

## Guidelines for Foreign Athletes Living in Finland

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<b>Guidelines for Foreign Athletes Living in Finland</b>	<b>Number of pages and appendix pages</b> <b>25+10</b>
<p>Finland has numerous athletes practicing and competing in different sports and levels coming from abroad. Depending on the age and personality every one of them handles and reacts to all the adjustment of this event.</p> <p>By starting of monitoring Finnish lifestyle, including any conditions that can have an effect on the athletes, analyzing their lifestyle and investigating different matters of physical and mental health it is possible to help other athletes who may be going through hard times as well while experiencing a new lifestyle far away from their home.</p> <p>Interviewing and getting to know some players and athletes in the level of their professional life (including all practices, nutrition during season, all kinds of meetings with coaches, travelling, sleeping), their school time if have, their leisure time (including resting, nutrition, activities and family) may answer unasked questions which appear in a lot of athlete's mind to whom mental coaching might have not arrived in a sufficient level.</p> <p>Beside everyday life other important bases must be mentioned in order to be able to understand the actual side of living in Finland, such as how clubs work differently inside the country as well even in the same sport and the difference between dealing with official papers in a new country all alone or with the help of the club/ housing family.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Mental health, social life, language issues	

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# 1 Introduction

Moving to another country comes with a lot of responsibilities, questions, difficulties, challenges and differences. When it comes to carrier, it is major decision to make to relocate to another country, sometimes even to another continent, where the loved ones might not be able to follow. Close to 7,5% of Finnish population are immigrants and Finland seems to be very good at handling official matters with non-Finnish people. However, besides official cases, personal matters can cause even bigger difficulty.

These matters might be related to professional life or leisure time. These guidelines may help a surprisingly wide group of people including both athletes and even some coaches. The most important part is that the reader who feels need to go through the thesis realizes the fact that there are numerous human beings trying to handle the same of similar situations what a lot of others. Given the fact that the thesis is addressed to athletes, this guidebook also brings to all groups, athletes, clubs, families and society (associations, federations and public state centers such as refugee centers).

Number of foreign nationals in 2001-2012:

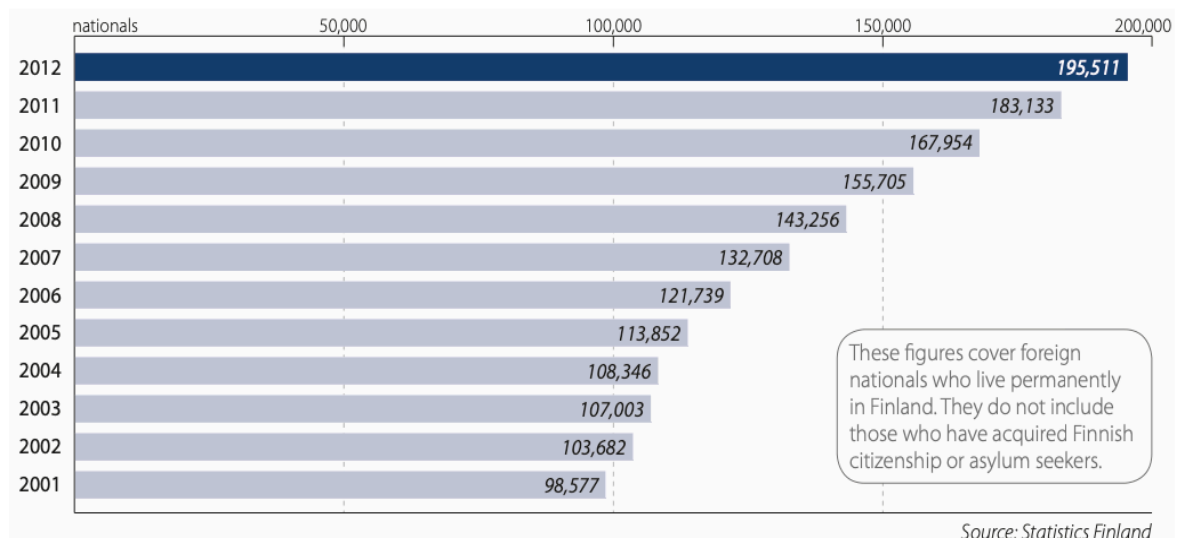


Figure 1 (Employment service statistics by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, 2012)

Largest groups by citizenship in 2012:

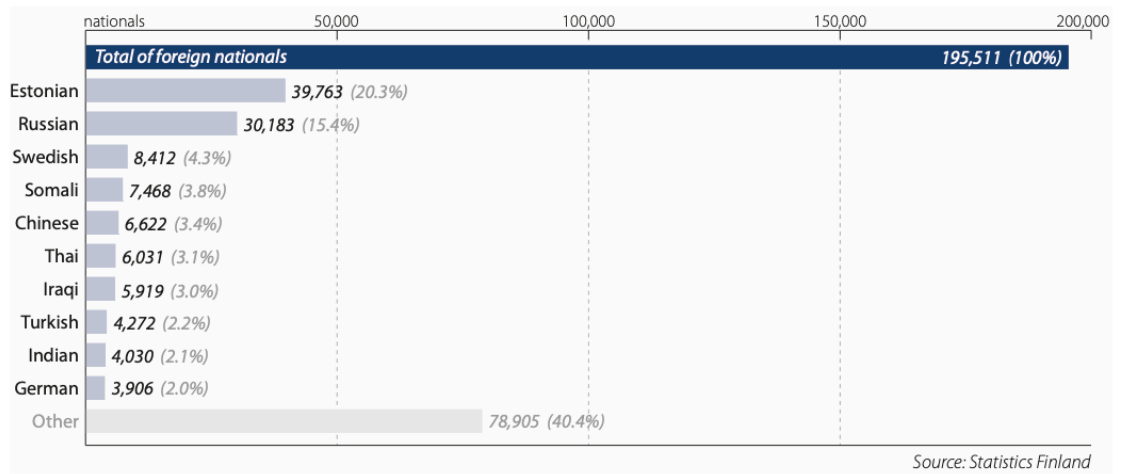


Figure 2 (Employment service statistics by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, 2012)

## **2 Practicing in Finnish clubs as a foreigner**

Practicing in Finland as a foreign athlete might be a new experience. Depending on the individual, there are numerous factors that may be different in every culture. When it comes to professional life there can be several deviations which can be related to personal differences inside the club both coaches and athletes and communication problems.

