

HEI LIFE

Spouse

Network

**Main steps
and
findings**



HEI LIFE Spouse Network in Numbers

1.9.2020–31.12.2022

103

Network Members

5

Participating HEIs

10+

Collaboration
Partners

79%

Prefer Social Activities

77%

Join to Advance Job Search

49 Events

27

Only for HLSN*
Members

9

for HLSN* & International
Staff/Students

13

Collaboration Events

Hundreds Reached Through Events

Thousands Reached on Social Media

*HLSN = HEI LIFE Spouse Network

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1. Foreword

Greetings from the HEI LIFE Spouse Network. We are happy to offer you this publication showcasing the work that we have done to build a network for international spouses of academics and staff at higher education institutions (HEIs) in the capital region of Finland. In this publication we explain why we wanted to build the network, what the network is about, what kind of activities we have arranged, who we have collaborated with, and what our findings and recommendations are based on our experience.

The HEI LIFE Spouse Network is the result of subproject 3 of the wider [HEI LIFE project](#) (Higher Education Institutions' Support for International Academics and Staff – Living, Integration, Family, and Employment in Finland). The HEI LIFE project and its subprojects were active from autumn 2020 to the end of 2022. The participating HEIs in subproject 3 included Aalto University, Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences (representing all local UAS), Hanken School of Economics, University of Helsinki, and University of the Arts Helsinki. The University of Helsinki was the main responsible partner in the HEI LIFE project, as the HEI LIFE project manager was employed by UH and it managed the actual funding. The subproject team had at least one representative from each participating university.

We hope that this publication can help organisations and networks with their own activities in supporting international spouses, in addition to bringing further insight into the HEI LIFE project. Creating and supporting a diverse and inclusive academic community requires thought and attention as well as concrete actions. With the HEI LIFE Spouse Network, the HEIs in the capital region have addressed strategic aims with practical steps and activities for the benefit of all HEIs and academic communities in Finland. It has been our pleasure to collaborate with multiple people and organisations, from the Ministry of Education and Culture to partner organisations and individuals. We hope you enjoy reading about the fruits of our labour. We look forward to continuing the good work and collaboration with all of you in the future!

Kind regards,
Kirsi Korhonen and the HEI LIFE Spouse Network
subproject team

2. Background for creating a spouse network for higher education institutions

The participating universities want to be the best possible communities for their people and ensure that their international talent can each create and lead a good and fulfilling life in Finland. However, despite the good will of the universities, challenges related to talent attraction and retention have been identified in immigration and integration, for instance. These challenges vary from official processes to practicalities in settling-in and even attitudes in integration. Specific examples with regards to the international spouses include difficulties in getting information about and access to relevant services, building networks, and finding employment. The universities have a key role in supporting their community members, including international spouses, both with internal services and in cooperation with other parties.

The whole HEI LIFE project was strongly linked to the internationalisation strategies of Finnish universities as well as the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture's vision for strengthening the international dimension of Finnish higher education and research and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment's [Talent Boost](#) programme. It is important for the higher education institutions to be able to offer quality services to international researchers, staff, and their spouses regardless of

the organisation's size and location. While public services are available for some topics and in some regions, employers also need to make an effort to support their own talent attraction and retention in order to create and maintain the best possible community for education and research.

It is a well-known fact, at least within international HR, that supporting the international spouses is also very important, in addition to supporting researchers and staff. With the help of the funding in question, the participating HEIs were able to realise their ideas for international spouse support. For instance, Aalto University and the University of Helsinki have already planned and offered some support for international spouses before the HEI LIFE project and were now able to develop and expand the support to the international spouses of all HEIs in the capital region.

The HEI LIFE Spouse Network is not the first international spouse network in the capital region. The cities of Helsinki, Espoo, and Vantaa started an international spouse network called the Spouse Program in 2020. While the Spouse Program was originally meant for international spouses of company staff, the organising team has collaborated with HEIs, including Aalto University and the University of Helsinki, from the beginning and often extends

invitations to their events and activities to international spouses at HEIs as well. At the moment, the Spouse Program is managed by the City of Helsinki. Other initiatives and organisations, like Espoo Career Club, Mothers in Business, International Working Women of Finland, Familia, and Nice-Hearts also welcome international spouses to their activities.

Though support networks for international spouses already exist, the participating HEIs though it important to create their own network, since they have an invested interest in the wellbeing of their researchers and staff and want to also welcome the spouses into the university community. In addition, HEIs already offer a range of services such as events and training to the whole international community, so a more formalised model was a natural extension of that work. Also, it gives the HEIs direct contact to the international spouses and better insight into their wishes and needs.

Another important aspect is the HEI LIFE project's objectives and priorities, including piloting useful activities and services supporting retention for the benefit of all HEIs, developing a more holistic perspective on integration, strengthening the employer brand of Finnish HEIs, and enhancing collaboration between HEIs, cities, and other organisations. In order to keep up to date with current developments in HEIs throughout Finland, the project team kept in close contact with networks such as the Finnish Academic Mobility Support Network (FAMO), [EURAXESS Finland](#), and [Talent Boost](#).

3. Goals and target group

The HEI LIFE Spouse Network supports the international spouses of academics, researchers, and staff working for HEIs in the capital region. The aim is to build and offer a community for the members and enhance inclusion and a sense of belonging. The network focuses on facilitating access to information, creating meaningful personal contacts, and improving employability.

The network is open to all international individuals, whose spouse/partner works for a higher education institution in the capital region of Finland either as an employee or grant researcher. The network is advertised as such by the participating HEIs to their international employees and grant researchers.

The organising team aims to offer meaningful and interesting content and activities to the network members. The focus and priorities were set based on discussions with the target group representatives, and further confirmed by information gathered from the network members. In the beginning, the focus of the network activities was on building a community among the members, introducing interesting networks, and sharing useful information. Further on, more focus was placed on improving the employability of the network members through training and facilitating professional connections, for instance.

The organising team and participating HEIs are aware that similar support and activities are offered by other organisations in the capital region, nationally, and internationally. Collaboration with other networks and organisations is a key feature of the support activities.

4. Planning and kick-off

The participating HEIs had good background knowledge for setting up the network and activities. Prior to the project, they had already done preliminary work and research on setting up spouse support services. For instance, the University of Helsinki (UH) had discussed similar collaboration in forming a spouse network already years earlier. UH had also drafted a model for spouse support several years earlier, which included similar aspects to the HEI LIFE Spouse Network plan. In addition, a similar spouse network called the Spouse Program had previously been set up by the cities of Helsinki, Espoo, and Vantaa, which provided important benchmarking and collaboration opportunities.

The work on the HEI LIFE Spouse Network started when the overall HEI LIFE project funding granted by the Ministry of Education and Culture became available in autumn 2020. To begin with, the sub-project team (organising team) reviewed all previous plans made by the participating HEIs, updated knowledge on existing spouse support services, networks, and related research, and gathered further information on the current and practical needs of the target group, international spouses. Some of the background material is listed in the Links and References chapter of this publication.

Focus groups were arranged for the potential international spouse members and HEI employers in autumn 2020 to gather additional information on the current and practical needs. Both focus groups

confirmed the initial assessment that the network activities should focus on building connections, facilitating access to information, and supporting the employability of the international spouses through collaboration between the participating HEIs and with other organisations such as cities, NGOs, and companies.

The focus group for international spouses had nine (9) participants, plus the HEI LIFE project manager Kirsi Korhonen and collaboration partner Jochen Faugel from the City of Helsinki (Spouse Program) facilitating the workshop. In the workshop, the participants shared their experiences of arriving to and living in Finland, and their views on what kind of support they would need to best integrate and build meaningful lives in Finland.

Three workshops were arranged for the HEI employer focus group in the autumn term 2020. The participants were mainly HR specialists from the participating HEIs, plus an international spouse as the target group representative. Waltraud Heschl from the Medical University of Graz (MUG) attended one of the workshops as an online guest. In the workshops, the participants discussed their vision and wishes for the HEI LIFE Spouse Network and related collaboration, reviewed the background material including the findings of the spouse focus group and benchmarking other spouse support activities, heard about experiences for spouse support at MUG, and brainstormed and finetuned ideas for activities

Most interesting for your HEI



Picture 1. Most Interesting Themes for HEIs. HEI LIFE Subprojects Joint Workshop Autumn 2021.

and the action plan of the HEI LIFE Spouse Network as well as collaboration between all related parties. In September 2021, the subproject team organised a joint online workshop for all HEI LIFE subprojects on the HEI LIFE Spouse Network. In the workshop, the organising team introduced the plans and activities for the network and discussed the organising team's experiences and open questions as well as possible collaboration and dissemination of the results. Based on the comments gathered from the workshop participants, fostering inclusion and belonging, collaboration and engaging the community members, and supporting employability were the most interesting themes for the participating HEIs. These expectations matched those of the network members (see [Chapter 5](#)) and were reflected in the subproject's activities.

