

Akava for students



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Akava – Confederation of Unions for Professional and Managerial Staff in Finland – is a trade union confederation for those with university, professional or other high-level education.

Akava is continuously growing

Akava has more than 30 affiliates with altogether half a million unionised members working as employees, entrepreneurs and self-employed professionals in either the public or private sector. The members join one of Akava's affiliates based on their field of study, degree, profession or position. The members of all Akava affiliates typically serve in management or expert positions in fields such as education, technology or medicine. Additionally, Akava has 100,000 student members.

In Finland, approximately 70 per cent of all highly educated citizens are members of one of Akava's affiliates.

Further information about, for example, the placement of Finland's highly educated population in the labour market, work wellness, salaries, taxation and education in Finland is presented in the publication 'A Glance at Akava', which is available online at www.akava.fi/en

- Akava is a politically independent trade union confederation for those with a university, professional or other high level education.
- Half of the membership works in the private sector, half in the public sector.
- Also those with high-level education join a trade union in Finland. More than 80 percent of Akava members have completed at least the lower university degree.
- The members join one of Akava's affiliates based on their field of study, degree, profession or position.
- Unionisation has a long tradition in Finland, and it is normal for employees to belong to trade unions in Finland. Approximately 75 per cent of Finnish employees are members of a trade union.
- In Finland, labour market organisations have a great deal of influence. Negotiations on salaries, wages and labour legislation are conducted between the government and the representatives of employees and employers organisations, which is referred to as the tripartite system.
- Freedom of organisation is a statutory right in Finland. No one can be coerced to join a union. Employment may not be terminated on the basis of membership in a trade union.
- Membership in an Akava affiliate is not dependent on a specific workplace. If you change jobs, you can continue your membership in an Akava affiliate.
- Akava also offers student membership. Akava's student council represents more than 100,000 students within high education, i.e. universities and polytechnic institutions.

Akava members work in various management, expert and teaching positions, and they are highly educated experts in their field. One third of Akava members hold managerial or leading positions. The average Akava member is 42 years old, and their estimated average monthly salary in 2010 was about 4,100 euro, though this varies considerably by branch.

Statistical information on Akava members

Number of Akava members 1.1.2011	552,813	Proportion of women	51 %
Main occupation:		Average age	42 years
Full-time work	87 %	Age distribution 1.1.2011:	
Part-time work	6 %	under 30	10 %
Unemployed	3 %	30–39	28 %
Entrepreneur	3 %	40–49	28 %
Employer 1.1.2011:		50–59	24 %
Private enterprise	55 %	over 60	10 %
Municipality	33 %	Lower tertiary or a higher level qualification	81 %
State	7 %	Living in Helsinki Metropolitan Area	32 %
Self-employed professionals	3 %	Members in full-time work:	
Church	2 %	Fixed term work	12 %
Position in organisation:		Average years in service in current employment	9
Professionals	34 %	Average gross income 2010, euro/month	4,100
Teaching professionals	26 %	Average working hours/week	40.7
Legislators, senior officials and managers	22 %	Persons working overtime	22 %
Technical and associate professionals	13 %	Persons working over 48 hours/week	12 %
Others	5 %	Persons working overtime without compensation	38 %

Sources: Statistics Finland, Labour force statistics; Akava's affiliates

National and international engagement

Akava provides decision-makers with information about issues that are important to its membership. Akava's activities include involvement in the supervision of interests both on the domestic and international levels. Akava's regional committees bear the primary responsibility for the supervision of social interests on the local level.

Akava participates actively in collaboration with international wage and salary earners' organisations within the Nordic and European countries, as well as in the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

Negotiating power on behalf of Akava members

Akava watches over the shared financial, professional, educational and other social interests of its members, as well as safeguarding their status and prestige in society. Akava is politically unaffiliated and independent of any political party. Together with other central confederations, Akava conducts negotiations over collective wage and labour agreements. The social partners' negotiation mandate includes unemployment benefits, pensions, financial support for adult education and individual work time account schemes.

Akava's central tasks include keeping a general watch over its members' interest in society. Akava lobbies decision-makers in the fields of taxation, labour, education and social policy, among others. The lobbying is supported by research and training, as well as local, regional and national activity and publicity work.

As regards collective agreements in the public sector, Akava's collective bargaining mandate is held by the Negotiation Organisation for Public Sector Professionals JUKO. In the private sector, the negotiating body is the Federation of Professional and Managerial Staff (YTN), even though certain affiliates negotiate independently.

