

# Trade Union information to immigrant workers



# 1 Welcome to work and the trade union

Welcome to Finnish working life! We hope that you get a good start. That is why we want to introduce trade union activities to you. Trade unions are an integral part of Finnish working life.

This material is made in co-operation between the  
Federation of Salaried Employees Pardia and  
TJS Opintokeskus (TJS - The Educational and Cultural Centre for Professional Employees).

The word trade union may provoke many kinds of thoughts – both good and bad. Before we continue, we think it would benefit you to test your own preconceptions.  
So please complete the test below first before reading on.

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## 1.1. Test your knowledge on trade unions!

**What do you think about trade unions?  
Are your assumptions valid in Finland?  
Answer yes or no to the claims below.**



1. Trade union activities are legal.

A) Yes B) no

2. You have to belong to a trade union

A) Yes B) no

3. Finnish trade unions are for Finnish employees only.

A) Yes B) no

4. If I join a trade union, I join a party at the same time.

A) Yes B) no

5. Trade unions are governed by the state.

A) Yes B) no

6. A trade union is only a network where you meet other people.

A) Yes B) no

7. A trade union will get me a job.

A) Yes B) no

8. Different kinds of employees join trade unions regardless of their education, profession and work duties

A) Yes B) no

9. The employer can sack me if I belong to a trade union.

A) Yes B) no

10. If I join a trade union, the employer thinks that I am a difficult employee who is likely to quarrel and demand all sorts.

A) Yes B) no

11. Trade union provides health care.

A) Yes B) no

12. Trade unions promote and look after their members' employment and working life interests.

A) Yes B) no

13. How many percent of Finnish employees belong to a trade union?

A) n. 20% B) ca. 75%

14. How many trade unions are there in Finland?

A) 5 B) ca. 70

a) Kyllä b) ei

You will find the correct answers on page 18.

## 1.2 Together we are strong and influential

Approximately 75 % of Finnish employees belong to trade unions. There are 70 big trade unions in Finland. Many of them include smaller sub-organizations. The number of trade unions is many times higher, if all trade unions are included in the count.

### Why are trade unions so popular?

The reason for trade unions' popularity is that it is easier to act as a group than on your own. In Finland, an important part of democracy is the people's right to organize themselves in groups to advance their interests. Laws protect this right. The trade unions defend and protect the rights of employees. They also help employees who need assistance in employment matters. In Finnish working life, the trade unions really make a difference.

The following are the most important reasons why members of the trade unions have joined the unions:

1. the trade union's support in pay and employment matters
2. earnings-related employment benefit
3. A general sense of security provided by the organization
4. thanks to a great number of members, the union is able to promote its members' interests more efficiently.\*)

Trade unions are, indeed, legal and independent organizations. They work together with each other and negotiate with both employer organizations and state authorities. This is what the so-called tri-partite co-operation is all about.

\*) Source: The Labour Market Study by the Trade Union Confederations (2007).

### Why are there so many different trade unions?

The reason for so many different trade unions is that the employees in Finland have organized themselves according to either line of work, place of work or profession. This leaflet tells you about Pardia – the Federation of Salaried Employees, which represents unions listed under heading Pardia - a trade union community.

### Migrant workers - join in!

It is important for the protection of employee rights and for the development of working life that everybody who works in Finland, also an immigrant, is a member of the trade unions. This is the best way to safeguard the interests of everybody working here. The same terms and conditions of employment apply to both foreign and Finnish employees and workers.

### Belonging to a community

The trade unions have also another important job to do in addition to advancing the interests of their members. Joining a trade union is a perfect way to meet others working in the same line of business or in the same profession and hear what is happening there. At their best, trade union activities offer you a network of people working in the same line of work as well as your colleagues and fellow workers.

# 2 Pardia

## – a trade union community

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Pardia – the Trade Union Federation for Salaried Employees' members are a substantial group of both state and private sector employees. There are nearly 70 000 members in our organization. The majority of them work in governmental offices and institutions, and some of them work in public utility companies and enterprises.

