

Footwear in Finland



Photo by Freestocks.org

Finnish footwear market is relatively small, revenue being €723 million in 2018 (source: Statista, currency converted USD -> EUR 11/2019). However, a large share of footwear sold in Finland is imported from other countries. This brings opportunities for businesses in developing countries. This factsheet provides specifications of footwear products in Finland and the Finnish footwear market.

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A. Finnish footwear market

- Footwear import in Finland has increased steadily and there is very little footwear manufacturing in Finland, which brings opportunities for manufacturers in developing countries;
- Finland is not a world-top country in footwear consumption – an average consumer used only €131 in footwear in 2018, as in world-top country Austria the sum was €253 (currency converted USD->EUR 11/2019). This brings opportunities for the manufacturers in the lower price segments;
- Approximately two thirds of footwear imports came from outside the EU countries in 2018.

1. Footwear segmentation

As the footwear market becomes more segmented and the preferences of consumers change, the Finnish footwear market can be segmented e.g. on the basis of price, volume, end-user profiles, style or materials used. The usual segmentation starts by distinguishing segments according to prices. This is usually done by identifying 3–4 different segments:

1) Cheap products for mass-market

These products are typically produced in low-cost countries outside EU and sold by mass-market retailers (in Finland e.g. [H&M](#), [Kesko](#), [Tokmanni](#)).

2) Middle-low & middle-priced products for mass-market

These products are also produced for mass-market but present the middle-low category; for example, higher quality materials can be used than in the lowest segment (in Finland e.g. the following brands: [Clarks](#), [Vagabond](#), [Vans](#), [Tamaris](#)).

3) Upper-middle and designer footwear

These products are pricier than in the middle-priced segment, designed by individual designers often lesser known as in the luxury segment (in Finland e.g. [Minna Parikka](#), [Terhi Pölkki](#), [Pertti Palmroth](#), Janne Lax for [Saint Vacant](#)).

4) High-end (luxury) footwear

This product segment represents the most high-end segment (e.g. [Manolo Blahnik](#), [Christian Louboutin](#), [Jimmy Choo](#)).

The most imported segments in Finland are naturally the cheap mass-market and middle-low & middle priced segments because these are directed to mass-market. Typically, these are also the products that are manufactured outside the EU.

After identifying the most suitable price segment for your products, you need to identify the most suitable user group (identify your potential customers) for your products and to what kind of use your products are meant for.

2. Finnish footwear market in general

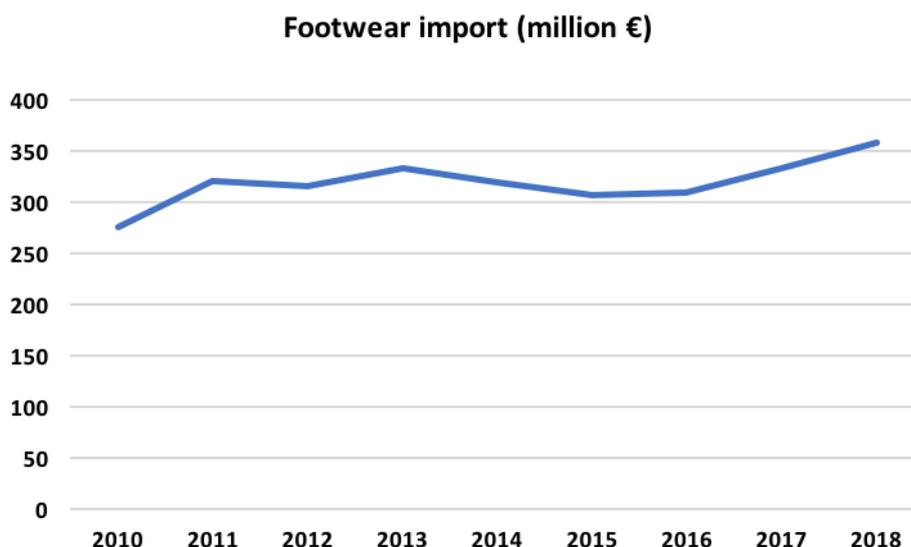
There are a few traditional Finnish footwear brands still operating and manufacturing products in Finland (e.g. [Kuoma](#), [Jalas](#), [Sievi](#)). However, a growing trend has been that manufacturing is done either in another European country or in a low-cost country (often in Asia). Even some higher end products are designed and sold in Finland but manufactured in another country, typically in Spain, Italy or Portugal (e.g. [Minna Parikka](#), [Terhi Pölkki](#)).

This brings new opportunities for manufactures of all price segments but especially for the two lower segments.

In 2018, the biggest segment in revenue was textile & other footwear (€308 million), when dividing footwear into three different segments (leather footwear, athletic footwear, textile & other footwear). Leather footwear amounted to €269.2 million in revenue and athletic footwear to €146.3 million (source: Statista, currency converted USD->EUR 11/2019).

As can be seen in table 1, footwear import to Finland has increased in 2010–2018, and in fact, it has increased relatively steadily since the 1990's. During the last twenty years, the value of import of clothing and footwear has doubled, which brings opportunities also for manufacturers outside the EU area.

