

Publications of the Ministry of Economic Affairs  
and Employment • Working life • 43/2016

# Good working life as Finland's competitiveness factor



Ministry of Economic Affairs  
and Employment of Finland

Publications of the Ministry of Economic Affairs  
and Employment 43/2016



## Good working life as Finland's competitiveness factor

Report of the working life brand group

Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment

ISBN: 978-952-327-174-6

[www.tyoelama2020.fi](http://www.tyoelama2020.fi)

Helsinki 2016

## Description sheet

<b>Published by</b>	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment		12/2016
<b>Authors</b>	Tuomo Alasoini, Juha Antila, Niilo Hakonen, Mervi Hasu, Maija Lyly-Yrjänäinen, Merja Niemi, Terttu Pakarinen, Elise Ramstad and Hannu Stålhammar		
<b>Title of publication</b>	Good working life as Finland's competitiveness factor: Report of the working life brand group		
<b>Series and publication number</b>	Publications of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment 43/2016		
<b>Register number</b>		<b>Subject</b>	Working life
<b>ISBN (printed)</b>	978-952-327-174-6	<b>ISSN (printed)</b>	1797-3554
<b>ISBN PDF</b>	978-952-327-175-3	<b>ISSN (PDF)</b>	1797-3562
<b>Website address (URN)</b>	URN:ISBN:978-952-327-175-3		
<b>Pages</b>	34	<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Keywords</b>	Brand, skill, cooperation, safety, working life		
<b>Abstract</b>			
<p>This report contains a proposal for the steering group of the Working Life 2020 project on how the Finnish working life brand should be strengthened. The objective of the development of the working life brand is to support economic growth in Finland in the long term, to help Finland to succeed in international cooperation and to elevate Finland's status as an example and inspiration for others. Primary clients of the working life brand work include foreign investors, companies, workforce and consumer clients.</p> <p>Three narratives have been written in support of the development of the working life brand. The focus area of the skills narrative is that the Finnish working life represents top expertise in the world. According to the cooperation narrative, the Finnish working life represents the most highly developed cooperation in the world. The safety narrative is based on the view that the Finnish working life represents the safest environment in the world.</p> <p>The group proposes that the strengthening of the working life brand is linked as part of the Team Finland network activities, the Made by Finland concept coordinated by the association for Finnish Work and the communications of the Working Life 2020 project. In addition, practical means how the key actors in the Working Life 2020 project can participate in the working life brand work should be examined.</p>			
<b>Publisher</b>	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment		
<b>Printed by (place and time)</b>	Lönnerberg Print & Promo, 2016		
<b>Publication sales/ Distributed by</b>	Electronic version: <a href="http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi">julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi</a> Publication sales: <a href="http://julkaisutilaukset.valtioneuvosto.fi">julkaisutilaukset.valtioneuvosto.fi</a>		

## Kuvailulehti

<b>Julkaisija</b>	Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö	12/2016	
<b>Tekijät</b>	Tuomo Alasoini, Juha Antila, Niilo Hakonen, Mervi Hasu, Maija Lyly-Yrjänäinen, Merja Niemi, Terttu Pakarinen, Elise Ramstad and Hannu Stålhammar		
<b>Julkaisun nimi</b>	Hyvä työelämä Suomen kilpailukykytekijänä: työelämäbrändiryhmän raportti		
<b>Julkaisusarjan nimi ja numero</b>	Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriön julkaisuja 43/2016		
<b>Diaari/hankenumero</b>		<b>Teema</b>	Työelämä
<b>ISBN painettu</b>	978-952-327-174-6	<b>ISSN painettu</b>	1797-3554
<b>ISBN PDF</b>	978-952-327-175-3	<b>ISSN PDF</b>	1797-3562
<b>URN-osoite</b>	URN:ISBN:978-952-327-175-3		
<b>Sivumäärä</b>	34	<b>Kieli</b>	Englanti
<b>Asiasanat</b>	Brändi, osaaminen, turvallisuus, työelämä, yhteistyö		
<b>Tiivistelmä</b>	<p>Julkaisu sisältää ehdotuksen Työelämä 2020 -hankkeen johtoryhmälle siitä, kuinka Suomen työelämäbrändiä tulisi vahvistaa. Työelämäbrändin kehittämisen tarkoituksena on tukea Suomen talouskasvua pitkällä aikavälillä, auttaa Suomea menestymään kansainvälisessä yhteistyössä ja nostaa Suomea esimerkiksi ja innoittajaksi muille. Työelämäbrändityön ensisijaisia asiakkaita ovat ulkomaiset sijoittajat, yritykset, työvoima ja kuluttaja-asiakkaat.</p> <p>Työelämäbrändin kehittämistä tukee kolme bränditarinaa. Osaamistarinan kärkenä on, että Suomen työelämä edustaa maailman kovinta osaamista. Yhteistyötarinan mukaan Suomen työelämä edustaa maailman kehittyneintä yhteistyötä. Turvallisuustarina perustuu näkemykseen, jonka mukaan Suomen työelämä edustaa maailman turvallisinta ympäristöä.</p> <p>Julkaisussa esitetään, että työelämäbrändin vahvistaminen kytketään osaksi Team Finland -verkoston toimintaa, Suomalaisen Työn Liiton koordinoimaa Made by Finland -konseptia ja Työelämä 2020 -hankkeen viestintää. Lisäksi selvitetään keinot, joilla Työelämä 2020 -hankkeen eri toimijat voivat osallistua työelämäbrändityöhön.</p>		
<b>Kustantaja</b>	Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö		
<b>Painopaikka ja vuosi</b>	Lönnerberg Print & Promo, 2016		
<b>Julkaisun myynti/jakaja</b>	Sähköinen versio: julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi Julkaisumyynti: julkaisutilaukset.valtioneuvosto.fi		

