



# Working in Finland

Dr. Daniel Valtakari



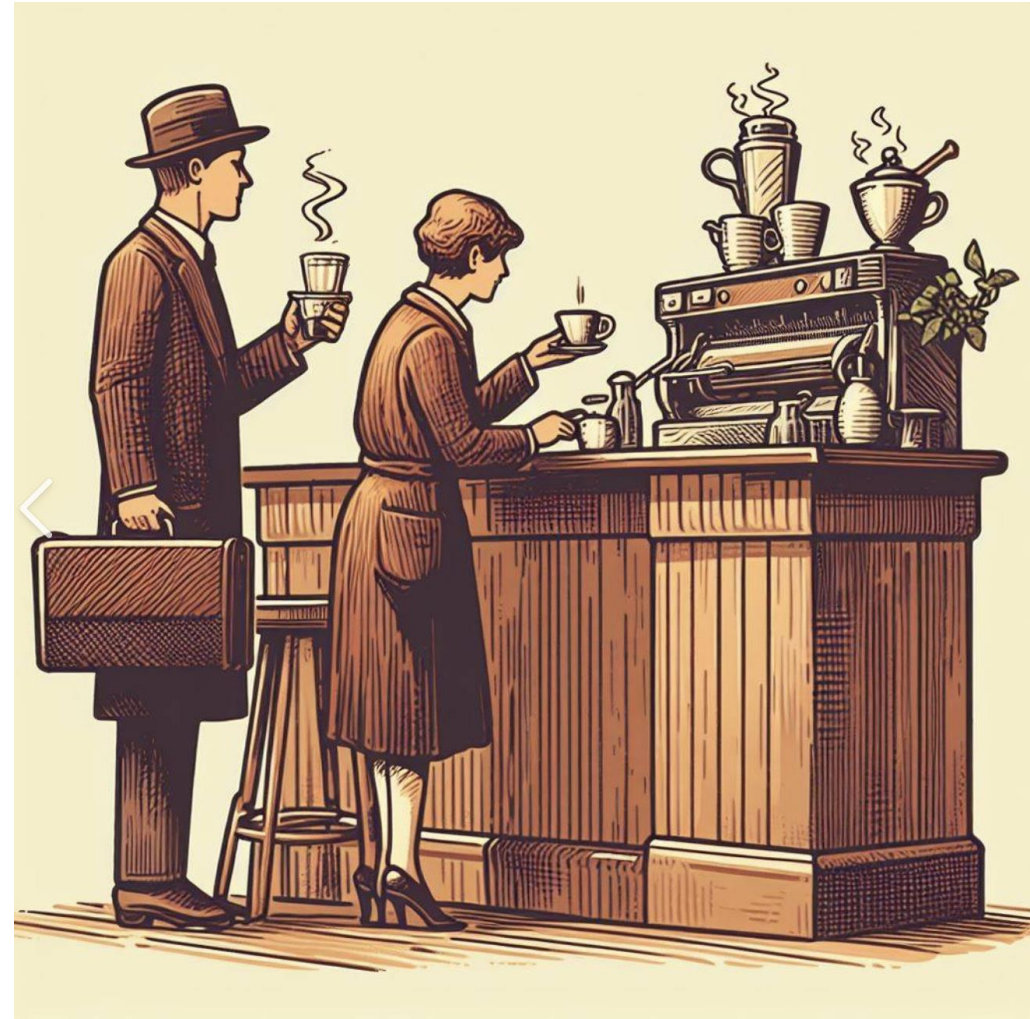


Dr. Daniel Valtakari

# One coffee, please

In order to be able to talk about work life culture and traditions first the obvious must be stated aloud – **Finnish culture is Finnish culture.**

For better or for worse, this is the way in Finland. Once we accept this it will be easier to understand and adapt to the way of the Finnish work life.