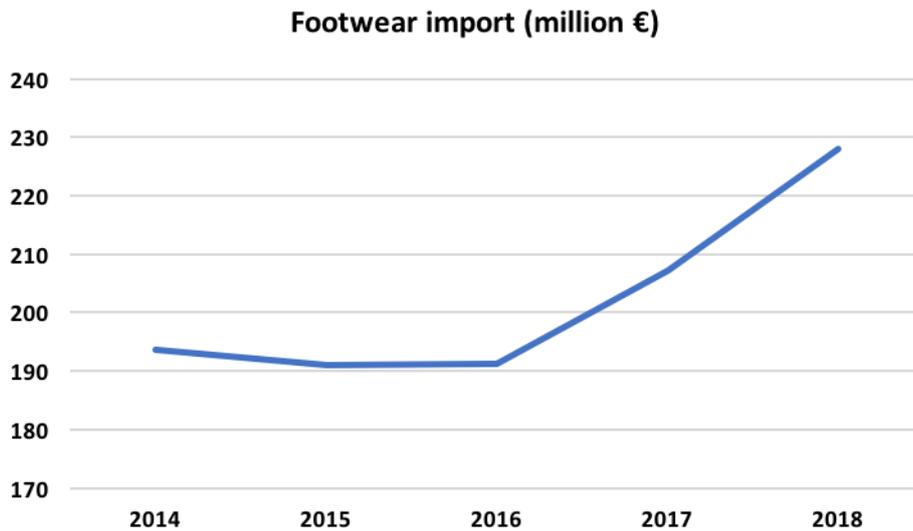
Table 1. Footwear import to Finland 2010–2018



Source: Finnish Customs

As can be seen in table 2, the imports from outside the EU have increased during the last five years. Especially in 2016–2018 footwear import from outside the EU area has increased rapidly from €190 million in 2016 to nearly €230 million in 2018.

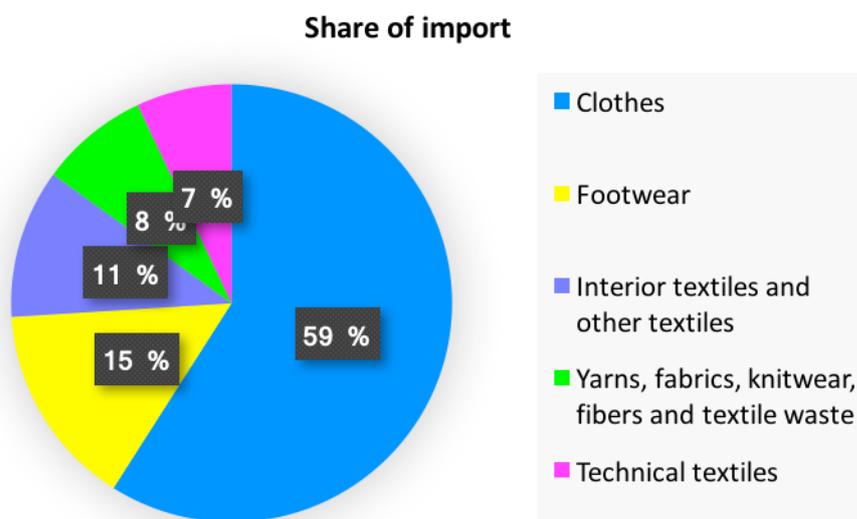
Table 2. Footwear import to Finland 2014–2018 from outside the EU countries



Source: Finnish Customs

As can be seen in table 3, of all textile and fashion import in 2018, footwear had a good share representing 15% of import value. In total, the value of import in this category was €2.4 billion, and the value of footwear import was €357 million.

Table 3. Share of footwear of all textile and fashion import to Finland in 2018

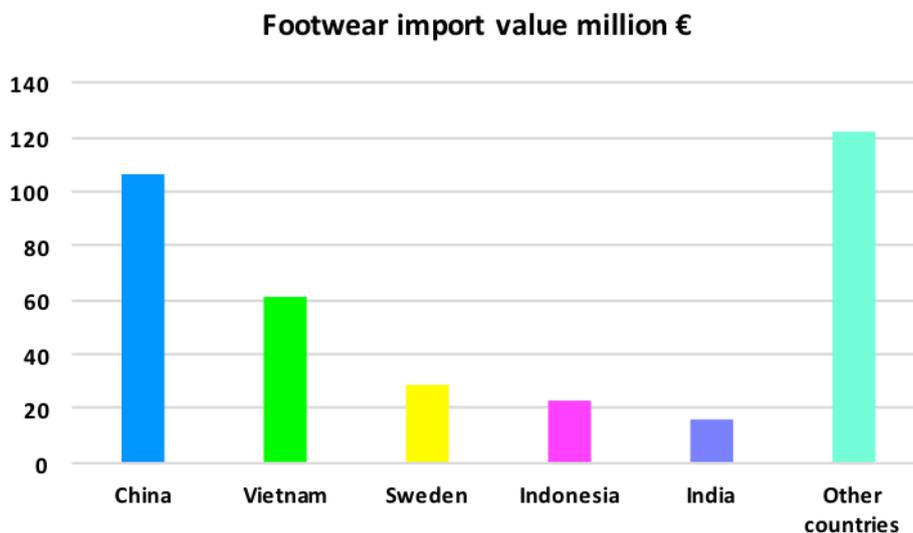


Source: Finnish Customs

The biggest importers of footwear to Finland in 2018 were China, Vietnam, Sweden, Indonesia, and India, as can be noted in table 4. Asian countries have increased their share in clothing and footwear imports to Finland during the last decades and have taken the lead position in footwear imports. For example, in 1987 the biggest footwear importers were Italy (30%), South Korea (21%), Portugal (11%), Germany (7%), Austria (7%), France (5%), and Denmark (4%) (source: Finnish Customs).

