

COUNTRY: FINLAND

FACTS:

Area: 338.440 km²

Population: 5.513 million (2018)

Government: Parliamentary democracy

Language: Finnish and Swedish

Religion: Evangelical-Lutheran (83 %) and Orthodox (about 1.1%)

Currency: Euro (EUR)

Time difference from CET: +1

Climate: The climate of Finland is marked by cold winters and fairly warm summers

Capital: Helsinki

National Day: 6th December

TIME:

HOLIDAYS AND VACATION:

The main Christian holidays are [Christmas](#), [New Year's Day](#), [Epiphany](#), [Easter](#), [Ascension day](#), [Pentecost](#), [Midsummer Day](#), and [All Saints' Day](#). The non-Christian holidays are [May Day](#) and the [Independence Day of Finland](#).

OFFICE HOURS:

Business hours are generally from 08:00 to 16:15 – government agencies and most institutions follow these hours – banks are open until 16:30 and most business is done Monday to Friday.

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS:

COURTESY:

When greeting, the parties shake hands and make eye contact. A deep bow denotes special respect – in normal circumstances, a nod of the head is enough. A Finnish handshake is brief and firm, and involves no supporting gestures such as touching the shoulder or upper arm.

DRESS:

In business environment proper attire is a suit or smart casual.

BODY LANGUAGE:

Finns prefer to keep a distance when greeting, so normally a firm handshake is enough.

NEGOTIATION:

BUSINESS MEETING:

Punctuality and factual debate are appreciated by the Finns. Be on time when the meeting starts!

NEGOTIATION SKILLS:

When negotiating with Finns show trustworthiness, and be open about your business. The challenges emerge as an outcome of poor communication and lack of trust between the parties. For Finland, these points are especially important because of the soft bargaining culture and realistic starting point in the negotiation.

INVISIBLE CODES:

Finns are modest about their achievements, and you should be the same. Do not expect immediate feedback or a lot of questions. The silence indicates they are thinking about what you have said. Silence in conversations is considered an accepted aspect of social interaction. You should not talk when someone else is talking since interrupting is regarded as rude.

ETHICS:

Finns are quite cautious and wish to keep up appearances and protect their privacy. You should not show any strong emotions in public or behave in too gregarious a way. Never ask personal questions, such as those related to someone's religion, job or political party.

COMMUNICATION:

Finns do not usually make small talk when negotiating, but tend to get straight to the point. The style of discussion is often factual and intelligent debate is respected. Finns also value a critical attitude and do not hesitate to express their dissenting opinions. This is considered less rude than honest. Criticism is regarded as to do with one's work and not as a personal attack. It is possible to have fun together immediately afterwards.

GIFTS:

Not typical in a business meeting, but always appreciated.

REPRESENTATION:

AT A RESTAURANT:

Usually, the most common mealtime to be shared with your business partners is lunch. In Finland, it is appropriate to discuss business during lunch unlike in some cultures where meal times are reserved for non-business-related topics. Hardly any alcohol is consumed at lunch time and the busy pace of working life has shortened business lunches to 1-2 hours. Lunch time at restaurants is usually between 11 AM and 2 PM.

IN THE HOME:

Finns still eat most of their dinners at home with their families. At lunch time, canteen meals in educational institutions and offices are the most usual. Dinner is served between 6 PM and 8 PM as a rule. If invited to dinner it is important to be on time regardless of whether you are invited to restaurant or your business partner's home. If you are meeting in a private home you should bring flowers, chocolate or a bottle of wine.

OTHER:

COUNTRY AND PEOPLE:

In Finland, there's one overarching concept that all Finns agree and are proud of. It is called *sisu*. *Sisu* means courage, grit, determination and bravery in the face of obstacles and challenges. It's sometimes translated into "Finnish spirit". Having *sisu* allows a person to keep going when others would consider a task impossible or give up.