These are

- Financial Sector
- Administration and Welfare Service Sector
- Higher Education, Research and Teaching Sector
- Technology and Information Sector
- Security Sector
- Pardia's Private Sector

**Pardia: 70 000 members**  
**- 23 member affiliations and**  
**- 600 member associations**

**Pardia also has 16 regional committees.**

### **You belong to Pardia through your local trade union branch or association**

Pardia – the Federation of Salaried Employees includes 23 member organizations and their sub-organizations in the sectors mentioned above. Pardia looks after the interest of all these organizations. Its duty is to support the activities of member organizations and union branches at places of work.

An individual employee is a member of Pardia – the Federation of Salaried Employees either through a union branch at his or her workplace or a national or regional association.

You will find Pardia's member organization at Pardia's website [www.pardia.fi](http://www.pardia.fi).

However, there is no need for you to worry about Pardia's organizational structure, as your most important link to the trade union is your own shop steward at your workplace. We will tell you more about shop stewards later.

More information on the Pardia is available from [www.pardia.fi](http://www.pardia.fi).

# 3 Working and support at workplace

At the workplace, an employee meets the job, his fellow workers, demands of the everyday work and sometimes problems, too. The workplace is where an employee also meets the shop stewards and representatives of the trade union. They are your closest and most important link to the whole of the trade organization and the trade union movement.

Anton works in a state agency. His superior asks him to find out background information for a financial plan. The matter is urgent and Anton will have to work overtime four hours every day from Monday to Thursday.

When Anton is paid, his salary is exactly the same as it was for the month before. Anton goes to see Pirkko. Pirkko has told him to contact her whenever he needs to. She is the shop steward in the agency at which Anton works.

*"I worked overtime.*

*Why is it that I have not received any compensation for it?" asks Anton.*

*"You are right, this is overtime", says Pirkko. "You must fill in a report form for overtime in order to get paid for overtime. I will help you to fill it in", she continues.*

*Many thanks for your help, says grateful Anton.*

*"Don't mention it", says Pirkko. "As a shop steward I am here to help you in situations just like this!"*

## 3.1 Sign a contract of employment

There is no rush to start working. First, you will have to agree on the terms and conditions such as pay and working hours for the job. An agreement like this is called a contract of employment. A contract can be either verbal or in writing. A written contract is much better because it is much easier to prove what was agreed if everything is written down. Before you sign a contract of employment, ask the shop steward to check the contract. The following things should be included in a contract of employment:

- the employer and the employee
- collective agreement to be applied
- wages/salary at the beginning of employment and the day when it will be paid
- where the work is to be carried out
- duration of the contract
- reasons for a fixed term of employment, if the job is not permanent
- trial period, if agreed
- employees duties and working hours
- annual leave and period of notice

### Civil servants and letters of appointment

There is a service relationship between the employee and the employer. If you work for the government, your service relationship is either an employment relationship or a public-service employment relationship. A large part of people who work for the government are in public-service employment relationship instead of an employment relationship. The main difference between an employment relationship and a public-service employment relationship is that the terms of a public-service employment relationship are based on collective agreements for public servants, laws, statutes and the employer's instructions. Only very rarely is there an individual contract between a civil servant and the employer. Civil servants receive a letter of appointment instead of signing an employment contract.

## 3.2 Rights and responsibilities at work – things you need to know

In Finland, both the employee and the employer have to follow the rules laid down in various laws and agreements. These laws and agreements stipulate different rights and responsibilities for both employees and employers. These generally laid out rights and responsibilities form the basis for all agreements between employees and employers.

It is to your own advantage to ensure that laws and agreements are upheld at your workplace. Please note that if any problems should arise you may be responsible for not making sure how things should be done correctly. The shop steward will help you to interpret different situations and assist you with possible problems. We will tell you more about the shop steward later.

### Employee

#### Rights

- freedom to join and be a member of a trade union
- pay, working hours and other terms as laid out in the collective agreement and the contract of employment (see chapter Sign a contract of employment).
- right to resign
- right to a healthy and safe working environment (see Health and Safety at Work)

#### Responsibilities

- to carry out work carefully
- to follow the instructions given by the employer, i.e. the manager or the supervisor
- to refuse to work for any other employer who competes with the employer in the same line of business
- to keep commercial and professional secrets
- not to take part in any industrial action that has not been agreed upon by the trade union

### Employer

#### Rights

- to employ people
- to manage work
- to discontinue an employment contract as laid out in laws and agreements
- freedom to join an employers' organization

