

# Postdoctoral Careers in Europe: Finland







## Introduction

---

Whether you are in the final stages of your doctorate or have just finished, you will probably be planning your next career move. One of the questions you will be asking yourself is whether to stay in your native country or embark on an academic career abroad. If you decide on the latter, Europe will almost certainly be on your shortlist of possible destinations. This eBook is for postdocs interested in starting or continuing their academic career in Finland.

Finland boasts a distinguished higher education system and, for a small nation, has a reputation for outstanding scientific research. This, together with a high standard of living, excellent working conditions and breathtaking landscape, makes Finland a unique destination for incoming researchers.

In this ebook, you will find out about the Finnish higher education system, and gain valuable insights into funding options, career advancement, the job market and practical ways to get a foot in the door.

## Contents

---

- [The Higher Education System](#)
- [Research and Funding](#)
- [Career Progression](#)
- [Salaries](#)
- [The Job Market](#)
- [Job Application Process](#)
- [Work Permits](#)
- [About this ebook](#)





## Research and Funding

---

Cutting-edge scientific research and a notably intensive publication output characterise the Finnish research landscape. The Finns believe investment in research to be vital to the country's economic success, indicated by the development of the [National Innovation System](#), which seeks to boost Finland's international participation in research as a cornerstone of modern society.

In 2014, Finnish research and development expenditure was around €6.5 billion, two thirds of which was provided by the private sector. The research system is relatively decentralised, with the majority of activities based in universities, UAPs and [18 government research institutes](#). Funding is provided via the Finnish Research and Innovation Council and the Strategic Research Council, both branches of the [Academy of Finland](#), a national organisation which provides specific grants and fellowships. The Academy also funds the successful [Centres of Excellence](#) programme, which facilitates top level research and supports scientists at all levels of their careers.

## Career Progression

---

One of the standout differences of Finnish academia is the absence of Assistant or Associate Professor roles, although these terms are gradually being introduced. An academic career can follow either research or teaching paths, but is generally a combination of the two. The first position would be as a postdoc researcher, which is usually a temporary role of up to four years. Following the postdoc stage are the roles of full-time teacher, university researcher/lecturer (broadly akin to a tenured Associate Professor) and Professor (permanent). All positions involve around 40% to 50% teaching. Researchers usually work under temporary contracts for a number of years before applying for a permanent or tenured position, if one becomes available.

## The Higher Education System

---

Finland's higher education system consists of [14 universities](#) and [24 Universities of Applied Sciences \(UAP\)](#). The University of Helsinki is the highest ranking institution, both for teaching and research. Higher education is regulated by the Ministry of Education and Culture, although Finnish universities enjoy significant autonomy over their finances and are classed as corporations according to public law.

Study options consist of three-year undergraduate degrees followed by a two-year Master's degree. PhDs take around four years to complete and are fully funded; doctoral students are either employed by the institution or receive funding from external sources. Tuition is currently free to all students, although fees for non EU/EEA students are to be introduced in 2017, along with a range of generous scholarship options to help alleviate this measure.

Finnish is the main language of tuition and research, and the country lags slightly behind its Northern European neighbours in the number English-taught courses on offer. However, Finns speak a high level of English, and more international programmes are being introduced each year. Higher education in Finland is funded by the state, but universities are also expected to raise their own funds from external sources.





# Salaries

Academic salaries are based on a national system set by Finnish universities, and are decided upon according to a fixed pay scale and performance-related pay. Institutions offer generous holiday packages (up to 6 weeks) and some of the most flexible working hours in Europe. However, those on temporary contracts may not experience these perks.

## Average academic salaries in Finland (gross monthly salary):

- Research Assistant (PhD students): €2,290
- Postdoc researcher: €3,200
- Full time teacher: €2,520
- University Researcher/Lecturer: €3,600
- Professor: €5,200

## Living and working in Finland

Although the cost of living in Finland is considered high, it is lower than other Scandinavian countries such as Denmark and Sweden.

