

Competence-Based Recruitment Project

Finnish Language Practice & Networking Survey
Analysis Report

International Professionals — Integration & Language Support

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Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a survey conducted as part of the Competence-Based Recruitment Project in the Kuopio region, in collaboration with Talent Hub Eastern Finland, Savonia University of Applied Sciences, and the ESR+ project. The shared goal is to support people with international backgrounds by improving their access to employment, strengthening Finnish language skills, and fostering connections between individuals, employers, educational institutions, and local organisations.

A total of 93 valid responses were analysed from 95 submitted surveys. The findings reveal strong demand for structured support, significant language barriers, and clear preferences for how and when activities should be delivered. The following key findings form the basis for the recommendations in Section 8.

Key Findings at a Glance:

96%	expressed interest in participating (80% Yes, 16% Maybe; only 4% declined)
72%	feel "Not confident at all" or only "Slightly confident" speaking Finnish
63%	cite understanding spoken Finnish as their #1 language challenge
81%	are job seekers (42%) or students (39%)
52%	prefer weekly activities — evenings and weekends are most convenient
98%	expressed interest in meeting guest speakers from employers and organisations

Survey Methodology

The survey was distributed via a public web link to international professionals in the Kuopio region between February and March 2026. Printed copies of the survey materials were also distributed to places where international professionals are frequent, such as the Työnavigaattori office, Kompassi, etc.

Metric	Count	Rate
Survey opened by respondents	227	—
Started responding	111	49% of those who opened
Submitted responses	95	86% of those who started
Total respondents used in analysis	93	—

Note The 86% completion rate among those who started is strong. The gap between those who opened (227) and those who started (111) may reflect passive interest or link sharing beyond the immediate target audience.

1. Respondent Profile

1.1 Current Situation

Job seekers represent the single largest group (42%), followed closely by students (39%). Together they account for 81% of respondents, indicating a strong need for professional integration and job-readiness support. Only 15% of respondents are currently employed.

CURRENT SITUATION OF RESPONDENTS

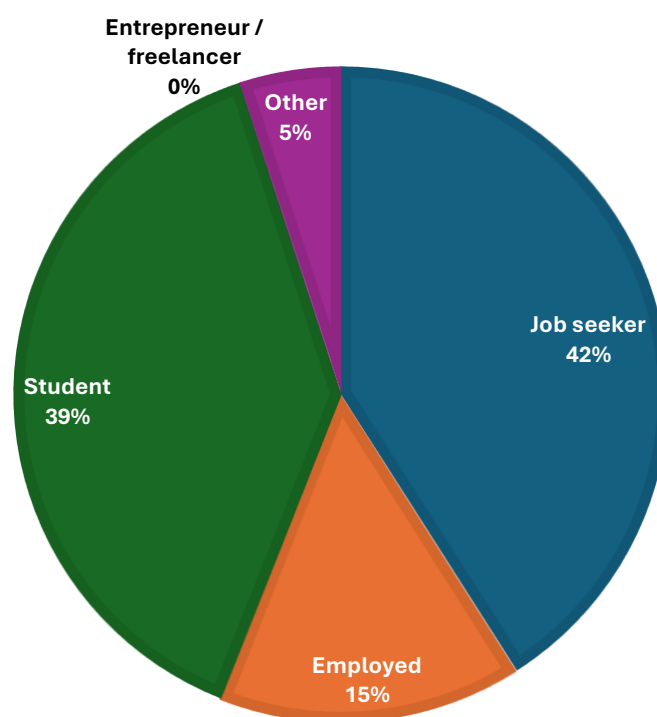


Figure 1 Respondents by current employment or study situation.

Note The spread across all groups — including the 19% who have lived in Finland for more than 5 years — shows that integration support is needed both for recent arrivals and longer-term residents who remain structurally excluded from the labour market.

1.2 Time Spent in Finland

Respondents span a wide range of residency durations. Over a third (34%) have lived in Finland for less than a year, while 19% have been here for more than five years.