#### Responsibilities

- to pay the agreed salary/wages on time
- to treat all employees impartially and equally regardless of gender, ethnic origin, religion or age
- to promote a good working environment and to support employees' opportunities to perform well at work and to develop professionally

### 3.3 The shop steward is the most important contact person for you

*"I think that the most important part of being a shop steward is that I can advice and help my fellow workers. I use a lot of time to talking and listening to people and trying to find out what their problems are. As a shop steward my target is that both sides are satisfied with the result so that both the employee and the superior end up feeling good about the resolution for a problem that needed to be resolved."*

Shop Steward Helena Frisk

The job of the shop steward is to act as the representative of both the employees and the trade organization. He or she oversees that the employer follows the terms of office – and of course the employee also has to follows the same terms.

The shop steward's other duties include to inform, give advice, guide and help the trade organization's members in questions relating to working life. He or she communicates the employees' opinions and insights to the employer and negotiates on behalf of the employees when needed. The shop steward is also your link to Pardia. This is how matters relating to employment can be taken forward and to improve them all the way up to the national level.

The shop steward will help you, for example, if you want to ask about:

- pay and pay rises
- how annual leave is determined
- whether the employer can make you to do other work than that specified in your contract of employment or terms of office
- do you have to go to work if you are ill and whether you will loose any pay for the time you stay at home when ill.

### 3.4 Occupational health and safety delegate looks after health and safety at work

The occupational health and safety delegate represents employees when dealing with matters relating to health and safety at the work place. This is called labour protection.

The role of the occupational health and safety delegate differs from that of the shop steward in that the occupational health and safety delegate represents all employees at the work place. He or she will help also those who are not members of the trade organization. However, the occupational health and safety delegate can be and often is a member of the trade organization.

The job of the health and safety delegate is to keep track of issues relating to health and safety matters at the workplace and report any shortcomings or faults to the health and safety manager. The health and safety manager will develop labour protection together with the employer. The result of this development work can be, for example, health and safety regulations that everybody has to follow at the workplace or improving the interaction between employees and the employer when planning work. An important part of the job is to participate in planning for improvements in maintaining working ability. Examples of steps taken by the employer to improve employees' working ability include different recreational and physical exercise events, courses and rehabilitative treatments.

You can turn to the health and safety delegate when, for example:

- you have a problem relating to ergonomics at work or how your place of work is set out
- you feel that you have problems keeping up with your work, i.e. when you have too much work to do or your work timetable is too busy
- if you are subjected to sexual harassment at work
- if you feel that you are bullied mentally or physically at work
- you don't know what to do in a case of emergency, for example, what to do if a fire breaks out.
- 

### 3.5 Trade union association at your workplace looks after your interests

There is a trade union association at most workplaces. As a member of the trade union, you are a member of that association. The workplace association's job is to be close at hand to help you as the association focuses on the issues relevant to a particular workplace. Along with the shop steward, the workplace association is another link you have to Pardia.

Pardia's trade union activities are based on the needs and targets of its members. Our main principles are openness and equality. This means that you will get help and services from your association but also that you can have an influence on the way things are at your workplace.

The chairman of your local association and the shop steward represent and negotiate on behalf of the members of the union association on matters relating to personnel issues at the workplace. This means that they represent you and negotiate on your behalf.

The local or workplace associations hold meetings and functions for members; they also arrange trade union training and other events for members. The workplace association can also organize its activities with the help of different kinds of working groups or committees. As a member, you will have many opportunities to tell your views and opinions about matters that concern your place of work and your trade association. You will learn much and find new friends. You can make yourself heard if you want to!

The duties of the workplace association and its elected officials are:

- represent and have an influence in the administrative bodies and cooperation organs and practices in the workplace of the whole organization
- participate in the development of the workplace and the organization
- in some cases draw different kinds of agreements with the employer
- keep the members informed about matters relating to their employment as well as the activities of the association
- organize meetings and functions, training, recreation and entertainment
- gain different kinds of advantages to the members

*"In 1997 – 2004 I was a member of the committee for the university's property support service personnel. I acted as the chair of the committee for five years. The committee brought forward the property service personnel's problems in order to advance the property personnel's interests. The committee worked especially hard to help those with the lowest wages there. We were praised for suggesting that they receive extra pay rises in connection with workplace specific negotiations."*

Helena Frisk

# 4 Pardia's duties

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Anton worked many hours of overtime in one week. He filled in the overtime report form and took it to his superior. Yet he has not received compensation for overtime.