## Presentationsblad

<b>Utgivare</b>	Arbets- och näringsministeriet	12/2016	
<b>Författare</b>	Tuomo Alasoini, Juha Antila, Niilo Hakonen, Mervi Hasu, Maija Lyly-Yrjänäinen, Merja Niemi, Terttu Pakarinen, Elise Ramstad and Hannu Stålhammar		
<b>Publikationens titel</b>	Ett bra arbetsliv – en faktor för konkurrenskraft för Finland: rapport av arbetsgruppen för arbetslivsvarumärket		
<b>Publikationsseriens namn och nummer</b>	Arbets- och näringsministeriets publikationer 43/2016		
<b>Diarie-/ projektnummer</b>		<b>Tema</b>	Arbetsliv
<b>ISBN tryckt</b>	978-952-327-174-6	<b>ISSN tryckt</b>	1797-3554
<b>ISBN PDF</b>	978-952-327-175-3	<b>ISSN PDF</b>	1797-3562
<b>URN-adress</b>	URN:ISBN:978-952-327-175-3		
<b>Sidantal</b>	34	<b>Språk</b>	Engelska
<b>Nyckelord</b>	Varumärke, kompetens, säkerhet, arbetsliv, samarbete		
<b>Referat</b>	<p>Publikationen innehåller ett förslag till ledningsgruppen för projektet Arbetsliv 2020 om hur Finlands arbetslivsvarumärke borde stärkas. Syftet med utvecklandet av ett arbetslivsvarumärke är att stödja Finlands ekonomiska tillväxt på lång sikt, hjälpa Finland att nå framgång i internationellt samarbete och lyfta fram Finland som ett exempel och en inspiratör för andra. De främsta kunderna i arbetet med arbetslivsvarumärket är utländska investerare, företag, arbetskraften och konsumentkunder.</p> <p>Utvecklandet av arbetslivsvarumärket stöds av tre varumärkesberättelser. Spetsen i kompetensberättelsen är att Finlands arbetsliv har den bästa kompetensen i världen. Enligt samarbetsberättelsen representerar det finländska arbetslivet det mest utvecklade samarbetet i världen. Säkerhetsberättelsen grundar sig på en syn enligt vilken det finländska arbetslivet är den säkraste miljön i världen.</p> <p>I publikationen föreslås att stärkandet av arbetslivsvarumärket ska kopplas till verksamheten inom nätverket Team Finland, konceptet Made by Finland som koordineras av Förbundet för Finländskt Arbete och kommunikationen inom projektet Arbetsliv 2020. Dessutom utreder man på vilka sätt olika aktörer inom projektet Arbetsliv 2020 kan delta i arbetet med arbetslivsvarumärket.</p>		
<b>Förläggare</b>	Arbets- och näringsministeriet		
<b>Tryckort och år</b>	Lönberg Print & Promo, 2016		
<b>Beställningar/distribution</b>	Elektronisk version: <a href="http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi">julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi</a> Beställningar: <a href="http://julkaisutilaukset.valtioneuvosto.fi">julkaisutilaukset.valtioneuvosto.fi</a>		



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## FOREWORD

Efforts are currently underway to make Finnish working life the best in Europe by the year 2020. Accomplishing this vision will require extensive cooperation and willingness to promote the development and renewal of Finnish workplaces. These efforts did not start from the scratch but are, instead, based on the long tradition of working life development in Finland.

At the moment, Finland is on the brink of confronting perhaps the biggest challenges it has ever faced. When encountering major changes, it is natural that we focus our sights on the future and demands for renewal, which makes it easy to forget the strengths and resources we already have. With its working life brand work, the Working Life 2020 project has aimed to bring into discussion the present strengths of Finnish working life and their more extensive utilisation as drivers of change. The present report indicates that there are features in the Finnish working life that do not occur on their own but have, instead, been shaped through time and cooperation. As a small country, we may also lead the way to other nations.

Based on numerous discussions, the working group has selected key attributes for the working life brand and written three narratives to support these. The narratives are based on experiences of the awareness, quality and associations related to the Finnish working life. The narratives emphasise the significance of good working life. Sharing these narratives allows us to strengthen our working life brand and at the same time commit ourselves to cherishing competitiveness and high quality of working life, also in the future. High skills, working together in

cooperation and a safe environment provide the keys to success. This is the basis for producing new innovations, high-quality products and services as well as good client experiences.

In Helsinki, 7 November 2016

Margita Klemetti  
Working Life 2020  
Project manager

Tuomo Alasoini  
Tekes  
Chair of the working life brand  
working group

# 1 Introduction

The Working Life 2020 project brings together the main players of Finnish working life with the aim of making Finnish working life the best in Europe by 2020. The project involves more than 60 organisations that all participate in developing working life and represent various sectors, including government organisations, employer and employee organisations and other expert organisations of various kinds. The project is broad-based and in many ways also unique internationally.

The mission of the working life brand group launched in August 2014 has been to *prepare a proposal for the steering group of the Working Life 2020 project on how the Finnish working life brand should be strengthened*. In 'branding terms' the same idea could be expressed as follows: how to increase the brand capital of Finnish working life.