To find out more about living and working in Finland, visit our country profile [here](#).

# The Job Market

A lack of permanent positions and limited upward mobility means that the Finnish academic job market is seen as a fairly closed shop. However, universities and research institutes are committed to employing foreign researchers through increased funding and the availability of teaching and research in English. There are now around 3,000 foreign teachers and researchers in Finland, and this figure is increasing by around 15% year on year. Many more possibilities exist outside of higher education, and the major industries investing in top research talent are electronics, agriculture, engineering and manufacturing, chemicals, healthcare and medicine. You can find more information about Finnish companies, industry and research institutes [here](#).

The ability to win both public and private grants is a major consideration when hiring academic staff. Being able to speak some Finnish would also be a distinct advantage, although not essential. As vacancies are often filled before they are advertised, networking in Finland is key to job success. You can start your job search at [jobs.ac.uk](#).



# Job Application Process

Individual universities and research institutes set their own hiring and employment criteria. However, job applications generally require a CV/resume, application form (usually online), cover letter, publications list, copies of qualifications in English and a recommendation letter or references. You may be asked to provide more detailed information for positions higher up the ranks. It is acceptable to complete your application in English if your Finnish is lacking.

The Finnish resume is much like the UK/US model, although you are advised to keep both the resume and cover letter brief - showiness and boasting would be frowned upon. Shortlisting of candidates is merit-based and the choice of who will be interviewed is made on the basis of research publications and teaching experience. Finnish academia is weighted towards teaching, so you will be expected to showcase your teaching skills in both the application and interview.

**Application Tip:** Should you be invited to interview, again be serious and sincere. Exaggeration would be seen as being tantamount to lying in Finland.





## Work Permit

---

If you are a citizen of an EU/EEA member state, you are not required to have a work permit for Finland. However, there are exceptions to this rule – those from ‘newer’ EU member countries may need to register at a local employment office.

Non-EU citizens will generally need to apply for a ‘residence permit for an employed person’ although some professions are exempt according to agreements between the Finnish government and certain countries. You can out more information at the [Finnish Immigration Service](#).

## About this ebook

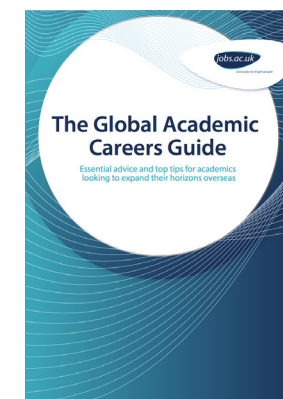
---

‘Postdoctoral Careers in Finland’ has been compiled by jobs.ac.uk as part of the ‘Postdoctoral Careers in Europe’ series, helping you take your first step into the European academic world.

Europe is one of the most popular destinations for freshly-minted doctorates. Ancient and prestigious universities, excellent funding opportunities and diverse research networks attract thousands of international students, postdocs and academics to Europe each year. Add to this the prevalent use of English as a working language and a commitment to international cooperation in research which is unparalleled worldwide, Europe has much to offer aspiring academics.