Anton contacts the shop steward, Pirkko, who finds out what is going on.

Anton's superior tells that he has sent the overtime report on for the director's approval.

*"I can't pay overtime compensation because there has not been a written order to do overtime in advance", says the director.*

*"A verbal instruction to work overtime at a specified time is a sufficient basis for overtime compensation"  
Pirkko contradicts him.*

*"Ok, I'll take care of this", says the director.*

Anton receives overtime compensation in his next salary. Pirkko checks that the criteria of the compensation have been calculated correctly.

- If the negotiations at the workplace were not successful to resolve the dispute about overtime compensation, a Pardia lawyer would support the local shop steward and Anton – if needed, all the way to a court of law.

\*) More information on the Finnish Confederation of Professionals STTK is available from [www.sttk.fi](http://www.sttk.fi).

## 4.1. Protecting your interests by exerting influence

The Pardia way of protecting your interests covers all the activities and efforts to have influence, which Pardia as a trade union undertakes on behalf of its member organisations and their members. Above all, protecting your interests means negotiating the general terms and conditions of employment and influencing employers and political decision makers.

Pardia aims at protecting your interests both independently and together with the Finnish Confederation of Salaried Employees STTK.\*) STTK is an umbrella organization in which there are 21 other trade organisations.

Through STTK, Pardia strives at influencing political groundwork and decision making in matters relating to Pardia's members. Examples of such matters include working life legislation, civil service development programmes and certain parts of social legislation.

Pardia contributes, negotiates and acts in cooperation with employers and state authorities as follows:

- examines and follows up the working conditions and terms and conditions of employment in the fields it represents
- comments, submits motions and meets decision makers so that the professionals represented by it have the opportunity to work under appropriate terms and conditions
- by participating in working group and by issuing statements aims at influencing employment legislation, working life and the content of legislation relating to social rights

- negotiates, looks after and develops benefits relating to its members' pay, terms and conditions of employment, working conditions and working environment
- trains shop stewards and occupational health and safety delegates who are responsible for looking after local interests at individual workplaces

## 4.2 Collective agreements guarantee minimum terms

The centrally negotiated collective agreements are negotiated between the employer and employee organizations. The aim of the agreements is to guarantee all employees certain terms of office or employment and pay increases fairly. The agreements also stipulate the minimum wage. There is no general minimum pay in Finland; the appropriate collective agreements always specify the amount of minimum pay in each field.

Before going to work and signing a contract of employment it is worth asking the shop steward at the workplace what is the contract applied to that particular workplace and then read it. These are the agreements that form the basis for your employment contract or terms of office, too.

### **The Collective Agreement for State Civil Servants and Employees under Contract**

Pardia negotiates the Collective Agreement for State Civil Servants and Employees under Contract for those working for the government. The employees working for the state are either civil servants or employees under contract. Remember always to find out the type of your employment with the state. It is important to know this as it has a bearing on everyday working situations.

In addition to the collective agreement for state civil servants and employees there are more specific agreements in individual state agencies and institutions in which terms and conditions of employment are agreed in more detail. Primarily, these agreements cover payment systems, their contents, application and following up their functionality. Salaries in state departments and offices are determined according to the demands of the job as well as personal skills and performance.

### **Private sector collective agreements**

Pardia also negotiates collective agreements for state utilities and enterprises as well as those of certain private sector employees. You will find the collective agreements for state civil servants and employees under contract on Pardia's website [www.pardia.fi](http://www.pardia.fi).

## 4.3. Earnings-related unemployment benefit

When you work legally in Finland, you pay, among other things, an unemployment insurance payment that is deducted from the pay you receive. If you are made redundant, the Finnish government will pay you unemployment benefit for the duration of your unemployment. This benefit is the same amount for everybody but it is considerably smaller than the earnings-related unemployment benefit. The amount of the earnings-related unemployment benefit will be calculated from your earnings.