This category occurs when coaches or athletes do not speak English language as a mutual language on the same level, or when simply the way of communicating is different (less polite, too harsh/ too nice, not explicit enough) due to the culture differences, for example.

Also, can occur with teammates while practice or game. Differences in coaching itself, both physical and mental, or differences between practice times and hours, also sometimes intensity that the athlete is used to in his/her home country.

When an athlete moves to Finland, not only the professional side of the life might cause challenges. In personal life might occur some problems with handling Finnish papers, identity card, social-security number. Housing problems are actual issues as well, even if it was organized by the club.

If parents are not moving with the athlete he/she needs to live alone in a new place without any friends yet, in an apartment that was not chosen by him/her which can reflect on professional life if it becomes lonely for the athlete and starts to feel depressed, anxious, lonely and it is not handled and talked about.

Getting to know and handle transportation matters, such as getting bus card or even getting to know Finnish transportation (for example: buses only stop when you wave them). Another might not so obvious matter is organizing free time and getting to know new people in a not so socially open-minded country.

### **2.1 Official documents**

In Finland Kela is responsible for all the benefits that people might get. Kela, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland, is a government agency that provides basic economic security for everyone living in Finland. ( Kansaneläkelaitos - The Social Insurance Institution of Finland, 2020)

When moving to Finland requires residence permit. As a citizen of an EU or EEA country or Switzerland, residence permit is not required. The permit is issued by

the Finnish Immigration Service. If staying in Finland longer than 3 months the person has to register in the Finnish Immigration Service within 3 months of arriving to Finland. After registering, people will get social security number, which will be used for personal identification, handling benefits, and in need of healthcare. After this people can apply for Finnish identity card and driving license as well, which looks different from what Finnish citizens have and not allowed to use for traveling. ( Kansaneläkelaitos - The Social Insurance Institution of Finland, 2020)

The procedure of applying for Kela benefits can be done online. It is available only in Finnish and Swedish language unfortunately. ( Kansaneläkelaitos - The Social Insurance Institution of Finland, 2020)

If the athlete is a student and has permanent address, he or she is able to apply for student benefits. ( Kansaneläkelaitos - The Social Insurance Institution of Finland, 2020)

### **2.1.1 Finnish identification card and passport**

To apply for a regular identity card, the application needs to be submitted via the Police's eServices or in person at a police licence services point of personal choice, but it is cheaper and quicker to submit the application online. (Poliisi , 2020) (Poliisi, 2020)

The cheaper fee applies even if your electronic application requires a visit the police licence services point. An electronic application can only be submitted with a digital photograph which has to be delivered directly to the police from the photograph and should not be older than six months. When applying for an identity card and a passport at the same time, a lower than normal fee will be charged for the card. (Poliisi , 2020) (Poliisi, 2020)

### **2.1.2 Finnish citizenship**

One of the most important things is to handle first the official documents when moving to another country. If the person decides to apply for Finnish citizenship later on, making sure that all papers are in order is a major responsibility.

A child of a Finnish citizen has automatically the parentage principle, which means that the child receives Finnish citizenship through his or her parents. (Maahanmuuttovirasto, 2020)

The current Nationality Act entered into force on 1 June 2003. The latest amendments were made on 1 April 2019 as the Maternity Act entered into force. (Maahanmuuttovirasto, 2020)

The Finnish Immigration Service may grant Finnish citizenship when applying or declaring. Finnish citizenship can be earned by declaration by:

- child born abroad and out of marriage (Finnish man or a Finnish non-birth mother)
- adopted child between 12 and 17 years of age
- former Finnish citizen
- Nordic citizen
- young person between 18 and 22 years of age who has lived in Finland long enough (Maahanmuuttovirasto, 2020)

When someone does not belong to any of the mentioned groups above, can apply for a citizenship. In order to get a positive decision on your application, applicant has to fulfil the requirements for naturalization:

- established identity
- sufficient language skills
- sufficient period of residence
- integrity
- means of support
- fulfilled payment obligations

(Maahanmuuttovirasto, 2020)

Finland accepts multiple citizenship. (Maahanmuuttovirasto, 2020)



### **3 Coaching kids and youth athletes**

The Finnish Multicultural Sports Federation FIMU was founded in 1999 by Finns and immigrants for the benefit of all immigrant people in Finland. Fimu has been joined the Finnish Sports Federation (FSF) in autumn 2000 and became the member of the Olympic Committee in June 2017.

The intent of the organization is to advertise sports opportunities for immigrants and people of an immigrant background. Fimu includes several sports clubs throughout Finland, many of these realizing local projects for promoting equality, solidarity and anti-racism. (Finnish Multicultural Sports Federation, 2020)

The Finnish Multicultural Sports Federation's aims are, to increase general awareness of multicultural sports in Finland, to establish equal opportunities for sports and exercise for all immigrant people and too provide information for immigrant people and the opportunity to learn from one another. Fimu also supports the multicultural member associations and uses sports as a tool to promote immigrants' integration and inclusion into the Finnish society. (Finnish Multicultural Sports Federation, 2020)

#### **3.1 Physical coaching**

An article (The Youth Physical Development Model: A New Approach to Long-Term Athletic Development) written by Rhodri Lloyd and Jon Oliver comes to a new approach in coaching youth. The LTAD considers the maturational status of the child and has a more strategic approach. (Rhodri S. Lloyd, 2012,2016)

The model also suggests that the measures and collection of height and weight data in order to be able to identify PHV (peak height velocity) and PWV (peak weight velocity). (Rhodri S. Lloyd, 2012,2016)

The YPD (youth physical development) model offers an overall access how to develop young athletes both male and female. (Rhodri S. Lloyd, 2012,2016)

YOUTH PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT (YPD) MODEL FOR MALES																					
CHRONOLOGICAL AGE (YEARS)	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21+	
AGE PERIODS	EARLY CHILDHOOD			MIDDLE CHILDHOOD						ADOLESCENCE						ADULTHOOD					
GROWTH RATE	RAPID GROWTH			STeady GROWTH						ADOLESCENT SPURT						DECLINE IN GROWTH RATE					
MATURATIONAL STATUS	YEARS PRE-PHV						PHV						YEARS POST-PHV								
TRAINING ADAPTATION	PREDOMINANTLY NEURAL (AGE-RELATED)						COMBINATION OF NEURAL AND HORMONAL (MATURITY-RELATED)														
PHYSICAL QUALITIES	FMS			FMS			FMS			FMS											
	SSS			SSS			SSS			SSS											
	Mobility			Mobility						Mobility											
	Agility			Agility						Agility			Agility								
	Speed			Speed						Speed			Speed								
	Power			Power						Power			Power								
	Strength			Strength						Strength			Strength								
	Hypertrophy						Hypertrophy			Hypertrophy						Hypertrophy					
Endurance & MC			Endurance & MC						Endurance & MC			Endurance & MC									
TRAINING STRUCTURE	UNSTRUCTURED			LOW STRUCTURE						MODERATE STRUCTURE			HIGH STRUCTURE			VERY HIGH STRUCTURE					

Figure 3 (Rhodri S. Lloyd, 2012,2016)

YOUTH PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT (YPD) MODEL FOR FEMALES																					
CHRONOLOGICAL AGE (YEARS)	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21+	
AGE PERIODS	EARLY CHILDHOOD			MIDDLE CHILDHOOD						ADOLESCENCE						ADULTHOOD					
GROWTH RATE	RAPID GROWTH			STeady GROWTH						ADOLESCENT SPURT						DECLINE IN GROWTH RATE					
MATURATIONAL STATUS	YEARS PRE-PHV						PHV						YEARS POST-PHV								
TRAINING ADAPTATION	PREDOMINANTLY NEURAL (AGE-RELATED)						COMBINATION OF NEURAL AND HORMONAL (MATURITY-RELATED)														
PHYSICAL QUALITIES	FMS			FMS			FMS			FMS											
	SSS			SSS			SSS			SSS											
	Mobility			Mobility						Mobility											
	Agility			Agility						Agility			Agility								
	Speed			Speed						Speed			Speed								
	Power			Power						Power			Power								
	Strength			Strength						Strength			Strength								
	Hypertrophy						Hypertrophy			Hypertrophy						Hypertrophy					
Endurance & MC			Endurance & MC						Endurance & MC			Endurance & MC									
TRAINING STRUCTURE	UNSTRUCTURED			LOW STRUCTURE						MODERATE STRUCTURE			HIGH STRUCTURE			VERY HIGH STRUCTURE					

Figure 4 (Rhodri S. Lloyd, 2012,2016)

### **3.1.1 Fundamental Movement Skills**

Fundamental movement skills are motor skills which are the basis for all physical activity.

Fundamental movement skills are:

Running

Jumping

Hopping

Galloping

Skipping

Catching

Balancing

Kicking

Leaping

Throwing

Fundamental movement skills should always be part of strength and conditioning program of athletes regardless of age groups. (Rhodri S. Lloyd, 2012,2016)

### **3.1.2 Strength**

Strength exercise, or resistance training, works your muscles by using resistance, like a dumbbell or your own body weight. This type of exercise increases lean muscle mass, which is particularly important for weight loss, because lean muscle burns more calories than other types of tissue. When people drop pounds, they can also lose muscle, so it's important to do resistance training to keep that muscle mass.

#### **Examples of strength exercises include:**

Lifting weights, using resistance bands, using your body weight for resistance, by doing push-ups, pull-ups, crunches, leg squats or push-ups against a wall and using weight machines at a gym. (Rettner, 2016)

#### **Benefits of strength exercises include:**

Increased lean muscle mass (or prevention of its loss)

Increased bone density and reduced risk of osteoporosis

Increased metabolism to help with weight loss or weight maintenance

Increased muscle strength to make everyday activities easier

Lowered risk of injury (by allowing the muscles to better support the joints)

(Rettner, 2016)

### **3.1.3 Hypertrophy**

Hypertrophy is the result of individual muscle fibers getting mechanical loading and subsequently increasing in volume. The size and the type of the mechanical load that muscle fibers experience is determined by basic muscle physiology, including the size principle, the force-velocity relationship, the length-tension relationship, and fatigue. (Beardsley, 2018)

### **3.1.4 Power**

Power training involves exercises that apply the maximum amount of force as fast as possible. Power training may also involve heavy lifts and plyometrics. A combination of a high strength and high-speed exercise lead to an increased ability to apply power.

### **3.1.5 Speed**

Speed is based on explosive power. Speed development is entirely age related. Anyhow, alternative research has indicated that speed development in youth can be changed by the level of maturation, which proposes the fact that speed can be trained in childhood and adolescence.

According to "The Youth Physical Development Model: A New Approach to Long-Term Athletic Development" article adolescence responded better to trainings that had the target of both neural and structural development such as plyometrics and strength. (Rhodri S. Lloyd, 2012,2016)

### **3.1.6 Agility**

Agility means somebody's ability to change direction and speed as fast as they can by using multiple skills combined, such as balance, strength and coordination. As one of the most unexplored fitness components agility is highly needed in majority of sports. (Ujhelyi, 2018)

### **3.1.7 Mobility**

There are different types of mobility: Static stretching, Dynamic stretching, Ballistic stretching and PNF (peripheral neuromuscular facilitation).

There are numerous purposes of mobility training. Most people use it as cool down, but many do not know dynamic stretching is used during warm up as well. Mobility training also assist the recovery of the muscle to its rest length and increases it. Also, one of the other main reasons why It can be very beneficial is that it improves fundamental movement skills, body posture and symmetry as well.

### **3.1.8 Endurance**

Endurance/ aerobic exercise means exercises that increase heart rate such as jogging, swimming, biking rope jumping. Endurance training also reduces cardiovascular risk and improves metabolism.

As in “The Youth Physical Development Model: A New Approach to Long-Term Athletic Development” article it is proposed, more attention should be given to endurance as athletes approach adulthood. (Rhodri S. Lloyd, 2012,2016)

Endurance is not essential for all sports and it is also remaining trainable in adulthood. (Rhodri S. Lloyd, 2012,2016)

## **3.2 Mental coaching**

Numerous professional athletes use mental coaching/ training as help for them to improve their ability to focus, deal with distractions and be more confident. Sport psychology itself is about improving attitude and toughness mentally in order to perform better. (Rhodri S. Lloyd, 2012,2016)

The results of studies and research conclude that most successful athletes possess a growth mindset and that, furthermore, such a mindset contributes to performance in three distinct ways. Their expectation for success leads to placing a greater emphasis on preparation than those with fixed mindsets. They develop their ability to turn failure into motivation. The final aspect of the growth mindset is that since they do not view future situations as predetermined, each new change to perform is attacked with a positive attitude and drive to win. That is a fact which should be actually known and used all around the world. (Dweck, 2008)

### **3.2.1 Motivation**

Numerous surveys among children participating in sports have been made to find out their motives to do sport or become part of a team. The kids answered mostly related to have fun and to enjoy sport, to learn new skills and to improve on existing sport skills and to become physically fit and to enjoy good health. Multiple said they participate in sports to enjoy the challenge and excitement of sports participation and competition and to enjoy a team atmosphere and to be with friends (Cox, Richard H., 2002; Cox, Richard H., 2002)

As this survey shows 'to have fun' is still the most important motive for kids to participate in sport. It is essential that we coaches keep it in mind when we are coaching kids, why they join a team and what the children expect to get out of it. (Cox, Richard H., 2002)

Why do kids quit sports?

Kids quitting sports is a major problem for many reasons. including diminishment of physical activity and greater potential to gravitate to unhealthy lifestyles, as well as lost opportunities at learning life lessons through sports. This article examines why kids quit sports, pulling from various research studies,

There are numerous reasons kids quit sport, most of them are, for example, that the child does not have fun anymore. The kid feels pressure to perform or gets injured that can result from overtraining. Other reasons might be lack of competence at the sport and also time demands. (Positive Coaching, 2014 - 2020)

### 3.2.2 Self determination

Self-determination in psychology is an important ingredient that shows people's ability to make decisions and manage their own life. It is giant part of well-being and it also has an impact on motivation.

(Ackerman, 2020)

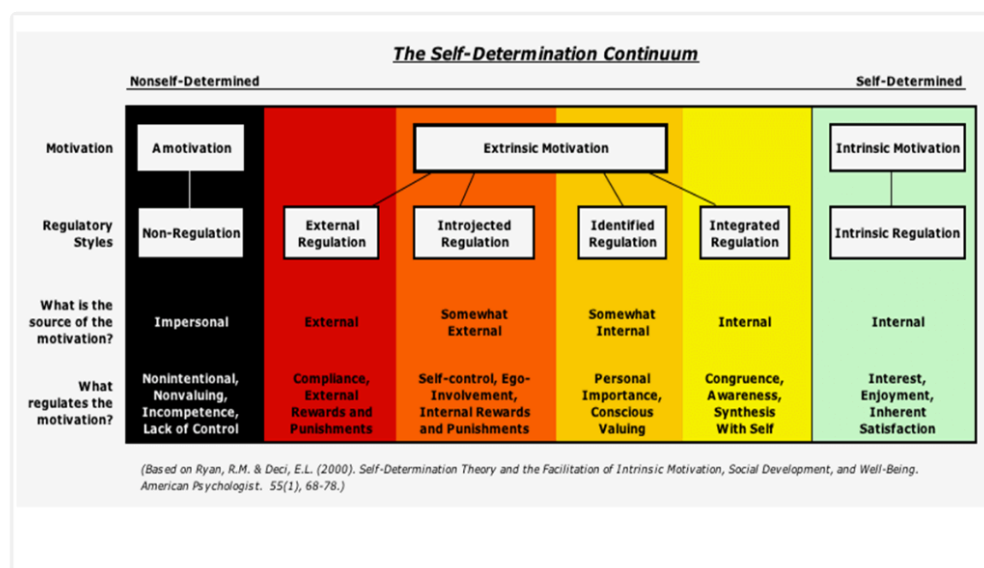


Figure 5 (Ackerman, 2020)

Self-Determination Theory:

This theory suggests that people can be able to be self-determined when their needs for connection, autonomy and competence are full field.

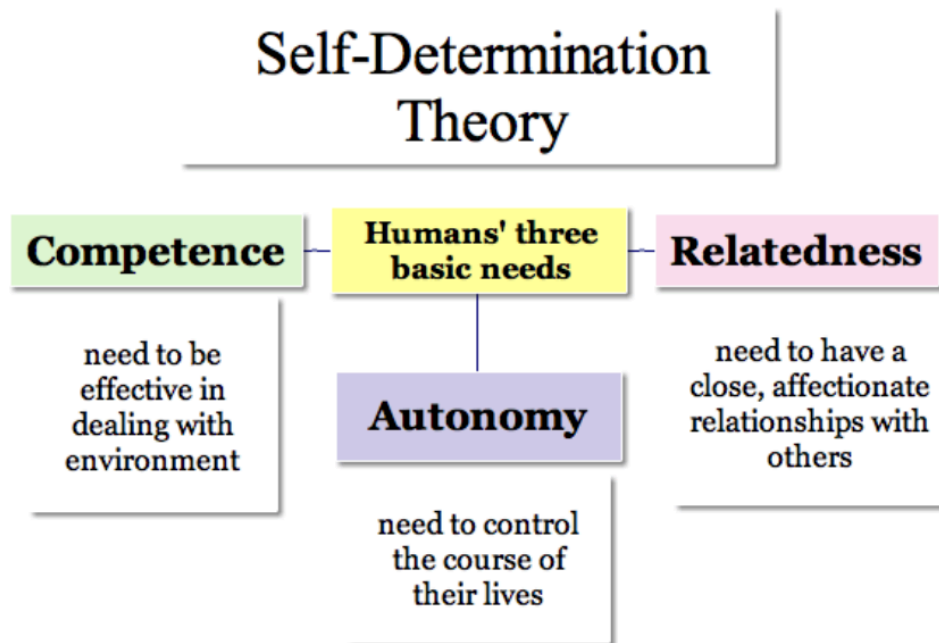


Figure 6(Ackerman, 2020)

The Self-Determination Theory is built up by six parts:

- 1) CET – Cognitive Orientations Theory
- 2) OIT – Organismic Integration Theory
- 3) COT – Causality Orientations Theory
- 4) BPNT – Basic Psychological Needs Theory
- 5) GCT – Goal Contents Theory
- 6) RMT – Relationship Motivation Theory (Róbert, 2019)

Self-determination is important part of everyday life. When it comes to practices, the coach might not be able to motivate the athlete as much as the athlete would need it, or the way she or he would need it.



Although some cases might be special and different, the following abilities can boost the athlete's self-determination (Ackerman, 2020):

Having self-awareness, being able to make decisions, set goals, attain goals. Have great communication skills is also as important as have relationship skills. Last but not least the ability to celebrate success and to learn from mistakes. (Róbert, 2019)

#### 4 The Finnish Government and Culture

Finland's political system is parliamentary republic within the framework of a representative democracy. The head of the country is the prime minister (Sanna Marin). The president of the Republic of Finland (Suomen tasavallan presidentti) is Sauli Niinistö.

Finland's culture is very different from a lot of other countries, it has very strong national identity. Finnish people are extremely proud of their achievements in all areas, especially in sports.