The participating HEIs agreed that they all contribute to planning and promoting the network's activities and events, share information on the network with their international community, and ensure the fulfilment of the subproject plan and funding requirements together. Most of the work was done by UH as the primary project organisation with the support of the other HEIs. All HEIs have an interest

in the success of the network, and especially Aalto and UH, as the assumption was that the majority of the members would be international spouses from these HEIs. Indeed, the membership numbers are split quite evenly between the two largest HEIs.

In preparation for the launch of the network, the organising team created a registration form, marketing material, and an email list, and planned a few initial events and activities, including an online kick-off event. Information on the network's launch and activities was shared to the HEI communities, collaborating partners, and the public on the HEI LIFE website, on internal communication channels, on social media, in live events and discussions, etc.

The kick-off of the HEI LIFE Spouse Network was on 31.3.2021. 42 interested individuals registered for the online event. As a welcome gift, the organising team sent the participants vouchers to R-kioski with the instructions to purchase an Easter egg to be used in the session. The programme included greetings from the participating HEIs, discussions on planned and potential activities and events, and a group activity with Easter eggs as well as a seasonal [video](#) made by UH to provide cultural insight. In addition



Picture 2. Advertisement for the HEI LIFE Spouse Network

to hearing about the planned activities, the participants shared their expectations for the network. Their expectations reflected the organising team's previous insight and confirmed the suitability of the initial plans for activities (see [Picture 1](#)).

The organising team felt that it was important to have something 'concrete' to offer interested members once the participating HEIs started promoting the network. The topics of the first events after the kick-off, Networking Tips, Volunteering Opportunities, and Municipal Elections, were chosen based on feedback received from the target audience and discussions with the Spouse Program, one of the main collaborating networks. Due to the restrictions related to COVID-19, all events were online for the first months.

The participating HEIs promote and share information about the network to all international researchers and staff in recruitment discussions, by email, on their intranet, and other internal communication channels, as well as in social media, for instance. Dozens of international researchers and staff whose

spouses could benefit from joining the network start working in HEIs in the capital region every year. Since an employer usually does not have the direct contact information of a spouse, the HEIs rely on several information channels to reach the target audience.

5. Activities

5.1 Needs and Wishes of the Network Members

The activities of the network are based on the aims of building a community, enhancing inclusion, facilitating access to information, creating meaningful personal contacts, and improving employability. When registering for the network, the members indicate which topics and activities they are interested in (see [Appendix 1](#)). They can select one, several, or all choices for all the categories, and give additional comments.

103 international spouses had registered for the HEI LIFE Network by the end of the HEI LIFE project period (31.12.2022). Their answers to the registration form gave good insight into the needs and wishes of the network members. According to the registration information, the main motivators for joining the network were job search (77% of respondents), professional networking (75%), and social networking (75%). Half of the members (54%) also listed learning as a main motivator. The members are most interested in topics related to working and living in Finland (78% and 73% of respondents respectively). Information on international or intercultural groups, family matters, and free time activities were also indicated as interesting (61%, 54%, and 50% of respondents respectively). Also, the members preferred social events and information material (79% and 75%) and indicated that webinars and training are also suitable types of support (58% and 51%). These needs and wishes have been taken

into consideration well, with all events supporting networking and most events focusing on the most popular topics fully or in part. Also, as soon as the restrictions related to COVID-19 were lifted, the events were organised face-to-face to increase the social dimension.

Answering the members' request for the timing of the activities depended on the activity in question and how many people were needed to organise it. Based on the answers to the registration form, over half of the members would prefer the events to take place in the afternoon or early evening (58% and 55% respectively). Morning and midday suit fewer people (41% and 35% respectively). Most of the events were organised either before noon or in the afternoon. Since the organising team is employed by the different participating HEIs and regular working hours in Finland do not usually extend to early evening, only a few events were organised at that time. It is worth noting that the question on preferred time of day was added to the second version of the registration form and thus the preference of the first 32 registered members is not known.

In addition to the information given by the members, the organising team and partner HEIs have accumulated substantial experience in supporting international talents with various activities, events, and services in international HR and other teams. They also have wide international net-

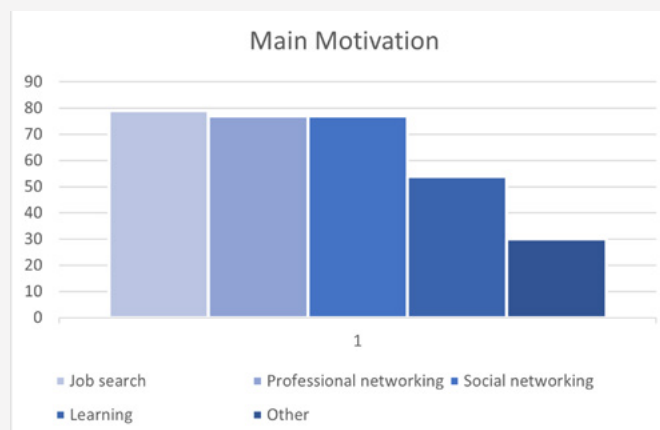


Table 1. Main Motivation for Joining the HEI LIFE Spouse Network



Table 2. Preferred Topics

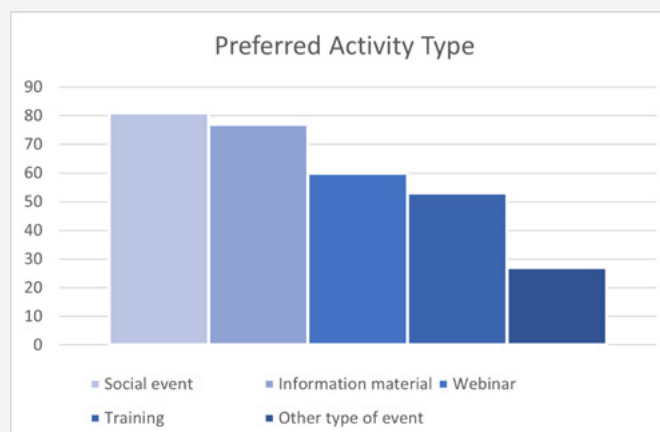


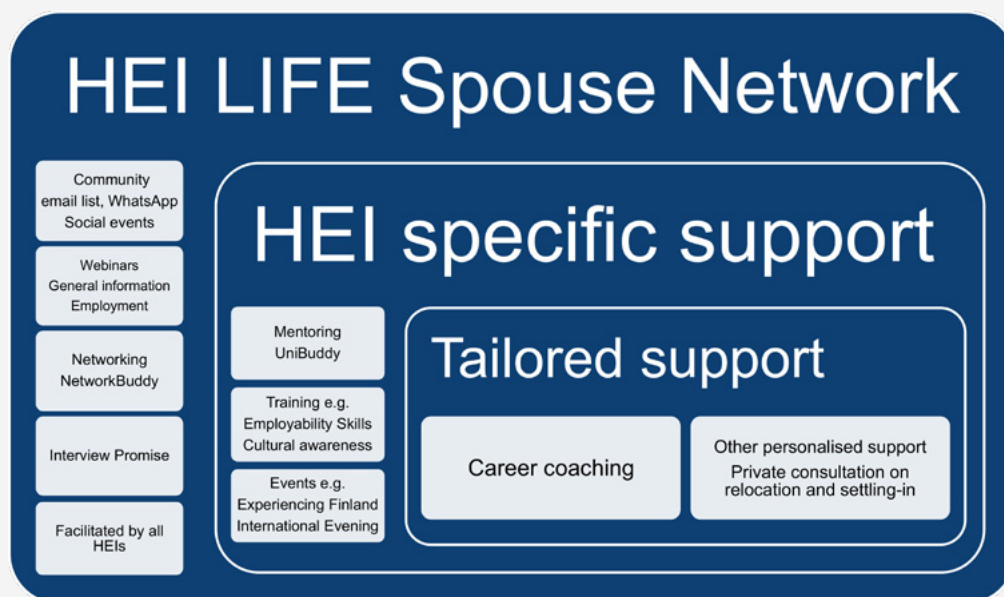
Table 3. Preferred Activity Type

works and direct contacts to international talents in Finland and abroad and receive feedback on the needs and wishes of the target group continuously. All of this ensures that the activities and events of the network are suitable, useful, and interesting for the members.

5.2 Main Activities

The main activities of the HEI LIFE Spouse Network include communication to the members (email list and WhatsApp group), informational events or trainings, social events, and the so-called Interview Promise. 49 events were organised during the HEI

Services offered by the HEI LIFE Spouse Network



Picture 3. HEI Specific Support Example From University of Helsinki.

LIFE project period. In addition, several activities including a community group on Facebook, the NetworkBuddy model for professional connections, and a career coaching group were piloted. In 2021, the focus was more on community building, while also offering important information, useful training, and local experiences. In 2022, more activities related to building skills and professional networks were introduced. See below for descriptions of the various activities and examples of events.

Inviting spouses to existing activities and collaboration with other organisations, networks, and individuals has proven interesting, useful, and sensible. The partner HEIs already offer some services and activities to international researchers, staff, and students that are suitable also for the spouse network members. Examples include the Experiencing Finland event, organised twice a year, where the international researchers, staff, and spouses get seasonal and cultural information and have the opportunity to network, as well trainings to improve work life skills and employability, intercultural communication skills, or knowledge of Finnish culture and communication, for instance.