The idea for launching the work emerged in discussions between the project manager of the Working Life 2020 project and the leader of the brand group held in the summer of 2014. In the discussions, it was noted that there are many strengths in the Finnish working life as shown by a number of international statistics, studies and other comparisons, but that this information on Finland's strengths has barely been utilised as a competitive factor. The work of the group started as an experiment which initially had the sole purpose of considering whether there are grounds for further development of the idea of Finnish working life brand and its utilisation as a competitive advantage. This work has continued and expanded as a result of the large number of positive feedback obtained during the process.

By April 2015, the group had completed a client description, a definition of the current state of the Finnish working life, including all of its strengths and weaknesses, as well as suggestions on brand attributes and the focus areas of brand narratives to support these. After the summer of 2015 and until the February of 2016, the group's

work was stagnant due to the reorganisation of the Working Life 2020 project and the group itself. From then on, the work has continued by finishing the brand narratives, prioritising the client groups, focusing messages for clients and preparing a plan on the channels used to further the working life brand work in the future. The preparation group of the project agreed in the June of 2016 that the group will submit its proposal by 30 September 2016.

Aiming to strengthen brand capital based on the true characteristics of the Finnish working life has formed the central value basis for the work. The group has worked according to a loose working plan and timetable. Intermediate outcomes of the work have been discussed a number of times in the steering group of the Working Life 2020 project as well as in the preparation group and advisory council of the project. During the preparations, many discussions have also been held with other experts and stakeholders.

The report proceeds in the following order: Chapter 2 highlights what is meant by the Finnish working life brand, why strengthening it is important and who are clients in the context of the working life brand. Chapter 3 includes a description prepared by the group on the current strengths and weaknesses of the Finnish working life brand. Chapter 4 describes the selected brand attributes and the brand narratives that support these. Chapter 5 presents the so-called client selection, including client prioritisation and focusing client messages. Chapter 6 includes a proposal for the future of brand work.

## 2 The Finnish working life brand: what, why and for whom?

### 2.1 Brand and working life brand

A *brand* is the positive reputation that has emerged around a trademark. The value of a brand is a combination of the recognition of a name or a logo, the brand loyalty of customers, the sense of high quality arising from the brand, and the mental associations linked to the brand. A brand can be described as a summary of the contents or identity of a product or service, which can create added value to the product or service and enhance the user's identity.<sup>1</sup>

Brand identity refers to the mental associations that the creator of the brand aims to strengthen through brand management. The associations act as a promise by the product or service provider to the client. The associations should help strengthen the relationship between the customer and the brand. Brand identity typically consists of a few associations which have been divided into the core identity and the extended identity. Associations may include innovativeness, high service level or good value for money.

Brand capital measures the total value of the brand for its owners, which makes it a vital part of the intangible capital of many companies or other organisations.<sup>2</sup> The areas of brand capital are:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Br%C3%A4ndi>

<sup>2</sup> [https://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aineeton\\_p%C3%A4%C3%A4oma](https://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aineeton_p%C3%A4%C3%A4oma)

- brand awareness, i.e. how well people recognise the brand either with or without assistance
- clients' experience of the quality of the product or service compared to other products or services
- brand associations, i.e. images the client associates with the brand as well as the product or service
- brand loyalty among clients

*In this report, the Finnish working life brand refers to the positive reputation that has been formed around the working life in Finland.* The brand capital of the Finnish working life consists of three components: awareness, quality and associations. In the context of a working life brand, it is difficult to afford relevant contents to brand loyalty, the fourth component of brand capital. The three components can be described as follows:

- *Awareness:* how well is the concept 'Finnish working life' recognised either with or without assistance?
- *Quality:* how good is Finnish working life considered compared to the working life of other countries?
- *Associations:* what kinds of ideas are associated with the working life in Finland?

When we talk about the working life brand, we must first determine what the concept of 'working life' actually entails in the given context. The work of the group has been founded on an extensive perspective on the contents of the concept. This includes features related to the quality of working life, features of the labour market, features of people active in working life (e.g. skills and competences), features of the labour and employment relations system, and measures taken to develop working life.

## 2.2 The objectives of the working life brand

Why is it important to develop the Finnish working life brand? Development of the working life brand:

- supports economic growth in Finland in the long term (economic dimension)
- helps Finland to succeed in international cooperation (political dimension)
- elevates Finland's status as an example and inspiration for others (social-ethical dimension)

These objectives support one another and there is no reason to put them in an order of importance.

## 2.3 The clients

When talking about the working life brand, it is not self-evident how clients should be defined. The starting point for this work has been a view according to which the basis of the Finnish working life brand consists of the shared labour input of people working in Finland. People working in Finland produce the brand in collaboration. In this view, the clients include people, organisations or institutions that in principle operate outside of Finland.

Primary clients include:

- *Foreign investors*: the strong working life brand attracts investments in such areas in Finland that will generate sustainable economic growth in the long term.
- *Foreign companies*: the strong working life brand attracts commercial transactions and other forms of cooperation with Finnish companies as well as seeking corporate partnerships in Finland.
- *Foreign workforce*: the strong working life brand attracts foreign workforce to the Finnish labour market, which helps filling gaps in domestic workforce and increasing innovation in working life through diversity and plurality of values.
- *Foreign consumer clients*: the strong working life brand increases trust that the products and services of Finnish com-



panies have been produced using high-quality approaches as well as ethically, socially and ecologically sustainable methods.

There are no grounds for putting the primary clients in an order of importance.

In addition to these primary clients, other client profiles can also be distinguished. These include:

- *Foreign policy makers*: the strong working life brand helps strengthen the transactions of Finland and Finnish companies with other countries and their companies in economic questions and on different political platforms.
- *Foreign media*: the strong working life brand helps spread a positive image of Finland outside of the country at a general level.
- *International organisations*: the strong working life brand helps spread a positive image of Finland outside of the country at a general level.