Duration	Count	Share
Less than 1 year	32	34%
1–3 years	30	32%
3–5 years	15	16%
More than 5 years	18	19%

2. Finnish Language Challenges

2.1 Language Level

Most respondents are at beginner level. Over 61% identify as Beginners (A1–A2) and 24% as Intermediate (B1–B2). Only 7% report Advanced proficiency (C1+), while 8% are unsure or have no Finnish at all.

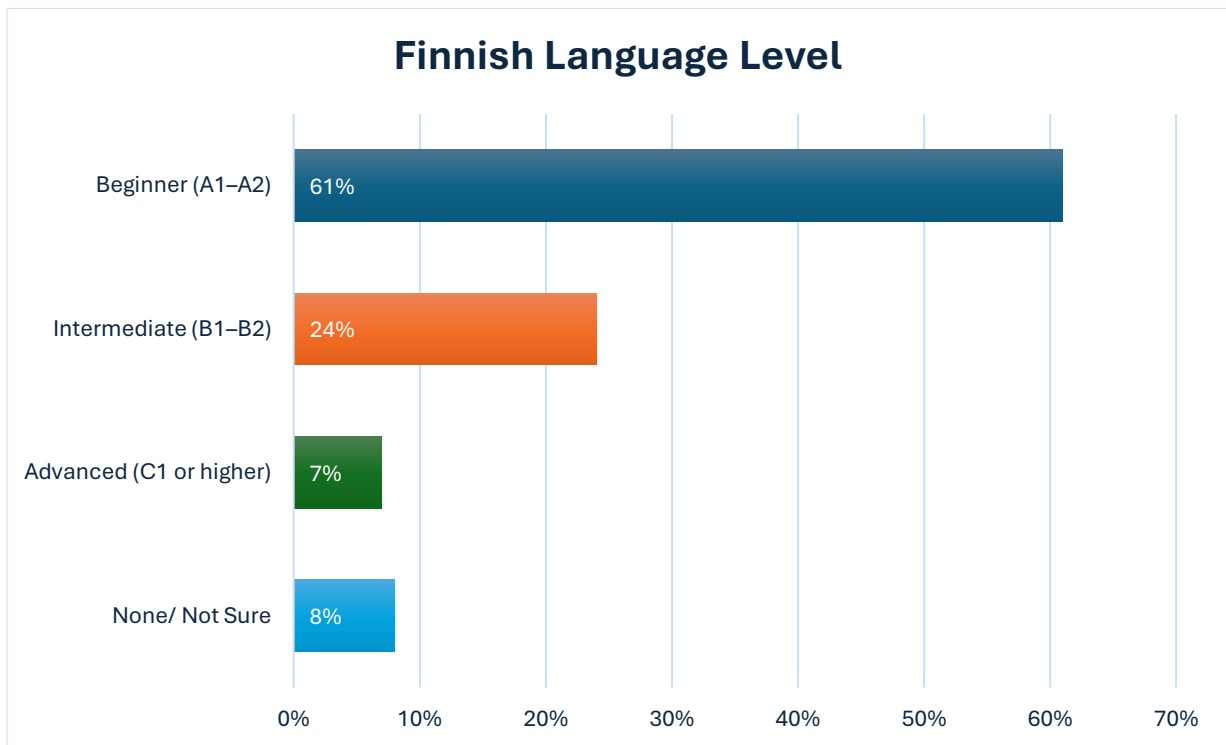


Figure 2 Self-reported Finnish language proficiency level.

2.2 Most Challenging Situations

Respondents could select multiple options. Understanding spoken Finnish topped the list (63%), reflecting the difficulty of comprehending native speech at natural speed with local accents. This was followed by everyday conversations, work-related communication, and job search situations.

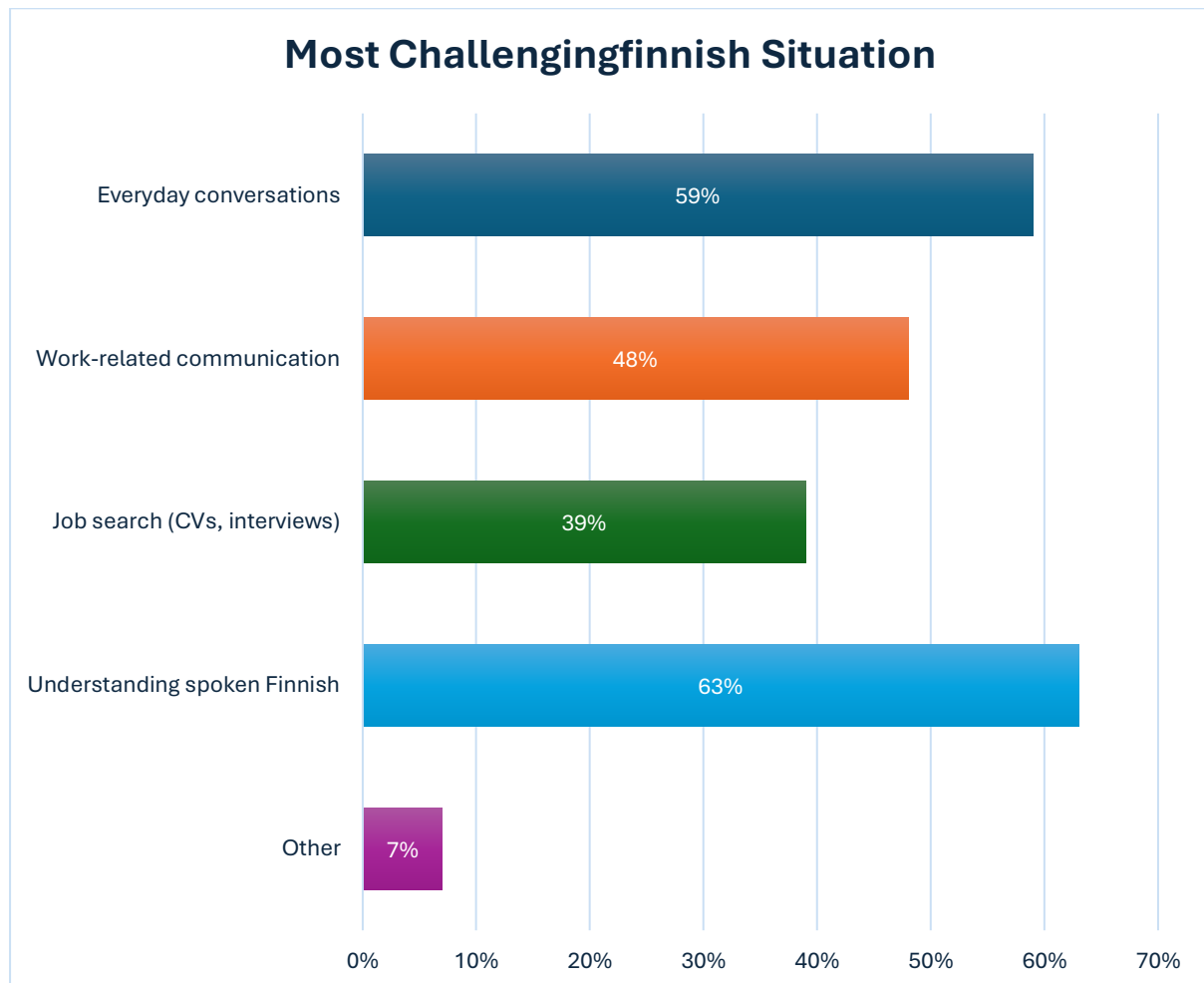


Figure 3 Most challenging Finnish language situations (multi-select).

2.3 Confidence Speaking Finnish

Self-reported confidence is consistently low. Fewer than 13% feel 'Confident' or 'Very confident', while 72% fall in the lower confidence range (Not confident at all: 29%; Slightly confident: 45%). This gap between language level and confidence suggests speaking anxiety is also a significant barrier.



Figure 4 Self-reported confidence in speaking Finnish.

Note Even Intermediate-level learners often rate their confidence as low, suggesting that speaking opportunities in a low-stakes, supportive environment could have an outsized positive effect.

3. Interest in Support Activities

3.1 Overall Interest

Interest in participating in support activities is overwhelmingly positive. Only 4 respondents (4%) indicated they would not be interested; those who declined tended to already have sufficient language skills, time constraints, or preferred independent learning.

Response	Count	Share
Yes	76	80%
Maybe	15	16%
No	4	4%

3.2 Preferred Activity Types

Respondents could select multiple formats. Job search workshops edged ahead (67%) with themed discussions close behind (66%). Guest visitors were also highly desired (60%), reflecting strong demand for direct employer connections.

Activity Type	Count	% of Respondents
Job search workshops	61	67%
Themed discussions (work, everyday life, hobbies)	60	66%
Guest visitors (employers, organisations)	55	60%
Games and interactive exercises	38	42%
Picture cards and visual activities	34	37%
Other	9	10%

3.3 Finnish Topics to Practice

Everyday practical situations dominate topic preferences (78%). Job search and career development comes in second (70%), directly reflecting the high proportion of job seekers and students.

Topic	Count	% of Respondents
Everyday situations (shopping, healthcare, public services)	71	78%

Topic	Count	% of Respondents
Job search and career development	64	70%
Hobbies and interests	45	49%
Other	5	5%

4. Scheduling Preferences

4.1 Preferred Frequency

A clear majority (52%) prefer weekly activities. Twice a month is next at 30%, indicating a demand for regular, consistent engagement rather than one-off events.

Frequency	Count	Share
Weekly	47	52%
Twice a month	27	30%
Once a month	14	15%
Other	3	3%

4.2 Preferred Time of Day

Evenings (17:00–20:00) are by far the most popular slot (64%), followed by weekends (43%). Morning and afternoon sessions each attracted 24%. This reflects the daytime commitments of students and job seekers, who together make up over 80% of respondents.

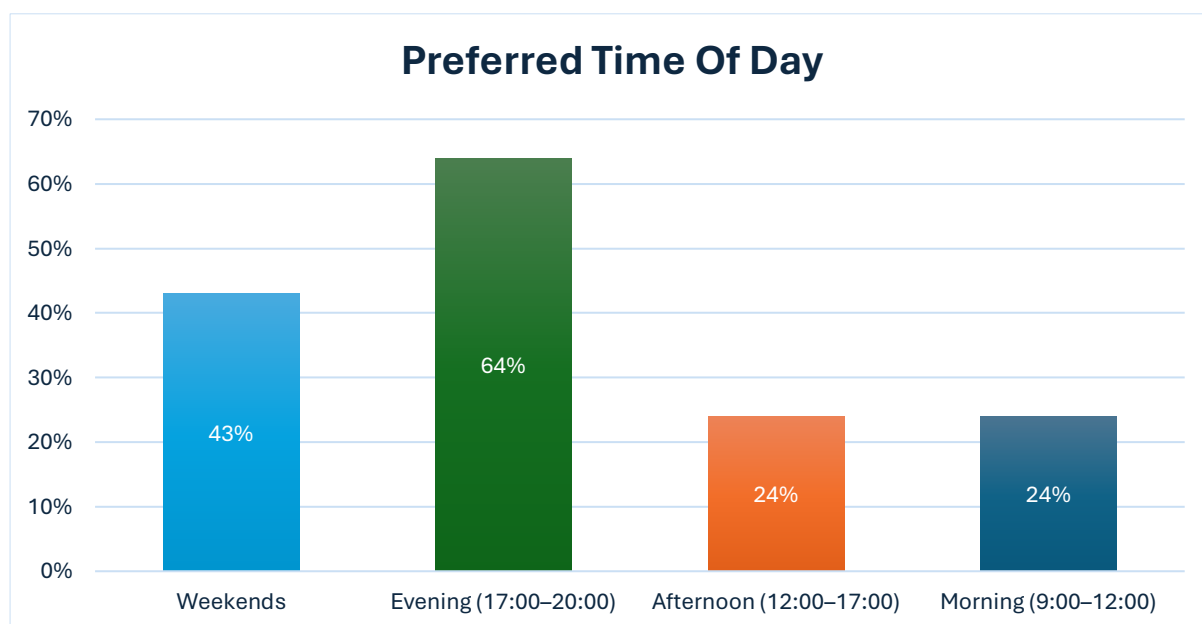


Figure 5 Preferred time of day for activities (multi-select).

Note Evening and weekend scheduling is not merely a preference — for the majority of participants it is a practical necessity. Daytime-only programming would structurally exclude a significant share of the target audience.

5. Motivation & Guest Speakers

5.1 What Motivates Participation

Improving Finnish language skills is the top motivator (83%). Networking for work or studies is a very close second (81%), followed by increasing confidence in everyday life (61%) and learning about Finnish working life (58%).

Motivator	Count	% of Respondents
Improving Finnish language skills	75	83%
Networking for work or studies	73	81%
Increasing confidence in everyday life	55	61%
Learning about working life in Finland	52	58%
Meeting new people	50	56%
Other	5	6%

5.2 Interest in Guest Speakers

An overwhelming 98% (Yes + Maybe) expressed interest in meeting guest speakers such as employers, educational institutions, and organisations. Only 2 respondents (2%) said no.

Response	Count	Share
Yes	73	81%
Maybe	15	17%
No	2	2%

Note The near-universal interest in guest speakers presents a high-value, low-cost opportunity. Even a single employer visit per month would provide direct networking exposure and signal to participants that the programme is connected to real employment pathways.

6. Cross-Tabulation Analysis

This section examines how responses differ across the three main groups: job seekers, students, and employed individuals.

6.1 Finnish Language Confidence by Situation

Students show slightly higher rates of low confidence than job seekers. Employed respondents, while still mostly in the lower confidence bands, are more likely to report moderate or high confidence — possibly due to daily workplace language exposure.

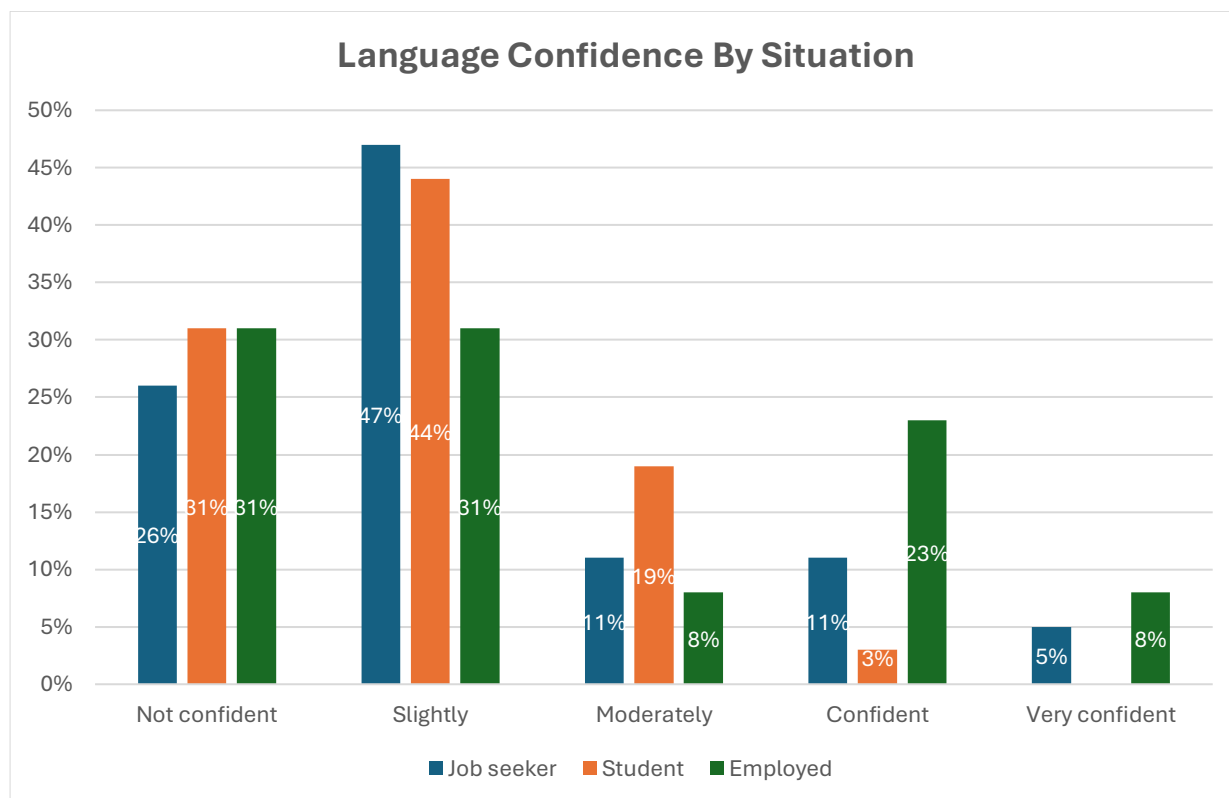


Figure 6 Finnish language confidence by respondent situation.

	Not confident	Slightly	Moderately	Confident	Very confident
Job seeker	26%	47%	11%	11%	5%
Student	31%	44%	19%	3%	0%
Employed	31%	31%	8%	23%	8%

6.2 Preferred Activities by Situation

Job search workshops are far more popular with students (75%) than with employed respondents (31%). Students are also most likely to prefer games and interactive activities, while employed respondents show lower overall activity preference — perhaps due to time constraints.

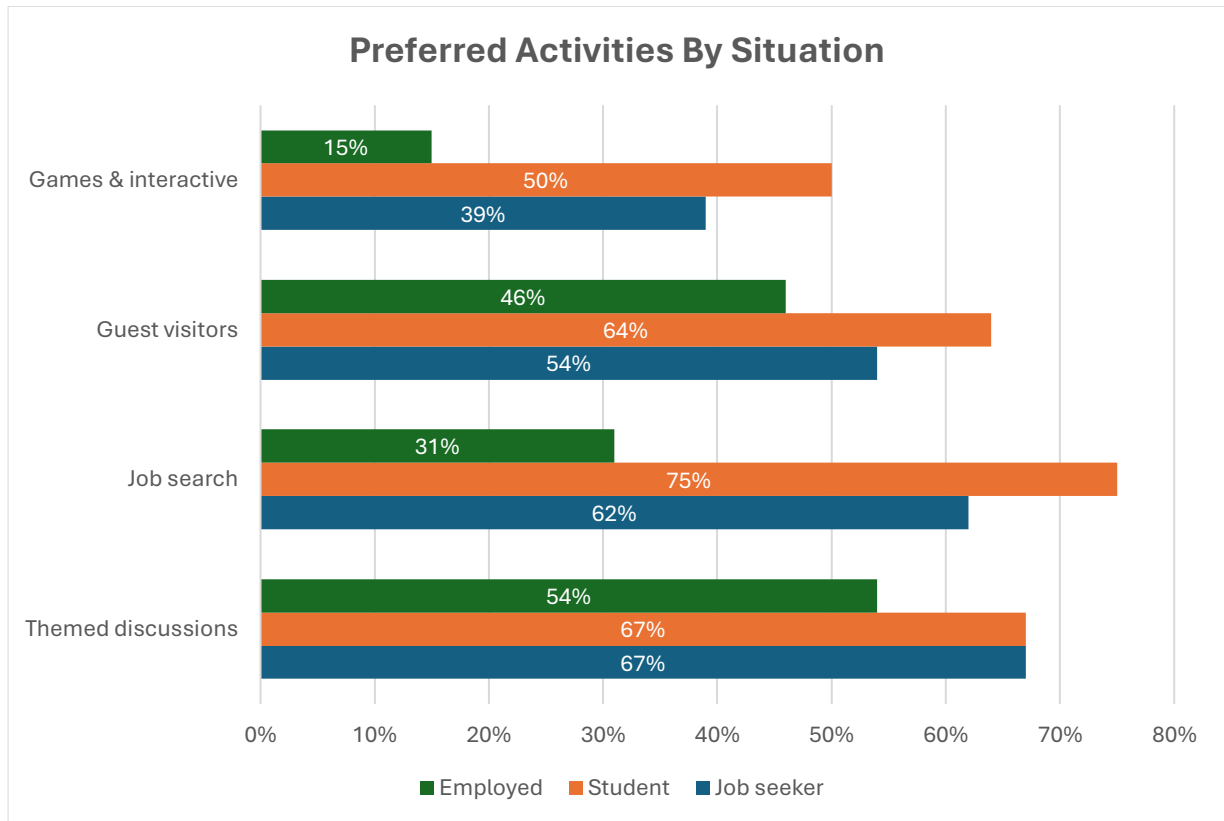


Figure 7 Preferred activity types by respondent situation.

Situation	Themed discussions	Job search	Guest visitors	Games & interactive
Job seeker	67%	62%	54%	39%
Student	67%	75%	64%	50%
Employed	54%	31%	46%	15%

6.3 Key Differences Summary

- Students are most enthusiastic across all activity types and show the least confidence in Finnish.
- Job seekers prioritise job search content and networking, consistent with their immediate employment goals.
- Employed respondents have higher (but still limited) language confidence and show less demand for structured activities — lighter-touch, flexible offerings may suit this group best.

7. Selected Open-Ended Responses

This section presents the most meaningful open-text submissions from the survey, organised by theme. Responses containing hate speech or irrelevant content have been excluded.

7.1 Language Barrier as a Two-Way Issue

One respondent reframed the language challenge in a way that stands out from the rest of the dataset:

"When you finally understand that the problem is occurring from the Finnish side and not from internationals. You literally described situations where Finns don't cooperate with international people."

Respondent — Finnish Language Challenges (open text)

Note This response points to a need for programming that goes beyond one-directional language instruction. Building mutual awareness among Finnish employers and community members would address a gap that no amount of Finnish classes alone can fix.

7.2 Demand for Practical & Social Activities

When asked about activity formats, respondents suggested formats that mix informal social outings with structured professional content:

"Evening trips to bowling alley, karaoke bar, sports bar, Puijo Tower etc."

Respondent — Activity Suggestion

"Networking with actual staff from companies"

Respondent — Activity Suggestion

"Easily accessible Finnish courses and phonetics exercises"

Respondent — Activity Suggestion (translated from Russian)

Note Social outings alongside structured learning could improve engagement and retention, especially for participants who find formal programming intimidating. Phonetics and pronunciation support is a gap not captured by the main survey questions but mentioned repeatedly in open text.

7.3 Underemployment & Skills Recognition

Two responses from the motivations field surface deeper systemic concerns that programme design should take seriously:

"Finding a job that actually aligns with my skills instead of working for bare minimum and wasting my potential."

Respondent — Motivation

"Seeing actual diversity in the organizing teams and in the invited employers' companies."

Respondent — Motivation

Note Beyond language and networking, respondents feel their qualifications are underutilised. Programming that actively connects international professionals with employers who value their full skill set — and that reflects diversity in its own delivery teams — could address this deeper frustration and build genuine trust in the programme.

7.4 Sector-Specific and Citizenship Pathway Needs

"A quicker path to citizenship."

Respondent — Professional Development

"Forestry engineer."

Respondent — indicating desire for sector-specific Finnish language training

Note Generic integration programmes may not address specialised needs such as sector-specific vocabulary or navigating citizenship processes. The programme could add value by offering targeted referrals or occasional themed sessions for specific professional fields.

8. Key Recommendations

Based on survey findings and open-text analysis, the following eight recommendations are proposed for programme design and delivery. Each is grounded directly in respondent data.

- 1** **Prioritise Evening and Weekend Sessions**
64% prefer evenings (17:00–20:00); weekends are also popular (43%). Daytime sessions should be secondary, optional offerings only.
- 2** **Offer Weekly Programming**
52% prefer weekly activities. Consistent sessions support language habit formation and community building far better than monthly events.
- 3** **Balance Language Practice with Job Search Support**
Job search workshops (67%) and themed discussions (66%) are equally popular. Alternate between conversational Finnish practice and career-focused content such as CV writing and interview preparation.
- 4** **Invite Employer and Organisational Guest Speakers**
98% of respondents said yes or maybe to guest speakers. This creates direct networking opportunities and is a key motivator for attendance.
- 5** **Focus on Spoken Finnish, Pronunciation, and Everyday Situations**
Understanding spoken Finnish is the #1 challenge (63%). Feature listening exercises, real-life dialogues, role-play, and phonetics exercises. Include healthcare and doctor’s visits as practice scenarios.
- 6** **Differentiate Content by Participant Situation**
Students and job seekers have distinct needs. Consider tailored tracks or parallel-strand sessions to serve both groups effectively.
- 7** **Include Informal Social Activities**
Open-text responses reveal appetite for informal outings (bowling, karaoke, cultural trips). Social events increase belonging and complement language learning.
- 8** **Ensure Diverse and Representative Programme Teams**
Respondents explicitly highlighted the importance of seeing diversity reflected in organising teams and invited employers. This builds trust and signals authentic inclusion.

Appendix: Full Summary Statistics

All quantitative survey results consolidated for reference. Percentages for multi-select questions are calculated against total respondents (n = 93).

Category	Response	Count	Share (%)
Location	Kuopio	85	90%
Location	Northern Savo (outside Kuopio)	5	5%
Location	Other	5	5%
Current Situation	Job seeker	39	42%
Current Situation	Student	37	39%
Current Situation	Employed	14	15%
Current Situation	Other	5	5%
Time in Finland	Less than 1 year	32	34%
Time in Finland	1–3 years	30	32%
Time in Finland	3–5 years	15	16%
Time in Finland	More than 5 years	18	19%
Finnish Level	Beginner (A1–A2)	57	61%
Finnish Level	Intermediate (B1–B2)	22	24%
Finnish Level	Advanced (C1+)	7	8%
Finnish Level	None / Not Sure	7	8%
Confidence	Not confident at all	27	29%
Confidence	Slightly confident	42	45%
Confidence	Moderately confident	13	14%
Confidence	Confident / Very confident	12	13%
Interest in Activities	Yes	76	80%

Category	Response	Count	Share (%)
Interest in Activities	Maybe	15	16%
Interest in Activities	No	4	4%
Preferred Frequency	Weekly	47	52%
Preferred Frequency	Twice a month	27	30%
Preferred Frequency	Once a month	14	15%
Preferred Frequency	Other	3	3%
Time of Day	Evening (17:00–20:00)	57	64%
Time of Day	Weekends	38	43%
Time of Day	Morning (9:00–12:00)	21	24%
Time of Day	Afternoon (12:00–17:00)	21	24%
Guest Speakers	Yes	73	81%
Guest Speakers	Maybe	15	17%
Guest Speakers	No	2	2%

Note One respondent in each cross-tabulation analysis (Section 6) was excluded due to an 'Other' situational category not covered by the three main groups.