Most Finns belong to the Evangelical-Lutheran Church. Religion in Finland is highly respected, and it is hard to observe differences between different religious believers.

In Finland the two official languages are Finnish and Swedish.

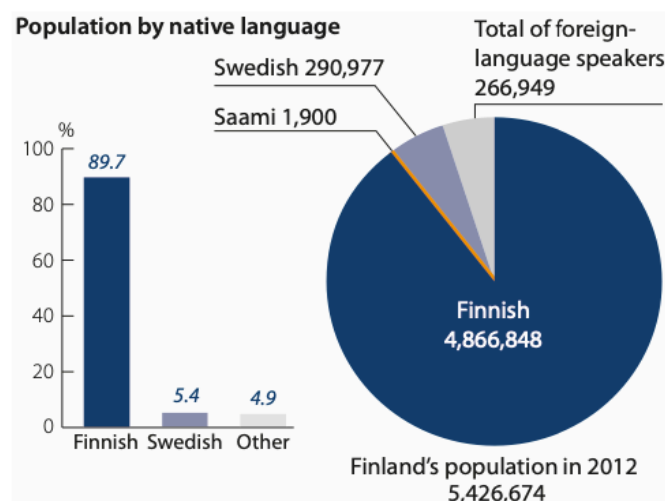


Figure 7 (Employment service statistics by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, 2012)

When it comes to Finnish culture it is very important to mention about food, beverages and also weather.

Finns eat a lot of very basic, for some foreigner sometime boring national food and drink the most coffee.

When it comes to weather the darkness is one of the most challenging factors.

The capital city of Finland is located in the south part of the country while

Rovaniemi is 705 kilometers (810 driving kilometers) to the direction of north.

Below will be presented the difference between Lapland's and Southern Finland's weather conditions. The average sunny hours in Helsinki in the darkest month, in December is close to 30 hours.

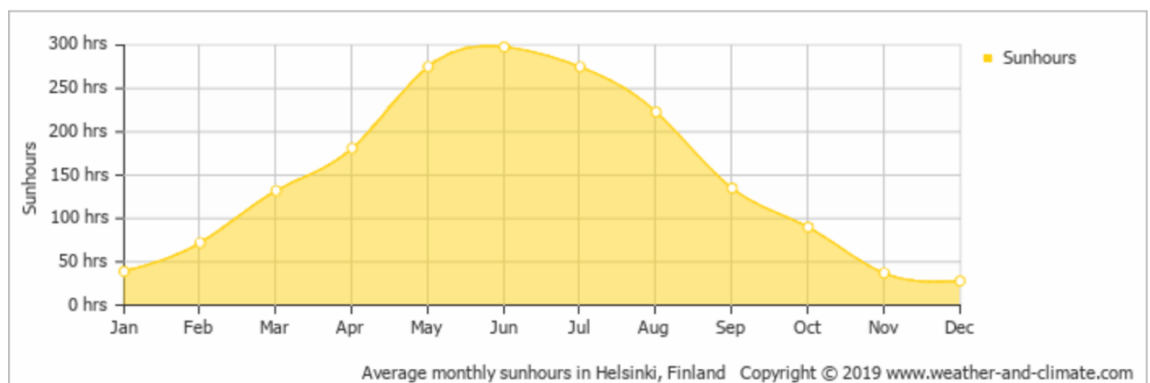


Figure 8 (Information, 2010-2020)

Helsinki's sunny hours per month:

**Helsinki - Sunshine**

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Hours	1	3	4	7	9	9	9	7	5	3	1	1

Figure 9 (World climate guide, 2019)

Rovaniemi's sunny hours per month:

**Rovaniemi - Sunshine**

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Hours	0	2	4	7	8	9	8	6	4	2	1	0

Figure 10 (World climate guide, 2019)

When it comes to average temperatures the coldest month is usually February and the warmest is usually July.

**Helsinki - Average temperatures**

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Min (°C)	-6	-7	-4	1	6	11	14	13	9	4	-1	-4
Max (°C)	-1	-2	2	8	14	18	22	20	15	9	4	0
Min (°F)	21	19	25	34	43	52	57	55	48	39	30	25
Max (°F)	30	28	36	46	57	64	72	68	59	48	39	32

Figure 11 (World climate guide, 2019)

**Rovaniemi - Average temperatures**

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Min (°C)	-18	-18	-13	-6	1	7	10	8	3	-2	-9	-16
Max (°C)	-8	-8	-2	4	11	17	20	17	11	4	-3	-7
Min (°F)	0	0	9	21	34	45	50	46	37	28	16	3
Max (°F)	18	18	28	39	52	63	68	63	52	39	27	19

Figure 12 (World climate guide, 2019)

In Helsinki, precipitation amounts to 650 millimeters per year while in Rovaniemi it is 580 millimeters.

**Helsinki - Average precipitation**

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year
Prec.(mm)	45	35	35	35	35	50	70	80	70	75	70	55	650
Prec.(in)	1.8	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	2	2.8	3.1	2.8	3	2.8	2.2	25.6
Days	10	8	8	7	6	8	9	11	11	11	12	12	113

Figure 13 (World climate guide, 2019)

**Rovaniemi - Average precipitation**

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year
Prec.(mm)	40	35	35	30	35	60	70	70	55	55	50	40	580
Prec.(in)	1.6	1.4	1.4	1.2	1.4	2.4	2.8	2.8	2.2	2.2	2	1.6	22.8
Days	10	10	9	7	8	9	10	10	9	11	12	10	115

Figure 14 (World climate guide, 2019)

## **4.1 The Finnish sport organizations**

In Finland there over 1.1 million people are being members of sport and physical organizations.

The Ministry of Education and Culture helps financially both regional and national organizations which means that over 130 organizations receive aid.

The grants depend on the organizations performance and what factors are taken under consideration. (Ministry of Education and Culture, ei pvm)

Sports club development grants awarded by the Ministry directly to sports and physical activity clubs is intended for developing their operations. (Ministry of Education and Culture, ei pvm)

## **4.2 The education system in Finland**

The education system includes early childhood education, preschool education, comprehensive education, upper secondary education and higher education. Adult education is intended for adults and it includes a multitude of alternatives from comprehensive to higher education. (The Finnish Education System, 2019)

### **4.2.1 Early childhood education**

In Finland kids are entitled to receive early childhood education. It is organized by daycare centers. Children may have at least 20 hours of this type of education if the parents are working or studying. The goal of these programs is that the children are supported and learn for example social and manual skills while supporting the parents as well.