What to do so that you too could receive the earnings-related unemployment benefit? This is what you need to do: As you join a trade union you automatically also join an unemployment benefit fund. A part of your union membership fee goes to the unemployment benefit fund. You benefit from paying the fee so that if you become unemployed, your unemployment

benefit will be based on your pay. This is called earnings-related unemployment benefit.

Members of Pardia are automatically members of the Civil Servants Unemployment Fund or the Unemployment Benefit Fund for Public Technical Sectors

## 4.4 Providing information and advice for employment issues

Pardia provides expert advice and information. Our aim is to give up-to-date information on employment and working life so that all our members know their rights and responsibilities at work.

Laws and statutes govern many aspects of Finnish working life such as holidays, working hours, maternity and parental leaves as well as occupational health and safety. In addition, some of the collective agreements include more detailed terms and conditions relating to these issues. Some employers know the contents of the laws and agreements well; some employers hardly know them at all. It is worth checking that what the employer tells you is actually true. For this, you can use not only the help of the shop steward and your own workplace trade organisation but also the lawyers and other experts working for Pardia.

### Up-to-date information to all members

Pardia provides reliable information on matters concerning its members and keeps you informed. It publishes PardiaNyt / PardiaNow magazine and brochures. At our website [www.pardia.fi](http://www.pardia.fi) you will find up-to-date information on current concerns. Most of our member organi-

zations have similar channels to keep you informed. On Pardia's website, you will find links to member organizations' websites.

### Personal advice to members

Pardia provides advice to individual members on, for example, when and how to apply for a study leave. We will also help you interpreting contract details or negotiating if a dispute has arisen regarding a contract of employment. Your closest adviser is always the shop steward at the workplace. However, the shop steward may not always know answers to everything or it is not his or her job to take care of certain matters. Then you can contact Pardia staff. You can contact us and ask questions via our website, send us an e-mail or telephone us.

## 4.5 Training and recreation for personal development and well-being

Pardia offers diverse training on working life and trade union activities. Our training aims at giving you information on the trade union movement, your rights and responsibilities as an employee and a member, to improve your working life skills and support your well-being. At the same time, you will get to know other Pardia people and share your working life and trade union experiences with them.

Every year, Pardia invites all new members to take part in the New Members' Event. During the event, you will get more detailed information on members' rights and responsibilities as well as the most important services and benefits to members. There are also basic and advanced training courses on organizational activities for both new and more long-standing members. The subjects of the training courses cover Pardia and

its duties, meeting technique and procedures, organizational activities and developing them as well as current affairs in working life.

Pardia trains its shop stewards, occupational health and safety delegates, and the member organizations' board members to carry out their duties. Nobody is left alone to manage his or her trade union duties.

You will find information on the training courses on Pardia's training calendar and our website. Find out if your own organization and workplace association organize any training. Some member organizations also provide small study grants.

*"I am happy with the training my association provides. The training courses have given me valuable information about membership services and benefits, pay, events and the collective agreement for state civil servants. In addition, in Pardia's training courses I have learned more about trade union activities, protecting interests, youth activities, shop steward's duties and international activities."*

Careers adviser / Vocational support specialist  
Esther Leander

## 4.6 Other member services and benefits

Pardia and its member organizations offer many kinds of member services and benefits in addition to the ones above.

Being a Pardia member, you will receive discounts in certain hotels, holiday destinations, cruise ships and petrol stations. As a member, you can apply for different kinds of assisted holidays. Some of Pardia's member organizations and associations have agreements with banks and shops. Some of the organizations give study grants.

Ask your own association what your member services and benefits are or look at Pardia's website [www.pardia.fi](http://www.pardia.fi) and your own association's website.

### **We need young people's valuable insights**

There are Pardia activities aimed at young adults who are members of Pardia. We aim at introducing the views of our younger members into our operations and practices. Pardia youth committee carries out the everyday work to achieve this.


The youth committee takes an active interest in the public debate on young people's position in the labour market. It maintains contact with Pardia's associates both in Finland and internationally. In addition, the youth committee participates in planning training for Pardia's younger members together with Pardia's training department. The training subjects concentrate on basic organizational skills such as young people's opportunities to have a say in the matters that concern them in their own association, organization and workplace.

Your own association helps you to get involved in Pardia's youth activities.