## 3 The strengths and weaknesses of the Finnish working life brand

There is little research knowledge available on clients' views on the Finnish working life. It was not possible for the group to conduct or commission a survey to bring light to the issue within the time frame of this project. Instead, the current state of the Finnish working life brand was assessed based on a variety of other research knowledge and statistical data, personal and subjective perspectives of the group members as well as the expert comments obtained on the working life in Finland.

### 3.1 Awareness

Up until the 1990s, awareness of the Finnish working life was fairly poor among the client groups. From then on, awareness has nevertheless been increasing particularly due to the following factors:

- Starting with Finland's EU membership in 1995, there has been an increase in Finland's participation in decision making in the EU, inclusion of Finland in an increasing number of different statistical comparisons and comparative studies and surveys as well as a boost in raising the profile of Finnish researchers and companies in EU cooperation and other international collaborations.
- Since the end of the 1990s, the success of Nokia and raising the profile of successful company managers in international economics and other journals has also raised awareness of the Finnish working life.

- Finland has been highly successful in different international comparisons on competitiveness (IMD<sup>3</sup>, WEF<sup>4</sup>), innovation ability (Innovation Union Scoreboard<sup>5</sup>, OECD<sup>6</sup>, Global Innovation Index<sup>7</sup>, Networked Readiness Index<sup>8</sup>), skills and competences (PIAAC<sup>9</sup>, PISA<sup>10</sup>) and working life (EWCS<sup>11</sup>, ECS<sup>12</sup>) ever since the latter half of the 1990s.
- Since the beginning of the latter half of the 1990s, Finland has also raised its profile as an interesting pioneer in the information technological breakthrough (Linux, gaming companies, Slush and the startup scene in general).
- The increased activity and long-term systematic approach in developing the working life since the mid-1990s has raised awareness on the Finnish working life practices.

Nevertheless, there continues to be less awareness of the working life in Finland compared to many other European countries, and the awareness is based on more superficial information due to, e.g. the low degree of internationalisation of the Finnish labour market as well as the language and cultural barriers. Indeed, many associations related to the Finnish working life are based on mental images of Finland as a country, not Finnish working life itself. The image of Finland has changed during the previous 20 or so years. While Finland used to be perceived as a remote and grey area in the hinterland of Europe, the country is currently more and more often seen as a progressive information society belonging to the family of Nordic welfare societies.

For instance, the Country Brand Index of the FutureBrand rankings of 2014–2015 placed Finland on the 13th position internationally. Finland's ranking was fairly sim-

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.imd.org/wcc/wcy-world-competitiveness-yearbook/>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/gcr/2015-2016/Global\\_Competitiveness\\_Report\\_2015-2016.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/gcr/2015-2016/Global_Competitiveness_Report_2015-2016.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/innovation/facts-figures/scoreboards/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/innovation/facts-figures/scoreboards/index_en.htm)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/innovation/inno/inno-stats.htm>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.globalinnovationindex.org/userfiles/file/reportpdf/GII-2015-v5.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_Global\\_IT\\_Report\\_2015.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_IT_Report_2015.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Julkaisut/2013/liitteet/okm19.pdf?lang=fi>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results-overview.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/european-working-conditions-surveys-ewcs>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/european-company-surveys>

ilar with other Nordic countries (Sweden 4th, Norway 6th, Denmark 9th and Iceland 15th).<sup>13</sup> Finland is currently more clearly examined as a part of the Nordic countries and the 'Scandinavian brand'. There have not been any significant changes to the rankings of the Finnish country brand between the years 2009 and 2015. This indicates that the stagnation of economic growth beginning in 2008 or the collapse of Nokia's mobile phone business have probably failed to significantly affect the associations related to the Finnish working life.

## 3.2 Quality

The quality of Finnish working life was assessed in light of the four thematic areas of the Working Life 2020 project: innovation and productivity, trust and cooperation, health and well-being at work, and a competent workforce. The group's views on the strengths (+) and weaknesses (-) have been summarised below for each thematic area:

### *Innovation and productivity*

- + Innovativeness
- + Development orientation
- + Autonomy
- High labour costs

### *Trust and cooperation*

- + Possibilities for influence and participation at work and workplace
- + Flexibility of working hours
- + Social relationships at the workplace
- + Social consensus
- + Low degree of corruption
- + Safety
- + Commitment to work and workplace
- + Networking
- +/- Tripartite cooperation and centralised labour market system (depending on

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.mumbrella.asia/content/uploads/2014/11/CountryBrandIndex2014.pdf>

client group)

- Low number of immigrants and the closed nature of the labour market (language, culture, geographic location)

#### *Health and well-being at work*

- + Reconciliation of work with family life
- + Occupational health care
- + Small income differences
- + Equality
- + Unemployment security
- Harassment and bullying

#### *A competent workforce*

- + Good basic skills of citizens
- + Workforce with good vocational education
- + Demanding work tasks
- + Possibilities for training and learning both at work and outside of it

### **3.3 Associations**

The results of the previous section were largely utilised in the assessment of mental associations related to the Finnish working life. Based on this assessment, the following associations can be considered the most important:

- Modern and capable of changing
- Has high equality and low hierarchy
- Competence-based
- Encourages participation
- Based on trust
- Safe
- Internally networked
- Externally reserved

## 4 The brand attributes and the brand narratives that support them

### 4.1 Objective and premises

The vision of the Working Life 2020 project states that Finland will have the best working life of Europe in the year 2020. Work aiming to strengthen the working life brand must support the accomplishment of this vision. The following objectives are presented for the three components of brand capital for the year 2020:

- *Awareness* of Finnish working life will be at least as good as the awareness of its Swedish counterpart.
- The Finnish working life will be able to sustain and strengthen its *high-quality* features, create new high-quality features as well as fix its current weaknesses.
- All of the primary *associations* related to Finnish working life will be unreservedly positive.

