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# **Finnish Adoption Board Annual Report 2024**



**Valvira**

National Supervisory Authority  
for Welfare and Health

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# 1 Review by the Chair of the Adoption Board



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*The circumstances leading to adoption are more diverse than before. In 2025, the Adoption Board will continue to ensure that every adoption is in the best interests of the child.*

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As the licensing and supervisory authority and the national Central Authority under the Hague Adoption Convention, the Adoption Board has a vantage point on societal changes both domestically and internationally. As the licensing and supervisory authority, the Adoption Board ensures that the conditions for adoption permits and accreditation permits are met and supervises licensed activities.

In the 2020s, the context in which countries send and receive children for adoption has changed more than ever before. At the same time, the duties of the Adoption Board have become more multifaceted and demanding. However, the objective of international cooperation between states and authorities has remained the same: to ensure the best interests of the child in every adoption.

## **Countries receiving children are paying closer attention to their own operations**

Ten years ago, the focus of the Member States of the Hague Adoption Convention was still on countries sending children for adoption. Now, states are paying even more attention to how intercountry adoptions have been carried out in their own countries in the past, and how they will be carried out in the future. When we also reflect on our own activities, international cooperation becomes stronger and more equitable.

The origins of intercountry adoption are linked to national histories. In addition to the United States, the largest receiving countries have been the Netherlands and Sweden. In these countries, intercountry adoptions began in the 1950s, in

the years following the Korean War. The Netherlands has engaged in adoption cooperation, especially with former colonies. In the past, Sweden has been active in expanding adoption cooperation and encouraging adoption. Adoptees from the early years of intercountry adoption have now raised concerns about irregularities and possible violations of their identity rights. This brings the examination back to the initial circumstances leading to adoption.

An authority should only proceed with adoption if 1) the child needs adoption, and the need is justified and acceptable, 2) the biological parents and the child have given their consent to the adoption voluntarily, and the consent is based on sufficient knowledge and understanding of the meaning of adoption, 3) no one will benefit financially from the adoption, 4) the authority has given priority to exploring the possibility of domestic adoption and has proceeded to intercountry adoption only if no family is available for the child in the home country, and 5) the authorities have ensured that the information used in the adoption process is reliable and have intervened in the adoption process if the best interests of the child are not being served. In Finland and other Hague Adoption Convention Member States, the basic premise is that the best way to meet the requirements is to adhere to the principles of the Convention.

### **Centralising intercountry adoption services with a single provider can increase equality but also carries risks**

Finland has previously had three service providers for intercountry adoption. Service providers are a 'one-stop service' for adoption applicants, helping them communicate with a foreign adoption agency. For the state, it is a way to centralise adoption authority responsibilities and expertise. However, the need for intercountry adoptions has decreased in recent years. From January 2025, new intercountry adoption processes in Finland will be centralised under one service provider, Interpedia ry.

In October 2024, Save the Children Finland announced that it would stop providing intercountry adoption services to new clients as of the beginning of 2025. The ongoing adoption processes within the organisation will continue as normal until they are completed. The City of Helsinki stopped providing the service to new clients in 2016, and the last intercountry adoption through it was carried out in 2024. Following the decision to suspend operations, the completion of pending adoption procedures required considerable transition periods.

Centralising intercountry adoption services with a single provider can increase equality but also carries risks. If the service provider's foreign partner conducts fewer adoptions or experiences interruptions in operations, this will have a more

immediate effect on adoption applicants, as there is no alternative service provider. The intercountry adoption service must be guided with greater awareness of potential risks.

People are increasingly enquiring about the possibility of adopting from countries with which Finland does not have adoption cooperation through a service provider. The underlying reason is immigration to and emigration from Finland. Adoptions without a service provider are strictly limited under the 2012 Adoption Act. The aim is to prevent what is referred to as 'independent adoptions'. The fundamental principle for any adoption must continue to be the child's need for adoption. The Adoption Board evaluates all adoption processes in accordance with this principle.

### **Services for adoptive families should be protected from budget cuts**

Adoption applications reveal the long and often painful journey applicants have taken towards family life and their high aspirations for parenthood. Adopted children have a background involving child welfare services and special needs, which the adoptive parent must have sufficient resources to meet. Organisations have developed and maintained excellent adoption-specific services, that is, services that specifically support adoptees, adoptive parents and adoption applicants.

In November 2024, the Adoption Board proposed to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health that it opposes cuts to the budget for organisational grants. These budget cuts have resulted in the closure of the adoption counselling telephone helpline in the spring of 2025 after decades of providing a low-threshold service. It is also unclear whether preparation courses aimed at adoption applicants can be continued. In the coming years, adoption-specific services should be protected from budget cuts. Any necessary cuts must be made in cooperation with adoption operators to avoid serious gaps in services. Adoption-specific services are still needed.

In 2025, the context in which adoptions take place will be significantly more diverse than previously anticipated. Although the operating environment is changing, the Board's main task remains to ensure that every adoption is in the best interests of the child.

Helsinki, 21 March 2025

Irene Pärssinen-Hentula, Chair of the Adoption Board

## 2 Duties and composition of the Adoption Board

### 2.1 Duties of the Adoption Board

The Adoption Board operates as an independent expert and licensing and supervisory authority in adoption matters in connection with the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health (Valvira). The Adoption Board is the Central Authority and national authority referred to in intercountry adoption agreements. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is responsible for the general planning, guidance and supervision of adoption counselling and intercountry adoption services.