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Why join a trade union?

Membership in a union is like having insurance – it provides you with protection for your future. Akava's affiliates assume the responsibility for the membership and guidance of the individual members.

The union membership fee is deductible in your taxation.

There are numerous good and important reasons to join a union. Some view union membership as being important from a social perspective. Some view the matter more in terms of their own personal interests, and consider, for instance, the security offered by union membership in workplace disputes, unemployment benefits or the union's many other services.

The purpose of unionisation has always been, however, to look after the general good of the employed work force. Unionisation supports employees in the achievement of the goals. The more members the union has, the more efficiently the union is able to promote the objectives of those members. There is strength in numbers!

Unions have achieved many significant employment benefits. For example, the four-week annual holiday, the winter holiday, end-of-holiday pay and parental leave may all seem like self-evident aspects of employment, but over the years, hard work has gone into ensuring these benefits for employees.

Akava offers its members:

- Field-specific supervision of interests
- Employment security – a shop steward in the workplace, an attorney in your union
- Legal assistance and advice in dispute situations concerning e.g. wages or salaries, employment contracts, overtime work, fixed-term employment conditions or termination of employment
- Unemployment security – as a member of the unemployment fund, all your employment relationships will be included in the period of employment that determines the amount of earnings-based daily allowance
- Professional guidance related to education, practical training and actual business activities in one's own field
- Useful professional publications, courses, seminars, training opportunities, and networking
- The opportunity to get involved and influence your future working life
- Bonuses and discounts: insurance policies, fuel discounts, holiday destinations...and much more.



The process of entering an employment contract, presenting a suitable salary request, and defending one's holiday rights is much easier when you have a labour market professional on your side. The attorneys working for Akava affiliates advise members and assist them in all problem situations. The union also provides you with the opportunity to join the unemployment fund, which pays an earnings-based daily allowance if you should become unemployed.

Join already as a student

It is wise to join the union already as a student. Nearly every university student can find a suitable union from among Akava's affiliates. By joining, as a student, the union that best knows your field of interest, you ensure security and support for the duration of your working life. Information about the affiliates' student activities and student membership is provided at, for example, Akava's university tours and events, and from representatives of the affiliates who are responsible for student membership issues.

The aim of Akava's student activities is to ensure that university students have access to the appropriate information about working life. A knowledge of the rules of working life will help to support one's future career and smoothen the transition from studies to employment. Representatives of Akava for students participate each year in various fairs and organise two extensive university tours: Akava Camp in the autumn and the Working Life tour in the spring.

Akava and its affiliates hope that the university tours will improve students' knowledge about working life and ensure that students are able to stand up for their own rights once they enter the workplace. The tours also provide information about the various affiliates and their activities. There will also be representatives present to provide information specifically about the student activities of the Akava affiliates.

AOVA - Akava's student council

Akava's student council, AOVA, represents the students' voice in Akava decision-making and beyond the central organisation. It is Finland's largest labour market organisation for students with 102,000 student members. AOVA serves as a subordinate unit to the Board of Akava and involves all Akava affiliates that have student activities. The primary task of AOVA is to put forth the student perspective within Akava's decision-making processes and policies.

Additionally, AOVA advances the common national interests of university students and students of universities of applied sciences, as well as of newly graduated degree students. The supervision of interests assumed by AOVA covers, in particular, the training, labour force and social political issues related to the working life of highly educated students.

How do I join Akava?



Akava members are organised on the basis of their field of education. For example, it is easy for a student of law or technology to find the appropriate affiliate to join. It is not that simple, however, for everyone. It is not always clear for students of the humanities, for example, which affiliate is most appropriate for them. In such a case, students are encouraged to contact the student representatives of the affiliates and request advice and guidance.

Please note that Akava does not have any direct personal members, even though many say that they are a member of Akava. An individual person, as well as students, always join an Akava affiliate, thereby making them a member of the central federation as well.

You can become a member of the union during your studies if you fulfil the student member criteria of the affiliate in question and you complete the required membership application. Most affiliates have an electronic application form that can be submitted online. Your membership will enter into force once the affiliate has accepted your application.

When you become a member of an Akava affiliate, you may also join the unemployment fund, which is essential for unemployment security. In case you don't find a job immediately upon graduation, the earnings-based unemployment benefit will prove to be very useful.