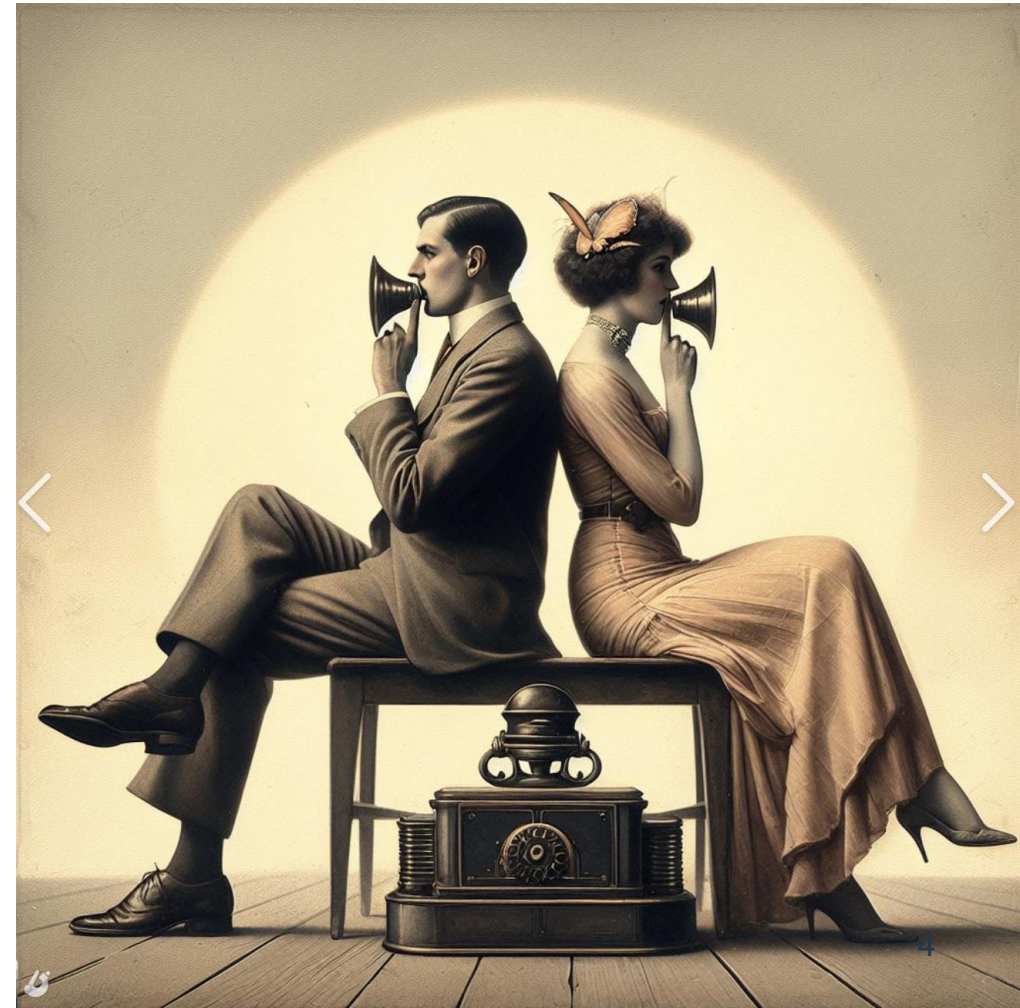


# Why talk when I already agree

There is a narrative about the Finns sitting at international meetings in a quiet fashion, sometimes with no input. When asked afterwards about the silent approach the answer is typically in line with *There was nothing to add, why speak.*

This may not be entirely true, alas it's not far from the truth.

Times change and nowadays many Finns are talkative, master small talk and speak up at meetings.



# The flat hierarchy

Finns are straightforward. If you have a question, then you ask. You can address your question to colleagues, managers and even the top management. It's perfectly normal and widely accepted.

If you have ideas and opinions, you should speak up.