The brand attribute is a feature of the brand that gives some essential information about the brand's values, look and essence. Brand attributes separate brands from one another and help clients make choices between different companies or organisations as well as their products and services. When developing a working life brand, it is also important to make choices on what kinds of attributes should be used when starting to strengthen a brand.

Before making the choice on brand attributes, the most important criteria must be determined for the attributes. The following list includes the six most essential criteria used in the selection, which also form a logical continuum together:

**Truthfulness**

The attributes are based on true features of the Finnish working life and society.



**Ownership**

The working group believes in the attributes and strongly stands behind them.



**Commitment**

(and later ownership)

The working group believes that it will be able to 'sell' the attributes to the steering group of the Working Life 2020 project and the necessary stakeholders (with strategically important relationships with the clients).



**Communicability**

The key contents of the attributes can be communicated to clients in a comprehensible manner.



**Credibility**

Clients are able to believe in the attributes based on the message.



**Inspirational qualities**

The clients act in the desired way based on the message.

## 4.2 Selected brand attributes

In 2015, the brand group selected three brand attributes related to skills, cooperation and safety to act as the basis for further discussions. The aim was to produce 200–300-word brand narratives to support the main focus areas determined for the attributes. The narratives form a central basis for the communications of the Working Life 2020 project, particularly the communications aimed at key client groups.

This would enable all narratives serving as the project's message and every related measure to also strengthen the underlying brand narrative.

The group's suggestions on brand attributes and the focus areas of the brand narratives have been discussed in the steering group of the Working Life 2020 project and they have also been commented on by other experts. Based on this work, the brand attributes, including the focus areas of the brand narratives, have taken the following shape:

Focus area of narrative 1: **The Finnish working life represents top expertise in the world**

- highly developed technology in use and at the forefront of the digital breakthrough
- strong participation of employees, work autonomy and flexibility of working time (and other aspects)
- efficient educational system, active staff training by companies and good possibilities for learning at work as underlying factors

Focus area of narrative 2: **The Finnish working life represents the most highly developed cooperation in the world**

- number one in the world and Europe in societal and corporate networking and the connection of this with innovativeness
- collaboration of management and staff as a pervasive principle
- equality and low hierarchy in the society enabling flexible collaboration as underlying factors

Focus area of narrative 3: **The Finnish working life represents the safest environment in the world**



- no one is left behind in the transformation of the working life, individuals' transitions in the labour market are supported by functional safety nets and springboards
- ecological sustainability as an attitude and way of life
- civil society where the citizens rely on one another and institutions and where responsible labour market parties are essential elements as underlying factors

### **4.3 The brand narratives**

The three brand narratives written in support of the selected three brand attributes have primarily not been intended as communicative narratives as such, but, instead, their purpose is to serve as a kind of narrative platform that can be used as a basis of forming messages targeted at different client groups. The brand narratives have been constructed as follows:

### 4.3.1 Skills narrative

Finland is a high skills society at the forefront of the digital breakthrough.<sup>14</sup> We use the latest competence and work effortlessly in cooperation networks to create products and services that meet the expectations and needs of clients and citizens globally.<sup>15</sup> Finland is a well-known educator and employer in creative and sustainably growing industries. The health and well-being industry, cleantech, bioeconomy and natural resources economy, Arctic business, design and music are growth industries in Finland, as is also generally the case with work and occupations requiring manual skills and creative skills in technology and programming. The sufficiency of competent workforce provides a favourable platform for establishing new companies as well as innovations that renew both business and the society.

There is a long tradition of lifelong learning in Finland and a culture and institutions that support this. The educational system secures learning for all and encourages the citizens to develop their skills and competences

throughout their lives. Teacher education is among the world's best, teachers are highly educated and learning outcomes are world-class.<sup>16</sup> The skills learned at school carry people forward, as Finnish adults also have world-class basic skills.<sup>17</sup> The majority of Finnish citizens actively develop their skills both at work as well as during leisure time. Finns are at the leading edge when it comes to competence in digital communication and using information networks.<sup>18</sup>

Finns are well-educated, committed to their work and interested in planning and developing their work and influencing its contents. Development and management of competence are part of everyday activities in the Finnish working life. Employees are encouraged to participate in work-based and workplace learning, for instance, through active training, participatory management and autonomous work.<sup>19</sup> Various competence development services for managing and coping with changes in the working life are available for companies and individuals.

