKINEN, COORDINATOR, UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ**

The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the displacement of people resulting from it brought Finnish higher education institutions together to reflect on solutions for supporting the fleeing students.

In March 2022, universities set up a practical working group led by UNIFI and the vice rectors to discuss policies for opening studies and providing support, taking into account the guidelines given by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Finnish National Agency for Education supported measures in our higher education sector, set up a joint website for communication and invited a group of SIMHE institutions to provide guidance to Ukrainian refugees. In the Agency's events, the messages and information channels of

Ukraine's higher education sector and education authorities were conveyed to our higher education actors. The SIMHE services, which had already been in operation in higher education institutions for a long time and are currently implemented in ten institutions, and the network-like approach of the services proved to be a natural route for supporting those who have had to interrupt their higher education studies and careers. The work in educational administration and communication were launched successfully in a consistent manner in the universities with assistance from committed cooperation structures. However, the decisions made by the universities have been somewhat different from each other. As a rule, the studies provided include free open university studies, language studies, and university studies completed with separate study rights, which will in future also be suitable as part of a degree in Ukraine or even in Finland. At the University of Jyväskylä, it has been possible to apply for these studies since April 2022 if the person's proficiency in English and background competence have been sufficient. The right to study is applied for through the continuing application process coordinated by the continuous learning services of the University of Jyväskylä, and it is for the open university or to the faculties, where the directors of study affairs and coordinators process the applications. The SIMHE guidance of the University of Jyväskylä, which focuses on the higher education pathway and is implemented together with the admission guidance and faculties, provides support for applying for the right to study. By November 2022, study rights had been granted to 11 students. In addition, a call for applications for Erasmus+ grants was implemented in the spring, which was preceded by cooperation agreements between the University of Jyväskylä and three partner universities located in Ukraine – in Lviv, Kiev and Kharkiv. The guidance at the initial state of grant application was provided from SIMHE, from where potential applicants in Finland were directed face-to-face and remotely and applicants in Ukraine through WhatsApp and other means. Of the selected 19 exchange students, 16 have arrived in Jyväskylä and are currently studying languages, business and administration and education sciences, among other things. Of the Ukrainian refugees that have arrived in Jyväskylä, a larger group than those who have had to interrupt their higher education studies is adults who already have a higher education degree. Interpreted group guidance has been organised to this target group as cooperation of SIMHE, the City of Jyväskylä Expertise Centre for immigrants and Salmiranta reception centre. SIMHE has also implemented guidance in Central Finland in other municipalities with highly educated Ukrainian residents. The regional network is the established collaboration field of SIMHE services, but some of the actors related to the crisis in Ukraine are new. In Jyväskylä, the support network of Ukrainians covers not only the reception centre but also the Orthodox parish, Multicultural Center Gloria and the services of social work. In cooperation with the authorities and the third sector, guidance has been provided to students requiring support with studies and wellbeing and the necessary authorities have been consulted about issues related to grants, housing and income. In the course of the year, 92 Ukrainian refugees have participated in SIMHE guidance provided by the University of Jyväskylä.

## **SIMHE services were developed as part of the Talent Boost actions of higher education institutions**

For example in Turku and Tampere, SIMHE actors work in cooperation with the International House Turku/Tampere activities, supporting the provision of joint international services to clients of both education and work-based immigration. In the University of Turku, the Talent Boost activities have been promoted by developing the processes related to international experts' contacts with working life and companies, alumni activities and SIMHE guidance services (incl. further instruction of the Finnish language and preparatory education for the legalisation test for dentists who have graduated in non-EU/non-EEA countries).

Tampere University has developed the International Talents Mentoring Programme and training support, which support traineeship and employment. Tampere University of Applied Sciences has taken measures in cooperation with stakeholders to make traineeships and final projects possible for international students.

Metropolia University of Applied Sciences has promoted the Talent Boost action programme through SIMHE services, operationally through a bilingual degree for registered nurses and through projects developing the provision of Finnish as a second language. In addition, an additional resource has been allocated to the development of the service paths of international students since 2022 to support international students in finding employment in Finland.

### **SIMHE SERVICES AS PART OF THE TALENT BOOST ACTIVITIES, VIRPI LAUKKANEN, DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONALITY, SAVONIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES**

In Savonia University of Applied Sciences, SIMHE services and the preparatory education of immigrants are seen as one part of the Talent Boost service promise, according to which attracting international experts, immigration and settling permanently in Finland are promoted comprehensively. The aim is to attract a significantly larger number of international students to Eastern Finland, in particular, and to improve the employment of the international experts already living in the area to jobs matching their competence.

At Savonia, the measures to develop internationalisation have been brought together broadly as part of the Internationality unit, which makes comprehensive development easier. International degree programmes are increased, efforts are made to increase their attractiveness and students' career competence and working life networks are developed in cooperation between different degree programmes. The Talent Hub activities support international students in finding places for traineeships and employment. Instruction of Finnish as a second language has been systematically increased in international degree programmes, a pathway to learning Finnish has been created and the development of proficiency in the language has been included as one criterion for grants.