What should be noted is that the footwear import from Sweden most likely is not as high as presented in the Finnish Customs' statistics. This is due to the fact that in cases where the country of origin is not known, the country from where the products have been delivered to Finland, will be marked as the country of origin. In addition, the logistic and manufacturing chains have grown, different parts of manufacturing are often done in different places, and therefore the statistics might be misleading.

Table 4. Biggest importers of footwear to Finland in 2018



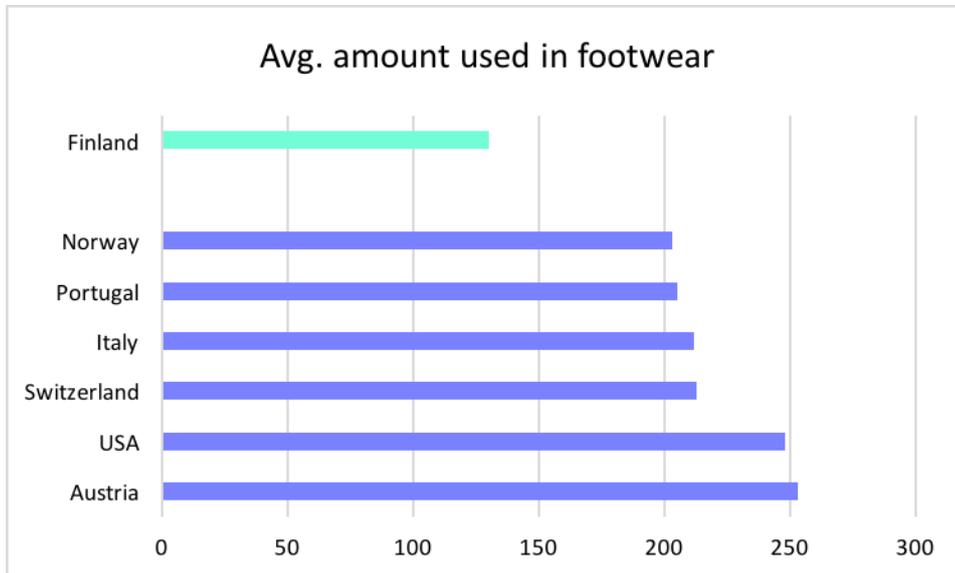
Source: Finnish Customs

3. Average consumer in Finland

During the last decades, the Finnish footwear industry has not been blooming and this is partly due to the fact that the Finns do not use huge amounts of money in their footwear, as can be noted in table 5. Even being a high-income country, Finnish average consumer uses €130 per year in footwear and €743 in clothing, as in the world-top countries (footwear: Austria, clothing: Norway) average consumers use €253 in footwear and €1,142 in clothing. Finland is not the lowest of Western countries, however, somewhere in the middle (source: Statista, currency converted USD->EUR 11/2019).

This requires a lot from the footwear industry, as the consumers like to see good quality and low price in the same package. At the same time, it provides new opportunities for manufacturers who are able to compete with low price and high quality.

Table 5. Average amount used (pp) in footwear in 2018 (€)



Source: Statista

B. Consumer preferences and products

- Taking into account the changing seasons and weather-durability is important when designing and producing footwear for the Finnish market;
- Comfortability is appreciated and feet are different than in Southern Europe or Asia – shoe last needs to be wider and looser;
- Sportswear is an emerging trend;
- Environmental and ethical considerations are gaining importance in purchasing decisions.

1. Consumer preferences and requirements

Four seasons

The traditional Finnish footwear brands are built on good quality and practicality, with the idea of producing shoes for Finland's often severe and changing weather conditions that require durability from footwear. Consumers also demand weather-durability from the products, often over trendy

design. Even with the desire to use modern footwear and trendy materials, changing cold or wet weather is often not allowing this.

The design of Finnish footwear is typically different from e.g. Southern European footwear brands focusing more on practicality than in fashion and trends. However, the more modern Finnish footwear brands have put more emphasis on design, but are also focusing on good quality and weather durability.

When designing and manufacturing products for the Finnish market, it is extremely important to take into account the requirements that the four seasons (summer – dry and warm; autumn – wet and often cold; winter – wet, snowy, cold; spring – wet, often cold) put on your products. Your products need to be able to cope with hard rain but also heat in the summer, and with water, slush, snow and cold in the winter. This requires a lot from the materials and finishing of the product.

What Finns usually want from their footwear: waterproof and warm materials, yet light and durable. The use of wool and warm insoles are traditional ways of keeping the biting frost outside.

