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**ATTRACTING, SELECTING AND RETAINING SKILLS: WHAT ROLE FOR MIGRATION POLICIES**

**PUHE**

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is an honor to speak to you on this special occasion on the important issue of the role of migration policies in attracting skilled migrants. In Finland, a Government Resolution on Future of Migration 2020 Strategy was adopted in June 2013. The aim of the Future of Migration 2020 Strategy is to pave the way for a more active and forward-looking migration policy in Finland.

The key principles of the Strategy are that Finland is an open and safe country, everyone can find a role to play and pluralism is part of everyday life. In March 2014, an action program has been adopted in support of the Strategy. The action program includes several concrete actions on implementing the Strategy's objectives. Monitoring and reporting of the Strategy's implementation is coordinated by Ministry of the Interior.

The percentage of work force of Finnish population will decrease in the future. Finland has a rapidly aging population and needs to attract skilled labour migration to supplement the Finnish labour force. Finland also needs to raise the employment rate of migrants already in the country. Currently the unemployment rate of migrants is three times as high as the unemployment rate of native Finns. Supporting integration is important, so that migrants can make use of their skills and will find a role to play in Finnish society. The residence permit system must be brought more closely into line with the need to promote labour migration into Finland and to enhance the appeal of moving to Finland.

Vocational competence acquired by migrants in their country of origin must be recognized and accredited. The process of obtaining employment must be facilitated through language training that takes into consideration the needs of working life.

Family migration issues have been taken into consideration in the Migration Strategy. In seeking to increase labour migration in Finland, attention is given to the significance of the workers family, and flexibility can be shown on a case-by-case basis in regard to the income limits of the residence permit for the worker's family members. When making residence permit decisions, greater attention is given to the individual circumstances of each family.

The potential for foreign students to remain in Finland after they graduate must be increased. It's difficult for graduates to find employment for which they are qualified if they can't speak Finland's national languages Finnish or Swedish. Teaching in Finnish or Swedish for foreign students during their studies is provided and practical training during studies promoted. The Government has also given a proposal to Parliament to extend the residence permit given to students after graduating in the purpose of finding employment from 6 to 12 months.

Growing diversity can be a valuable resource, because migrants' skills and innovative ideas make an important contribution to Finland's development and international competitiveness.

Thank you.