## 5. Have influence by being an active member


A trade organization exists to promote and safeguard its members' working life interests. The aim is also to provide the members a mutual support network and to further professional solidarity. Have you thought about the fact that you, too, can be influential? We will reach our targets when as many members as possible make sure that employees' rights and responsibilities are realized fairly.

There are many ways to participate in trade union activities. For example, you can tell your shop steward what is wrong at your workplace. You can e-mail us and tell us about how your association works or suggest how to improve things. You can take part in events, training courses or youth activities. Alternatively, if you are more active, participate in working groups or come forward as a shop steward candidate. Participate in a way that appeals to you.



Personnel and finance secretary Ennio Zuccaro:  
Everybody can develop their workplace

*"When you are interested in and enthusiastic about something, you just have to do something about it. You can develop things the way you want them to go. This is what I have done in my workplace. I want to help my colleagues and look after their interests. I have noticed that my workmates value this and that is why they support me. I discuss different matters concerning the workplace with my superior and put forward ideas how to improve things to him. I have managed to create good channels of dialogue to both my superior and my workmates; many of them come to talk to me and ask about things at the workplace. I believe that I have served as a model and inspired others to try to make a difference."*



Careers adviser / Vocational guidance specialist Esther Leander:  
Immigrants need information about trade union and need to get involved in it

*"The shop steward was there to meet me at the door on my first workday. She showed me around the building, introduced me to other employees and answered all my questions. Later that day, she told me that she was the shop steward and asked me whether I was interested in becoming a trade union member. I would not have known that the union existed if she had not told me."*

*Immigrants are still outsiders in trade union activities. I want to be involved so that I can bring forward the issues that concern immigrants, improve their position and persuade immigrants to join the union. I am my association's representative in Pardia's youth council and a deputy member of the youth committee. The people involved in Pardia's youth activities are flexible, unreserved people without prejudices, who are more open to different and multicultural people than some of the older members. I believe that immigrants' participating in trade union activities is one way to help people to welcome immigrants to the society and working life."*

# 6 Further information on Finnish working life

This chapter includes many different sources of information regarding trade union activities, immigration, working in Finland and Finnish working culture as well as work opportunities.

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

The main menu option “What we do” in STTK’s English website includes a link called Guides for Foreigners under which you will find the following brochures (some of them are available also in Estonian and Russian):

- Finland: a system that works
- A guide for foreigners working in Finland
- ABC to the Finnish Trade Unions
- Printed versions of these brochures are available at Pardia offices. The brochures are also available in Finnish.

[www.mol.fi/finnwork](http://www.mol.fi/finnwork)

The Finnish Ministry of Labour’s website contains information for those coming to work in Finland and foreigners already living in Finland. The pages tell about working life regulations, work permits required and Finnish working culture. There you will also find a pdf-document called “Working in Finland? Information about living and working in Finland”.

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

In the infopankki website, there is important basic information to immigrants how the Finnish society works and the opportunities living and working in Finland offers. The site’s material is available in 15 languages. The subjects covered are:

- Welcome to Finland
- Permits: residence permit and citizenship
- Accommodation: where to find accommodation and information on housing in general
- Finnish language: courses and studying on the internet
- Work: jobs, working life and unemployment
- Education: studying and schools
- Health: When you get ill
- Social services: family, children and the elderly
- Crises: what to do and where to go
- Culture and Leisure: what to do and where to go
- Associations: e.g. founding an association and its activities

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

The Finnish Immigration Service website includes the most important contacts an immigrant needs. The site gives you information about immigration principles and practices in Finland. The Finnish Immigration Services grants residence permits, makes decisions on residence applications for refugees and asylum seekers and is responsible for granting Finnish citizenship.

[www.suomi.fi/suomifi/suomi/aiheet](http://www.suomi.fi/suomifi/suomi/aiheet)

The Suomi.fi –website provides information on immigration, security, legal protection and taxation among other things. Subjects relating to immigration include:

- Immigration permits and documents
- Residence permits
- Passport and identity card
- Application and document fees
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- Living in Finland
- Working and studying in Finland
- Rights and responsibilities

[www.tyoelamanverkko-opisto.fi/petmo/](http://www.tyoelamanverkko-opisto.fi/petmo/)

This website covers in much more details some of the same subjects as this leaflet. We recommend you check out sections “Suomalainen työkuluttuuri ja tavat” and “Suomalainen viestintä”. The site covers the following subjects:

- Työsuhde ja työehdot Suomessa – Employment and terms of employment in Finland
- Työsuojelu ja työturvallisuus – Labour protection and occupational health and safety
- Työmarkkinajärjestöt – Labour market organizations
- Suomalainen työkuluttuuri ja tavat – Finnish working culture and practices
- Suomalainen viestintä – Finnish communications

[www.kitkatta.net](http://www.kitkatta.net)

Kitkatta.net is an information service on higher education and working life to employers, students and personnel of higher education institutions. The section aimed at students gives you information about career opportunities for people with higher education, matters relating to employment contracts and starting your own company.

# 7 Vocabulary

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## Collective agreement (TES)

An agreement between employer and employee organizations. The aim of the agreement is to guarantee all employees certain terms and conditions of employment and wage development equally.

The agreement defines terms and conditions relating to a certain field such as pay and overtime compensation, working hours, holidays and other benefits in to be applied in fields or professions included in the agreement.

## Collective agreement for public servants (VES)

An agreement between the government as the employer and the employee organizations for those working for the state. The aim of the agreement is to safeguard certain terms and conditions and wage development in public-service employment relationship for all employees equally.

The agreement defines terms and conditions relating to a certain field such as pay and overtime compensation, working hours, holidays and other benefits to be applied in fields or professions included in the agreement.

## Confederation

Confederations unite different trade organizations and advance their interests in the society. There are three trade union confederations: STTK, AKAVA and SAK.

## Daily allowance for unemployment (basic daily allowance)

Unemployment benefit provided by the state. It aims at providing an income for an unemployed person during his or her unemployment. See also earnings-related unemployment benefit.

## Earnings-related employment benefit / earning-related daily allowance

A benefit based on work-related earnings paid when an employee is made redundant. Earnings-related employment benefit is available when an employee belongs to an unemployment fund. See also unemployment benefit.

## Employment contract

A verbal, written or electronic expression of will between an employee and an employer in which the employee undertakes to work for the employer under the latter's management and supervision in exchange for compensation.

## Employment relationship

An employment relationship is created when an employee undertakes to work for the employer under the employer's management and supervision. It can also be established even if the work is carried out from home on the employee's own computer.

## Industrial action

A general term for a situation in which employer and employee organizations can not agree on terms and conditions of work and put pressure on the opponent in order to reach an agreement. An industrial action can take place, for example, to improve working conditions or pay.

Types of industrial action available for employees include ban on overtime work, strike and even mass resignation. An employer is free to declare a lockout, which prevents employees belonging to a trade union in a certain field from getting access to the workplace. The employees' countermove to a lockout can be a boycott in which, for example, the whole staff of a multi-field employer or a certain field stops working altogether.

## Labour protection

Steps the employer and employees take, either voluntarily or as obliged by law, to reduce and remove dangers present at work and working conditions. Labour protection aims at promoting employees' physical and mental health, safety at work and job satisfaction.

## Letter of appointment

If you work for the state in a public-service employment relationship, instead of an employment contract, you will receive a letter of appointment for the public-service employment relationship. See also public-service employment-relationship.

#### Occupational health and safety representative

The employees' representative in matters relating to labour protection. An occupational health and safety representative must be elected at every workplace in which more than 10 people work permanently. Law governs the duties, election and rights of an occupational health and safety representative.

#### Occupational health care

Employers are obliged to arrange so-called preventative occupational health care. This aims at maintaining and improving employees' working ability and general well-being.

#### Organization

In connection with trade union movement, organization means employees cooperating so that cooperation activities are carried out under a registered trade organization.

#### Public-service employment relationship

A public-service employment relationship is created when an employee undertakes to work for the employer under the employer's management and supervision. Public-service employment relationships concern work carried out for the state. Most people working in the state sector are in a public-service employment relationship. The terms and conditions of a public-sector employment relationship are based on collective agreements for public servants, laws, statutes and the employer's instructions.

#### Service relationship

A service relationship forms when an employee undertakes to work for the employer under the employer's management and supervision. A service relationship can be either an employment relationship or a public-service employment-relationship.

#### Shop steward

Representative of the trade union and employees belonging to the union at the workplace

#### STTK

One of the three trade union confederations.