Different preferences than in Southern Europe

In addition to practicality and weather-durability, Finns usually want their shoes to be comfortable, even over their looks. For this reason and also for the different shape of Finns' feet, the last needs to be wider and looser than in Southern Europe or in Asia. Practicality, comfort and fit usually come first, fashion and trends second.

Having said this, one must remember that consumer demands are changing constantly and not all Finns want the same things. Not all Finns wear water-proof boots but like their shoes to look trendy. Even top Finnish designers make fashionable high heels and contemporary ankle boots that are not always designed for Finnish weather conditions.

Therefore, it is worth the effort to make your market research well, in order to find out what are the local preferences, but at the same time try to have an innovative product.

2. Emerging trends

Sportswear as emerging trend in footwear¹

Sneakers and sports shoes are more and more commonly used in other purposes than sports, and this can be seen in the Finnish consumer market as well. Finnish dress code is generally speaking very relaxed and sneakers are tolerated even in many work places. In free time, sneakers are used very commonly. This trend has been strengthened by e.g. pop stars



¹ Photo by Hunter Johnson.

who are role models for youth and shape the fashion trends increasingly. Overall, a sporty life style is popular in Finland and has strengthened this trend as well.²

Environmental and ethical considerations

Recently there has been a lot of talk about the conditions under which fashion clothing and footwear are made, and what is the environmental impact they cause. In the modern clothing and footwear production, the production chains can often be long and not necessarily transparent for the consumer. Even the importer might not be aware of all the subcontractors involved in the production chain.

Footwear is often made of leather, which is the best and most durable material for shoes at the moment. In the manufacturing process, leather is often tanned chemically, which is a heavy burden on nature. The tanning agent is often a chromium compound, which might be a risk both for the tannery workers and the environment. Sometimes vegetable tanned leather is also used, which is equally durable but gentle on the environment and the makers. This is a growing trend.

A Finnish technology company Spinnova studied young consumers' attitudes towards clothing shopping and eco-friendliness. According to the study, young consumers (generation born between the early 1980s and the mid-1990s) are following trends, want to consume fashion more ecologically and are willing to pay more for products that are eco-friendly.

As many as 41% of respondents would pay 20–40% premium, or price premium, on eco-fashion. However, a majority of 54% said they wanted to pay 20% or less of the premium. Thus, the result may also mean that some respondents would not pay any extra for greening at all. In any case, it reflects that a big part of young consumers would be willing to pay more for products that are eco-friendly. This opens new opportunities also for foreign eco-friendly and sustainable footwear companies wanting to export their products to Finland.³

There are also initiatives wanting to improve the working conditions in footwear industry in developing countries. For example, an initiative called [Clean Clothes Campaign](#) is an international project sponsored by the European Union to encourage consumers to demand better conditions for clothing and footwear makers. Transparency of manufacturing conditions is a demand that consumers often have for the products they buy.⁴

3. Products and brands

Finnish products and brands

Most of the footwear purchased by Finns has been imported to Finland, and although there is a small Finnish footwear industry, it has been declining for a few decades. The footwear factories produce mainly classic shoes, not so much fashion shoes. However, there are still a few traditional

² <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9431130>

³ <https://fafi.fi/trendit-ja-ilmiot/tutkimus-milleniaalit-haluavat-ekologisempaa-muotia-ja-ovat-valmiita-maksamaan-siita/>

⁴ <https://cleanclothes.org/>, <http://www.puhtaatvaatteet.fi/>

footwear brands operating in Finland, many of them making products for the special conditions of Finland, such as winter boots, or making products for professional use, such as safety shoes for industrial use.

In addition to the products designed and manufactured in Finland, there are a growing number of footwear brands designed in Finland but often produced elsewhere.⁵

- Sievi <https://www.sievishop.fi/>;
- Kuoma <https://www.kuomiokoski.fi/en/>;
- Jalas <https://www.ejendals.com/jalas/?mls=en>;
- Pomar <https://pomarshoes.com/>;
- Lahtiset <http://www.lahtiset.fi/en/>;
- Kuje <https://kuje.fi/>;
- Terhi Pölkki Shoes <https://shop.terhipolkki.com/>;
- Tepsut <https://www.tepsut.fi/>;
- Minna Parikka <https://www.minnaparikka.com/en>;
- Pertti Palmroth <https://www.palmrothshop.com/>;
- Saint Vacant <https://www.saintvacant.com/>.



Popular international products and brands

In addition to the following footwear brands, Finns often buy shoes from brands that are not traditionally footwear brands, or unbranded footwear from hypermarkets and mass-retailers.

- Vagabond <https://www.vagabond.com>;
- VANS <https://www.vans.eu/>;
- ECCO <https://global.ecco.com/en/>;
- Birkenstock <https://www.birkenstock.com>;
- Lloyd <https://www.lloyd.com/wd/en/men/>;
- Converse <https://www.converse.com>;
- Clarks <https://www.clarks.eu/>.



⁵ Photos by Lukas, Matthew Henry, Freestocks.org, Camila Damasio

C. Channels to find buyers for footwear products

- There are several ways to get your product in the shops in Finland – usually the shorter the chain from manufacturing to the shop is, the cheaper is the price. However, you might need the help of agents or traders;
- In order to get successfully into the Finnish market, you need to know the market, have an interesting product and story, be reliable, honest and persistent;
- Trade fairs are a good place to meet potential partners/buyers and to examine new trends.
- Online stores are an effective channel to find Finnish customers.

1. Identify your channels to the market

Depending on the type of your business or willingness to adapt your business to emerging opportunities, there are several ways of getting in contact with buyers in Finland. A thumb rule is, the more people/businesses there are in the chain between you and your end customer, the more people there are to take their share of the profits. However, depending on your experience and knowledge of the market, it is often wise to have some assistance.

1) Find an agent, trader or broker

This is the most common way for products manufactured in developing countries to find their way to Europe and Finland. You will sell your products to the agent/trader, who finds a wholesaler or retailer who sells the product to customers. If you do not know the market and the wholesalers/retailers properly and are not willing to take the effort to get to know them, this is a good option for you. Usually you need to pay a fee for the agent.

2) Find a wholesaler or importer

Sell your products to a wholesaler or importer, who then sells your products to a retailer is another indirect option of trade for you. They will guide you in developing the products and collections. This is a good option for you if you do not have the resources or knowhow for doing for example marketing on your own.

3) Contact the buyers directly

This is a more direct and faster option for getting your products into the Finnish market. Buyers appreciate faster deliveries and the possibility to have more flexibility increasingly, and this is becoming a popular option for large retailers and buyers.

4) Sell directly to consumers

This is the most direct route to reach your customers. Online selling makes this option easier for you. However, in this option you are responsible for the whole process from manufacturing to marketing on your own.

2. Tips for success

Do your market research properly

In order to be successful in getting into the Finnish market, you need to do your market research properly. Make sure you understand the demands the consumers have, as well as what the retailers are looking for.

Create an interesting story



Story-telling is an effective way to build trust among buyers and consumers. Products with an interesting story stand out in a market of several similar products so it is worth the effort to create an appealing story for your products. You can for example tell about your background, how you came into the business, how your company was established, if there is something interesting in the materials you use, about ethical and environmental aspects of your product etc. However, be honest and find the interesting aspects in your company's and product's story.

Define your unique selling points

In order to get potential customers and buyers interested in your product, you need to have a unique selling point. A unique selling point can be an interesting design, good quality, cheap price etc. Even when you try to make your products as appealing as possible, make sure you stick to the truth.

Be persistent, trustworthy and reliable

Do not expect things to happen overnight. Finnish people often need time for building trust and will not be willing to sign a contract immediately. You need to be persistent, however, avoid being too eager to seal the deal. Honesty is appreciated as well as reliability (in e.g. deliveries) so do not give promises you know you cannot keep.

3. Trade fairs

Trade fairs are good places to meet potential buyers because many buyers visit them to find new products and to explore new trends. They are also excellent places to find out about new trends and demands, and to meet other people and businesses in the industry. When visiting trade fairs, you can either present your products or go there to make new contacts. In each case, have well-prepared material of your company and



your products and what you can offer for your potential business partners available for your new contacts. And remember, that most likely you will not be directly signing deals in the trade fair but making new partners require time, patience, building trust and continuing communications.

Trade fairs in Finland

[Kenkäviikko \(Shoe Week\)](#) (website only in Finnish) is one of Finland's largest buying events for professionals in the field for shoe and luggage retailers. Shoe Week gathers together approximately 60 suppliers. Contact information: Address: Suomen Kenkäviikot ry, c/o East River, Fashion Center, Härkähaankuja 14, 01730 Vantaa, Finland. E-mail: hallitus(at)kenkaviikko.fi.

[Helsinki Fashion Week](#) (HFW) is part of [Nordic Fashion Week Association](#), which is a leading organisation making results on the internationalisation and export of sustainable fashion, bringing international fashion into Finland and to the Nordic countries from Asia, Africa, Latin America, Middle East and Europe, and vice versa.

Helsinki Fashion Week supports designers and brands nationally and internationally. HFW gathers an international group of press, buyers and other professionals in the field of fashion to Helsinki. Finnish and international fashion followers worldwide tune in to see the globally recognized Helsinki Fashion Week event every July in Helsinki.

Trade fairs in Europe

[Gallery Shoes Germany](#) welcomes more than 550 brands and more than 400 exhibitors from more than 20 countries are staged. The exhibitor portfolio expands every season.

[Bazaar Berlin](#) is one of Germany's most international sales fair for handicrafts, design, natural products and Fair Trade goods. Every year in November around 500 manufacturers and retailers from more than 60 countries present their high-quality goods and exotic merchandise. Handicraft, jewellery, accessories, clothing, design products, home textiles, fair trade products, organic and ecological products, natural cosmetics, wellness products, season's products, decoration items and gifts, leather goods, hand bags, shoes, small furniture, rugs, etc.



[Expo Riva Schuh](#) is one of Italy's most important international trade fairs dedicated to the world of volume footwear, combining business, relax, and fashion. Twice a year in January and June, the international footwear market makes a date in Riva del Garda to present the latest fashion collections A/W and S/S. There are 1,545 exhibitors, 13,000 visitors, and 33,288sqm occupied.

[Lineapelle](#) is an international exhibition of leather, accessories, components, fabrics, synthetics and models. The core of the exhibition are its different trend areas, displaying the most innovative samples provided by the exhibitors: leathers, accessories and components, fabrics and synthetics (about 2,000

items on display). This selection of articles is delivered after exhibition closing to the LP Fashion Studio of Milan, where it can be consulted.

[ISPO Munich](#) is Germany's largest trade fair for sports business where more than 2,800 exhibitors present their latest sports products from segments such as snow sports, outdoor, health & fitness, urban and team sports.

[MICAM Milano](#), one of footwear industry's leading international trade fairs, is a one-of-a-kind event with over 2,000 footwear collections at each edition, melting business and fashion. The event takes place in Milan twice a year, in February and September. It showcases the A/W and S/S collections for the following year, respectively. It consists of 63,000sqm exhibition area, 30 participating countries, 1,400 exhibitors, 800 Italian exhibitors, 600 international exhibitors, 90,000 annual attendance, 54,000 attendance from abroad.

4. Retailers

As traditional shoe stores have slowly decreased in number and online stores have increased their popularity in fashion sales, supermarkets have strengthened their position in fashion sales as well. According to a study made by the Finnish Commerce Association, already one quarter of people are buying clothes and shoes in supermarkets.⁶ A few of the biggest supermarket and footwear chains in Finland:

[TOKMANNI](#) is a Finnish discount store chain, which in terms of net sales in 2015 was the largest retail chain in Finland and the Nordic countries. Tokmanni is the only nationwide discount store chain in Finland and had around 200 stores around the country at the end of 2018.⁷

[SOKOS](#) is a traditional department store which is a part of one of the biggest department store chains (S Group) in Finland. It has operated since 1952. Sokos chain has 22 department stores operating in Finland and an online store.

[STOCKMANN](#) is one of the major department stores in Finland known for high quality products. There are six department stores in Finland operating under the name Stockmann and an online store.

[PRISMA](#) is the [S Group's](#) (a major Finnish retail group) supermarket chain. The chain includes 64 outlets and an online store. There are also Prismas in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia.

[K-CITYMARKET](#) is the [K Group's](#) (a major Finnish retail group) supermarket chain. In Finland, there are currently 80 stores in 58 different cities.

⁶ <https://fafi.fi/muotibisnes/muotikulutuksen-kasvu-maltillista-marketit-vallanneet-ala-edelleen/>

⁷ <https://www.talouselama.fi/uutiset/pohjoismaiden-suurin-halpakauppaketju-helsingin-porssiin-liikevaihto-755-miljoonaa-tyontekijoita-3-200/f095bd34-8fc8-370b-9926-9a82a3e8b5c7>

[KOOKENKÄ](#) is K Group's footwear store chain that has 35 stores in 27 different cities in Finland, and an online store.

[CLICK SHOES](#) is a footwear store that has an online store and 27 stores in 19 different cities in Finland.

[NILSON SHOES](#) is a footwear store chain that consists of online store and 6 stores in 4 different cities in Finland.

[DIN SKO](#) is a footwear store chain that has 9 stores in 7 different cities in Finland, and an online store.

Online stores

Online sales have become increasingly popular in recent years and it continues to strengthen its presence in the market. Especially young adults use online stores regularly and their popularity is growing all the time in Finland.⁸ Online stores provide customers flexibility and provide them equal shopping opportunities irrespective of their place of residence. This changes shopping behaviour particularly in sparsely populated Finland. One must note when planning online sales that the same regulations apply to footwear products sold online as when sold in traditional stores. Online sales provide opportunities for companies aiming at the whole EU market, because online sales are not restricted by country borders, and the EU internal market provides a highly unified regulatory environment for footwear brands and manufacturers.

Social media and blogging have provided new marketing channels for footwear products in Finland. Social media and blog posts can reach tens or even hundreds of thousands of potential buyers. Social media provides a good channel for directing your marketing to well-defined target groups.

A few of the most popular online stores selling footwear products in the Finnish market: [ZALANDO](#), [BRANDOS](#), [BUBBLEROOM](#), [BOOZT](#), [CELLBES](#), [ELLOS](#), [SPARTOO](#), [HALENS](#), [BIANCO](#), [STYLEPIT](#).



⁸ <https://fafi.fi/muotibisnes/muotikulutuksen-kasvu-maltillista-marketit-vallanneet-ala-edelleen/>

D. Legislation and buyers' requirements for footwear products

- Make sure your products are safe, durable and comply with the legislation;
- Most of the legal requirements regarding footwear relate to the use of chemicals and to labelling;
- Standards can be a good selling point and increase trust in your products;
- Take environmental and ethical considerations into account in your manufacturing process – these can be a deal-breaker for the Finnish buyers and consumers.

Footwear industry faces a number of legal requirements when aiming at the European market. In addition to the legal requirements, your buyer might have other requirements for suppliers for example regarding durability or ethical or sustainable production. Make sure to ask your buyer about their requirements at an early stage in order to ensure smooth cooperation.

When planning to export footwear to Finland, it is important to make sure your products are safe, durable and comply with the legislation. Make sure you test the materials you use in production as well as your end products. Standardization is a tool for companies to ensure customers of the quality of their products and for building trust.

It is important to note that for many of the test methods the [European Chemicals Agency \(ECHA\)](#) has recommended a method in order to provide help in choosing analytical methods and to harmonize testing methods in the EU. ECHA has published a [Compendium of analytical methods recommended by the Forum to check compliance with Reach annex xvii restrictions](#).

The Compendium contains official methods (with references published in REACH legal text), standard methods (published by international, European or national standardization bodies), methods published by a recognised technical organisation, a national or EU reference laboratory (EPA, etc.), and internal methods developed by the respondent laboratories.

1. EU legislation on footwear products

See a list of EU legislations and import requirements relating to your specific footwear products on [EU Trade Helpdesk](#).

Product safety and chemicals

European [Product Safety Directive](#) aims at ensuring the safety of consumers. According to the directive, only safe products should be placed on the market.

[REACH](#) (EC 1907/2006) is the European Regulation on Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals. The main aims of REACH are to ensure a high level of protection for human health and the environment, including the promotion of alternative test methods, as well as the free circulation of substances on the internal market and the enhancement of competitiveness and innovation. REACH also applies to companies in the textile and fashion sectors that use substances classified as hazardous. It requires importers and manufacturers of footwear to share information on the substances in their products. REACH defines specific obligations for each individual chemical substance you use. Your obligations depend on your role in the supply chain for the specific substance. See the specific obligations for your product on European Chemicals Agency's interactive tool [Navigator](#).

The Chemicals legislation contains a number of restrictions or bans of use of chemical substances in leather and textile production. Make sure you adhere to the legislation and see the restrictions on [EU Trade Helpdesk](#) or on [European Chemicals Agency's \(ECHA\) listing](#).

The restricted substances include e.g.:

- Azo dyes and azo colourants;
- chromium IV compounds;
- nickel and lead (e.g. in zippers);
- phthalates (used in PVC as stabilizer or plasticizer);
- polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs, used in rubber and plastic products);
- short-chain chlorinated paraffins (used in leather industry as fatting agent, restricted as Persistent Organic Pollutant under [EU Regulation 2019/1021](#));
- perfluorooctane sulphonate (used for water-resistance, restricted as Persistent Organic Pollutant under [EU Regulation 2019/1021](#));
- organostannic compounds.

[The European Chemicals Agency \(ECHA\)](#) manages and coordinates the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction processes of chemical substances to ensure consistency in management of chemicals across the EU.

Footwear Labelling

[Directive 94/11/EC](#) specifies that labelling must give consumers information on the composition of the three main parts of footwear:

- the upper;
- the lining and sock;
- the outer sole.

The composition can be given using pictograms or written indications for specific materials:

- leather;
- coated leather;
- textiles;
- other materials.

Only materials covering at least 80% of the surface area or 80% of the volume of the outer sole need to be labelled. If no single material accounts for at least 80%, information should be given on the two main materials used. More information about footwear legislation [here](#).

Footwear packaging

Make sure your product packaging complies with the [EU legislation](#). The main requirements are:

- to limit the weight and volume of packaging to a minimum in order to meet the required level of safety, hygiene and acceptability for consumers;
- to reduce the content of hazardous substances and materials in the packaging material and its components;
- to design reusable or recoverable packaging.

Biodegradable packaging: oxo-degradable plastic packaging must not be considered as biodegradable.

Safety footwear

Footwear designed to be worn by individuals for protection against one or more health and safety hazards is covered by the [Regulation on Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) \(EU\) 2016/425](#). More information about legislation related to personal protective equipment [here](#).

Safety footwear need to have a [CE marking](#) which is mandatory for certain products on the European market.

Materials made from wild plants or animals

In case you use materials made from wild plants or animals, you need to make sure that you comply with the requirements of the [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species \(CITES\)](#). [EU wildlife trade legislation](#) implements these requirements on the Union level. The most important is the [Council Regulation \(EC\) No 338/97](#) that deals with the protection of species of wild fauna and flora by regulating trade therein. It lays down the provisions for import, export and re-export as well as internal EU trade in specimens of species listed in its four Annexes. More information can be found [here](#).

Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

When planning import of your products to Finland, you need to make sure you are not violating any intellectual property rights for example relating to the design of your product or brand name you are using. Find more information about the European intellectual property rights legislation [here](#).

2. Finnish legislation and authorities

The EU legislation is the applicable legislation in most cases when importing footwear products. In addition to the EU legislation, there are some national legislations that give tighter requirements for products. For example, the use of formaldehyde in textiles is regulated by a national law (recommended testing method: SFS standard SFS-EN ISO 14184-1:2012).⁹

[The Finnish Customs](#) is the authority to supervise the implementation of the EU regulation in cases of footwear product import outside of the EU and the European Economic Area (EEA). The Finnish Customs is the relevant authority if you seek advice on requirements for importing footwear products outside of the EU or the EEA.



[Finnish Safety and Chemicals Agency \(Tukes\)](#) is the authority supervising the safety of products sold in the Finnish market. Tukes is also a relevant authority if you have questions regarding the national or EU safety requirements for footwear. It is the national helpdesk giving information about the REACH regulation.

