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EMN Finland Conference 2026

A long-term vision and strategy for immigration? – Aiming for a more uniform and efficient immigration administration in Finland

Speaker biographies



Rafael Bärlund, Head of EMN Finland

Rafael Bärlund has worked at the EMN Finland from its inception in 2008, first as a Senior Adviser, and from January 2021 as the Head of EMN Finland. From 2025 onwards, in addition to the EMN, the area of responsibility is also including the Finnish Immigration Service's information service, as well as its situational awareness, foresight, and analysis functions. Previously, he has worked at the Finnish Immigration Service as a Planning Officer and at the Embassy of India for Finland as a Visa Officer. Prior to that, he has been employed by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva. Bärlund holds an MA in Political Science.



Anna-Kaisa Ikonen, Minister of Local and Regional Government

Anna-Kaisa Ikonen has extensive experience of local and regional policy. Ikonen has served as the Mayor of Tampere as well as Deputy Mayor and chaired the Tampere City Council. Ikonen also chaired the Council of the Public Sector Pensions KEVA and served as a vice-chair of the Association of Finnish Cities and Municipalities and a vice-chair of the Pirkanmaa Wellbeing Services County. As a national policy-maker, Ikonen is in her second term as a member of parliament. Prior to this, she served as State Secretary in the Ministry of Finance in the Katainen and Sipilä Governments. Ikonen served as vice-chair of the National Coalition Party from 2020 to 2026. In adition, Ikonen has served as a Professor of Practice and worked in non-governmental organisations, as a project manager in a consultancy firm and as a development manager in regional state administration.



Ilkka Haahtela, Director General, Finnish Immigartion Service

Ilkka Haahtela has served as the Director General of the Finnish Immigration Service since Autumn 2022. Before taking up his current position, Haahtela spent almost two decades working in a range of managerial roles in the public and private sectors. Haahtela joined the Finnish Immigration Service after working as Service Director at the Uusimaa Employment and Economic Development Center and later as Head of Immigration and Employment Affairs at the City of Helsinki. Haahtela holds a Master of Social Science (Tampere University) and an Executive Master of Business and Administration (Aalto University).

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Jean-Christophe Dumont, Head of International Migration Division, Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, OECD

Dumont has been the Head of the International Migration Division in the Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, OECD since 2011. He joined the OECD Secretariat in 2000 to work on international migration issues. He oversees the OECD annual flagship publication on migration, International Migration Outlook and numerous publications on the economic impact of international migration, as well as on migration management and the labour market integration of immigrants and their children in OECD countries. Dumont has also worked on migration and development issues and on the international mobility of health workers. He holds a PhD in development economics from the University Paris IX-Dauphine and was a research fellow at Laval University, Quebec, Canada.



Seppo Orjasniemi, Senior Ministerial Adviser, Head of Unit, Fiscal Forecasting & Macro Fiscal Policy Analysis, Ministry of Finance

Seppo Orjasniemi serves as Head of Unit at the Economics Department of the Ministry of Finance of Finland, leading both the Fiscal Forecasting Unit and the Macro Fiscal Policy Analysis Unit. In addition to analyzing public finances, his responsibilities include assessing the long-term development of Finland's economic structures and demographic trends. Prior to his current position, Orjasniemi served as Secretary General of the Finnish Economic Policy Council and worked as a Senior Economist in the Monetary Policy and Research Department of the Bank of Finland.



Rasmus Aro, Lead Specialist, MDI

Rasmus Aro specializes in the study of Finland's demographic development and in forecasting future population trends through population projections. Aro approaches migration primarily as part of Finland's broader demographic transformation, examining the varying significance of migration across different regions of the country in relation to, among other factors, labour force development, changes in the working-age population, shifts in age structure, and regional differentiation. Aro is also interested in the settlement and housing patterns of people with an immigrant background within Finland, as well as the internal migration dynamics associated with immigrant-background populations.

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Antti Kauhanen, Research Director, Etla Economic Research

Antti Kauhanen is a Research Director at the Etla Economic Research and an economist specializing in labor markets. His research covers employment, wage formation, skills, and the effects of technological change on working life, among other topics. Kauhanen also serves as a Professor of Practice at Aalto University.



Suvi Pulkkinen, Lead Specialist, the Finland Chambers Commerce

Suvi Pulkkinen is a Lead Specialist at the Finland Chamber of Commerce, where Pulkkinen focuses on the operating conditions of businesses and Finland's skills needs. Pulkkinen approaches immigration as a key factor in the long-term success of both companies and Finland as a whole. Her work examines how Finland can build a society that attracts people from abroad, enables them to establish their lives and careers, and ensures that their skills are effectively utilized while businesses can access the talent they need to grow and succeed.