(The Finnish Education System, 2019)

### **4.2.2 Preschool education**

Before going to school, children must attempt to preschool, which is one year long. It usually starts in the year when the child turns six years old. Municipalities organize preschool education and it is free of charge for families. Preschool education is

given by early education teachers who have graduated from a university. Pre-school education is usually organized from Monday to Friday, four hours a day. (The Finnish Education System, 2019)

#### **4.2.3 Comprehensive education**

This type of education usually starts in the year when the child turns seven years old. All children residing in Finland permanently must attend comprehensive education. Comprehensive school comprises of nine grades.

Every teacher teaching in comprehensive school have a master's degree. Teachers, who teach grades 1–6, are specialized in pedagogy. Grade 7–9 teachers are specialized in the subjects they teach. Children often have the same teacher for the first six years. The teacher gets to know the students well and is able to develop the tuition to suit their needs. (The Finnish Education System, 2019)

#### **4.2.4 Upper secondary education**

Upper secondary school and vocational education are the most common options after comprehensive school. They are considered upper secondary education. Upper secondary education is usually free-of-charge for the students. However, they must purchase their own books and other learning materials. (The Finnish Education System, 2019)

##### ***Upper secondary schools***

It provides education that not leads to profession. The upper secondary schools have the same subjects as comprehensive school, but they are more independent and studying there takes from two to four years. It also has a matriculation examination. After passing the examination and finishing the school, students are eligible to apply to universities, universities of applied sciences or upper secondary school based vocational education (The Finnish Education System, 2019)

##### **Vocational education**

Vocational education is more practice-oriented than upper secondary education. It takes approximately three years to complete vocational education. After finishing students can apply for specialized vocational degree. The practical part is essential part of this kind of education.

Students are also able to apply for higher level education after completing vocational education. (The Finnish Education System, 2019)

### Higher education

In Finland, higher education is provided by universities and universities of applied sciences. Studying in an institute of higher education may be free or subject to a charge. You will be charged tuition fees if you are not an EU or EEA citizen or a family member of an EU or EEA citizen and are studying towards a bachelor's or master's degree in an English-language degree program. (The Finnish Education System, 2019)

#### **4.2.5 Universities of Applied Sciences**

This type of higher education is more practice-oriented than universities. It usually takes 3.5-4.5 years to complete bachelor's degree, but to be able to get a master's degree students must have 3 years of work experience on the same field. (The Finnish Education System, 2019)

#### **4.2.6 Universities**

The tuition is based on scientific research. Completing Bachelor's degree takes about three and master's two years afterwards. After Master's degree students can apply for a right to complete further studies and earn a Licentiate's or Doctoral degree. (The Finnish Education System, 2019)

Most preschools and schools provide education in Finnish or Swedish language. Larger cities have some upper secondary schools that provide tuition in other languages. (The Finnish Education System, 2019)

## The foreign job seekers qualification level in 2010-2011:

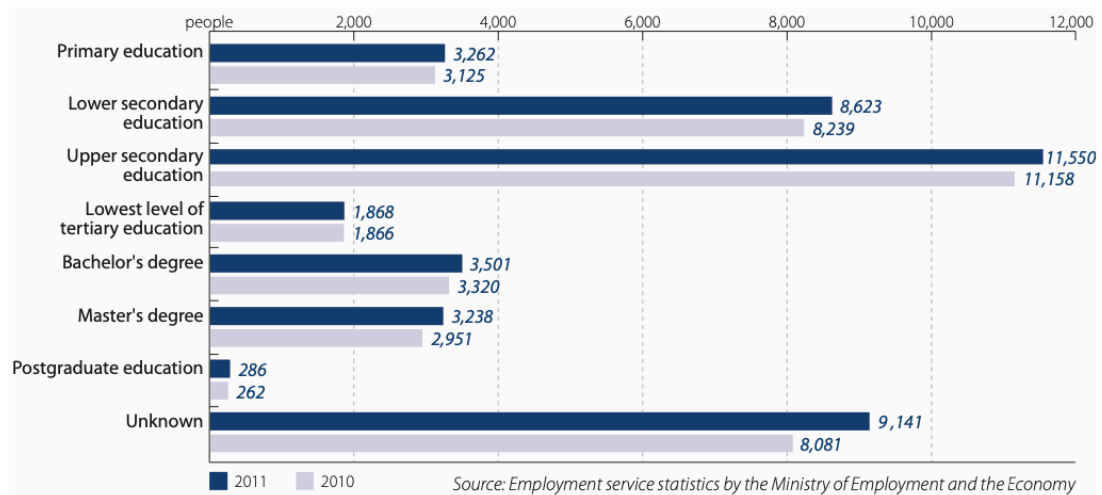


Figure 15 (Employment service statistics by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, 2012)

## 5 The aim of the project

The topic of this project has not been discussed or researched yet in deeper level. The aim of the thesis was to help athletes moving to Finland from a different country. To support them with basic information, give them the opportunity to read about the life in Finland even before moving here and to show that asking or reaching for help is not shame.

The other aim of the project is to find out how many athletes might need this kind of support and if these guidelines are actually helpful.

### 5.1 Project planning

The idea of this thesis came from personal experiences. I moved to Finland when I turned 18 and I started to study in Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences when I turned 19. The first years were great, since I only needed the English language whatsoever. Trying to find a work placement was no problem since a lot of clubs in the area of track and field are in need of new coaches. I got a great place, amazing co-workers, talented and open-minded athletes with full of joy and motivation. Finding an actual paying job brought the first difficulties due to language

problems. A lot of places where I have applied did not even answer me, it did not matter if there was no need for Finnish skills in the job description.

Currently I have a great job and I live at a place where I am happy, I speak some Finnish and have to say I have had hard moments. After I have found my way, I decided I want other people to know they are not alone struggling sometimes, and I wanted athletes, who might not move to Finland because they want to live here, but because of a professional opportunity, to know, that asking for help is never shame. Moving somewhere you might would not move without getting a contract from a club is way harder than moving somewhere you can imagine yourself for the rest of your life without any other influence.

## **5.2 Implementation**

Two athletes and one coach were asked 8 questions related to living in Finland as a foreign person and professional. By asking one coach to answer these questions athletes can also see how foreign coaches see these difficulties, challenges, shocks and experiences when coaching both Finnish or foreign athletes, or just related to their personal experiences. It might also help for athletes to “take a look” how a coach can experience a life situation like this.

One of the athletes is a 25 years old ice hockey goaltender from Czech Republic. He moved to Finland at the age of 16 and speaks fluent Finnish now.

The second athlete is a 31-year-old basketball player who moved from Hungary to Finland at the age of 23 and speaks some Finnish.

The coach is a 23-year-old American swimming coach who has lived in Finland for several years and studied Finnish language for a short period.

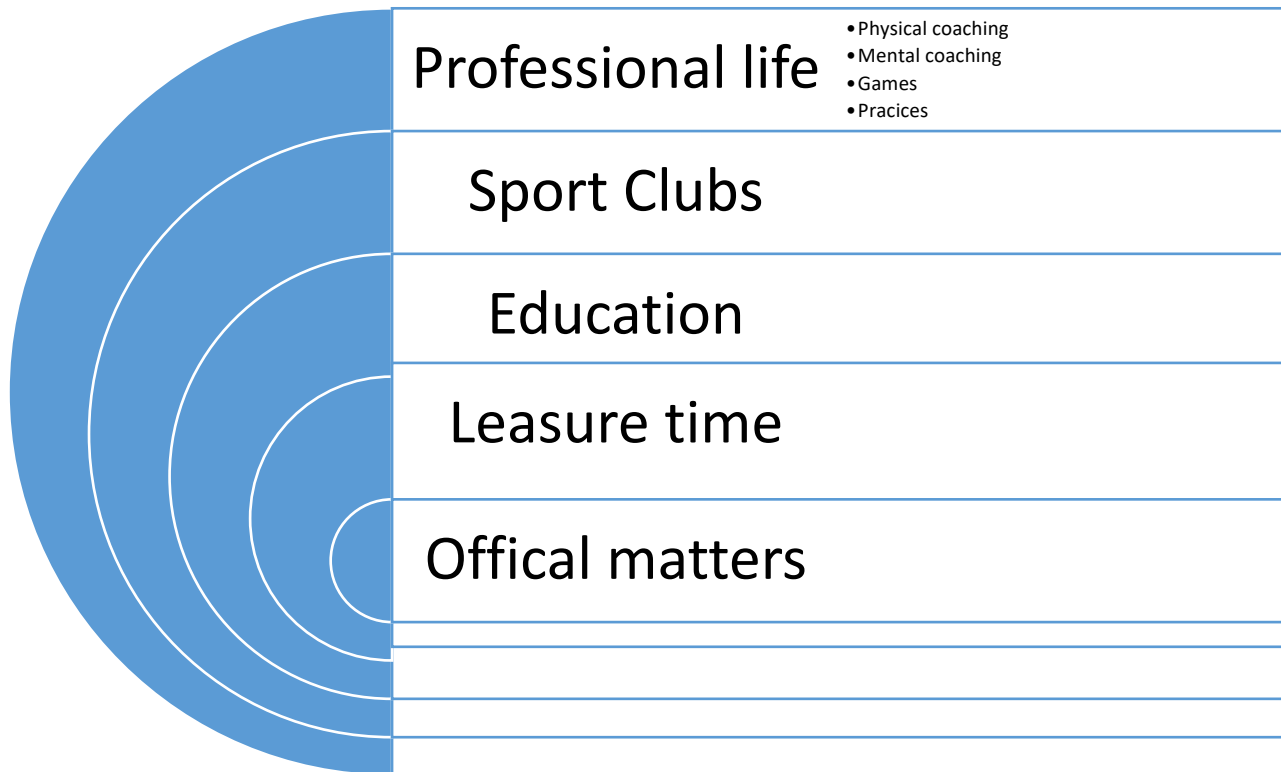
The athletes and the coach remain nameless.



### **5.3 Description and result**

The result of the questionnaire was overall is showing how different qualities and quantities there can be between nationalities in sports coaching. The two European countries had no enormous contrast between Finland and their own habits, although the United States had deviation in coaching style, the coach handling free time as a team, the importance and the implementation of team work and athlete centered coaching and mental coaching is not as not a big part of coaching in Finland as in America. Learning Finnish language was also harder for native English speaker than for the Hungarian or Czech athlete. The reason can be that the Czech athlete moved to Finland very young, at an age when it is easier to master new languages. For the Hungarian athlete it might have been easier to understand the grammar rules since Finnish and Hungarian belong both to the Uralic family. The result of the thesis is a short book with guidelines which shows research in all mentioned areas.

Table 1. The most important areas of abroad-living



## 6 Discussion

The thesis tries to give an overall picture for the athletes and readers about common issues, cases and problems that might appear when moving to Finland. By mentioning and opening up the all the most important sectors, including school systems, Kela, Finnish government and Finnish clubs, the goal is that the reader of the thesis will get a clearer picture and more confidence.

Thus the goal of the guidelines is to give some basic information what other athletes think and have experienced in Finland, to bring up briefly basic knowledge about what is the difference between physical and mental coaching, so the understanding of the questionnaire is easier and no need background check, to give information about the most important cases, related to official papers and benefits

and to share everyday life information, including people's behavior, food and weather, which people might investigate before moving to another country.

Being lucky enough to be able to interview 3 different people from 3 different sports and countries gives wider overall picture of how differences apply to various sex, nationality and sport.

( Kansaneläkelaitos - The Social Insurance Institution of Finland, 2020)

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The Youth Physical Development Model: A New Approach to Long-Term Athletic Development

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Why Kids Quit Sports

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## **8 Appendices**

- 1. Has the athlete/ coach noticed any differences between practices in Finland and in his/her home country, including practice times, the composition of the training, nutrition, etc.?**

HUNGARY:

The Hungarian athlete's answered were very positive and have not pointed

out major differences between the two countries' sport life.

The athlete mentioned there has been no specific nutrition related to the athlete's sport. The practice times are in both countries reasonable, no major difference. Related to warm-ups and recovery Finland's style was described as "more tied to the practice" while in Hungary it is more the athlete's individual responsibility.

CZECH REPUBLIC: There was no big differences between the physical practices but in nutrition and office training Finland is more advanced.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: The coach answered related to the free time, which in the United States of America is provided by the coach after practice and the athletes are not leaving home right after the practice ends.

## 2. **Mental coaching:**

**What does the athlete expect from the coaches in the area of mental coaching?**

**How many times a week the athlete would need sessions in this area?**

HUNGARY: Being treated as an individual, engagement and listening from the coaches' side was the most important. Coaches should steer away from mentoring/teaching (giving answers, finding issues) and move towards asking questions and finding solutions. Also, the importance of the coaches' availability outside on practices was mentioned.

CZECH REPUBLIC: The athlete said he does not expect anything, and for his personal needs once or twice a month would be enough.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: Mental coaching is not a big part of coaching in Finland as in America. The coach mentioned in the answer that her athletes in Finland were surprised when she gave some motivational

speech to them. In America it is natural that the coach is always there for the athlete and treats them like family.

**3. How are Finnish clubs different from the athlete's/ coach's home country's sport clubs?**

HUNGARY: In Finland sport clubs can afford professional coaches even for junior and non-professional level athletes and the facilities are better.

CZECH REPUBLIC: Not so much difference was noticed from where the Czech athlete was training.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: When it comes to teamwork, compare to America's family-like teams in Finland everyone is more of an individual, including the coach.

**4. How is the Finnish education system different from the athlete's /coach's home country's education system (meaning the personal experience of the athlete/coach)?**

HUNGARY: Learning is more important than the grades in Finland.

CZECH REPUBLIC: The athlete has not gone to school in Finland.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

American coaches approach athlete centered coaching better than in Finland.

**5. Does the athlete/coach feel like there is a non healthy hierarchy inside some teams (not necessarily own experience) which might include factors included race, age or any other matters?**

HUNGARY: Neither personal nor second-hand experience.



CZECH REPUBLIC: The athlete has not experienced it at least not in a non-healthy level.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: No.

**6. How does the language affect the athlete's/ coach's everyday life including school, practice and free time?**

HUNGARY: If the athlete speaks decent English it is no issue whatsoever.

CZECH REPUBLIC: The athlete has learned Finnish very fast and was always opened to speak it.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: It was hard to communicate as a Finnish non-speaker with the athletes, but the swimmers that spoke English luckily helped. Paperwork was the hardest, since it was a Finnish club everything was in Finnish.

**7. Is the athlete/coach studying or planning to study Finnish language, if yes how does he/she feel about the level of difficulty?**

HUNGARY: It is hard to study it in English as Hungarian is the athlete's native language, but otherwise not extremely difficult language to learn.

CZECH REPUBLIC: Already using the language.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: The coach studied Finnish language for one semester at school. After that she stopped learning it and considered it as one of the hardest languages she was learning.

**8. What were the biggest cultural differences that the athlete noticed so far between Finnish culture and his/her home country?**

HUNGARY: Finnish culture is honest and supportive culture, but only after being able to fit in and also people are very straight forward, not fake.

CZECH REPUBLIC: According to the athlete it depends more on the individual than on culture.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: The attitude about sports. In Finland swimmers went to practice achieving goals of the coach while in America the athletes had more of their own goals and enjoyment.



# GUIDELINES FOR FOREIGN ATHLETES LIVING IN FINLAND

11.3.2020

Moving to another country comes with a lot of responsibilities, questions, difficulties, challenges and differences. When it comes to career, it is a major decision to make to relocate to another country, sometimes even to another continent, where the loved ones might not be able to follow. These guidelines are helping to get to know Finnish government and its official steps related to foreigners living in Finland, physical and mental coaching, culture sport clubs and organizations and the education system and how it works. All this information is providing a basic knowledge in a short version of guidelines for both young and older athletes arriving from a foreign country to Finland to be able to start to fit in in a totally different world.

Almost 7.5% of the population of Finland are immigrants. Practicing in Finland as a foreign athlete might be a new experience. Depending on the individual, there are numerous factors that may be different in every culture. When it comes to professional life there can be several deviations which can be related to personal differences inside the club both coaches and athletes and communication problems. This category occurs when coaches or athletes do not speak English language as a mutual language on the same level, or when simply the way of communicating is different (less polite, too harsh/ too nice, not explicit enough) due to the culture differences, for example. Also, it can occur with teammates while practice or game. Differences in coaching itself, both physical and mental, or differences between practice

times and hours, also sometimes intensity that the athlete is used to in his/her home country. When an athlete moves to Finland, not only the professional side of the life might cause challenges. In personal life might occur some problems with handling Finnish papers, identity card, social-security number. Housing problems are actual issues as well, even if it was organized by the club. If parents are not moving with the athlete he/she needs to live alone in a new place without any friends yet, in an apartment that was not chosen by him/her which can reflect on professional life if it becomes lonely for the athlete and starts to feel depressed, anxious, lonely and it is not handled and talked about. Getting to know and handle transportation matters, such as getting bus card or even getting to know Finnish transportation (for example: buses only stop when you wave them). Another might not so obvious matter is organizing free time and getting to know new people in a not so socially open-minded country.

One of the first steps when moving to Finland is to make it official. Register the new address and get Social Security number. when staying longer applying for identity card is a great idea seems it makes life easier. It is also possible to apply for Finnish citizenship as a foreigner with no relation to Finland whatsoever. Finnish citizenship can be earned by declaration by a Nordic citizen or a young person between 18 and 22 years of age who has lived in Finland long enough, when someone does not belong to any of the mentioned gross above can still apply for citizenship but the applicant has to have sufficient language skills, established identity, sufficient period of residence, integrity and means of support and fulfilled payment obligations .

When athletes start practicing it is a necessity that they know basics about physical and mental coaching so they are able to figure out their way of processing towards their goals together with the team and coaches. it is important for the athlete to know about the club of theirs and also other Finnish sport clubs and organizations.

The Finnish education system starts with early childhood education organized by daycare centers. Later on comes preschool education which starts usually in the year when the child turns 6 years old. Later on when the child turned 7 years old starts the comprehensive education which is followed by

upper secondary education. In higher education Finland provides University and University of applied Sciences study places. University of applied Sciences is a type of education which usually takes 3.5 or 4.5 years to complete the Bachelor degree but students are also able to get a Masters degree which requires three years of work experience on the same field. In universities the tuition is based on scientific research completing bachelors degree text about three years and masters two years afterwards. In Finland next finish speaking schools there are numerous Swedish not English speaking ones as well.

It is important for the athletes to understand next to professional life (meaning physical and mental coaching, games and practices) educating themselves is a necessity. However sport as a profession and education takes a lot of time, dealing with official matters/ papers and enjoying leisure time cannot be avoided. Socializing in Finland is not the easiest but it's great to have friends.

One of the other deal breakers in Finland is the weather. Summertime in northern part of Finland the sun might not even set. In autumn and winter the sun might don't rise. In southern part of Finland it is not that radical but still strange. Autumn and winter can be hard and foreign people as well as it is on Finnish people. Next the darkness it might be extremely cold.