Collaboration between the HEIs and with other organisations such as the cities and local NGOs in organising and offering events adds greatly to the services offered to the spouses. It also ensures that the events have a good number of participants, and that more resources are available to provide good quality services. Also, having a wide network of experts in various fields is useful when looking for suitable speakers or service providers for the activities and events. Another important aspect is gathering feedback on the events and activities to ensure that they fit the needs and wishes of the target group.

5.3 Email list

An email list was created already in the beginning to share information to all HEI LIFE Spouse Network members. All new members are added to a Major-domo email list administered by the University of Helsinki. At the beginning of 2023, the list had 114 members, 111 of which were international spouses and 13 members of the organising team.

The email list is mainly used by the organising team for sharing information on upcoming events and

activities. Common topics are events or activities organised by HEI LIFE Spouse Network, the participating universities, the cities in the capital region (incl. Helsinki Spouse Program, Espoo Career Club, International House Helsinki), collaborating NGOs or other organisations, information on holidays and traditions, and important current affairs. A typical message includes information on a few events or activities by the HEI LIFE Spouse Network as well as the cities and/or collaborating organisations. Reminders of events or activities promoted earlier are also sent to the list. On average, one or two emails listing activities and events have been sent to the list each month (see Appendix 2 for example email).

Members can unsubscribe from the email list by emailing the organising team or by sending Major-domo the appropriate command by email. The organising team has found the email list to be a convenient way of sharing information and can recommend a joint communication channel for similar networks.

5.4 WhatsApp group

A WhatsApp group was created in January 2021. By the end of 2022, there were 36 members in the group, 32 of whom were international spouses and four (4) members of the organising team. Discussion in the group focuses around sharing information and tips on events and life in Finland, and communication on the spouse network's current activities. A link to the group is shared in the introduction email sent to all new members and members can join the group at their convenience.

The WhatsApp group is an easy way to keep in touch and has proved more active than the other communication channels in terms of the members themselves sharing information, pictures, etc.

5.5 Facebook group

In addition to the email list and WhatsApp group, the HEI LIFE Spouse Network also had a Facebook group. The aim of the group was to make sharing information and creating personal connections easier. The group had 56 members and was active from April 2021 to December 2022. A link to the group was shared in the introduction email sent to all new members.

Though a good amount of network members joined the group, the activity mainly consisted of the project

manager posting updates on events or services, with little interaction between the members. There were 70 posts in total. In autumn 2022, the project team decided to close the Facebook group due to inactivity and scarcity of resources in engaging the group members and posting useful and interesting content. Prior to the decision, the project manager posted a poll to ask how the members felt about closing the group. Out of 56 members only four people replied which in itself was sufficient confirmation for the inactivity of the group.

5.6 NetworkBuddy

The importance of personal networks in creating opportunities is well-known, as is the lack of networks as one commonly cited challenge for international talents in Finland. To facilitate meaningful connections, the organising team piloted the NetworkBuddy activity on a small scale. The idea of the NetworkBuddy activity is to link a member of the HEI LIFE Spouse Network to a professional working in a field that interests the network member. The NetworkBuddy can share information on their specific field with the network member that can prove useful in prospecting potential career paths, for instance.

The HEI LIFE Spouse Network members can express their interest in making a new professional connection by filling in a form with additional information on their fields of interest, etc. (see Appendix 4). The connections are created through the professional networks of the organising team. In practice, the organising team checks who in their network might be a good 'NetworkBuddy' and contacts that person to ask for a short meeting with the HEI LIFE Spouse Network member. The NetworkBuddy is only expected to have a chat with the spouse, and there is no promise of a job interview or offer, etc. If a suitable connection is found and the person agrees to a discussion with the network member, the organising team sends them both a message to share their contact information and start the conversation.

The model was piloted in 2022 with interested network members. The activity was initiated by asking the network members for their interest in the activity. Eight (8) spouses expressed their interest in making a new connection through NetworkBuddy. The professional connections were sought out through the organising team's own networks

and social media. The organising team managed to create five (5) matches for the eight (8) interested members. The team was unable to match three (3) of the members with professionals in their specific fields of interest despite several attempts to find suitable connections.

The matching was done manually using an electronic form for registration and an Excel for the matching. This proved quite time consuming as the network members have very diverse backgrounds and fields of interest, and it was not always easy to find a good match. The organising team discussed the option of using the online platform for the Dörren programme with Luckan Integration. The Dörren platform is a more advanced version of a matching tool and could have been useful in supporting the professional connections of the international spouses. Due to challenges related to timing and funding restrictions, the use of the Dörren platform could not be piloted during the HEI LIFE project period.

The participants usually gave feedback on the meetings to the project manager verbally. There was no formal follow-up. Based on the feedback received, the participants found the connections they made useful and interesting and were happy to receive further information on their specific fields in Finland. The NetworkBuddies were also happy to share their experiences and help the network members in getting a better picture of their respective field of work in Finland.

5.7 Career coaching group

The University of Helsinki offered the spouse network members the opportunity to join a career coaching group in 2022. Group coaching means group-based coaching of individual participants. The aim is to support the achievement of development goals for everyone involved in the process. Group coaching makes use of the group's resources, expertise, and shared thinking. At its best, group coaching enables and increases joint reflection and awareness.

The aim of the group coaching was to help the participants understand what they want professionally, identify their career goals, and how they can be reached. The group was facilitated by two certified coaches from the University of Helsinki (HR Services) in English and it was free of charge for the participants.

The members were invited to join the group by email. The members interested in the group filled in a registration form. The form included questions about their education and profession, as well as motivation for joining the group, topics of interest, and expectations and goals for the group coaching process. The participants were expected to commit to the group process and meetings and have sufficient English skills for career reflection.

Five (5) members signed up for the career coaching group. The group met five (5) times both remotely and in person. In the meetings, the group focused on values and motivation, skills and learning, and career planning, for instance. The topics of each meeting were agreed within the group. In between the meetings, the participants had some exercises and they arranged separate meetings to discuss them as well. Discussions within the group were confidential.

In addition to the discussions and insights gained in the group sessions, personal networking between the spouse members was a significant outcome of the group. The group worked well together, and the participants got to know and sparred each other very well.

5.8 Interview Promise

As part of their collaboration and joint effort to support the careers of the international spouses, the partnering HEIs agreed on an 'Interview Promise'. In practice, the Interview Promise is a service model where international spouses, who are interested in an open vacancy at any of the partnering HEIs, can contact international HR in the HEI in question and discuss the vacancy and their career prospects. The Interview Promise is not a promise of an actual job interview with the hiring unit or supervisor, but rather a promise of an open conversation about the HEI as an employer and a direct contact to HR. The spouses are informed of the Interview Promise by email and in discussions with the HEI representatives.

To date, the agreement has been used by the international spouses a couple of times to ask about an open position at one of the partnering HEIs. Utilising this opportunity depends a lot on the initiative of the individual members or international HR at the partnering HEIs. Between the partnering HEIs,

the agreement has most actively been used by Aalto to scope potential contacts and job opportunities for their international spouses at the partnering HEIs. To elaborate by example, the international HR contact from Aalto University is in touch with their colleague at the University of Helsinki, for instance. Aalto's HR tells their UH colleague a bit about the person in question and their background, and requests a contact or meeting with a professor, manager, or someone else in the related field of expertise. The international HR contact at UH then seeks out a suitable person internally, explains the interview promise, and requests that the contact details can be given to the HR colleague or international spouse in question in order for them to get a personal contact and hear more about their field in the Finnish setting. Both the professional contact in the HEI of interest and the international spouse are aware that the discussion is not a job interview or a promise of anything further.

Based on the subproject's experience, the Interview Promise is appreciated by the members as they receive personal support and get a good professional contact. It also makes the HEIs more visible and accessible as potential employers. When the international spouses know the international HR contacts through the network, it is easier for them to ask about open vacancies or potential career prospects. Similarly, when colleagues at partnering HEIs know each other well and collaborate often through the network activities, the threshold of requesting a contact for an international spouse is lower than it otherwise might be. Also, the professional contacts working at the partnering HEIs who receive the request from their own HR (e.g., UH international HR asks a professor working at UH) have been happy to connect with the international spouse and talk about their respective field of expertise.

5.9 CV Pilot

The CV pilot was a career support service pilot organised in collaboration by the University of Helsinki Career Services and the City of Helsinki Executive Office's Economic Development Services. The goal was to find traineeship positions in local companies for the participants. The HEI LIFE Spouse Network members were invited to join the pilot.

The support activities included tips and advice on creating a good CV, updating an existing CV, and

presenting the job seeker profiles to local companies interested in interviewing candidates. Representatives from UH and the City of Helsinki shared the work responsibilities, with UH handling a CV workshop and the City of Helsinki calling prospective companies to introduce the job seeker profiles, for instance. The HEI LIFE project manager participated in the planning of the activities and in helping participants at the CV workshop as a representative of the subproject.

20 people signed up for the pilot, three (3) of which were members of the HEI LIFE Spouse Network. Ten (10) people attended the workshop and 14 sent their CVs to the City of Helsinki's business coordinator. These activities were organised in the end of 2022. The calling campaign continues until April 2023. There were no reports of recruitment by the end of 2022.

Based on the feedback received from the participants, they received useful, practical advice and the additional support was much appreciated. The business coordinator gave feedback on the good working life skills and potential of the participants. A notable point was that the participants wished to be interviewed by relatively large and well-known employers. However, such employers usually have a structured traineeship programme, and it is difficult to get a traineeship position in any other way.

5.10 HEI Specific Spouse Support

The participating HEIs also offer the spouses of their own researchers and staff additional support. For example, the University of Helsinki offers their spouses the opportunity to discuss matters and questions related to relocating to and living in Finland with an International HR Specialist during the recruitment phase and afterwards. In some recruitment cases, UH also offers new international employees and their families external relocation services through their service provider. UH also has internal funding for Dual Career support which can be used to support the employment of a highly qualified international spouse. In addition, UH Career Services offered their international spouses the opportunity to join the [HelsinkiUNI International Talent Programme](#) in 2021. The participating HEIs inform their own target group of the support activities separately and usually by email and through personal discussions.

5.11 Peer Network for Spouse Support Coordinators

During the project period, the number of spouse support initiatives in university cities in Finland increased. To facilitate sharing experiences and knowledge and provide peer support, a new peer network was formed for colleagues coordinating spouse support activities in different organisations in Finland. The HEI LIFE project manager organised the first meeting after discussing the idea with possible participating colleagues and receiving positive feedback.

Representatives from Aalto University and the University of Helsinki working on spouse activities participate in the peer network. The group meets every couple of months to discuss different spouse support activities, share experiences, and exchange ideas. For the organising team, the network has been a good source of peer support and also feedback on ideas and topics concerning the HEI LIFE Spouse Network, including the activities and publications. The network is listed here as a by-product of the subproject, as the project manager played a key role in forming the network.

5.12 Publications

The main publications of the subproject are this publication and a video showcasing the Finnish language and universities. This publication contains all the relevant information gathered from subproject 3. The aim of the video is to raise interest in the universities, higher education, and research in Finland as well as the diversity of the Finnish language. In addition, the HEI LIFE Spouse Network has been presented in several events throughout the project period. The presentation material used has been shared with the participants of these events.

In addition to these, the subproject has produced several presentations and other material on and for the HEI LIFE Spouse Network, including an Easter themed video for the kick-off event in 2021.

5.13 Discontinued Plans

Sometimes plans do not work out and that is also part of the process of piloting new services. During the project period, the HEI LIFE Spouse Network participated in a collaboration discussion with UH, Aalto, student unions AYY and HYY, Tekniikan Aka-
teemiset TEK, Palta, Sivista, and The Shortcut. The

idea was to organise a campaign to assist international students and spouses in finding internship positions. The HEI LIFE Spouse Network members would have been invited to the programme and the international HR specialists at both HEIs would have offered information and support related to hiring international employees. The discussion between the participants continued for several months though in the end the internship campaign was not organised.

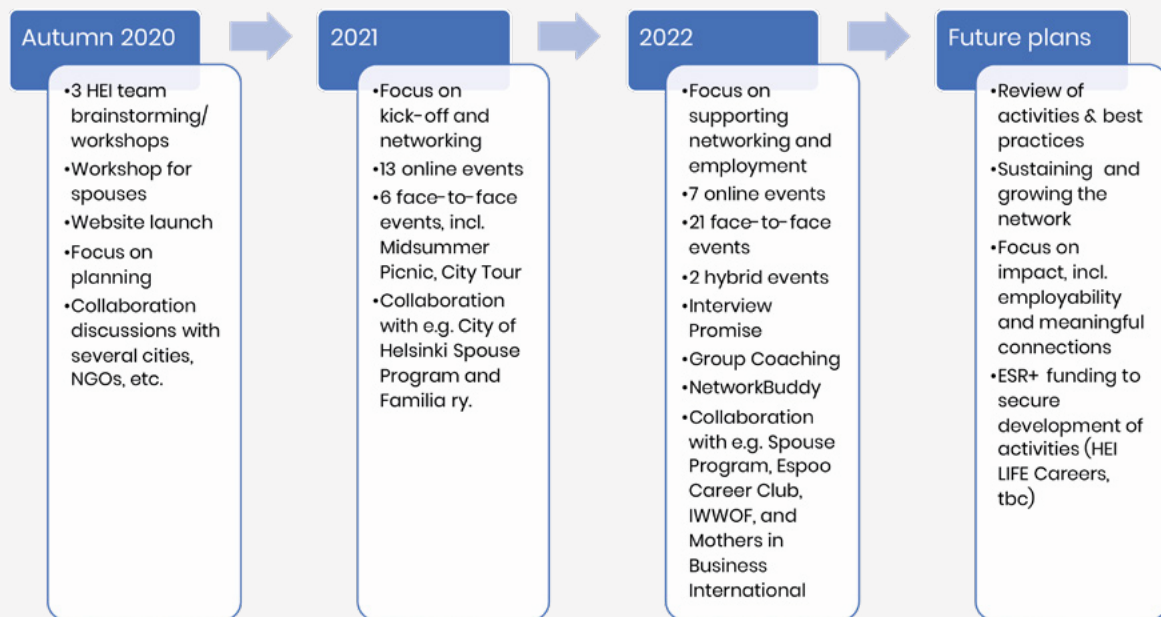
The collaboration experiment was an interesting and useful experience. It gave all the participants insight into their respective experiences and points of view regarding the issue, which they can build on should a similar project be planned at a later stage. Also, international students from Aalto did a Customised Student Business Project called 'Integrating International Talent' to investigate and develop means to facilitate the employment of international talent to Finland. The project's report gave a good overview of the concerns and prospects of international students and companies regarding employment and was a good learning experience for the students involved.

The subproject team was also planning to create material for learning about and discussing Finnish culture. However, due to constraints on time and other resources, the project team was not able to realise that part of the plan. The preliminary work done on that can be utilised and developed further later at a suitable opportunity.

5.14 Events and Training

The HEI LIFE Spouse Network's coordinating team organised 49 events and training sessions on different topics for the HEI LIFE Spouse Network during the HEI LIFE project period. The team collaborated with several people and organisations in organising events and training, offering the network members experiences, information and networking opportunities as well as raising general awareness of the importance of spouses in talent retention, among other things. The main collaboration partners have been the City of Helsinki Spouse Program and other integration related units, the City of Espoo's Career Club, Mothers in Business International, International Working Women of Finland, and The Shortcut. The organising team has also collaborated with other organisations including Nicehearts ry, Familia ry, Luckan Integration's Dörren, Olarin Eräkotkat -

HEI LIFE Spouse Network Timeline



Picture 4. Timeline for Building the HEI LIFE Spouse Network.

Wild Eagles ry, the Family Federation of Finland, and with several speakers, trainers, and service providers as well as the wider national Talent Boost network.

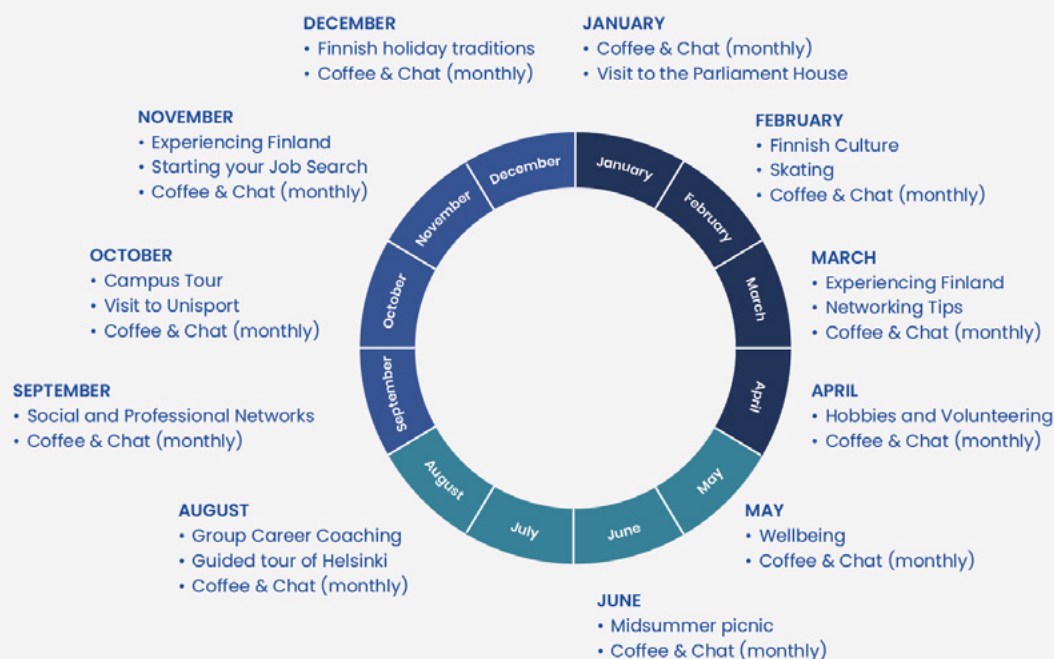
Altogether 27 events were organised only for the HEI LIFE Spouse Network members. In addition, three (3) other activities, NetworkBuddy, Group Career Coaching, and the Interview Promise, were aimed only at the network members. The CV pilot organised together with the City of Helsinki was open to the international students at the University of Helsinki and the spouse network members. Nine (9) events were organised by either Aalto University or the University of Helsinki for their international students, researchers, and/or staff, and the spouse network members were invited to join the events. The main event of the whole project, the HEI LIFE Seminar, was open to everyone. The HEI LIFE Seminar was organised in collaboration with all three (3) HEI LIFE subprojects.

12 events were organised in collaboration with another organisation. Nine (9) with the City of Hel-

sinki's Spouse Program, one (1) with the City of Espoo's Career Club, one (1) with Familia, and one (1) with Mothers in Business International. The events organised with another network were usually open to the members of both networks. The event organised with Mothers in Business International was a seminar on inclusion in working life and it was open to everyone. In addition, the network members were invited to join several events and activities by other organisations, including the ones mentioned above and International Working Women of Finland, Luckan Integration, and The Shortcut.

Generally, organising an event included planning the programme, setting a date, finding a speaker, booking a venue or setting up the online event, promoting the event, handling the registrations, hosting the event, and sending the material to the participants. For the first months, the events were organised online due to meeting restrictions related to COVID-19. Once the meeting restrictions were lifted, events were organised face-to-face outdoors, and later also indoors. Face-to-face events seem

HEI LIFE Spouse Network Calendar



Picture 5. HEI LIFE Spouse Network Calendar

to be best for enhancing the community spirit, engaging the participants, and facilitating networking. Face-to-face meetings is the primary model for all activities and events. Online events work very well too with some topics and people are now used to attending events online. Based on the positive feedback and experience with online events, online events will continue to be one of the working models for the events. Many of the topics can be addressed well online, sometimes it might be easier for the network members to participate online, and other networks can also be invited to join online events more easily. The examples mentioned below are events that the HEI LIFE Spouse Network plans to organise again, except for the two seminars. In the table below, the abbreviation HLSN means the HEI LIFE Spouse Network.

Examples of events:

Type	Audience	Topic	Organisers/ Partners	Comments
Skills Training	HEI LIFE Spouse Network members	Networking Tips Interactive session with speaker presentation, exercises, and discussion	HEI LIFE Spouse Network, speaker (Yuliya Salorenko)	Project manager organised the registration, marketing, and online session technicalities, and hosted the session. Speaker provided the details for marketing and all of the content. Session received very good feedback. Speaker received a fee. 12 registered participants.
Informative Webinar	HEI LIFE Spouse Network members	Social and Professional Networks in Finland Informative session with speaker presentations and open discussion	HEI LIFE Spouse Network, Familia, International Working Women of Finland, Nice-hearts, Mothers in Business International, Olarin Eräkotkat – Wild Eagles	Project manager organised the registration, marketing, and online session technicalities, and hosted the session. Speakers introduced their organisations and activities. Session received good feedback. Speakers did not request a fee for their participation. 24 registered participants.
Social event	HEI LIFE Spouse Network members	Midsummer Picnic Social get-together and visit to local botanical garden.	HEI LIFE Spouse Network and families	Tasks included marketing, registration, providing details of event, and purchasing snacks and refreshments. Project manager took care of most of the administrative work and other team members helped with the shopping, etc. If access to the location was subject to an entrance fee, the project paid that. Participants also brought snacks to share. 11 (2021) and 14 (2022) registered participants/families.
Informative Webinar	HEI LIFE Spouse Network members	Hidden Jobs in the Finnish Job Market Interactive session with speaker presentation and open discussion	HEI LIFE Spouse Network, International Working Women of Finland, speaker (Veronika Redin)	IWWOF representative (Lucia Vuillermin) arranged almost everything from the speaker to the technicalities. Project manager shared the marketing material to the HEI LIFE Spouse Network, sent further details to the participants, and attended the session. The session received good feedback. IWWOF received a fee. Eight (8) registered participants.
Social event	HEI LIFE Spouse Network members	Coffee & Chat Social get-together and visit to local café	HEI LIFE Spouse Network	Coffee & Chat is a relaxed get-together for all members organised once a month. The get-togethers usually take place in a different café in a central location. Generally, participants select and pay for their own refreshments. Occasionally, refreshments were offered to the participants. Regardless of the number of participants, the activity receives good feedback and adds greatly to the sense of community within the network. Average number of participants is under ten (10) people.

Type	Audience	Topic	Organisers/ Partners	Comments
Social event	HEI LIFE Spouse Network members	Campus Tour Social event with visit and tour of each participating HEI and related word bingo game	HEI LIFE Spouse Network and UH UniBuddy programme	All the participating HEIs were involved in organising a campus tour for the HEI LIFE Spouse Network and UH's UniBuddy Program. Tasks included planning the programme, promoting the event, handling registration, purchasing and distributing public transport tickets and snacks, hosting the visits at each HEI, and gathering feedback. Feedback received was positive, the participants liked visiting the HEIs and learning more about them and meeting new people. 14 registered participants (10 HLSN members).
Sports event at Merihaka sports hall	HEI LIFE Spouse Network and Helsinki Spouse Program members	Fun Floorball Tournament Social get-together with team sports activity international talents in Finland	HEI LIFE Spouse Network, Helsinki City Spouse Program	Helsinki City Spouse Program representative and HEI LIFE Spouse Network representatives shared organising tasks, with the Spouse Program taking the lead and HLSN having more of a supporting role. Costs were shared similarly. Tasks included marketing, registration, venue booking, providing event details, and purchasing snacks and refreshments. Majority of participants were from the Spouse Program. The session received great feedback. 20 registered participants (3 HLSN members).
Skills Training	HEI LIFE Spouse Network and Espoo Career Club members	Self-hack workshop Interactive session with facilitated exercises and discussions	HEI LIFE Spouse Network, Espoo Career Club, Trainer (Grace Ondo)	HEI LIFE Spouse Network representatives booked the venue and marketed the event to the spouse network members. The trainer provided the details for marketing and all of the content in the training event. The session received very good feedback. 19 registered participants (3 HLSN members).
Skills Training	HEI LIFE Spouse Network	Intercultural communication – Finland focus Interactive session with speaker presentation, facilitated exercises, and open discussion	HEI LIFE Spouse Network, Trainer (Kirsi Korhonen)	The project manager was the trainer and handled all the tasks, including booking the venue, marketing the training to the members, creating the training material, and facilitating the session. The session received very good feedback. Six (6) registered participants.

Type	Audience	Topic	Organisers/ Partners	Comments
Social event	HEI LIFE Spouse Network	Holiday event Social get-together with seasonal food, gingerbread decorating, and sharing cultural holiday traditions	HEI LIFE Spouse Network	Tasks included marketing, registration, providing event details, booking the venue and catering, purchasing snacks and refreshments, and hosting the event. Representatives from Hanken School of Economics and Helsinki University of the Arts hosted the event. The event received very good feedback. 12 registered participants.
Seminar at Think Corner, University of Helsinki (streaming option available)	All interested persons and parties	Inclusivity morning: What does it take to employ international talents in Finland? Open seminar with speaker presentations and panel discussion, online stream and chat available.	HEI LIFE Spouse Network, Mothers in Business International, speakers from Finnish institute for health and welfare (Sanna Nykänen), Family Federation of Finland (Gunta Ahlfors), Business Finland (Regina Ainla), Vaikuttavat Naiset (Afrah al Bayaty), Sara Salmani	MiB International and project manager shared tasks with MiB Int being responsible for marketing and contacting the speakers, for instance, and the HEI LIFE project manager booking and arranging practicalities related to the venue and catering. MiB's Executive Director and the project manager hosted the event, with the latter also hosting the panel. Costs were shared with the HEI LIFE project taking care of the cost of the venue and MiB taking care of the speaker fees, catering, and other costs. The event received very good feedback. 25 participants onsite, 80 viewers online.
Seminar at Think Corner, University of Helsinki (streaming option available)	All interested persons and parties	HEI LIFE Seminar Open seminar with speaker presentations and workshops, online stream and chat available.	All HEI LIFE subprojects Speakers Kirsi Korhonen (HEI LIFE Project Manager and subproject 3), Tiia Tuomi (Steering Committee Chair), Henna Juusola (keynote speaker), Raisa Suominen (subproject 1), Irinja Paakkanen and Lucia Vuillermin (subproject 2), and Yordi Yern (subproject 3)	As part of the HEI LIFE project, all three subprojects pulled together to organise an open seminar to showcase the work done in HEI LIFE and discuss the main topics with all interested parties. The seminar programme included presentations, workshops, and networking. The project manager provided an overview of the whole project, and the three subprojects presented their activities and main findings both on stage and later in more detail in workshops. The tasks related to organising the event itself (booking the venue and catering, promotion, registration, material distribution, gathering feedback, etc.) were mainly handled by the project manager and the University of Helsinki representatives, and the subproject teams took care of their presentations and workshop content. The event received very positive feedback, and the participants found both the stage presentations and workshops interesting. 198 registered participants, 64 eventually came in person, 99 followed the event online.



Picture 6. HEI LIFE Spouse Network Member Yordi Yern and Project Manager Kirsi Korhonen on stage at the HEI LIFE Seminar 2022. Photo by Tanja Malo

In addition to the events mentioned on the previous pages, the team and/or participating universities have also organised informative events on relevant topics including public services for newcomers, municipal elections, and support for entrepreneurship, training supporting career paths, employability, or skills development on topics such as job search in Finland, Finnish culture and communication, and intercultural communication, and events highlighting local sights, including a visit to the National Museum, a guided city tour of Helsinki, and a nature walk. Some of these events have been organised with a collaboration partner and/or a service provider.

5.15 Cost and workload of the activities

Most of the activities were quite inexpensive to organise when considering the cost of a venue, digital systems, materials, or snacks. Some events only required informing the network members of the time and place of a meeting and one representative of the organising team showing up to meet the members. Other events included small costs of some tens of euros to cover snacks. Some activities or events included speaker or other fees amounting to some hundreds of euros. A few events and the publications cost some thousands of euros.

When considering the labour cost, meaning hours used to organise any activity, the costs were sub-

stantial. Usually, any activity required several hours of work from the project manager and the rest of the team. Of the events, the public seminars and some social events like the picnics and tours took the most time to organise. These also included higher costs related to the venue, catering, and/or other charges. Events organised in collaboration with partners, such as IWWOF or the Spouse Program, required less work from the project manager or organising team. Some of these events also included costs for the venue, snacks, entrance fees, and/or other charges.

Of the other activities, NetworkBuddy and the Career Coaching Group required the most work from the project manager and coaches, respectively. Communication about the activities to the network members and interested parties and creating the publications also took a notable amount of time. The overall project funding included the salary costs for one staff member, meaning the project manager, who divided their time between running the whole project and this subproject. The other members of the organising team contributed to the activities as part of their normal work. Most of the costs of the subproject were covered by the funding received from the Ministry of Education and Culture, including the costs related to the activities, events, publications, and salary. The participating HEIs also



Picture 7. HEI LIFE Spouse Network Härkäsaari Visit 2022. Photo by Kirsi Korhonen.

covered some costs for catering, venue rent, and gift vouchers, for instance.

Some of the network members helped with the planning and/or organising of events during the project period. For instance, two members were involved in the organising team, one member shared their experiences in public at the HEI LIFE Seminar, and several offered their help during the events. This kind of participation was a great way for the organising team to get to know the members better and stay focused on the goals and target group of the activities. Based on the registration information, half of the members are willing to help organise events. Active participation provides good opportunities for the members to influence and benefit from the network activities and the involvement of the spouses can help the organising team to maintain a connection with the members and focus on the most relevant activities.

5.16 Feedback

The organising team asked for feedback on the activities from the network members on several occasions. Feedback could be given anonymously using an electronic form, by filling in a paper version of the form at an event, and verbally to any member of the organising team. Feedback given on the spot at any happening (event or other activity) has been positive throughout the project period. The number of feedback forms returned was very low throughout the project period, and the information gathered does not give a full picture of how the activities and events have been received.

Based on the feedback received, the members were happy with all the activities that they participated in. The content, programme, speakers, and details all

received positive comments. The members liked the social events the best, which could also be seen in the participation numbers. Most typical comments concern the programme, speakers, and social aspect of the activity. The participants often commented on how much they liked meeting the other spouses and exchanging experiences about and tips related to living in Finland. This confirms to the team that the HEI LIFE Spouse Network can have a very positive effect on the members' lives as a peer support network.

The members rarely had requests for major changes or improvements. Most of the requests had to do with the timing of the activities or events. Some members prefer alternating the times of events or organising them later in the day because they have children, take part in Finnish language courses, or have other obligations during the day. Some members also suggested topics for events, and a few even organised their own activities with other network members. This finding was especially rewarding to the organising team since the main goal is to create a community for the spouses. The fact that some of them have become friends proves that the network has been able to facilitate meaningful connections and support people on a very personal level.

Going forward, the participating HEIs can be confident that the events and activities offered have been useful and interesting to the members and that many of them can be organised again. The event calendar for 2023 is based on the experiences and findings of the past 21 months of network activity. The team should continue actively asking for feedback to ensure that the network offers the kind of support in networking, career advancement, and inclusion, etc. that the members wish for and need.

6. Findings and recommendations

This publication explains the goals, activities, and findings of the HEI LIFE Spouse Network and the work done in subproject 3. By sharing the experiences and main findings, the participating HEIs want to support others in building similar support activities, the international spouses in finding pathways to inclusion and belonging, and the wider international community everywhere. The roots of the network and activities go back to several discussions concerning the importance of spouse support that the participating HEIs have had among themselves and in national and international networks over the years. With the help of the funding, the HEIs had the opportunity to further develop their spouses support and realise the plans for this collaborative network.

Building a collaboration network for international spouses, or any target group, offers opportunities and presents challenges. It can be an enriching and rewarding experience for both the members and organisers. Based on the experience with the HEI LIFE Spouse Network, the organising team can recommend building a similar network. The participating HEIs find that supporting the wider international community increases a sense of belonging and well-being within the community, advances inclusion into society in general, and offers insight into the actual needs and wishes of the members. The organising team recommends focusing on the people and their wishes and needs when building a network and planning activities. On a personal level

this kind of network and its activities can have a major impact on an individual's daily life and well-being, and on an organisational level they contribute to concrete services as well as strategic goals.

Collaboration is another recommendation to anyone planning similar activities. Cocreation brings diversity and other benefits to ideation, planning, and execution. Collaboration and sharing offer a wider pool of information, material, networks, and other resources. Time and other resources required to handle all the administrative duties and tasks related to the actual activities and events can present a challenge. The organising team recommends allocating sufficient working hours to a few people to manage the network. This will help reserve time for and focus on the work, as trying to manage the activities on top of other duties can be challenging and may affect the quality of the content and benefits for the members. Setting realistic goals and making a working plan for the first six (6), 12, and 18 months, for instance, will support the organising team in maintaining focus and prioritising relevant steps and activities. Keeping notes of the work and details is also important, especially for recurring activities or events. Any activity or event that has been organised successfully once can be more easily repeated based on the previous experience, notes, and material. Most of the HEI LIFE Spouse Network activities for 2023 have been organised at least once before (see [Picture 5](#)).



Picture 8. Hidden Gems City Tour of Helsinki with Beyond Relocation. Photo by Kathrin Deter.

Based on the experience of the organising team, other organisations with similar interests and target groups are happy to collaborate and co-organise activities. For the HEI LIFE Spouse Network, many of the activities, especially some events, would not have been as successful without collaboration with other organisations and networks. Especially as a small network with limited resources, it is better to join forces with others to ensure better content and a wider audience and impact for any activity. Collaboration also enables more diverse and tangible resources as different organisations and individuals bring their own expertise, funds, and other strengths into the mix. Pooling resources like skills, time, and funding between the participating organisations and collaboration partners and ensuring larger participation through joint activities make sense. Any activity with all the details involved is more worthwhile to organise if several people participate in the activity and benefit from the content, and also easier to organise with several people sharing the tasks. Peer support in leading this type of activities, another benefit of collaboration, also proved important during the project. Spouse support activities are increasing all over Finland and there is much to gain from sharing experiences, exchanging ideas, and collaborating on activities. The HEI LIFE Spouse Network will continue to organise events and activities together with all collaboration partners and contribute to the peer network also after the HEI LIFE project funding period.

Concerning the content of the activities, an interesting location or the right setting might be all that is needed for a successful activity. The feedback and participation numbers indicate that the network members are most interested in meeting other people and sharing experiences. Information can be shared digitally while personal connections are usually best face-to-face. During the project period, participant numbers in HEI LIFE Spouse Network events varied from a few to a couple dozen people. The two seminars aside, the most popular events were the social events organised mainly outdoors (guided city tour, picnics, island visit, and campus tour), in addition to the kick-off. Though job search and advancing professional connections were cited as the main motivators by the members and working and living in Finland were requested topics, social events were still the preferred type of activity. This might partly explain why the events or other activities related to career advancement have not had as many participants as the social events. Also, the needs and wishes of an individual member may change and schedules and other factors can affect participation. It might also be easier to show up to a social event for casual conversation with a group of peers than to commit to a more formal event like a training session. Gathering feedback and talking to the members ensure staying up to date with their needs and wishes.

While the network activities are appreciated by and beneficial to the network members, engaging the

members might still seem challenging. It might be easy to sign up for a network and remain a passive member though being an active member would ensure that one benefits as much as possible from the network and activities. Also, it might be easy to sign up for an event or activity, but obligations or other appointments might prevent actual participation. Yet, the network activities best benefit those who participate in them. Engaging the members is important and takes some effort. Supporting personal connections, creating a sense of community, and active communication might help prevent no-shows and passive membership.

Also, sometimes plans and discussions do not amount to an actual concrete result. Some events or activities might have to be cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances or lack of participants. It can

also happen that the organisers do not reach an agreement on the details such as the target group, budget, or content of an activity. These instances provide a good learning opportunity and material for further development at a more suitable occasion.

Another challenge to consider is reaching the target audience in the first place when direct contact information is not available. New employees or other community members are not obliged to share information on their family status, so organisations reach out to potential members in various ways. Promoting the network both internally in newsletters, emails, and other communication channels, and publicly on social media, etc. is very important. The possibility of reaching the target audience increases by sharing the information as widely as possible.

TOP TIPS

- Prioritise people
- Ask and offer what the target group wants and needs
- Be open to trying new ideas and activities
- Diversity is key in activities (content, speakers, timing, location, etc.)
- An interesting location and meeting people is often enough
- Assign coordinator(s) to start and manage the activities for 1-2 years
- Set aside some funding for the activities
- Be realistic about what can be achieved in the first 6, 12, 18 months
- Collaborate with peer organisations, cities, companies, NGOs, etc.
- Repeat popular/useful/interesting activities in the same format
- Promote the activities in every available channel and forum
- Engage the members in the activities
- Keep in touch with the members on relevant channels regularly
- Ask for feedback often
- Appreciate the experience, personal connections, and practical support offered and received

7. Continuation of the HEI LIFE Spouse Network

Based on the experience and going forward, the participating HEIs will continue collaborating on spouse support activities and co-managing the HEI LIFE Spouse Network. Creating the network was certainly worthwhile and has contributed to the international communities and strategic goals as HEIs and employers hoping to attract and retain the best talent. Starting January 2023, the managing of the network will be divided between the two universities with the most members in the network, the University of Helsinki and Aalto University. UH and Aalto will alternate between six-month periods of managing the network. This includes handling membership registrations, organising and promoting events, and other communication with the members, for instance. Representatives from the participating HEIs will continue to plan and organise the activities together and with other local organisations. Representatives from UH and Aalto will also continue networking and exchanging experiences and best practices nationally with their colleagues working with spouse support matters in Finland.

In continuation to the work done in HEI LIFE subproject 3, the University of Helsinki and Aalto University will receive funding to develop the career support of the spouses in a new project called HEI LIFE Careers. The aim of the project is to facilitate access to education, employment, or entrepreneurship by offering the spouse network members one of

three paths with thematic content, coaching, training, and/or other support. The work will be done in collaboration with several other projects and organisations, including Career and [SIMHE](#) Services (Supporting Immigrants in Higher Education) in the HEIs and the versatile services of the cities in the Helsinki Metropolitan area.

Building the network, organising the activities, and especially getting to know the international spouses of the researchers and staff better has been a very interesting and rewarding experience for everyone involved in this subproject. Personal encounters with people and sharing experiences have been the most memorable occasions. Seeing through many of the plans the team made during the project and even before is also a professional achievement. Hopefully the information shared in this publication will be useful for others planning and creating similar activities or anyone else interested. Collaborating, co-creating, and supporting each other is the way forward towards a more inclusive, well-being, and diverse community.

8. Acknowledgements

The HEI LIFE Spouse Network has been created with the help of many individuals and organisations. The project team would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in planning and organising the network and its many events and activities. To begin with, the whole project was made possible thanks to the funding by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. Thank you for the opportunity to focus on the international spouses of academics, researchers, and staff and pilot these important services.

The interest of all higher education institutions involved made the cocreation of such a collaborative network model possible. Thank you to all the team members, Kirsi Korhonen, Jaana Nylund, Tuomas Leikkonen and Laura Kasakkamäki from the University of Helsinki, Mikaela Stelwagen, Eeva Lyytikäinen, and Minna Planman from Aalto University, Linda Nyqvist and Miranda Lillqvist from Hanken School of Economics, Leena-Kaisa Paananen from Helsinki University of the Arts, Meri Vehkaperä and Maarit Mesiniemi from Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, for their joint efforts and great work in realizing the ideas and co-creating this community and concrete support for the international spouses. Thank you also to the steering committee members, who contributed their time and supported the work of all the subprojects with their insight and guidance.

The team would like to also acknowledge all the international spouses who have joined the network, supported the organisation of events and activities, and/or participated in them. Their interest and engagement are the best confirmation for the work. Based on their feedback and the shared experiences, the participating HEIs can be sure that they have been doing something meaningful on an individual and community level, and hope to continue building the network and community together also in the future.

Thank you also to the multitude of individuals and organisations ranging from international talents to cities, companies, NGOs, and other parties interested in collaborating with HEIs in supporting the spouses of international talents moving to and living in Finland. It has been a pleasure and honour to work with so many different people and organisations in realising activities, creating connections, building network, raising awareness, and improving the life of individual international spouses.

Building a community and network is always a joint effort, and everyone plays a part in creating a more diverse and inclusive Finland. Thank you to each and every one for caring, sharing, and making a positive difference.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. HEI LIFE Spouse Network Registration Form

Please fill in the following information and tell us a bit about yourself. Thank you in advance.

HEI LIFE Spouse Network - Helsinki Region



Dear spouses! Welcome to join the spouse network of the higher education institutions in Greater Helsinki. This peer network is meant for the spouses of international academics and staff in higher education institutions in Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa in Finland.

The network activities include information sessions, workshop and social events. Membership in the network is free, as are most events.

Please fill in this form to register as a member in the network. We will email you with more details on the community and upcoming events.

The network is part of the [HEI LIFE](#) project, funded by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. It is managed by HEIs participating in the project. For further information, visit the [HEI LIFE website](#) or contact project manager Kirsu Korhonen at the University of Helsinki (kirsu.korhonen@helsinki.fi) or Head of International Mobility Mikaela Stelwagen at Aalto University (mikaela.stelwagen@aalto.fi).

Registration information

First and Last Name *

Email *

Phone number

Higher education institution where spouse works *

Name of other HEI, if applicable

Preferred communication channel *

☐ Email
☐ Phone
☐ Social media

Event preferences

Main motivation for joining the network *

☐ Job search ☐ Social networking
☐ Learning ☐ Other
☐ Professional networking

Which topics would you like the network events to cover? *

☐ Family matters ☐ Official matters
☐ Freetime activities ☐ Working in Finland
☐ International/-cultural groups ☐ Other
☐ Living in Finland

Preferred activity type *

☐ Information material ☐ Webinar
☐ Training ☐ Other
☐ Social event

Would you like to volunteer to organise the activities? *

☐ Yes
☐ No

Preferred time of day for events *

☐ Morning
☐ Midday
☐ Afternoon
☐ Early evening

Comments

Confirmation

☐ By filling in and sending this form, I give HEI LIFE consent to store my contact information, add me to an email list, and send me messages related to HEI LIFE and the spouse network. *

Proceed

Thank you for joining our HEI LIFE Spouse Network! We look forward to seeing you at our next event!

HEI LIFE is a national project supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The HEI LIFE Spouse Network is part of the activities in the Helsinki Region in Finland, organised in collaboration by Aalto University, Diaconia University of Applied Sciences, Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, Hanken School of Economics, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, University of the Arts Helsinki and University of Helsinki.

Subject: HEI LIFE Spouse Network Upcoming Events

Welcome to the HEI LIFE Spouse Network,

I am Kirsi Korhonen, and I manage the HEI LIFE Spouse Network activities. I have just added you to the email list, and below you will find the latest information on our upcoming events.

You are welcome to join any of our events. All the activities are free of charge (usually also those organised by our collaboration partners like the City of Espoo and City of Helsinki). Most of them require registration in advance so that we know how many people are coming.

You can also join our WhatsApp group, if you want to connect with the other spouses online. Feel free to ask any questions there or email me. WhatsApp group: ([link to group](#))

HEI LIFE SPOUSE NETWORK EVENTS

FUN FLOORBALL TOURNAMENT 10.11.

Come join us for an afternoon of sports and fun together with the City of Helsinki's Spouse Program participants. Floorball is a very popular sport in Finland with many children and grown-ups playing this interactive and fun game in their spare time. The best part, each one can grab a stick and a ball and start playing; no previous experience needed. So, you can come even if you've never tried floorball before. We'll even match you with teammates, so all you have to do is come join us!

For more information check the Eventbrite page. Registration ended already but if you want to come, email me and I'll add you to the list. ([Link to Eventbrite page](#))

COFFEE & CHAT 16.11.

Let's try an earlier time for our Coffee & Chat get-together in November. Let's meet at the Think Corner at 10 am on Wednesday 16.11. Breakfast porridge is served until 10:30 am so you can also have breakfast with your cup of coffee/tea, if you feel like it. By the way, there are many interesting public events at Tiedekulma. I'm just sitting here listening to talks about e.g. research in the arctic region. Check out the events calendar on Think Corner's website (select 'suomi' to be sure to see all events).

CV, COVER LETTER, AND SKILLS SEMINAR 17.11.

Top up your job search skills with this webinar! This session is hosted by Aalto University from 3 pm to 5 pm on 17.11. Daniel Valtakari from Academic Engineers and Architects in Finland TEK will provide you with useful tips on how to improve your CV and cover letters and how to understand your skills in order to perform better in job interviews. This session is a follow-up to Daniel Valtakari's previous session, but you can join either one separately too. This event is an online Teams meeting: Click [here](#) to join the meeting

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION - LIVING IN FINLAND 29.11.

On 29.11. we'll organise a half-day training on intercultural communication and communicating with Finns. The training will include theory, discussions, and exercises on intercultural communication, personal and cultural preferences, and characteristics of Finnish culture and communication. Participants will also get access to the CultureActive tool for 12 months for free.

The training is from 9 am to 12 noon and it will be organised on-site at the city centre campus of the University of Helsinki. The training will be conducted by myself (Kirsi Korhonen) as I am a trained CultureActive trainer.

This training has only 10 spots so be sure to sign up soon. Registration for this event is binding. Participating requires a little homework in advance from each participant as part of using the

CultureActive intercultural profile tool.

Please register at the latest on Thursday 24th November by filling in this form (first come first served): ([link to form](#))

INTERVIEW PROMISE

If you are interested in working for one of the partner universities, and notice a suitable job opportunity, please don't hesitate to reach out to us for a chat. Our 'admin team' has members from each partner university (Aalto University, Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, Hanken School of Economics, University of the Arts Helsinki, the University of Helsinki). We'll be happy to have a chat to see if we can help you further finding a career in academia or university services. In practice, you can email me or the contact at the university in question, and let us know which job you are interested in (maybe include the job announcement as well). We might be able to tell you something about the position or unit, or connect with someone else for a further discussion.

OTHER IDEAS:

FATHER'S DAY 13.11.

Father's day is celebrated on the second Friday of November in Finland. Like with Mother's Day in the spring, cards or gifts might be made at school and you might see some offers in the shops too. There are usually also lots of posts on social media wishing all fathers well on that Sunday.

ENTRYPOINT MENTORING PROGRAM DL by 16.11.

The City of Espoo is inviting all international talent living in the capital region to join the EntryPoint Mentoring program. EntryPoint matches professionals who are familiar with the Finnish working culture, with other professionals who would benefit from their guidance, experiences and tips. EntryPoint's activities support diversity, international professional mindset and career development, for both mentors and mentees. For more information check the website and apply by 16.11.2022 if you to join the program!

HOW TO GET RECRUITED INTO AN INTERNATIONAL TEAM 24.11.

Another one of our collaboration partners, Mothers in Business, is organising a networking event for international talents and companies together with the City of Helsinki's Spouse Program. If you're looking for a job in Finland or thinking about your next career move, join this event to hear best practices of recruiting international talents and leading multicultural teams. For more information and registration, see the event's website.

NEW IN HELSINKI: HOW TO NAVIGATE FINNISH WINTER 29.11.

The City of Helsinki is organising an event for newcomer's to the capital region to tell about free-time activities in Helsinki and also tips on how to survive Finnish winter. This might be a nice continuation to the discussions we had at our Experiencing Finland event in Dipoli last week, and a good introduction to winter especially to everyone who missed our event. Register for the event by 27.11.

IHH EMPLOYMENT COACHING

International House Helsinki (IHH) has launched a new Employment coaching service. It is designed to fit the needs of international talents in the Helsinki capital region interested in starting their job search. The Employment coaching service is tailored to each customer's needs and covers the following topics:

- Early-stage employment counseling
- Methods and tips for job-searching
- Introduction to the Finnish labour market
- Jobseeking in the Helsinki capital region

IHH Employment coaching service can be contacted by email (coaching@y4works.fi) or phone (+358 41 314 5362). It is also possible to book a 30-minute appointment by email or by phone. Service is provided in English or Finnish, and free of charge. For more information, visit IHH's website.

Wow, that turned out to be a longer list than I first thought! :D We're so lucky to have many things happening in the capital region. I hope you can all join some of these events. We'll also organise a few of our own events in December, and will be sending you more information about those within the next few weeks.

Wishing you all a great week!

Best regards,
Kirsi & the team

Appendix 3. Example of Event Registration Form. Campus Tour 2022.

Event Registration

HEI LIFE Spouse Network Event 13.5.2022

Welcome to the HEI LIFE Spouse Network's Campus Tour on Friday 13.5.2022!

Come join us on this tour of all the HEI LIFE higher education institution partners in the capital region. We'll get to know more about the universities and each other as we tour the sites during the afternoon.

We start at 12 in Aalto University in Espoo. We will finish the tour at 4 pm in Haaga-Helia in Pasila. All you need to do is bring an open mind and good shoes so that your feet don't tire from the walking. A phone with a camera might also come in handy. We will provide snacks on the way. We will also provide you with a public transport ticket when we move forward from Aalto University, if necessary.

Please join us and register by providing the information below. Please register on Monday 9.5.2021 at the latest. If for some reason you are not able to attend the session after all, please inform Kirsi Korhonen about that before the event.

Please note that this event is for the members of the HEI LIFE Spouse Network. The invitation has been extended to the Helsinki University's UniBuddy program. If you are not yet a member of the HEI LIFE Spouse network or UniBuddy program, you should also fill in the respective member registration form. Thank you in advance.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact the HEI LIFE Project Manager Kirsi Korhonen (kirsi.korhonen at helsinki.fi).

Registration information

First and Last Name *

Email address *

Phone number *

Are you a member of the HEI LIFE Spouse Network or the Spouse Program or Helsinki University's UniBuddy program? *

☐ Yes

☐ Not yet. I will fill in the membership registration form.

Event information

Will you participate in the event on 13.5.2022?? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

Will you need a ticket for public transportation for the tour? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

Do you have any allergies or dietary preferences?

Comments or questions for the organisers or speakers.

Tietojen lähetyks

Tallenna

Appendix 4. NetworkBuddy Registration Form



Expression of Interest - NetworkBuddy



NetworkBuddy is a professional networking opportunity for the members of the HEI LIFE Spouse Network. This is a new concept that we are testing for the HEI LIFE Spouse Network. With this form, we are trying to confirm the interest of the members in this proposed activity.

NetworkBuddy participants are assigned a professional contact, who has experience in the field that interests the spouse. The contact agrees to meet the spouse and share their career story, insights concerning their job and the field, and other relevant tips or experiences.

We recommend that there is at least one meeting within 1-2 months of the matching, either in person or online. The spouse and NetworkBuddy's contact details will be shared with them once the match has been found.

If you would be interested in participating in this and meeting a NetworkBuddy, please answer this survey. The information you provide will only be used for the purposes of planning and launching the NetworkBuddy concept. If you have any questions, please contact the HEI LIFE Project Manager Kirsi Korhonen (kirsi.korhonen@helsinki.fi).

Thank you in advance!

Personal details

Last name *

First name *

Occupation

Email address *

Telephone

My language skills

- ☐ Arabic
- ☐ English
- ☐ Finnish
- ☐ French
- ☐ German
- ☐ Italian
- ☐ Russian
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ Swedish
- ☐ Other

Please specify other language skills

NetworkBuddy Preferences

I would like to participate in NetworkBuddy

- ☐ Yes *
- ☐ No *
- ☐ Maybe later *

Which field or profession interests you?

I would prefer to meet

- ☐ In person
- ☐ Online
- ☐ Both options suit me

I would prefer my Network Buddy to have

- ☐ Several years of experience in their profession
- ☐ Experience with moving to another country (e.g. to/from Finland)
- ☐ Work experience in an international organisation
- ☐ Experience from several fields (e.g. professional fields, volunteering)
- ☐ Something else (please elaborate in the Comments box)

I would prefer my Network Buddy to be

- ☐ Italian
- ☐ Russian
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ Swedish
- ☐ Other

Please specify other language skills

NetworkBuddy Preferences

I would like to participate in NetworkBuddy

- ☐ Yes *
- ☐ No *
- ☐ Maybe later *

Which field or profession interests you?

I would prefer to meet

- ☐ In person
- ☐ Online
- ☐ Both options suit me

I would prefer my Network Buddy to have

- ☐ Several years of experience in their profession
- ☐ Experience with moving to another country (e.g. to/from Finland)
- ☐ Work experience in an international organisation
- ☐ Experience from several fields (e.g. professional fields, volunteering)
- ☐ Something else (please elaborate in the Comments box)

I would prefer my Network Buddy to be

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Finnish
- ☐ International
- ☐ I'm happy with all options

Additional information

What is your current career situation?

- ☐ I have a job
- ☐ I'm looking for a job
- ☐ I'm looking for a volunteering position
- ☐ I'm open to/thinking about my options
- ☐ Other (please specify in the Comments box)
- ☐ I'm not looking for a job

Comments, questions, concerns?

Proceed

Save

[HEI LIFE](#) is a national project supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The HEI LIFE Spouse Network is part of the activities in the Helsinki Region in Finland, organised in collaboration by Aalto University, Diaconia University of Applied Sciences, Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, Hanken School of Economics, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, University of the Arts Helsinki and University of Helsinki.

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