The Adoption Board operates:

- **as the Central Authority** under the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention, Finnish Treaty Series 29/1997); and
- **as the national authority** under the European Convention on the Adoption of Children, signed in Strasbourg (European Convention on the Adoption of Children, Finnish Treaty Series 39/2012).

The Adoption Board **monitors compliance with intercountry adoption agreements in Finland.**

Finnish adoption legislation is in accordance with intercountry adoption treaties and the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Finnish Treaty Series 60/1991). Adoption is regulated by the Adoption Act (22/2012) and the Government Decree on Adoption (202/2012). In all decisions and other measures concerning the adoption of a minor child, the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration (Section 2.1 of the Adoption Act, Article 3.1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child).

The Adoption Board **grants permits for domestic and intercountry adoptions to adoption applicants**, i.e. to the child's prospective adoptive parents. The purpose of an adoption permit is to ensure that the adoption is in the best interests of the child.

As a rule, a person living in Finland must always apply for an adoption permit if they wish to adopt a child under the age of 18. The adoption applicant applies

for a permit from the Adoption Board after having received adoption counselling provided by the wellbeing services county.

The Adoption Board processes applications in which the adoption applicant actually resides in Finland. Finnish law applies to adoptions by applicants residing in Finland, regardless of whether the child is adopted from Finland or abroad. The Adoption Board does not process applications in which the applicant's actual place of residence is a country other than Finland.

The Adoption Board does not process adoptions that do not require an adoption permit. An adoption permit is not required when adopting a child from one's own country if the person is adopting the child of a spouse or a child who has been permanently in their care or custody. An adoption permit is also not required for the adoption of an adult over the age of 18.

If an adoption applicant wishes to adopt a child from abroad, they should, in principle, use an intercountry adoption service provider. The service provider is a Finnish operator that assists the adoption applicant in carrying out an intercountry adoption.

The Adoption Board **issues accreditation licences to intercountry adoption service providers**. Service providers apply to the Adoption Board for 1. a licence to act as a service provider for intercountry adoption and 2. separate permissions to cooperate with individual countries. The purpose of the licences is to ensure that service providers and all their partner countries are equipped to carry out adoptions in the best interests of the child.

The Adoption Board **supervises the activities of intercountry adoption service providers** when they carry out adoptions and provide post-adoption services to adoptees or adoptive parents.

The Adoption Board's annual report consolidates the Board's activities in its duties during 2024. The Adoption Board operates in the plenary and sections, in which the matters to be addressed are prepared by the Adoption Board's administration (Chapter 2.2). The Board's plenary session monitors the development of adoption activities (Chapter 3), the Section for International Affairs acts as the national Central Authority for adoptions and supervises intercountry adoptions (Chapter 4), and the Section for Adoption Permission Matters evaluates the suitability of adoption applicants as adoptive parents (Chapter 5). The work of the Adoption Board requires cooperation with adoption operators (Chapter 6) and the media (Chapter 7). In its duties, the Adoption Board compiles information about the development of intercountry adoptions in Finland (Chapter 8).

## 2.2 Composition of the Adoption Board

The Finnish Government appoints the Adoption Board for a maximum term of five years at a time. The current Adoption Board began its term on 1 July 2022. The Finnish Government appoints the chair, vice-chair, members and deputy members. The Adoption Board consists of a plenary session, the Section for International Matters and the Section for Adoption Permission Matters. The plenary session and the sections are chaired by the chair or vice-chair of the Board. Matters are decided by the Board based on the secretary's presentation.

### Administration of the Adoption Board

The chair, vice-chair, and secretaries of the Adoption Board are civil servants who operate as an independent group within the Administrative Department of the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health (Valvira). The official serving as the Chair of the Adoption Board is the supervisor of the group.

In 2024, the Chair of the Adoption Board was Manager Irene Pärssinen-Hentula, and the Deputy Chair was Legal Officer Arttu Malava (until 31 December 2024). The secretaries are Legal Officer Anne Ritari, Senior Officer Minna Malviniemi (1 January 2024–31 July 2024) and Senior Officer Päivi Pietarila (starting 1 October 2024). Krista Palonen served as an assistant to the Adoption Board.

### Plenary Session and Section Members

In addition to the Chair or Vice-Chair, there are at least four other members of the **Section for International Matters**. The representatives of the sections must include a representative of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, an expert in legal matters related to intercountry adoptions, an expert in the practical aspects of intercountry adoptions, and a child welfare expert.

Composition of the Section for International Matters in 2024 (full members, deputy members in brackets)

member representing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

Nina Blomqvist, Senior Specialist, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9 August 2024–31 December 2024

(Mona Nyholm-Niemi, Legal Officer, Ministry for Foreign Affairs until 30 April 2024,

Helinä Heikkinen, Senior Specialist, Ministry for Foreign Affairs from 9 August 2024)

member with expertise in legal issues

related to intercountry adoptions:

Outi Kemppainen, Legislative Counsellor, Ministry of Justice

(Joanna Grandell, Senior Specialist, Ministry of Justice)

member with expertise in the practical aspects of intercountry adoptions:

Anja Wikstedt, Adoption Counsellor, All Our Children (Yhteiset Lapsemme ry),

(Jenni Heinonen, Coordinator, All Our Children)

member with child welfare expertise:

Lucia Hakala, Senior Specialist, Central Union for Child Welfare until 5 September 2024, Laura Holmi, Senior Specialist, Central Union for Child Welfare from 6 September 2024

(Director Miia Pitkänen, Socca – Uusimaa Social Services Competence Centre (Uudenmaan sosiaalialan osaamiskeskus))

Other members:

Tiina Muinonen, Ministerial Adviser, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

(Susanna Hoikkala, Ministerial Adviser, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health)

Eeva-Maria Nieminen, Senior Officer, Finnish Immigration Service

(Leena Turku, Senior Officer, Finnish Immigration Service)

Maija Jäppinen, Assistant Professor of Social Work, University of Helsinki

(Saana Raittila-Salo, Doctoral Researcher and Social Worker, University of Helsinki)

Composition of the **Section for Adoption Permission Matters** in 2024 (full members, deputy members in brackets)

member with child welfare expertise:

Päivi Sihvo, Social Worker, Länsi-Uusimaa Social and Crisis Emergency Services

(Anna Klingenberg-Peltola, Social Work Manager, City of Vantaa)

member with adoption counselling expertise:

Maria Jensen, Social Worker, City of Helsinki

(Kristiina Mattinen, Regional Director of Operations, Save the Children Finland, until 8 August 2024; Maija Vihervirta, Development Manager, from 9 August 2024)

member with expertise in child growth and development:  
Elina Kontu, Professor of Psychology, University of Tampere  
(Saara Salo, Doctor of Psychology, University of Helsinki/Pilke Clinic)

member with medical expertise:  
Outi Linnaranta, Chief Physician, National Institute for Health and Welfare  
(Paula Häkkänen, Senior Physician, Health Promotion, Helsinki and  
Uusimaa Hospital District HUS)

Other members:  
Irja Hemmilä, Senior Officer, National Supervisory Authority for Welfare  
and Health  
(Chief Physician Kari Raaska, National Supervisory Authority for Welfare  
and Health until 31 August 2024, Chief Physician Tanja Kankuri, National  
Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health from 6 September 2024)

The **Plenary Session** consists of the members of the Section for Adoption Permission Matters and the Section for International Matters, representatives of organisations related to the Adoption Board's activities, as well as other members and experts by experience.

Composition of the plenary session in 2024 (full member, alternate in brackets below)

The above-mentioned members of the Section for International Matters, members of the Section for Adoption Permission Matters, deputy members of both sections, and

Jenny Nyman Ahokas, Executive Director, Adoptiopeheet ry  
(Lotta Ventelä, Communications and Organisational Secretary, Adoptive Families in Finland (Adoptiopeheet ry))

Saku Jokisalo, Adult adoptees, domestic adoptions  
(Jaakko Rautavaara, Adult adoptees, domestic adoptions)

Anu-Rohima Mylläri, Adult adoptees, intercountry adoptions  
(Parvathi Willberg, Adult adoptees, intercountry adoptions)

Aulikki Haimi-Kaikkonen, Senior Social Worker, City of Helsinki  
(Saara Leinonen, Adoption Coordinator, City of Helsinki)

Salla Hari, Director for Adoption Program, Interpedia ry  
(Ilona Kalliola, Executive Director, Interpedia ry)

Piia Savio, Executive Director, Simpukka ry, Diverse Families network  
(Sofia Lindqvist, Diverse Families Network)

Päivi Pietarila, Intercountry Adoption Director,  
Save the Children, until 30 September 2024  
(Maija Vihervirta, Development Manager, Save the Children Finland, until  
8 August 2024; Merita Lepojärvi, Social Worker, Save the Children Fin-  
land, from 9 August 2024)

Juha Jämsä, Executive Director, Rainbow Families Finland  
(Vilppu Järvinen, Rainbow Families Finland)

### 3 Monitoring developments in adoption activities

The Adoption Board's plenary session follows developments in adoption matters, takes initiatives, and prepares statements on adoption-related issues. Adoption activities are undergoing major changes both nationally and internationally, which increases the number of issues that need following up and discussion.

The plenary meetings are themed according to the development plan, and they take matters such as Government Programme entries concerning adoptions into account. The Board's term of office from 2022 to 2027 has four main themes. The Adoption Board will follow how 1. post-adoption support, 2. adoption specific expertise, and 3. the identity rights of adoptees can be strengthened. In addition, the Adoption Board will review 4. the past and future of the adoption system. Information about the topic discussed in the plenary session is collected in informal working groups, in which experts or actors outside the Board also participate.

The Plenary Session of the Adoption Board met three times in 2024. The plenary continued to follow the situation of intercountry adoptions in the Nordic countries, reviewed information about post-adoption support and continued to follow adoption breakdowns. Adoption breakdowns refer to cases in which an adopted child cannot continue to live in an adoptive family, i.e. is permanently placed outside the adoptive family or is re-adopted. The plenary also discussed adoption expertise in the wellbeing services counties with their representatives who attended the plenary meeting.

The plenary heard an introduction to the doctoral dissertation on intergenerationalism and the transmission of depressive symptoms from parent to child in situations of intercountry adoption when the child and the parent do not share a genetic background (Krista Liskola, *Intergenerational Transmission in the Context of International Adoption: the associations between parental depressive symptoms, maternal and child temperamental characteristics and child behavior*, 2024).

In 2024, the Plenary Session of the Adoption Board issued statements on several topics.

- Statement of the Adoption Board on the draft implementation plan of the National Child Strategy for the term of office of Prime Minister Orpo (25 April 2024).

- Statement of the Adoption Board on the Government’s draft proposal for legislation concerning the State Regional Administration reform (30 August 2024).
- The Adoption Board’s views on the need to update and translate the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health’s Adoption Counselling Guide (STM 2013) and suggested corrections to its text content as identified by the Adoption Board (15 November 2024).

In December 2024, the Adoption Board also drafted a position statement on the 2025 grant proposals of the Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA) for adoption agencies. In January 2025, the Plenary Session issued a statement on the matter: “The Plenary Session of the Adoption Board calls for the protection of adoption services and for predictability in the changes to STEA’s 2025 grants.”

## 4 Supervision of intercountry adoptions as the Central Authority

The Section for International Matters is the Central Authority for adoption in Finland and fulfils international cooperation obligations in adoption matters. The Section for International Matters carries out the following activities:

- monitors compliance with the Hague Adoption Convention in Finland and, if necessary, takes measures to ensure compliance with it;
- grants Finnish intercountry adoption service providers permission to provide intercountry adoption services (Adoption Act, Section 87) and revokes granted permissions (Adoption Act, Section 89);
- grants Finnish intercountry adoption service providers authorisations to cooperate with foreign service providers and revokes granted authorisations (Adoption Act, Section 90);
- monitors the activities of intercountry adoption service providers and their cooperation with foreign service providers;
- in intercountry adoption cases, submits statements to the courts (Adoption Act, Section 79), as well as reports on the content of the law of another state (Adoption Act, Section 78).

In addition, the Section collects and maintains information about legislation and practices in foreign countries regarding adoption and intercountry adoption services. It provides information, reports and statements to authorities and service providers upon request.

The Section for International Matters held nine meetings in 2024.

### 4.1 Monitoring intercountry adoptions

In 2024, the Section for International Matters followed the situation of intercountry adoptions in receiving countries, as well as in the countries of origin.

In particular, the Section followed up on information regarding the national surveys on intercountry adoptions launched by Norway and Sweden, as well as the

decisions and recommendations made in the other Nordic countries. In addition, the Section reviewed the situation of Ukrainian children.

The Section for International Affairs discussed Save the Children Finland's decision to stop providing intercountry adoption services to new clients and the impact of the decision on intercountry adoption activities in Finland. Save the Children Finland will no longer accept new adoption applications as of 1 January 2025, but it will finalise all ongoing adoption processes and continue to provide post-adoption services for intercountry adoptions. The organisation's adoption counselling will continue as before.

In 2024, the Adoption Board carried out a monitoring mission to Colombia. The Board was represented by Chair Irene Pärssinen-Hentula and Legal Officer Anne Ritari. The Adoption Board visited Interpedia's governmental adoption partner, Colombia's adoption Central Authority, the Institute of Family Welfare (Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (ICBF)). In addition, the Board visited a private children's home (Fundación Casa de la Madre y el Niño), Bogota's child welfare reception unit, and the city's child welfare unit responsible for family placement decisions.

Adoption processes in Colombia follow the principles of the Hague Adoption Convention and Colombian adoption law. Child welfare and adoption work is the responsibility of the Colombian national authority (ICBF). The ICBF develops its operations by renewing guidelines for authorities. In recent years, it has strengthened its capacity to respond to post-adoption enquiries from adult adoptees. In 2024, a total of 907 adoptions were carried out in Colombia, in which 330 children were adopted outside Colombia. A total of 630 children have been adopted from Colombia to Finland since 1985. In recent years, about 3–6 children have arrived annually.

### **Cooperation with Central Authorities**

The Adoption Board's Section for International Matters cooperates with the Central Authorities of other states to exchange country-specific information. Country-specific information is essential for the Adoption Board, especially when it monitors operators or considers the prerequisites for licensing them to engage in foreign cooperation. The Adoption Board requested information from and responded to requests for information from adoption Central Authorities, other authorities and adoption service providers in different countries.

The Adoption Board participated in the annual meeting of the Nordic adoption Central Authorities, organised by the Norwegian Central Authority, Barne-, ungdoms- og familiedirektoratet (Bufdir), in Oslo on 15–16 May 2024. The Board was represented by Chair Irene Pärssinen-Hentula, Legal Officer Anne Ritari and Senior Officer Minna Malviniemi. Irene Pärssinen-Hentula, Chair of the Adoption Board, participated in a discussion with the European adoption Central Authorities on increasing cooperation in the assessment of licences.

### **Cooperation with the Permanent Bureau of the HCCH, which administers the Hague Adoption Convention**

The implementation of the Hague Adoption Convention is monitored and developed by the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH), in which the Adoption Board participates as Central Authority. The HCCH last convened a meeting of the Special Commission on the Adoption Convention for Central Authorities in 2022. Between sessions, the Adoption Board participates in monitoring and developing the implementation of the convention, for example, by responding to enquiries from the Permanent Bureau of the Hague Conference.

In 2023–2024, the Chair of the Adoption Board participated in the HCCH Working Group on the Financial Aspects of Intercountry Adoption. The Working Group consisted of both countries of origin and countries of destination and met four times for four-day meetings. The Working Group prepared updates to the guidelines for the Contracting States of the Hague Adoption Convention on fees of adoption services, adoption running costs, and contributions and donations related to adoption activities.

### **Collecting country-specific data from the ISS**

In support of its work, the Adoption Board receives country information and reports from the ISS (International Social Service). The service is maintained by ISS/IRC (International Social Service / International Reference Center for the rights of the children deprived of their family). The Adoption Board pays ISS a membership fee, which allows both the Board and the adoption authorities in Finland to use ISS's information services.

The Adoption Board met with representatives of the ISS/IRC at an annual meeting, where the Board received information about the service and discussed their own information needs. The Adoption Board responded to an ISS enquiry on how open adoptions and the right of adoptees to access information about themselves are implemented in Finland.

The Chair of the Board, Irene Pärssinen-Hentula, and secretaries Anne Ritari and Minna Malviniemi participated in the ISS Roundtable on the situation in Ukraine on 25 March 2024 and in the ISS 100th Anniversary Seminar (*Throughout time, across borders: Navigating child protection and restoring family links*). The seminar covered topics such as the history of the ISS, children on the move, tracing origins, family care, child abduction and mediation, and the future of child welfare and social work.

### **Cooperation with European adoption organisations**

Irene Pärssinen-Hentula, Chair of the Adoption Board, and secretaries Anne Ritari and Minna Malviniemi participated in the international conference on the Generational Impact of Adoption held by EurAdopt, the umbrella organisation of European adoption organisations. The conference, which took place in Cambridge in England on 17–18 May 2024, brought together adoption authorities, representatives of adoption organisations and experts by experience from across Europe.

## **4.2 Intercountry adoption service licensing and supervision**

In 2024, the Section for International Affairs granted Finnish service providers three authorisations for international cooperation in accordance with Section 90 of the Adoption Act:

Interpedia was granted permission to continue international cooperation with the Colombian Fundación Casa de la Madre y el Niño. The authorisation is valid from 16 March 2024 to 10 February 2027.

Interpedia was granted permission to continue international cooperation with the Thai Department of Children and Youth (DCY) from 16 December 2024 to 31 October 2027.

Save the Children Finland was granted permission to continue international cooperation with the Thai Department of Children and Youth (DCY). The authorisation is valid from 22 October 2024 to 31 October 2027.

Licences may be granted for a period of up to five years. In the context of issuing licences, the Section discussed changes in the international operating environment. The Section considered it justified to review operations every few years and granted licences for three years.

The Section for International Matters continued its annual monitoring of service providers' fees and post-adoption services. The Section also monitored the activities of adoption service providers through three cooperation meetings. These meetings covered topical issues, the practical activities of service providers and changes in the operating environment.

## 5 Assessing the suitability of adoption applicants

The Adoption Board's Section for Adoption Permission Matters assesses the suitability of applicants as adoptive parents in domestic and intercountry adoptions. The Section for Adoption Permission Matters grants permits to applicants residing in Finland for the following adoptions:

- domestic adoptions (Adoption Act, Section 40),
- intercountry adoptions through a service provider (Adoption Act, Section 41),
- intercountry adoptions without a service provider (Adoption Act, Section 42)
- and grants extensions of permits and changes to permit conditions; processes notifications of material changes in the circumstances of adoption applicants and assesses whether they have an impact on the validity of a permit; and revokes previously granted permits (Adoption Act, Section 45, sections 47–49).

The Adoption Board grants adoption permits for a maximum period of two years. If necessary, adoption applicants must apply for an extension of the validity period of the permit before the time limit expires. During the permit's period of validity, the adoption applicant must notify the Adoption Board without delay of any material changes in their circumstances.

The Section for Adoption Permission Matters may meet in full or limited composition. A limited composition consists of the Chair or the Vice-Chair of the Board and one member or deputy member of the Section who has expertise in child welfare or adoption counselling.

A limited composition may process matters for which the resolution can be considered clear, taking the circumstances of each case and the Board's previous practice into account. In the limited composition, the Section may grant a permit for domestic adoption and intercountry adoption through a service provider, extend the validity of an adoption permit, approve a change of service provider or decide on another minor change to the terms of the adoption permit, and decide that the notification of changes in the adoption applicant's circumstances do not give reason to revoke the adoption permit or change its terms.

In 2024, the Adoption Board's Section for Adoption Permission Matters held a total of 19 meetings: 11 times in a full composition and 8 times in a limited composition.

The Section for Adoption Permission Matters granted 37 new permits for intercountry adoption through a service provider in accordance with Section 41 of the Adoption Act and extended the validity of 48 permits for intercountry adoption. (In 2023, 45 new intercountry adoption permits were granted, and the validity of 56 permits was extended.)

The Section for Adoption Permission Matters granted 14 new permits for domestic adoption and extended the validity of 15 existing permits. (In 2023, 19 new permits for domestic adoption were granted, and 37 existing permits were extended.)

The Section for Adoption Permission Matters made a total of 19 decisions on permits granted for intercountry and domestic adoption based on notifications of changes in circumstances. (In 2023, 21 decisions were made based on notifications of changes in circumstances.)

The Adoption Board's Section for Adoption Permission Matters processes individual adoption permit applications for intercountry adoptions without a service provider (Adoption Act, Section 42). The Adoption Act limits intercountry adoption without a provider to exceptional situations, always involving the adoption of a specific identified child. Such situations generally arise if the child being adopted is a close relative of the applicant and in need of intercountry adoption.

In recent years, and especially in the last two years, the Adoption Board has been receiving an increasing number of enquiries about the possibility of intercountry adoption without a service provider. This phenomenon is driven by immigration to Finland and Finnish adoption applicants temporarily living abroad. Not all enquiries ultimately lead to an application for an adoption permit, but the guidance provided by the Adoption Board has increased significantly.

## 6 Training for domestic adoption operators

The work of the Adoption Board requires extensive cooperation with adoption operators. During 2024, the Chair and secretaries of the Adoption Board participated in several collaborative meetings with domestic adoption operators.

The Adoption Board organises an annual training day that brings together adoption counselling experts, intercountry adoption service providers, as well as Adoption Board members and deputy members.

The theme of the 2024 training was supporting young adoptees and their families. The training was held on 8 February 2024 as a hybrid event, which reached a total of 69 domestic adoption experts working at different stages of the adoption process.

During the training, the Chair of the Adoption Board, Irene Pärssinen-Hentula, gave an overview of the Board's activities and topical themes in intercountry adoptions. Silja Kosola, a specialist physician and docent in adolescent medicine, spoke about the challenges and opportunities of adolescence. Niina Rita, Licentiate in Psychology, specialist in health psychology, and psychotherapy trainer, spoke about strengthening the interactive connection between adopted adolescents and their parents. Social workers Saara Leinonen and Laura Uusitalo from the City of Helsinki's adoption unit discussed supporting young adoptees and their families in the context of adoption counselling and post-adoption services. Representatives of adult adoptees, Anu-Rohima Mylläri and Parvathi Willberg, trained attendees on addressing racism in adoptive families. The perspective of adult adoptees was also represented by Saku Jokisalo, who discussed openness and communication in domestic adoptions. Eeva-Maria Nieminen, Senior Officer at the Finnish Immigration Service, spoke about adoptions without a service provider and related immigration issues. The secretary of the Adoption Board, Legal Officer Anne Ritari, spoke about questions that arise in permit administration.

## 7 Media collaboration

During 2024, the Adoption Board published two press releases and two online news articles, and gave several interviews to the media. [The Adoption Board provides up-to-date information about its activities on its website.](#)

In 2024, Nordic adoption investigations were highlighted in the media, as Norway and Denmark restricted intercountry adoption licences, and Norway launched a national adoption investigation. The Adoption Board pointed out that it has not become aware of any suspicions of illegality in intercountry adoptions carried out in Finland. However, the Board stated that it closely follows up on investigations in other countries and pointed out that it is important for the authorities supervising adoptions to share information and maintain an up-to-date picture of the situation. ([Intercountry adoptions under scrutiny by the Adoption Board, 18 January 2024](#)).

The Adoption Board responded to several requests for interviews concerning Nordic adoption investigations. The Chair of the Board gave an interview to *Huvudstadsbladet*, in which it was stated that Finland monitors the situation of intercountry adoptions (*Sverige, Norge och Danmark granskar internationella adoptioner – Finland avvaktar*, HBL, 10 February 2024). The Chair of the Board also gave an interview on the subject to YLE's Nyhetspodden programme (*Därför kritiseras adoptioner i Norden*, YLE, 4 September 2024).

Changes to adoption services in Finland were also a topic of discussion. In October, Save the Children Finland announced the termination of its intercountry adoption service. The Adoption Board stated that it is following up the changes in adoption services and pointed out that the Board has no supervisory measures pending that would affect the decision of Save the Children Finland ([Adoption Board monitors changes in intercountry adoption services, 7 October 2024](#)). The topic was discussed in news broadcasts, as well as in YLE's online news (*Fewer people want to become parents, and it is also visible in adoption – a large agency stops adoptions from abroad to Finland*, YLE, 8 October 2024).

The Adoption Board also pointed out that updating the Adoption Counselling Guide would strengthen the implementation of post-adoption support ([Update to Adoption Counselling Guide can strengthen post-adoption support, 24 June 2024](#)). In addition, the Board informed that fewer adoption permits had been granted than in the previous year ([Slightly less adoption permissions granted than last year, 21 August 2024](#)).

## 8 Intercountry adoptions to Finland in 2024

The Adoption Board monitors the activities of intercountry adoption service providers, collects information about their cooperation partners, and compiles statistics on the number of children adopted to Finland through service providers.

### 8.1 Activities of intercountry adoption service providers

In Finland, intercountry adoption services may be provided by wellbeing services counties and organisations that the Adoption Board has authorised. The duties of service providers include:

- **assisting adoption applicants** in the intercountry adoption of a child under the age of 18 and cooperating with a foreign service provider;
- **supervising** the adoption to ensure it is carried out in the best interests of the child, respecting the rights of the child as recognised by international law, and without any unjustified financial or other benefit to anyone,
- **providing** adopted children and adoptive parents with a **post-adoption service** for intercountry adoptions ( Adoption Act, Section 33), i.e.
  - retaining adoption documents,
  - assisting adoptees in obtaining information from their country of origin, such as their background and biological origins,
  - providing adoptees with psychosocial support and guidance for acquiring and processing information or for travelling to their country of origin.

In 2024, three intercountry adoption service providers operated in Finland:

- Interpedia,
- Save the Children Finland's intercountry adoption service,
- The intercountry adoption service of the City of Helsinki's Social Services and Health Care Division.

The City of Helsinki's intercountry adoption service no longer accepts new clients. Save the Children Finland announced in October 2024 that it would also stop providing intercountry adoption services to new clients on 1 January 2025. The intercountry adoption services of Save the Children Finland and the City of Helsinki will complete all pending adoption applications and submit follow-up reports on completed adoptions to the countries of origin.

From the beginning of 2025, new intercountry adoption processes will be centralised under Interpedia. Interpedia celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2024. The organisation was founded in 1974 to help families adopt children from abroad. Interpedia has been operating as a licensed service provider since 1985.

The decision by two service providers to stop accepting new clients indicates that the need for international adoption of children has decreased. This is also reflected in the statistics of other countries implementing intercountry adoptions. An increasing number of children find families in their home countries. The overall number of children to be adopted has also decreased.

Although the number of children adopted internationally has decreased, the number of children alone does not reflect the amount of adoption work. Today, an increasing proportion of adoption work consists of providing post-adoption services. Each child who has already been adopted, as well as those who will be adopted in the future, and their adoptive families have a statutory right to post-adoption services (Adoption Act, Section 33(2), (3), and (4)). All three service providers will continue to provide statutory post-adoption services for as long as adopted children and adoptive parents need them. The Adoption Board will continue to monitor the provision of these post-adoption services. The Adoption Board and service providers expect post-adoption service work to increase in the coming years as more children adopted to Finland reach adolescence and adulthood.

To ensure post-adoption services for adoptive families, Valvira has allocated annual funding approved by the Finnish Government to the service providers. The amount of this allocation remained unchanged from 2018 to 2024 and has also been granted in the same amount for 2025. The Adoption Board and Valvira monitor the use of the allocated funds.

## 8.2 Foreign partners of Finnish service providers

Finnish intercountry adoption service providers were licensed in seven countries at the end of 2024. Save the Children Finland's cooperation licence with the Chinese adoption Central Authority (CCCWA) expired on 5 September 2024.

The tables below show the service providers' cooperation licences by country of origin as at 31 December 2024.

**Table 1: Save the Children Finland**

Country of origin	Central Authority	Contact
Bulgaria	Ministry of Justice	ANIDO Association
Philippines	National Authority for Child Care (NACC)	National Authority for Child Care (NACC)
Chinese (PRC) (ended 5 September 2024)	China Centre for Children's Welfare and Adoption (CCCWA)	China Centre for Children's Welfare and Adoption (CCCWA)
Thailand	Department of Children and Youth (DCY)	Department of Children and Youth (DCY) Thai Red Cross Children's Home (TRRCH)
Czech Republic	Office for international Legal Protection of Children (UMPOD)	Office for international Legal Protection of Children (UMPOD)

**Table 2: Interpediary**

Country of origin	Central Authority	Contact
Bulgaria	Ministry of Justice	Family National Association (FNA)
South Africa	Department of Social Development	Abba Specialist Adoption & Social Services (Abba)

India	Central Authority Resource Agency (CARA)	Central Authority Resource Agency (CARA)
Colombia	Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (ICBF)	Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (ICBF) Fundación Casa de la Madre y el Niño La Fundación Ayuda a la Infancia Hogar Bambi Chiquitines
Thailand	Department of Children and Youth (DCY)	Department of Children and Youth (DCY)

**Table 3: City of Helsinki**

Country of origin	Central Authority	Contact
Bulgaria	Ministry of Justice	Happy Child Association
South Africa	Department of Social Development	Jo'burg Child Welfare (JCW)

### 8.3 Trends in the number of children adopted to Finland

The Adoption Board and its predecessor (lapseksiottamislautakunta) have been monitoring the number of children adopted from abroad through service providers since 1985, when the Board was established. At that time, Finnish legislation began to regulate intercountry adoptions and the provision of adoption services. The statistics of the Adoption Board include children who have arrived in Finland through a service provider. The statistics do not include what are referred to as “independent intercountry adoptions” carried out without a service provider.

In 2024, the number of children who arrived in Finland surpassed 5,000. At the end of the year, a total of 5,019 children had arrived in Finland through intercountry adoption service providers. The number of intercountry adoptions increased until the mid-2000s. The largest number of children arrived in Finland in 2005

(308 children). The number of adoptions has since decreased annually. In 2015, 93 children arrived in Finland, compared with 51 in 2024.

There have been changes in the number of adoptions in particular years. In 2020, adoption processes slowed down in all cooperating countries due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2014, the Equal Marriage Act was passed in Finland, after which Russia has no longer allowed adoptions to Finland.

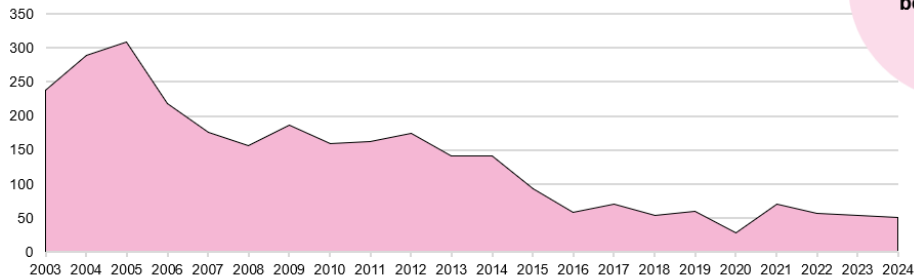
No single factor explains the decrease in intercountry adoptions in Finland. The number of people choosing to start families with children has declined significantly, and the factors that have contributed to this decline are also reflected in adoptions. The total number of intercountry adoptions has decreased in all countries, as an increasing number of children in need of adoption are being placed with a family in their home country. Intercountry adoption follows the principle of subsidiarity, which means the right of the child to grow up primarily in their own family or in their own country (Article 21 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 4 of the Hague Adoption Convention).

However, the total number of children arriving in Finland is not the only indicator of the need for intercountry adoption. At present, international adoption is especially needed for school-age children and siblings with traumatic backgrounds, who also often have special health needs. Finnish adoption applicants often hope for a young child, while children in need of adoption are usually beyond early childhood and have special needs. Each adoption process still requires careful consideration to find a family for the child that is able to meet their needs.

The Adoption Board receives information from Finnish intercountry adoption service providers about adoptions facilitated by service providers to Finland from abroad. The Adoption Board does not receive similar data on domestic adoptions. Domestic adoption is confirmed by district courts, from which the information is passed on to the Finnish population register (DVV) and Statistics Finland. In addition to adoptions of foreign children, Statistics Finland also compiles statistics on adoptions within families, which make up the majority of domestic adoptions.

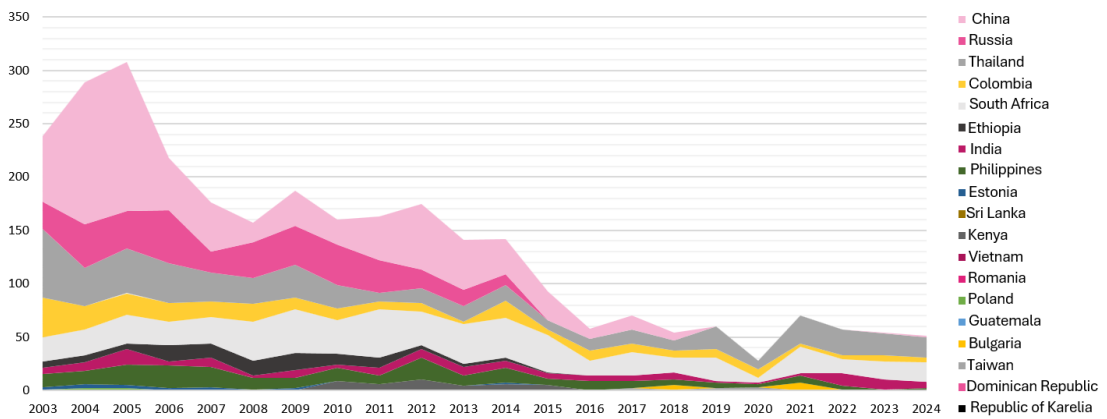
# Number of children adopted to Finland through service providers between 1985 and 2024

Number of children arriving in Finland between 2003 and 2024

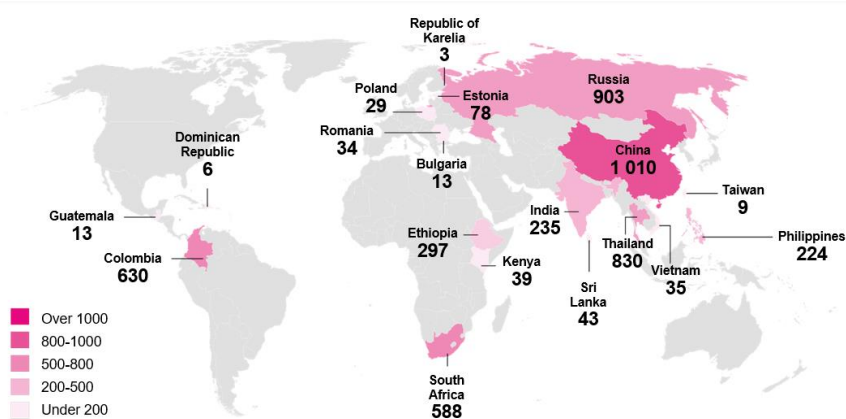


Total number of children arriving in Finland between 1985 and 2024  
**5 019**

Number of children arriving in Finland between 2003 and 2024 by country, from highest to lowest



Children arriving in Finland from 1985 to 2024 by country



### Number of children adopted to Finland through service providers between 1985 and 2024

Country	1985-2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Bulgaria	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	7	1	0	0	13
Dominican Republic	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
South Africa	22	23	24	27	22	25	36	41	32	45	32	37	37	35	14	22	14	22	5	25	13	17	18	588
Ethiopia	191	6	7	5	15	13	14	16	10	10	3	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	297
Philippines	7	12	12	19	21	19	11	10	12	8	21	10	14	6	9	7	5	5	3	7	3	1	2	224
Guatemala	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
India	97	6	8	15	4	9	2	7	3	7	8	8	7	5	5	5	7	2	1	2	12	9	6	235
Republic of Karelia	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Kenya	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	6	10	4	6	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	39
China	265	61	133	140	49	46	18	33	23	41	62	47	33	27	10	13	7	0	0	0	0	1	1	1010
Colombia	385	37	22	20	18	14	17	11	11	7	8	2	16	5	9	8	6	8	8	3	4	6	5	630
Poland	24	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	29
Romania	34	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	34
Sri Lanka	43	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	43
Taiwan	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	3	0	0	0	0	9
Thailand	334	64	36	42	37	27	24	31	22	8	14	15	15	9	11	13	10	21	8	26	24	20	19	830
Russia	550	26	41	35	50	20	34	36	38	31	17	15	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	903
Vietnam	35	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	35
Estonia	60	2	4	3	2	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	78
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2070</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>5019</b>



# Valvira

National Supervisory Authority  
for Welfare and Health

National Supervisory Authority  
for Welfare and Health, Valvira

Ratapihantie 9, 00520 Helsinki  
PO Box 43, FI-00521 Helsinki  
Ounasjoentie 6, 96200 Rovaniemi

Tel.: +358 295 209 111  
kirjaamo@valvira.fi  
valvira.fi