Student membership is generally free, but a separate fee is collected for membership in the unemployment fund. Some affiliates require students to pay a membership fee only during those months of employment in which the condition for employment is met. Once you have joined the union, you will receive instructions regarding the payment of the membership fee.

An employed person can authorize the employer to handle the payment of the membership fee, that is, to deduct the fee from the salary and pay it to the union on behalf of the employee. The membership fees for the union and unemployment fund are both deductible in the employee's taxation.

The membership fee for a permanent member of the union is generally defined as a specific percentage of the salary. The membership fee practices and amounts vary from affiliate to affiliate.



Member affiliates

Finnish Association of Academic Agronomists

Agronomiliitto
www.agronomiliitto.fi

Akava Special Branches

Akavan Erityisalat
www.akavanerityisalat.fi

The Union of Church Professionals within Akava AKI

Akavan kirkolliset ammattiliitot AKI
www.akiliitot.fi

Akava's General Group

Akavan Yleinen Ryhmä AYR
www.akavanyleinenryhma.fi

The Union of Diaconal Workers in Finland

Diakoniatyöntekijöiden liitto dtl
www.dtl.fi

Union of Swedish-speaking Engineers in Finland

Driftingenjörsförbundet i Finland
DIFF
www.diff.fi

Kirkon Nuorisotyöntekijöiden Liitto KNT

www.knt.fi

Union of Technical Professionals, KTK

Kuntien Tekniset KTK
www.ktk-ry.fi

Finnish Union of Experts in Science

Luonnontieteiden Akateemisten Liitto LAL
www.luonnontieteilijat.fi

Society of Finnish Professional Foresters

Metsänhoitajaliitto
www.metsanhoitajat.fi

Sales and Marketing Professionals SMKJ

Myynnin ja markkinoinnin ammattilaiset SMKJ
www.smkj.fi

Trade Union of Education in Finland

Opetusalan Ammattijärjestö OAJ
www.oaj.fi

Union of Finnish University Professors

Professoriliitto
www.professoriliitto.fi

The Institute Officers Union of the Finnish Defence Forces and the Border Guard

Päällystöliitto
www.paallystoliitto.fi

Sosiaalialan korkeakoulutettujen ammattijärjestö Talentia

www.talentia.fi

The Finnish Association of Architects

Suomen Arkkitehtiliitto SAFA
www.safa.fi

SEFE – The Finnish Association of Business School Graduates

Suomen Ekonomiliitto SEFE
www.sefe.fi

Finnish Veterinary Association

Suomen Eläinlääkäriliitto
www.sell.fi

Finnish Pharmacists' Association

Suomen Farmasialiitto
www.farmasialiitto.fi

Finnish Dental Association

Suomen Hammaslääkäriliitto
www.hammaslaakariliitto.fi

Association of Finnish Lawyers

Suomen Lakimiesliitto
www.lakimiesliitto.fi

Finnish Medical Association

Suomen Lääkäriliitto
www.laakariliitto.fi

Finnish Psychological Association

Suomen Psykologiliitto
www.psyli.fi

Union of Finnish Speech Therapists

Suomen Puheterapeuttiliitto
www.puheterapeuttiliitto.fi

The Finnish Association of Occupational Health Nurses

Suomen Työterveyshoitajaliitto
www.stthl.net

Finnish Association of Political Scientists

Suomen Valtiotieteilijöiden Liitto
SVAL
www.sval.fi

The Finnish Association of Graduate Engineers TEK

Tekniikan Akateemisten Liitto TEK
www.tek.fi

Health Science Academic Leaders and Experts

Terveystieteiden akateemiset johtajat
ja asiantuntijat
www.taja.fi

Finnish Union of University Researchers and Teachers

Tieteentekijöiden liitto
www.tieteentekijoidenliitto.fi

Finnish Business Polytechnic Graduates Association

Tradenomiliitto TRAL
www.tral.fi

The Officers Union

Upseeriliitto
www.upseeriliitto.fi

Union of Professional Engineers in Finland UIL

Uusi Insinööriliitto UIL
www.uil.fi

Finnish Union of Environmental Professionals

Ympäristöasiantuntijoiden keskusliitto YKL
www.ykl.fi

Managers and Specialists in the Private Sector YTY & Professional Coaches of Finland

YTY & Valmentajat
www.yty.fi
www.saval.fi



www.akava.fi