<sup>14</sup> In the WEF's competitiveness rankings of 2015–16, Finland placed 13th in the technological readiness pillar and 2nd in higher education and training pillar. [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/gcr/2015-2016/Global\\_Competitiveness\\_Report\\_2015-2016.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/gcr/2015-2016/Global_Competitiveness_Report_2015-2016.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Finland ranked 2nd in the INSEAD's networked readiness index of 2015. [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_Global\\_IT\\_Report\\_2015.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_IT_Report_2015.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> According to the PISA study, 15-year-old Finns ranked 12th in mathematics, 6th in literacy and 5th in natural sciences in 2012. Finland was number one in Europe in literacy and natural sciences. <https://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/PISA>

<sup>17</sup> According to the PIAAC study, 16–65-year-old Finns placed 2nd in both literacy as well as number and problem solving skills in 2012. <http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Julkaisut/2013/liitteet/okm19.pdf?lang=fi>

<sup>18</sup> According to the Digibarometer of 2016, Finland ranks first in the prerequisites of its citizens to utilise digitalisation. <http://www.digibarometri.fi/uploads/5/8/8/7/58877615/digibarometri-2016.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> In the European Working Conditions survey of 2010, Finland placed number one in the share of employees having undergone training paid-for by employer within the previous 12 months. Finland ranked second in the distribution of autonomous team work. <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/european-working-conditions-surveys-ewcs>

### 4.3.2 Cooperation narrative

Finland is a networked society that believes in the power of cooperation. Companies cooperate more actively in Finland than anywhere else in Europe. There is cooperation in the production of products and services, development as well as sales and marketing.<sup>20</sup> Smooth cooperation and the underlying mutual trust support the flexible way of operating in companies as well as promote the creation and dissemination of new ideas and innovations from one company to the next. The culture of cooperation between actors combined with strong competence provides companies with good capabilities to adjust to changes in the operating environment, such as periods of technological breakthrough.

There is also a long and established tradition of dialogue and collaboration between employers and employees. At the workplace level, the collaboration between management and staff is an essential element of the 'Finnish labour market model' developed in recent decades. Over the years, the collaboration has been increasingly extended from the traditional education and

occupational safety issues to also developing productivity, quality, innovations and the competitiveness of the company as a whole. Finland represents the international top actors in flexibility of working life, shared management and opportunities for employees to participate in discussing joint issues at their workplace.<sup>21</sup> Finland is Europe's leading nation in the prevalence of flexibility of daily working hours.<sup>22</sup>

In the Finnish working life, cooperation is based on the strong trust not only between individuals but also in national institutions prevailing throughout the society.<sup>23</sup> Finland is an equal country without deep economic, social or cultural divides in the society.<sup>24</sup> Education and well-being services covering the entire country and available for everyone act as important factors that support and even out people's possibilities to succeed. The citizens are accustomed to communicating with one another as equals and acting with initiative in both working life as well as outside it. A light team-like and autonomous way of working method is a natural way to operate in the majority of Finnish workplaces.

<sup>20</sup> In the European Company Survey of 2013, Finland ranked first in Europe in the number of companies carrying out extensive cooperation with other businesses in this area. [http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef\\_publication/field\\_ef\\_document/ef1502en\\_0.pdf](http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef1502en_0.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> In the European Company Survey of 2013, Finland ranked the best in Europe in the number of companies using a joint approach to decision-making on daily tasks related to work. [http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef\\_publication/field\\_ef\\_document/ef1502en\\_0.pdf](http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef1502en_0.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> In the European Company Survey of 2013, Finland had the relatively highest number of companies whose employees are able to affect the time they begin and end their workdays on a daily basis. <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/data-visualisation/3rd-european-company-survey-ecs>

<sup>23</sup> In the European Quality of Life Survey of 2012, Finns were found more likely to have trust in other people than citizens of any other EU27 countries. Finland placed 2nd in trust in national institutions. [http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef\\_publication/field\\_ef\\_document/ef1361en.pdf](http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef1361en.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> In the European Quality of Life Survey of 2012, Finland ranked second among the EU27 countries with least tensions between the rich and poor, employers and employees as well as men and women. [http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef\\_publication/field\\_ef\\_document/ef1264en\\_0.pdf](http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef1264en_0.pdf)

### 4.3.3 Safety narrative

Finland is a safe country for working and conducting business. The country provides a stable operating environment for both employers and employees with the help of its functional institutions and infrastructure, low-level corruption and highly developed education, business and well-being services.<sup>25</sup> The stability is backed by an active civil society where people participate in their own terms in different 'grass-roots' activities. The gap between citizens, authorities and policy makers is small. An essential element of the Finnish civil society consists of responsible labour market parties, which represent a large majority of the country's business activities and workforce and act with close interaction with one another.

The efficiency and protection of property provided under Finnish legislation are among the best in the world.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, legislation provides employees with rights to influence their own workplace and their personal work. In Finland, companies put a lot of effort in staff training, development and employee well-being, perceiving these as important competitiveness factors in the global operating environment. As a small,

open and export-led country, Finland has grown accustomed to structural changes in the economy. The labour market parties and public authorities have developed both security systems and incentives that can be used in promoting structural changes in the working life and softening their social impacts for employees.

A lot has been done in recent years to promote gender equality in the working life in Finland. The gap in the employment rates of men and women is the smallest out of all EU countries<sup>27</sup> and women participate in training paid-for by the employer most actively out of all EU countries<sup>28</sup> Exhaustive public day-care services make it possible for both parents to have equal opportunities for participating in the labour market and balancing work and other aspects of life.<sup>29</sup> The Finnish society is work-focused. However, the work-focused nature is not manifested as long workdays, but as a desire to work smartly and productively while applying modern, and in increasing amounts also environmentally friendly, working methods and technologies. As a living environment, Finland is among the cleanest and safest in the world.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> The WEF's Global Competitiveness Report of 2015–16 puts Finland in a global leading position in the stage of development and functionality of the country's institutions. [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/gcr/2015-2016/Global\\_Competitiveness\\_Report\\_2015-2016.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/gcr/2015-2016/Global_Competitiveness_Report_2015-2016.pdf)