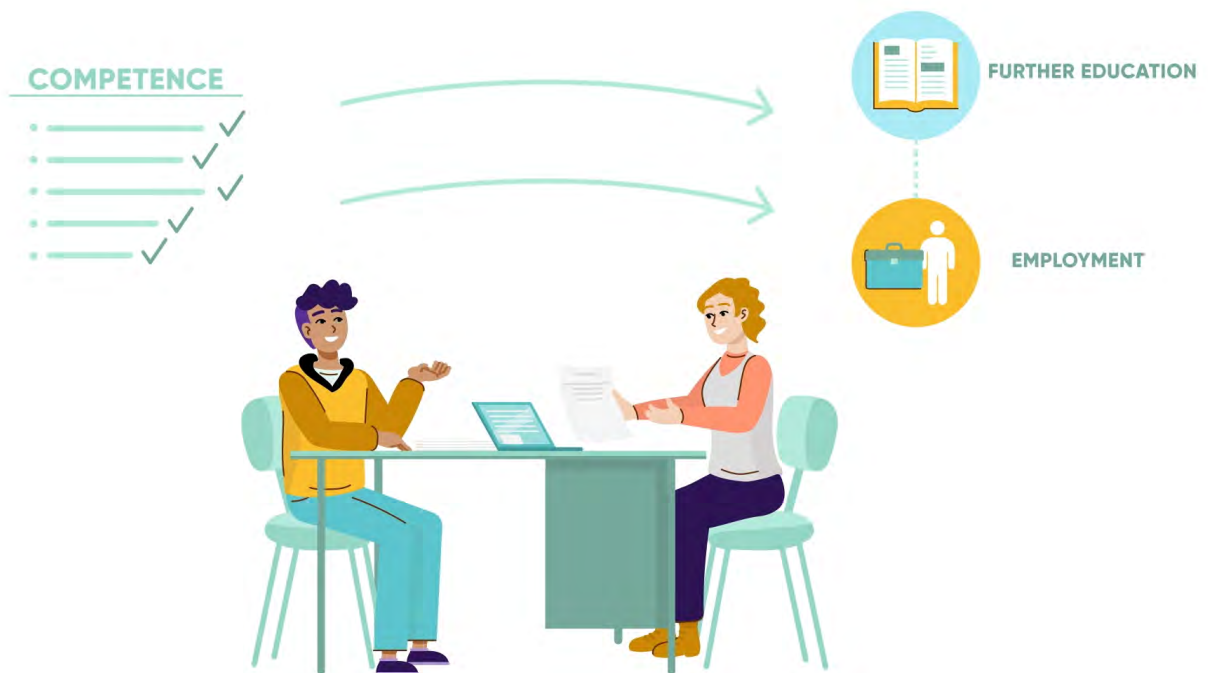
SIMHE activities are seen as one important part of Talent Boost as a whole and the activities are used especially to support the immigrants already living in the area in finding their way to higher education and those with a higher education degree in finding work that matches their education. Preparatory education for immigrants serves as one

good path to degree programmes, although the required fairly good proficiency in Finnish has been challenging for many. Savonia currently participates in a project managed by Karelia and funded by the Ministry of Education to develop a similar English-speaking preparatory education for immigrants.

In future, the capability to better reach those immigrants who have already acquired an education in their home country will be seen as a development area. By identifying their prior learning and providing supplementing education, their path to working life can be speeded up. The role of SIMHE guidance is to provide guidance at the initial stage and find the right educational pathways. As for the identification and recognition of prior learning, the guidance counsellors of each international degree programme play an important role. Cooperation between the SIMHE activities and degree programmes is therefore important in building a successful educational pathway.

# CONCLUSION

SIMHE services have been developed actively since their establishment, and the work continues to be an essential part of developing the accessibility of higher education institutions. The objective “Finland, a responsible and receptive nation” defined in the Vision for strengthening the international dimension of Finnish higher education and research by 2035 sets the following goals: entering Finland and staying in the country is smooth and easy and higher education institutions, scientific institutions and other bodies in the sector take the lead in creating an open-minded and receptive society that is culturally and linguistically diverse. For their part, the SIMHE services are important measures that help to achieve these goals.



## FIGURES

- Figure 1 New students with an immigrant background. Source: Vipunen – Education Statistics Finland  
<https://vipunen.fi/fi-fi>
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Source: Reports of SIMHE higher education institutions

## ILLUSTRATIONS

All illustrations: Videotiiviste Oy

## MORE INFORMATION

SIMHE services on the Finnish National Agency for Education website:  
<https://www.oph.fi/en/simhe-services-higher-education-institutions>

Accessibility plan for higher education (Abstract in English)  
<https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/163235>

Strategy for continuous learning in higher education institutions (in Finnish)  
[https://okm.fi/documents/1410845/4392480/Kansallinen+korkeakoulujen+jatkuvan+oppimisen+strategia\\_1.0.pdf/22fd6ebf-1a3a-cdf3-b14d-4aa32bf2aaf0/Kansallinen+korkeakoulujen+jatkuvan+oppimisen+strategia\\_1.0.pdf?t=1670581872127](https://okm.fi/documents/1410845/4392480/Kansallinen+korkeakoulujen+jatkuvan+oppimisen+strategia_1.0.pdf/22fd6ebf-1a3a-cdf3-b14d-4aa32bf2aaf0/Kansallinen+korkeakoulujen+jatkuvan+oppimisen+strategia_1.0.pdf?t=1670581872127)

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Online  
ISBN 978-952-13-6897-4  
ISSN 1798-8926