If you have a task and you are expected to perform something, then you are also given the liberty to choose your way get the job done. In the Finnish work life, we don't check with superiors all the time about how we work and how we should do something. And if we don't get any feedback then things are (really) well. It can be interpreted as *there has been nothing to*

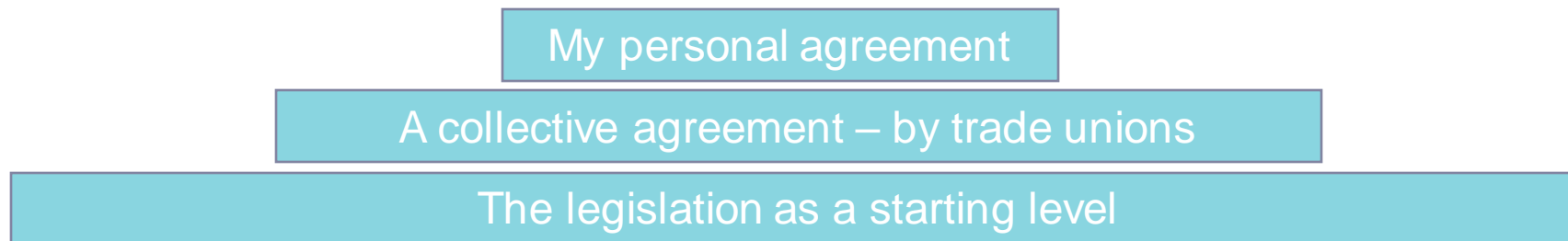
*complain about.*  
Daniel Valtakari ©



# Finns negotiate and agree

Yes, this is typical for Finland. It's the core of Finnish work life. In the work life the most important negotiation is that about *collective agreements*.

Collective agreements set the minimum standards for work life. They are negotiated by employee and employer organisations or representatives. They apply to everybody with the power similar to legislation and must be followed.



# Labour legislation

Labour and work life related legislation is strong and applied at all workplaces. Usually, it is not possible to agree differently from the legislation. If it is, then it is usually done through the collective agreements.

One example is the annual 1612 hours working time at the universities.



# Collective bargaining

In addition to the legislation, we negotiate collectively. The collective agreements set the minimum standards for the personal work agreements and the work everyone does at the workplace. For example, the paid sick leave or paid maternity and family leave is agreed in the collective agreement.

TEK participates in collective bargaining together with other Akava organised trade unions. We set the goals together based on feedback from our members and then we negotiate together with the corresponding employer unions.





# Employees are protected

Employees in Finland are protected in many ways from, for example:

- Abuse by employers
- Abuse from colleagues
- Excessive and exhausting work and stress

These are enforced by different authorities and monitored on a continuous basis.

There is a Shop Steward and/or a Health & Safety representative at most workplaces to whom you may address any concerns. Your union will also support you at any time.



# At the workplace

Coffee breaks, lunch breaks and interaction between people at the workplace is most important.

It's good to have breaks together with the others, participate in discussions (at least to listen) and *be part of the team*. This will also keep you in the loop and you will be appreciated by colleagues and superiors. In addition, it will have a positive impact on your career development.



# Trade unions

Finland is the promised land of associations, unions and trade unions. We like to get organised, have meetings and make things better.

Trade unions are in the heart of the work life of individuals. Any member will get help in personal matters, such as employment related issues, advice on salaries and career development.

The unions are involved in the negotiations on behalf of their members, collective agreements (including annual salary raise), important matters in the society and legislative work (parental leave).

Trade unions also offer networking, mentoring and many other services and opportunities. There may be some variation from union to union.



# TEK, for example

Defending the interest of graduate engineers, architects for soon 130 years.

We offer:

- Legal help and advice
  - Like how your agreements are interpreted and are your bonus programs applied correctly
- Work life related advice and support
- Career services
  - Support and advice when you want to advance in your career or change workplace
- Collective bargaining in the interest of our members
- many other things

Members can (and should) contact us in all above mentioned matters. Call us even when you are not sure if we can deal with the matter – we will let you know and possibly even direct to the right people.

Visit <https://www.tek.fi/en> for membership. Degrees from abroad may also be accepted.



# Our support for you

Once you start looking for a job and eventually find it, you can rely on our support from the unions:

We offer, among other things,

- Career services and work life advice to promote your search for a job.
- Legal help to check your work agreement is in order and in your interest.
- Statistics and advice to negotiate an agreement you should have.
- Continuous support and advice during every step of your career.
- Courses in cooperation with the universities.



# Academic Engineers and Architects in Finland TEK

For further contact, questions and  
information about membership  
please contact

Dr. Daniel Valtakari

Senior adviser

email: [Daniel@tek.fi](mailto:Daniel@tek.fi)