#### Trade organization / trade union

An organization established by employees with the aim of protecting and improving the terms and conditions of the employees' work. Trade organizations negotiate collective agreements with the employer organizations, monitor the application of the collective agreements and help the employee in conflict situations. Usually, trade organizations are formed by people working in the same profession (nurses) or field (glass factory workers), or people who have the same education (engineers).

#### Trade union movement / trade organization activities

Activities aimed at improving the employees' position in matters relating to the employees. The purpose of the trade union movement is to organize employees to trade organizations and to influence the terms and conditions of the employees' work and standing in working life with the support a large number of employees (members).

#### Tri-partite cooperation

Cooperation and negotiations carried out by employee and employer organizations together with government representatives.

#### Unemployment Fund

Unemployment fund pays earnings-related unemployment allowance and some other benefits to members during their unemployment period. If an unemployed person is not a member of the Unemployment Fund the National Pensions Institute will pay the allowance. Thus the allowance is lower than the earnings-related unemployment allowance.

#### Workplace association

A trade association acting at an individual workplace. The association can be a member of a trade organization. In that case, the trade association is a member association of the trade organization.

Lähteet: Wikipediaa <http://fi.wikipedia.org/> ja Työmarkkina-avain.

## Answers on page three questions

1. Trade union activities are legal.

- Yes. Trade union activities are completely legal. In Finland, both employees and employers are organized.

2. You have to belong to a trade union.

- No. Joining a trade union is voluntary.

3. Finnish trade unions are for Finnish employees only.

- No. In order to improve working life and to promote employee rights it is important that everybody working in Finland, including migrant workers, is a trade union member.

4. If I join a trade union, I join a party at the same time.

- No. Trade unions are not affiliated to political parties.

5. Trade unions are governed by the state.

- No. Trade unions in Finland are independent and free organisations.

6. A trade union is only a network where you meet other people.

- No. The basic duty of a trade union is to protect and look after its members' interests. Trade unions negotiate and agree collective agreements on behalf of the employees and influence working life practices and legislation. They also join people in the same line of business together.

7. A trade union will get me a job.

- No. Everybody must find his or her own job, for example, through an employment office. If needed, the trade union in question will give advice when an employee is drafting an employment contract with the employer. In general, the trade union will support and protect an employee and if a trade union member becomes unemployed, he or she will receive unemployment benefit from his union to cover a part of the loss of earnings.

8. Different kinds of employees join trade unions regardless of their education, profession and work duties.

- Yes. Trade unions protect the rights of employees; therefore, they attract many kinds of people. Joining a trade union is voluntary, of course.

9. The employer can sack me if I belong to a trade union.

- No. Being a member of a trade union is not a legal

reason for sacking an employee. That is why an employer cannot discriminate against an employee in any other way either. The employer has the right to terminate an employment agreement but even then, the employer needs justifiable reasons relating to the company's production and/or finances or other justifiable reasons relating to the employee personally.

10. If I join a trade union, the employer thinks that I am a difficult employee who is likely to quarrel and demand all sorts.

- No. Most employers have a positive attitude towards trade union membership. The aim of trade unions is to negotiate and agree different things. This aim is best met also from the employer's point of view when as many employees as possible are organized. This is because the organized employees have their own representative who negotiates on behalf of the other employees. This leads to a smaller number of negotiations as the employer does not have to conduct separate negotiations with every single employee. The employee representative will take care that the aims of the employees are taken into account.

11. The trade union provides health care.

- No. A trade union does not provide health care. In Finland, the municipalities arrange public health care using tax money to pay for it. In addition, employers have a duty to organize so called preventative occupational health services. These services aim at maintaining and improving the employees' health and work ability.

12. Trade unions promote and look after their members' employment and working life interests.

- Yes. Indeed, a trade union promotes and looks after its members' interests relating to their employment and working life in general.

13. How many percent of Finnish employees belong to a trade union?

- Approximately 75 % of Finnish wage and salary earners belong to a trade union.

14. How many trade unions are there in Finland?

- There are some 70 trade unions in Finland. Additionally, many of the big trade unions are affiliated to smaller sub-organizations – if the sub-organizations are included, the number of trade unions is much higher. What kind of results did you get? How well do you know Finnish trade unions and their activities? To get more information, carry on reading!