Aini Räisänen, Specialist, Future of work-based immigration project, Sitra

At Sitra, Aini Räisänen is responsible for system change and impact design, currently working on initiatives such as the Future of work-based immigration project. With years of experience in management consulting, Räisänen's core expertise lies in breaking down complex ecosystems, identifying their critical leverage points, and measuring impact. Räisänen thrives on creating ‘aha’ moments by combining analytical thinking, metaphors, and empathetic facilitation.

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Mika Raunio, Research Fellow, The Migration Institute of Finland

Mika Raunio's interests lie in the link between migration and regional development, particularly knowledge-based regional development and related migration. The development of a knowledge-based immigration policy and the solutions to regional policy have also been part of his work. In addition, the area of regional development, the operating and innovation environments of emerging economies have also been at the core of his focus of interest. He is currently involved in the projects Transforming Immigration System for Future Skills (STN/the Research Council of Finland) and The Impact of Diversity on the Vitality of Urban Regions (VN-tutkiva). Raunio holds a Licentiate degree in Administrative Sciences.



Karoline Osman, Senior Advisor, Norwegian Directorate of Immigration

Karoline Osman is a Senior Adviser at the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI). Osman works with residence applications submitted from abroad, focusing on cooperation and efficient case flows between UDI, Norwegian foreign service missions and external service providers. Her work aims to improve cross-agency processes and create a more coherent application journey.



Katja Luopajärvi, Director, Visa and Immigration Affairs Unit, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

Katja Luopajärvi is the Director at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' Visa and immigration Affairs Unit, where she is responsible for visa policy and the visa operations of Finland’s diplomatic missions, as well as for the statutory residence permit services provided by those missions. Prior to Luopajärvi’s current position, she worked for approximately two decades in a variety of roles within the foreign service, both at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and at Finnish missions abroad.

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Pavel Maksimenko, Entrepreneur, Chair of Migrant Entrepreneur Committee

Pavel Maksimenko is an entrepreneur, partner at Adeptus Oy, and Chair of Migrant Entrepreneur Committee of the Suomen Yrittäjät. Maksimenko has extensive experience in financial sector leadership, building profitable growth, and leading people. Today, Maksimenko coaches leaders and organizations in emotional intelligence and the psychology of decision-making. In the immigration debate, Maksimenko brings an entrepreneurial perspective, focusing on how Finland can better support immigrants in becoming entrepreneurs, growing their businesses into employers, and contributing to shared prosperity and economic growth.



Harriet Mallenius, Director, Customer Relations Unit, Finnish Immigration Service

Harriet Mallenius is the Director of the Customer Relations Unit at the Finnish Immigration Service, with extensive experience in developing customer services within the public sector. In addition to overseeing customer relations and facilities management, Mallenius' current responsibilities include preparations for Finland's upcoming citizenship test and the development of Migri's target state for artificial intelligence. Mallenius is passionate about advancing seamless public services, creating impactful customer experiences, and contributing to issues that are of vital importance to Finland.



Katri Niskanen, Senior Ministerial Adviser, Labour Migration and Integration Unit, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland

Katri Niskanen currently serves as Team Leader for Labour and Education-Based Immigration at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland. Her team is responsible for preparing legislation and policy in this field, as well as steering and monitoring the performance of the relevant administrative sector. Previously, Niskanen has coordinated Finland's positions on EU-level migration policy and legislative initiatives at the Ministry of the Interior and worked as a legal expert at the European Commission, focusing on highly skilled migration and family reunification matters. Niskanen is a versatile expert in migration policy and governance at both the national and EU levels. In addition, Niskanen is motivated by finding innovative solutions that create benefits for migrants, countries of origin, and receiving societies alike.

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Marina Velikova, CEO, Finland Relocation Services

Marina Velikova is an expert in international mobility and labour migration and serves as the CEO of Finland Relocation Services. Velikova works closely with companies recruiting international talent to Finland and has extensive insight into the practical challenges of immigration processes from both employers' and relocating employees' perspectives. In her work, Velikova approaches migration as a comprehensive process in which efficient administrative procedures, labour market needs, and successful integration are closely interconnected. At the EMN Conference, Velikova will bring a practical perspective to the discussion, particularly highlighting the experiences of employers and international professionals regarding the effectiveness and smooth functioning of entry and immigration processes.



David van de Wetering, Senior Policy Advisor, Repatriation and Departure Service Netherlands

David van de Wetering serves as a Senior Policy Advisor for Strategic Policy and Legal Affairs at the Dutch Repatriation and Departure Service (DTenV). In this role van de Wetering primarily advises the Board of Directors on international matters and strategic developments in the field of return. With nine years of experience in the field of return, van de Wetering has held various advisory positions and also gained practical experience as a case handler. This combination provides a broad perspective on both the strategic and operational aspects of return.



Olli Koskipirtti, Process Owner, Control and Monitoring Department, Finnish Immigration Service

Olli Koskipirtti serves as a Process Owner in the Supervision Department of the Finnish Immigration Service. Koskipirtti is responsible for a range of matters related to removals from the country and internal security, including deportations based on criminal offences, denial of admittance or stay, and entry ban cases. Together with his team, Koskipirtti provides guidance and support to other processes within the agency on issues concerning public order and security as well as national security. In addition, his area of responsibility covers matters related to the reliable establishment of identity, including document examination and the use of biometrics.

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Tuomo Kurri, Director, Return Affairs, Ministry of the Interior Finland

Tuomo Kurri serves as Director of Migration at the Ministry of the Interior of Finland. Kurri has worked at the Ministry since the early 1990s in various expert positions related to immigration and foreign nationals' affairs, as well as in leadership roles heading several units. Kurri holds a Licentiate of Laws degree.



Elina Nurmi, Director, Reception Services Department, Finnish Immigration Service

Elina Nurmi is the Director of Reception Unit at the Finnish Immigration Service. The Reception Unit is responsible for the directing, planning and supervising of reception centres for beneficiaries of international protection, the assistance system for victims of trafficking in human beings as well as detention units. The Reception Unit also maintains the system of voluntary return. Previously Nurmi has worked as a researcher and at the municipal sector as the Head of Immigration and Lead Specialist at the City of Helsinki.



Mikko Sivola, Chief Inspector, Helsinki Police Department

Mikko Sivola has worked at the Helsinki Police Department since 2001. Sivola specializes in immigration-related matters that fall under police responsibilities, with particular expertise in readmission procedures, voluntary returns, and returns. Currently, Sivola serves as the head of investigations in a unit responsible for, among other things, readmission cooperation, return operations, EURP reintegration support, and matters related to cooperation with Frontex.

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Tuula Svinhufvud, Lead Specialist, Envoy for Migration, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

Tuula Svinhufvud has served as Lead Specialist on Migration at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland since 2019. Previously, Svinhufvud served as Finland's Ambassador to Algeria from 2015 to 2019 and as Committee Counsellor to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Finnish Parliament from 2011 to 2015. Prior to these positions, Svinhufvud headed the EU Unit at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs between 2007 and 2011. Since joining the Ministry in 1989, Svinhufvud has held a variety of roles both at the Ministry and in Finnish diplomatic missions abroad.



Minna Hulkkonen, Head of Department, Director General, Migration Department, Ministry of the Interior

Hulkkonen was appointed as the Director General of the Migration Department at the Ministry of the Interior in September 2020. Previously, Hulkkonen has had an impressive career in the Finnish Administration. Hulkkonen has worked as Senior Specialist at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs at the Embassy in Moscow in 2019, as Ministerial Adviser at the Ministry of the Interior as well as a Legal Adviser and head of a team at the Cabinet in the Office of the President of the Republic. Moreover, in 2007–2009, Hulkkonen worked as Committee Counsel at the Parliamentary Office. Between 1996 and 2007, Hulkkonen worked in a number of different positions at the Ministry of the Interior, as Senior EU Specialist at the Prime Minister's Office, and as Senior Specialist at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs at the Permanent Representation of Finland to the EU. Hulkkonen is a Bachelor of Laws.



Sonja Hämäläinen, Migration Director, Labour Migration and Integration Unit, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland

Sonja Hämäläinen serves as Migration Director at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, where Hämäläinen has been responsible for migration affairs since 2011. Hämäläinen also serves as vice-chair of the VTT Board and as a member of Human Resources and Remuneration Committee. Prior to her current position, Hämäläinen worked at the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of the Interior in roles including Project Manager and Senior Adviser. She has also gained international experience working as a lawyer for the United Nations (UN). Hämäläinen holds a Bachelor of Laws degree.

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Jussi Tanner, Director General, Consular Services, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland



Jussi Tanner serves as Director General of Consular Services at the Ministry for Foreign starting in 2022. Before that, Tanner served as a Special Envoy tasked with directing the activities of Finland's public authorities on the mission to repatriate Finnish children detained in northeast Syria (al-Hol camp). In addition, Tanner led Finland's evacuation operation in Afghanistan. Tanner has served as Finland's Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN in New York as well as Senior Diplomatic Adviser to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. In the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Tanner has also served as Director of the Crisis and Assistance Team at the Consular Services and worked in the Department for Europe and in the Legal Service. He holds the degree of Master of Arts.

Johannes Hirvelä, Director, Information Services and Performance Guidance Unit, Finnish Immigration Service



Johannes Hirvelä serves as Director for Information Services and Performance Guidance Unit at the Finnish Immigration Service. His responsibilities include overseeing the agency's performance management and target monitoring, leading analytical functions related to migration and the residence permit system, and directing information gathering concerning countries of origin and transit. Hirvelä has worked at the Finnish Immigration Service since 2023. Prior to joining the agency, he served at the City of Helsinki as Development Manager for Employment and Immigration Affairs, Head of Youth Services, and Education Inspector. Earlier in his career, Hirvelä worked as a consultant at Deloitte and held supervisory and project management positions at Posti.

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