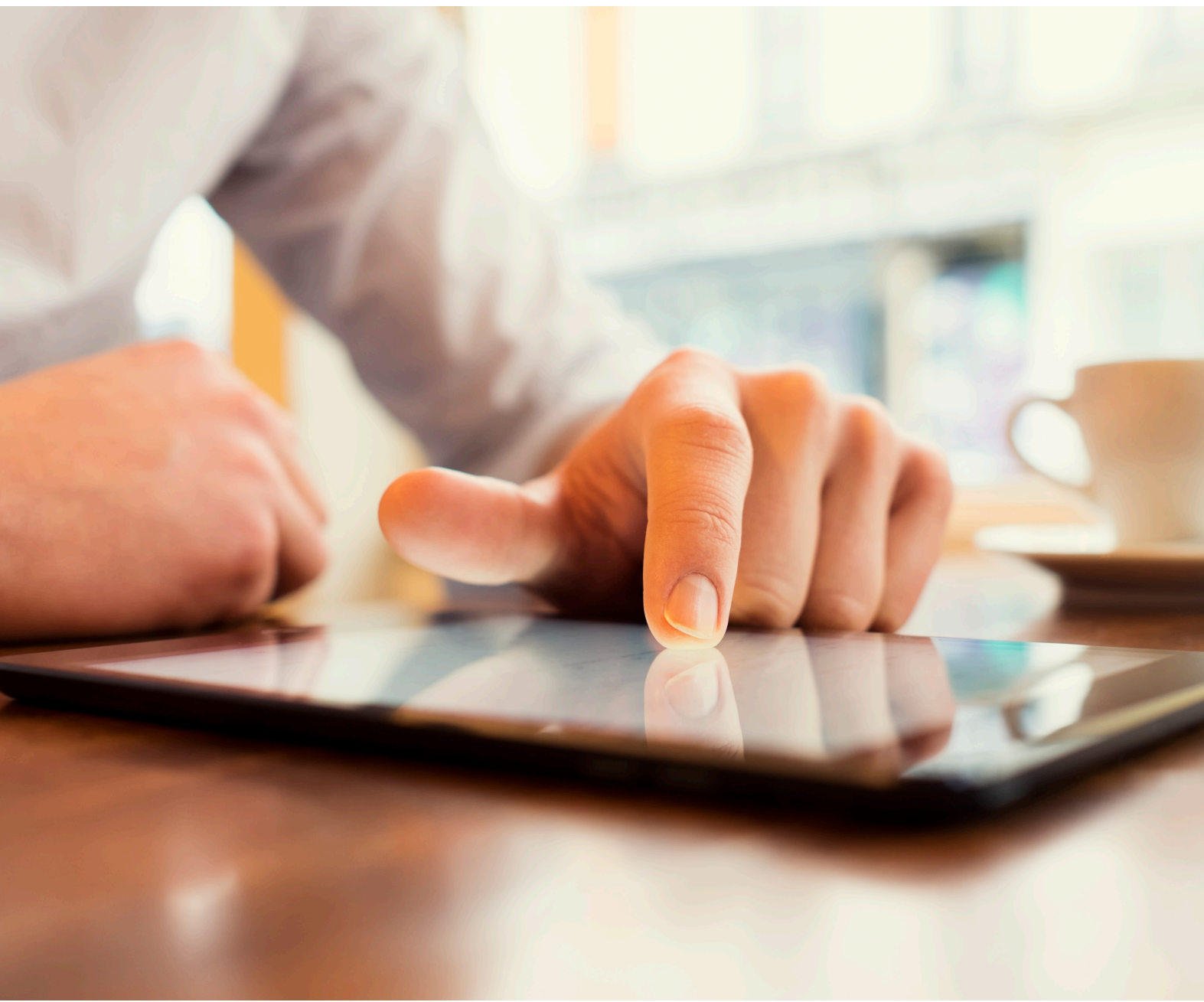
Combined, the European Union member states invest almost €300 billion in research and development each year. There is a strong tradition of cross-border collaboration, providing a unique research perspective as well as offering ample opportunities to work with colleagues across the continent. Whether you choose a job in a European university, research institute or company, you will experience fantastic research facilities, generous funding and progressive working conditions.

## Recommended reading:



### The Global Academic Careers Guide

Essential advice and top tips for academics looking to expand their horizons overseas. This ebook will tell you more about the scale of the new global market, help you consider the pros and cons of seeking employment outside your nation of origin, and give you important information that will improve your success rate if you do decide to give working abroad a try.





From teaching and research to  
managerial and administration,  
instantly search thousands of great jobs  
worldwide!

Fantastic UK and international employers – universities,  
research institutes, colleges, charities and commercial  
organisations

- Get the latest jobs sent directly to you
- Explore careers advice articles for CV help, interview tips and more

Start your job search today at: [\*\*www.jobs.ac.uk\*\*](http://www.jobs.ac.uk)

Follow us on:

