



Report on the employment of disabled people in European countries

Country: Finland
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Background:

The [Academic Network of European Disability experts](#) (ANED) was established by the European Commission in 2008 to provide scientific support and advice for its disability policy Unit. In particular, the activities of the Network will support the future development of the EU Disability Action Plan and practical implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People.

This country report has been prepared as input for the *Thematic report on the implementation of EU Employment Strategy in European countries with reference to equality for disabled people*.

The purpose of the report ([Terms of Reference](#)) is to review national implementation of the European Employment Strategy from a disability equality perspective, and to provide the Commission with useful evidence in support of disability policy mainstreaming. More specifically, the report will review implementation of EU Employment Strategy and the PROGRESS initiative with reference to policy implementation evidence from European countries, including the strategies addressed in the EU Disability Action Plan (such as flexicurity and supported employment).

The first version of the report was published in 2008. This is the second version of the report updated with information available up to November 2009.



Summary of changes since 2008

New quantitative data:

There are reported to be 43 534 disabled people in the public labour market. Their impairments are: physical disabilities (35 %), mental health disorders (23 %) respiratory diseases (10 %) and others (32 %). These percentages are estimates (Vates-säätiö 2009). This latest quantitative information is very significant because it shows that the employment rate of this group decreased by 4,4 % between 2000-2008. New quantitative data is produced every month by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy and the latest report (July/2009) shows that 4029 persons had subsidised employment in July 2009 and these usually are disabled people. Table 1 provides details:

Table 1.

SUBSIDISED EMPLOYMENT July 2009		7/2009	7/2008	Change in number of persons	%
1.	Employment with the State	1461	1470	-9	-0,6
2.	Employment with municipalities	6817	7596	-779	-10,3
3.	Employment in the private sector	24290	26206	-1916	-7,3
1-3	Total employment subsidies	32568	35272	-2704	-7,7
4.	Labour market training	21329	20026	1303	6,5
5.	Trainee work with labour market support/coaching for work	8289	7604	685	9,0
6.	In job alternation places ¹	6298	7952	-1654	-20,8
1-6	Total measures	68484	70854	-2370	-3,3

The trend seems to be that subsidised work places have decreased, but labour market training and similar activities have increased.

New policy changes:

Disabled people's employment had a 36 million euro allowance in the budget of Finland's government in 2008 (see Valtion talousarvioesitys 2008, http://budjetti.vm.fi/indox/tae/2008/frame_2008.html). The long-term process of developing intermediate labour markets is a contemporary policy issue of the Comprehensive Reform of Social Protection (Sata)-Committee (Vogt 2009). Details of this committee's work are provided in the Annex.

The Act on personal assistance extends assistance to work places. This is also covered in more detail in the Annex.

New research evidence:

Parrukoski, Sanna & Karjalainen, Jouko: Tietoja vammaisten työllisyydestä ja toimeentulosta. Helsinki: Terveystieteiden tutkimuskeskus, 2009. (Knowledge on employment and livelihood of disabled people) <http://www.koyhyyskirjoitukset.org/alustuksia/20092/Tilastoja%20vammaisten%20k%F6yhydest%E4.doc>

¹ This means people who have jobs where they are standing in for someone taking a period of leave from work. "In job alternation places" is an official category of the Ministry of Employment and the Economy.



This report shows that only 15-20 % of disabled people have a paid job compared with a rate for the whole population of about 70 %. (The percentage of disabled people who have a paid job varies in statistics because it is not calculated consistently. The Ministry of Employment and Economy and Statistics Finland calculate these rates differently.) This situation has been very stable for many years. Disabled peoples' gross incomes are 2/3 lower than that for the whole population. In 2005, 22 % of disabled people lived in poverty.

Vuorela, Mika (2008): Työtä haluaville uusia mahdollisuuksia työhön. Selvityshenkilö Mika Vuorelan selvitys. Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö 10.3.2008. (New job possibilities for people who want to work) http://www.tem.fi/files/18750/Vuorela_loppuraportti.pdf

The main findings of this report are that about 30000 disabled persons could be employed in open labour markets. 6000 of them could be in full-time jobs and the rest of them in part-time jobs.

Suikkanen, Asko (2009): Selvitys välityömarkkinoista. Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden tutkimuskeskus (Report of intermediate labour markets) http://www.stm.fi/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=41254&name=DLFE-4806.pdf

This report on intermediate labour markets is part of the social security reform committee's recommendations. The report suggests companionship policy programmes, social policy reforms to identify risks i.e. to pre-empt risks, different kinds of contracts of employment and consideration of a conventional contract of employment as not a norm. A new policy of taxation, deeper social risk analysis, strengthening adult education and life-long learning, better connections between rehabilitation activities and the realities of working life, more multidisciplinary research and follow-up by other EU countries are further recommendations.

The economic crisis:

Detailed data on this issue and the employment of disabled people are not available yet, but the trend seems to be that subsidised work places have decreased and labour market training and similar activities have increased within a year.



PART ONE: GENERAL EVIDENCE

1.1 Academic publications and research reports (key points)

Only a few people with disabilities are at work in Finland. This blocks them out of working life and out of full citizenship. However every third handicapped person is willing to work. About 40 percent of handicapped persons consider that employment is very important for human well-being. About 30 percent of disabled persons have an excellent or good working capacity. More than a fifth of handicapped persons have a permanent job. If one takes voluntary work into account, half of handicapped persons have worked during the last 24 months. There are therefore a lot of unused employment resources among handicapped persons. (Nummelin 2008; Holm & Hopponen 2007; Linnakangas et al. 2006).

Finnish authorities on disability are interested in supported employment (SE) and supported workers are satisfied with their jobs - in spite of the fact that the development of SE is slow and there are only few workplaces for those who need intensive and on-going support. It is common that a person gets support mainly at the beginning of their employment, not continually. The payments are usually very small in SE. The lowest wage per hour was 0.67 Euros and the mean income per hour was 4.5 Euros in 2001. Usually, persons with diagnosed learning disabilities have the lowest wage levels. The other main group in SE are persons with diagnoses of mental illnesses. They usually receive minimum wages. A survey of the opinions on the basic values of SE has shown that job coaches regarded inclusion, self-determination and meaningful employment as important values. However, they are doubtful about accepting the principle of employment of all willing, regardless the degree of disability. (Pirttimaa, 2003)

The main findings of a recent report are there are that only 15-20 % of disabled people who have a paid job compared with 70% of the whole population. This disparity has been very stable for many years. Their gross incomes are 2/3 lower than those of the whole population. In 2005 22 % of disabled people lived in poverty. (Parrukoski & Karjalainen 2009).

A report on intermediate labour markets is part of the social security reform committee's recommendations. The report suggests: companionship policy programmes, social policy reforms to identify risks i.e. to preempt risks, different kinds of contracts of employment with consideration of a conventional contract of employment as not a norm, a new policy of taxation, deeper social risk analysis, strengthening of adult education and life-long learning, better connection of rehabilitation activities to working life realities, more multidisciplinary research and follow-up of other EU countries. (Suikkanen 2009).

As a development proposal for good policy and practice, more tolerant attitudes and updated legislation are needed after piloting of good projects of employment of disabled people, e.g. social enterprises. This proposal also includes new research paradigms like action research among people with disabilities and critical studies of employment structures.

1.2 Employment statistics and trends (key points)

Comparison of employment rates between disabled and non-disabled people shows that 20 percent of people with disabilities have paid work and 70 percent of all people have a paid work according to the Ministry of Labour and the Statistical yearbook of Finnish Social Insurance Institute. However these percentages are not necessarily as valid as they should be, because the statistical data on employment rates of disabled people has not been gathered systematically. These rates are based on individual studies (see also Ylipaavalniemi 2005). However the following table 1 shows the increase of disabled people who are at work in age group 25-64 between 2002-2006 (about 221 000 persons). The data shown here has been gathered from several sources, because there is not any longitudinal statistical data focused on disabled people's employment.

Table 1 Disabled people at work 2002-2006

	2002	2006	Difference
Women	16% N=35400 (estimated)	23% N=50800 (estimated)	+7% 15400 (estimated)
Men	18% N=39800 (estimated)	24% N=53000 (estimated)	+4% 13200 (estimated)
Total	17% (average) N=75200 (estimated)	24% (average) N=103800 (estimated)	+7% (average) N=28600 (estimated)

Sources: Eurostat 2003; 2008; Holm & Hopponen 2007; Linnakangas et al 2006.

The comparison between disabled men and women in 2002-2006 shows that 18 percent of disabled men and 16 percent of disabled women had a permanent job in 2002. By 2006 there was a subtle increase in the numbers working. A third of disabled people who have work are in the age group 35-44 and usually they have acquired rather than congenital impairments.

An overview of statistics shows that there is a lack of employment data on disabled persons. There is not a systematic data collection of disabled people's employment in Finland and even Eurostat is focused on integration into working life. On the other hand, the stigmatisation of disabled people's employment is a partial exclusion. All labour market policy efforts concern disabled people too, providing they do not receive disability pensions. Some structural reasons are worth mentioning. Finnish welfare services are not based on the idea that disabled persons would earn their livelihood through work. Their livelihoods are based on disability pensions. If the any work is paid for, the pension is abolished. In the worst situations disabled persons form a group for inexpensive labour.

Recently there were reported to be 43 534 disabled people in the public labour market. Their impairments were: physical disabilities (35 %), mental health disorders (23 %) respiratory diseases (10 %) and others (32 %). These percentages are estimates (Vates-säätiö 2009). This latest quantitative information is very significant because it shows that the employment rate of this group decreased by 4,4 % between 2000-2008. New quantitative data is produced every month by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy and the latest report (July/2009) shows that 4029 persons had subsidised employment in July 2009. These people usually are disabled people.

Table 2. Contemporary data (2008) on the employment of disabled people

Year: 2008	Absolute? (N)	Percentage (%)	Change (from previous year)
Disability rate	266814 ²	5,03 ³	3282 increase in disability service users
Employment rate of disabled people	62800 ⁴	23,50 ⁵	
Activity rate of disabled people	97240 ⁶	36,44	
Inactivity rate of disabled people	169574	63,56	
Employment in open labour market	43534	16,32	
Employment in sheltered	19300 ⁷	7,23	

² The rate is based on statistics of number of people who get disability benefits from The Social Insurance Institution of Finland 2009

³ Percentage of the whole population in Finland

⁴ Open labour market plus work centres

⁵ Calculation based is on the disability rate

⁶ Including job seekers and people who have jobs

⁷ Sheltered or supported employment

workshop			
Reason for leaving the labour market due to disability or long standing health problem	65700	24,60	

Year: 12/2008⁸	Public sector	Private sector	(e.g. comment or give % employers meeting obligations?)
Fulfilment of employment quota (if it exists) These numbers are based on government subsidised employment rates. It is not a quota system, but the system makes it possible to employ disabled people in the public and private sectors.	9423 persons with subsidised employment	25781 persons with subsidised employment	

Participation in training of disabled people	These numbers are included in activity rate of disabled people i.e. 23000 persons in work centres, 1080 persons in work orientation guidance, about 10300 persons with ID in some sort of supported work in 2008. (Varanka 2009)	(e.g. comment or give number of people participating in vocational or work-related employment)
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1.3 Laws and policies (key points)

Finnish labour policy is very traditional in a sense of work search: eligibility to work search must be argued for. Disabled persons face many difficulties with convincing authorities of their ability to work. However the Act of Vocational Rehabilitation (act 189/2001) and the Social Welfare Act (act 710/1982) include elements that support disabled persons to get jobs, although the focus is on the total unemployed population. The main idea is to activate unemployed persons at the municipal level. Municipalities can organise activation activities themselves or they can buy this function from outside organisations. Most municipalities have established foundations with enterprises and non governmental organisations to actualise this obligation (see also Vuorela 2008).

Employment policy on disabled people is focused on so- called partly incapacitated persons. According to the latest report (Hytti 2008) a comparison between Nordic Countries shows that Finland has the narrowest range of partial benefits and targeted measures.

⁸ Based on the monthly report of Ministry of labour and the economy July/2009



A person will receive a full pension if his/her earning capacity has decreased by at least 3/5 and a partial pension of the decrease is at least 2/5 but below 3/5. However it is important that the active labour market measures for the partly incapacitated have been managed on the 'mainstream' principle, i.e. the labour administration has not provided any special measures for the partly incapacitated at all. However, supported employment is provided as a municipal service under the Social Welfare Act. This means that employment efforts of disabled people are a question of social and health services and not a question of employment policy as such. In other words the issue of disabled people's employment has been partially medicalised in Finland.

Alongside this activity individual policy programmes have been carried out. Efforts to employ disabled people mainly are focused on people with intellectual disabilities. (Hytti 2008; Hytti & Hartman 2008).

However disabled people's employment had a 36 million euro allowance in the budget of Finland's government in 2008 (see Valtion talousarvioesitys 2008, http://budjetti.vm.fi/indox/tae/2008/frame_2008.html). The long-term process of developing intermediate labour markets is a contemporary policy issue of the Comprehensive Reform of Social Protection (Sata)-Committee (Vogt 2009).

The social protection system in Finland is undergoing a thorough overhaul on the basis of the Sata programme, which is headed by a MSAH committee. The committee's proposals for the policy lines of the reform are based on an evaluation of the adequacy of social protection and foreseeable challenges. The main aims of the reform are:

- to make the option of taking employment always worthwhile
- to reduce poverty levels
- to safeguard sufficient basic income security in all life situations.

The reform is being carried out with the overall aim of ensuring that social protection has a sustainable funding base in the long term.

The project is being implemented in stages. The initial proposals by the Sata Committee were put to parliament in 2008. Overall proposals on key policy lines were tabled in early 2009.

The same ideas are included in the report of The Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs 2008–2010, The Finnish National Reform Programme – Implementation Report 2009.

Further information:

[Sosiaaliturvan uudistamiskomitean \(SATA\) esitys sosiaaliturvan kokonaisuudistuksen keskeisistä linjauksista](#) (MSAH's publications 2009:10) http://www.stm.fi/julkaisut/selvityksia-sarja/nayta_julkaisu/1389048#fi

Also the Act on disability services states that personal assistance as a subjective right to disabled persons includes a possibility for personal assistance (not necessarily an assistant) to persons with disabilities at work (see <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/1987/19870380> especially § 8c)

1.4 Type and quality of jobs (summary)

It is not very common that disabled people very easily get jobs in the open labour market. Their employment is focused on sheltered employment. The term sheltered employment is not used in Finland and the term supported employment is used instead because work places are ordinary ones, supportive working conditions are developed. These supportive elements may include more accessible physical environments and people who assist the disabled employee. The employment sectors that mostly are represented among disabled people's work places are the service sector and NGOs. Many disabled persons are working in shops, fast food outlets or they in cleaning.



Part time work is the most popular. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, disabled people themselves say they do not feel up to working full time. Secondly, the disability pension is withdrawn if full time wages are earned. So the latter reason is a structural one. In fact there are not any encouraging elements to full time work. Training opportunities for real paid work are too few in spite of legislation (act 189/2001). Also social enterprises have been unsuccessful in Finland, because their legislation is too complicated (see Karjalainen 2008). Disability pensions are the first choice.



PART TWO: SPECIFIC EXAMPLES

2.1 Reasonable accommodation in the workplace and other activation policies

Work orientation guidance is the most important support for reasonable work conditions, but this varies a great deal between municipalities. Basically standards of work orientation guidance are acknowledged, but there is a lack of money and personnel for realising it. One crucial disadvantage of work orientation guidance is the provision of too simple training conditions compared with real work places. This disadvantage is infrequently recognised. The gap between real work and supported work is also evident in employment contracts and social benefits. Supported employment does not have the status of real work in Finnish legislation and governmental practices. (Nummela 2006; Ollikainen 2007).

However awareness of disabled people as a potential workforce has increased and even some private sector service providers have employed disabled persons. A recent large employment campaign has been the Common Responsibility Campaign of the Finnish State Church. Their main task has been to promote disabled persons to firms and even to secure employment. At the moment numbers of new employees are not available yet, but this campaign has had a high media profile. After the campaign one Finnish broadcasting company (SubTv) began a charity campaign to employ persons with intellectual disabilities and challenged other firms to follow their example.

2.2 One example of best practice

The Common Responsibility Campaign of the Finnish State Church mentioned above, was organised in May 2008. It had two goals. First it spread the knowledge that people with intellectual disabilities are a real workforce in firms. This knowledge included for example information about work training practices and how to get public support when employing disabled persons. Guidance to firms, disabled persons and their families was one of the aims. Secondly it encouraged firms to employ disabled persons. Disabled persons were mostly employed by parishes, but some firms, such as SubTv continued the campaign after the end of its official end date. The real problem of the campaign was that it was based on charity. It is not clear whether the initiative will be continued. (see www.yhteisvastuu.fi).



PART THREE: SUMMARY INFORMATION

3.1 Conclusions and recommendations (summary)

Finnish labour policy is undeveloped in sense of employment of disabled people. The ethos and practice of welfare is based on the idea that disabled people do not have to be at work and the welfare state attempts to compensate this handicap with the disability pension. When the starting point to improve disabled persons' employment situation is like this, it indicates there are many barriers to overcome. Because of this ideology there is not a real will to employ disabled persons by the governmental administration, in spite of individual projects and policy programmes. There are always more pressing policy matters, such as the consequences of globalisation at a macro level. Many Finnish social scientists have criticised this ethos as neo-liberalism and New Public Management (e.g. Eräsaari 2006). Also legislation and statistics on this issue are incomplete.

In terms of equality it is not necessary to prioritise different kinds of disability groups in an employment policy. There are however two policy developments that should be considered. First, consideration of sanctions if enterprises do not employ disabled people and better public support for the employment of disabled people. Second, basic research on disabled people's employment is very limited in Finland. Only a few surveys or statistical analysis have been done, and these are not included in the strong Finnish tradition of the sociology of work. Critical sociological studies are needed, especially on discrimination. These recommendations should be taken up together with the development of legislation and statistics.

3.2 References

Act on disability services includes right to personal assistance of disabled persons
<http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/1987/19870380>

Comprehensive Reform of Social Protection (Sata)-Committee
http://www.stm.fi/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=39503&name=DLFE-7508.pdf (includes English summary).

Employment bulletin, July 2009

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- Ministry of Labour publication http://www.tyoministerio.fi/mol/fi/99_pdf/fi/06_tyoministerio/06_julkaisut/10_muut/amke_2000_luvulla.pdf
- Finlex 710/1982 <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/1982/19820710>
- Finlex 189/2001 <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kokoelma/2001/20010027.pdf>
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- Common Responsibility Campaign www.yhteisvastuu.fi



Annex 1: quantitative data on the employment of disabled people

Year: 2008	Absolute? (N)	Percentage (%)	Change (from previous year)
Disability rate	266814 ⁹	5,03 ¹⁰	3282 increase in disability service users
Employment rate of disabled people	62800 ¹¹	23,50 ¹²	
Activity rate of disabled people	97240 ¹³	36,44	
Inactivity rate of disabled people	169574	63,56	
Employment in open labour market	43534	16,32	
Employment in sheltered workshop	19300 ¹⁴	7,23	
Reason for leaving the labour market due to disability or long standing health problem	65700	24,60	

Year:	% Permanent	% Temporary
Permanent contracts vs. short term contracts		

Year:	% Full-time	% Part-time
Full time vs. part time jobs		

Year: 12/2008 ¹⁵	Public sector	Private sector	(e.g. comment or give % employers meeting obligations?)
Fulfilment of employment quota (if it exists) These numbers are based on government subsidised employment rates. It is not a quota system, but the system makes it possible to employ disabled people in the public and private sectors.	9423 persons with subsidised employment	25781 persons with subsidised employment	
Participation in training of disabled people	These numbers are included in activity rate of disabled people i.e. 23000 persons in work centres, 1080 persons in work orientation guidance, about 10300 persons with ID in some sort of supported work in 2008. (Varanka 2009)		(e.g. comment or give number of people participating in vocational or work-related employment)

⁹ The rate is based on statistics of number of people who get disability benefits from The Social Insurance Institution of Finland 2009

¹⁰ Percentage of the whole population in Finland

¹¹ Open labour market plus working centres

¹² Calculation based is on the disability rate

¹³ Including job seekers and people who have jobs

¹⁴ Sheltered or supported employment

¹⁵ Based on the monthly report of Ministry of labour and the economy July/2009



Annex 2: 2008-9 laws and policies on the employment of disabled people

Comprehensive Reform of Social Protection (Sata)

The social protection system in Finland is undergoing a thorough overhaul on the basis of the Sata programme, which is headed by a MSAH committee. The committee's proposals for policy lines of the reform are based on an evaluation of the adequacy of social protection and foreseeable challenges. The main aims of the reform are:

- **to make the option of taking employment always worthwhile,**
- **to reduce poverty levels,**
- **to safeguard sufficient basic income security in all life situations.**

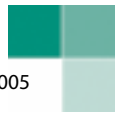
The reform is being carried out with the overall aim of ensuring that social protection has a sustainable funding base in the long term.

The project is being implemented in stages. The initial proposals by the Sato Committee were put to parliament in 2008. Overall proposals on key policy lines were tabled in early 2009.

Further information:

[Sosiaaliturvan uudistamiskomitean \(SATA\) esitys sosiaaliturvan kokonaisuudistuksen keskeisistä linjauksista](#) (MSAH's publications 2009:10) http://www.stm.fi/julkaisut/selvityksia-sarja/nayta/_julkaisu/1389048#fi

The Act on personal assistance as a subjective right to disabled persons includes a possibility for personal assistance (not necessarily an assistant) to persons with disabilities (see <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/1987/19870380> especially § 8c)



Annex 3: 2008-9 research/evaluation on the employment of disabled people

Publication details (author, date, title, etc):	Parrukoski, Sanna & Karjalainen, Jouko: Tietoja vammaisten työllisyydestä ja toimeentulosta. Helsinki: Terveystieteiden tutkimuskeskus ja hyvinvoinnin laitos, 2009. (Knowledge on employment and livelihood of disabled people) http://www.koyhyyskirjoitukset.org/alustuksia/2009-2/Tilastoja%20vammaisten%20k%F6yhydest%E4.doc
Key findings from the research:	The main findings of this report are that only 15-20 % of disabled people have a paid job compared with 70% of the whole population. This has been very stable many years. Their gross incomes are 2/3 lower than that for the whole population. In 2005 22 % of disabled people lived in poverty.
Comment or assessment:	The only publication that emphasises the poverty of disabled people.

Publication details (author, date, title, etc):	Vuorela, Mika (2008): Työtä haluaville uusia mahdollisuuksia työhön. Selvityshenkilö Mika Vuorelan selvitys. Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö 10.3.2008. (New job possibilities to people who want to work) http://www.tem.fi/files/18750/Vuorela_loppuraportti.pdf
Key findings from the research:	The main findings of this report are that about 30000 disabled or handicapped persons could be employed in open labour markets. 6000 of them could be in full-time jobs and the rest of them in part-time jobs.
Comment or assessment:	There is a lack of political will to employ disabled people and their contribution should be understood as a resource and not as a burden.

Publication details (author, date, title, etc):	Suikkanen, Asko (2009): Selvitys välityömarkkinoista. Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden tutkimuskeskus. (Report on intermediate labour markets) http://www.stm.fi/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=41254&name=D_LFE-4806.pdf
Key findings from the research:	The report on intermediate labour markets is part of the social security reform committee's recommendations. The report suggests companionship policy programmes, social policy reforms to identify risks i.e. to prevent risks, different kinds of contracts of employment and consideration of a conventional contract of employment as not a norm, a new policy of taxation, deeper social risk analysis, strengthening adult education and life-long learning, better connection of rehabilitation activities to working life realities, more multidisciplinary research and follow-up of other EU countries.
Comment or assessment:	This report includes necessary recommendations as a part of social security reform in Finland, but their implementation is unclear at this moment.

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Employment bulletin, July 2009

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Vuorela, Mika (2008): Työtä haluaville uusia mahdollisuuksia työhön. Selvityshenkilö Mika Vuorelan selvitys. Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö 10.3.2008. (New job possibilities for people who want to work) http://www.tem.fi/files/18750/Vuorela_loppuraportti.pdf