Finland ranks 2nd in the World Internal Security & Police Index (WISPI) of 2016. [http://wispiindex.org/sites/default/files/downloadables/WISPI%20Report\\_EN\\_WEB\\_0.pdf](http://wispiindex.org/sites/default/files/downloadables/WISPI%20Report_EN_WEB_0.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> In the WEF's Global Competitiveness Report of 2015–16, Finland ranks first in the world in the strength of property rights and is among the top three for the efficiency of its legal system. [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/gcr/2015-2016/Global\\_Competitiveness\\_Report\\_2015-2016.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/gcr/2015-2016/Global_Competitiveness_Report_2015-2016.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> According to a statistical comparison by Eurostat, Finland had the narrowest gender employment gap among population aged 20–64 years out of all EU countries in 2015. <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7240293/3-26042016-AP-EN.pdf/>

<sup>28</sup> In the European Working Conditions survey of 2010, Finland placed number one in Europe in female employees having undergone training paid-for by employer within the previous 12 months. <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/european-working-conditions-surveys-ewcs>

<sup>29</sup> In WEF's gender gap index of 2015, Finland was rated the country with third highest gender equality in the world. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/economies/#economy=FIN>

<sup>30</sup> In the Environmental Performance Index, which measures, among other things, ecosystem protection and promotion of human health, Finland was ranked first in the world in 2016. [http://epi.yale.edu/sites/default/files/2016EPI\\_Full\\_Report.pdf](http://epi.yale.edu/sites/default/files/2016EPI_Full_Report.pdf)

## 5 Client selection

The working life brand work is aimed at a number of client groups whose wishes and expectations can vary significantly. Therefore, the group decided to prepare a so-called client selection for client prioritisation and focusing of client messages. The selection entails separate examination of each client group and each group has also been divided into four geographical areas: Europe (Germany), North America (USA), Russia and Eastern Asia (China, Japan, India).

At first, the client selection was used to determine the importance of each client defined according to the client group and the geographic area. The following scale was used in the classification: 'extremely important', 'important', 'not very important' and 'unimportant'. Subsequently, it was determined which narrative (skills, cooperation, safety) we wished to communicate to the clients defined as most important. The third planned stage included determining the absolute focus area of the selected narratives. However, this third stage was proven to be difficult to an extent that it was not implemented in practice.

The preparation of the client selection utilised the group's expertise, the expertise of the international network of the Finnish Funding Agency for Innovation Tekes as well as different statistics and studies. For foreign investors, the origin of most foreign capital investments to Finland was taken into account. For foreign companies, countries and regions of origin of the companies with most production and other cooperation with Finnish companies were taken into account. For foreign workforce, the countries and regions of origin of most workforce coming to Finland were taken into account. For foreign consumer clients, it was taken into account what are the most important exporting countries and regions for Finland.

Below is a more detailed analysis of each client group by region (Table 1):

*Foreign investors:* Europe is by far the most important region for Finland. The EU territory alone accounted for over 92 per cent of the direct foreign investments to Finland in 2014.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, as increasing the volume of foreign investments aimed at Finland can be generally considered important for a number of reasons, investors from all of the regions can be considered as at least important clients for the working life brand work.

*Foreign companies:* There is no fully unambiguous view available on how actively Finnish companies conduct production and other cooperation with businesses from other regions. Nevertheless, for our purpose, it can be assumed that the export and import shares of foreign trade statistics give a sufficiently rough overall view on the matter. Based on these statistics, in the few recent years, the share of the EU countries has amounted to over 60 per cent of Finland's foreign trade, while Asia accounted for some 15 per cent, Russia for little short of 10 per cent and North America for almost 10 per cent.<sup>32</sup> For the working life brand work, the importance of the groups was evaluated based on the same principles as used for the investors.

*Foreign workforce:* A clear majority of the employees working in Finland but permanently residing in other countries come from European countries. Russia's share is around 10 per cent, while the shares of Asia and North America are notably smaller.<sup>33</sup> For the working life brand work, Europe can be perceived as the most important origin for foreign workforce.

*Foreign consumer clients:* Groups were determined with the same justifications and principles as with foreign companies.

*Foreign policy makers:* Foreign policy makers were not considered as a group for which the working life brand work would be primarily targeted.

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<sup>31</sup> [http://www.tilastokeskus.fi/til/ssij/2014/ssij\\_2014\\_2015-10-30\\_fi.pdf](http://www.tilastokeskus.fi/til/ssij/2014/ssij_2014_2015-10-30_fi.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> [http://www.tulli.fi/fi/suomen\\_tulli/ulkomaankauppatilastot/grafiikkaa/liitteet/Kuviot\\_2016FI.pdf](http://www.tulli.fi/fi/suomen_tulli/ulkomaankauppatilastot/grafiikkaa/liitteet/Kuviot_2016FI.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> [http://tilastokeskus.fi/artikkelit/2013/art\\_2013-09-23\\_013.html](http://tilastokeskus.fi/artikkelit/2013/art_2013-09-23_013.html)

*Foreign media:* The group did not classify foreign media as primary clients of the working life brand work. However, the media of all regions play an indirectly important role as channels for strengthening the Finnish working life brand in the regions.

*International organisations:* The group also did not classify international organisations as primary clients of the working life brand work. Nevertheless, many of the organisations, such as International Labour Organisation (ILO) and other organisations under the United Nations or World Economic Forum (WEF) are indirectly important channels for reinforcing the Finnish working life brand. This is also the case with organisations linked to the European Communities.

**Table 1. Prioritisation of the clients of working life brand work.**

Regions (countries)/ Foreign client groups	Europe (Germany)	North America (USA)	Russia	Eastern Asia (China, Japan, India)
Investors	Extremely important	Important	Important	Important
Businesses	Extremely important	Important	Important	Important
Workforce	Important	Not very important	Not very important	Not very important
Consumer clients	Extremely important	Important	Important	Important
Policy makers	Not very important	Not very important	Not very important	Not very important
Media	Extremely important	Important	Important	Important
International organisations: Important				

Prioritising the three brand narratives based on different clients proved to be more challenging than prioritising the clients.

*The skills narrative* can be in principle considered the most easily comprehensible and least culturally bound of all the narratives; skills and competences are appreciated in all cultures.

*The cooperation narrative* contains a number of different dimensions, and values such as trust, low amount of divides in the society and close cooperation between different societal actors are not equal or as easily understandable in all cultures as in the Nordic countries.

*Safety* can be considered to be a generally acceptable value regardless of culture. However, according to the safety narrative, safety is guaranteed by factors such as equality, openness and transparency of societal institutions or an active civil society, which are not necessarily perceived to be as highly valued and approved devices for creating safe conditions in contexts outside of the Nordic environment.

In summary, we came to the conclusion that the skills narrative should be considered as a kind of focus area narrative for the working life brand work for all the clients determined 'extremely important' or 'important'. The safety narrative supports this narrative, but should be typically linked to the skills narrative in communications. This also goes for the cooperation narrative.



## 6 Proposal for the future

The group proposes the following measures for strengthening the working life brand in the future:

### **1 Linking the strengthening of the working life brand as part of the Team Finland network activities**

The Team Finland network promotes the success of Finland and Finnish companies abroad. Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Culture form the core of the Team Finland network. Other key actors include publicly funded organisations and foreign branches under the management of these ministries (Finpro, Tekes, Finnvera, Finnfund, Finnpartnership, Industry Investment, Technical Research Centre of Finland, National Board of Patents and Registration of Finland, the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, the Finnish Cultural and Academic Institutes, the Finnish-Russian Chamber of Commerce and the Finnish-Swedish Chamber of Commerce). The Team Finland network brings together state-funded actors promoting the internationalisation of companies, international investments in Finland and Finland's country brand as well as the services they provide. The strong working life brand is well-suited as a factor that can be used to support achieving the aims of the network.

*Proposed measures: The representatives of the Working Life 2020 project and the working life brand group will discuss the matter with representatives of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and Tekes in the Finland Promotion Board as well as with other representatives as needed. The aim is to use these measures to connect the working life brand work as part of the Board's country brand communications.*

## **2 Linking the strengthening of the working life brand as part the Made by Finland concept coordinated by the Association for Finnish Work**

The purpose of the Made by Finland campaign, launched in late 2016, is to help Finns perceive what kind of work takes place in Finland and thus make those living in Finland feel proud of Finnish competence, ignite positive discussion on the competence of Finns and to provide means for the member companies of the Association for Finnish Work to participate in the Finland 100 year of celebrations. The campaign allows shaping brand narratives to a communicative form for both international and Finnish audiences, promoting cooperation with the Team Finland / Finland Promotion Board network, carrying out practical communications based on the narratives in Finland and conducting a study to support the working life brand work among Finnish and foreign target groups. In addition to the Association for Finnish Work, the core actors of the Made by Finland campaign have been planned to include at least the Working Life 2020 project, Tekes, Finnish Institute of Occupational Health and the Finnish Family Business Union.

*Proposed measures: Representatives of the Working Life 2020 project, Tekes, Finnish Institute of Occupational Health and the Finnish Family Business Union will continue their discussions on their participation in the campaign with the Association for Finnish Work to accomplish the inclusion of the working life brand work as a part of the campaign in a planned manner.*

## **3 Linking the work of the working life brand group as part of the communications of the Working Life 2020 project**

*Proposed measures: The preparation group for the Working Life 2020 project will discuss the results of the working life brand work. Based on these discussions, the group's report will be made available as an electronic publication at the project's website, and a Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment press release will be prepared on the work of the working life brand group for the media. The report will also be translated into English. The representatives of the working life brand group will write an article on the results of their work for publication in a national journal. The Working Life 2020 project will produce the necessary materials according to its media plan.*

#### **4 Determining the means of the key actors in the Working Life 2020 project to participate in the working life brand work**

*Proposed measures: The Working Life 2020 project will conduct a questionnaire survey among its core actors, other actors and partners to determine their readiness and practical means to participate in working life brand work in the future as well as the functionality of the different narratives and related needs for development.*

#### **5 Follow-up of the implementation of proposals and working life brand work**

*Proposed measures: The preparation group of the Working Life 2020 project will outline the proposals for the working life brand group and determine how their implementation will be monitored. The outlines of the preparation group will be included in the project's action plan for the year 2017, which will be submitted for the approval of the steering group in January 2017.*

# Good working life as Finland's competitiveness factor

The Working Life 2020 project appointed in 2014 a work group to prepare a proposal on how the Finnish working life brand should be strengthened.

The group highlights why strengthening of the Finnish working life brand is important and who the clients are in the context of the brand. The group has selected three brand attributes and supporting narratives and proposes five measures for the development of the Finnish working life brand for the future.

Printed publications

ISSN 1797-3554

ISBN 978-952-327-174-6

Electronic publications

ISSN 1797-3562

ISBN 978-952-327-175-3

Electronic version: [julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi](http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi)

Publication sales: [julkaisutilaukset.valtioneuvosto.fi](http://julkaisutilaukset.valtioneuvosto.fi)

Printed: Lönnberg Print & Promo, 12/2016