3. Standards

The key standardisation organisations are:

[The Finnish Standards Association SFS](#) is the central standardisation organisation that controls and co-ordinates national standardisation work in Finland, as well as develops, approves and publishes national standards. It also sells standards and communicates information about them to the public.

⁹ <http://plus.edilex.fi/tukes/fi/lainsaadanto/20120233>

SFS is a member of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the European Committee for Standardization (CEN), and a majority of SFS standards are based on international or European standards.

On [SFS webshop](#) you can search for test methods in order to test the safety and durability of your materials and products.

[International Standardization Organization \(ISO\)](#) is providing test methods for checking your products' safety and durability, and you can search for them on the website (for example the tests for [footwear](#), [leather](#), and [textiles](#)).

[European Committee for Standardization \(CEN\)](#) is the European standardisation organisation and provides you test methods as well. You can [search for them](#) on the website.

Ethical and sustainability standards and recommendations

As the consumers become more aware of environmental and ethical issues in clothing and footwear industry, it is extremely important to take these factors into consideration in your manufacturing process. The lack of Corporate Social Responsibility can be a deal breaker for a Finnish buyer, for example child labour will not be accepted in any circumstances.



Ecologically or sustainably produced footwear is still a niche market but a good way to differentiate from your competitors. Even if you are not seeking to get your products standardised, you need to take environmental and social responsibility into account in your production.

The European Union has its own [EU Ecolabel for Footwear](#), which is marketed as the official EU mark for greener products.

In addition, there is a number of standards and organisations aiming at improving the environmental and social conditions in the industry:

[Global Organic Textile Standard \(GOTS\)](#) is aiming at ensuring the organic status of textiles from harvesting of the raw materials through environmentally and socially responsible manufacturing all the way to labelling in order to provide credible assurance to the consumer.

[The OekoTex Standard 100](#) is for various textile products to ensure that the chemicals used throughout the production process are not harmful or dangerous to human health. The scope of the human ecological requirements is based on the intended use of the textile. In principle, the more intensively a textile comes into contact with the skin, the stricter the limit values it must fulfil.

[SA8000](#) is a standard developed by the Social Accountability International (SAI). It is based on the UN Declaration on Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and on the core labour standards of the International Labor Organization (ILO). Certifications are issued by international certification bodies accredited by SAI.

[Business Social Compliance Initiative \(BSCI\)](#) is a social auditing organisation that aims at improving social performance in global supply chains.

[Worldwide Responsible Accredited Production \(WRAP\)](#) is an independent, non-profit team of global social compliance experts dedicated to promoting safe, lawful, humane, and ethical apparel and footwear manufacturing around the world through certification and education. WRAP is headquartered in Arlington, Virginia, USA, with regional offices in Hong Kong, SAR, and Dhaka, Bangladesh, full-time staff in India and Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam), and for Latin America.

[Ethical Trading Initiative \(ETI\)](#) is an organisation working to improve working conditions in global supply chains by developing effective approaches to implementing the ETI Base Code of labour practice.

In [Standards Map](#) listing you will find more information about sustainability standards. It provides information on over 210 standards, codes of conduct, audit protocols addressing sustainability hotspots in global supply chains.

E. Footwear and commerce organisations in Finland

Footwear and commerce organisations produce information about the Finnish market and new trends and on their websites, you might find useful information or even possible partner companies for your business so it can be worth the effort to check them.

[Finnish Shoe and Leather Industry Association](#) (website only in Finnish) is a community of member companies whose mission is to oversee and promote the interests of its members in various ways.

[Fashion Finland](#) (website only in Finnish) is a Finnish fashion community and information channel that aims to increase the visibility and appreciation of the industry, support business and promote cooperation and the culture of fashion in Finland. Contact information: Address: Fashion Finland, Eteläranta 10, 00130 Helsinki, Tel. +358 40 922 3171, e-mail: [fafi\(at\)fafi.fi](mailto:fafi(at)fafi.fi).

[Finnish Commerce Federation](#) is a nationwide lobbying organisation whose mission is to promote Finnish commerce. The federation works to improve the operating conditions for companies active in wholesale and retail trade, to stimulate co-operation within the sector and to enhance the commercial and employer interests of the members. The federation maintains a databank on Finnish commerce and publishes news about the sector to members.

[Fashion and Sport Commerce Association](#) (website only in Finnish) is an association for fashion and sport trade co-operation and advocacy. The member companies represent about 4/5 of the clothing, footwear, sports and wholesale trade. Members are textile and fashion retail chains,



department stores and markets, as well as suppliers. Contact information: Post address: PL 150, 00251 Helsinki, Finland. Tel. +358 9 43156 141.

[Finland Chamber of Commerce](#) coordinates the operations of the 19 independent regional Chambers of Commerce in Finland. Today the Chambers of Commerce bring together over 20,000 companies and corporate influencers from across the country. Finland Chamber of Commerce works on a national level, and the 19 regional Chambers of Commerce cover all areas of Finland. Regional Chambers of Commerce promote entrepreneurship and a favourable business environment in Finland.

[The Association of Products and Services Trade \(ETU\)](#) (formerly known as The Federation of Finnish Wholesalers and Importers), represents 13 industries and approximately 400 member companies in the multi-channel trade in professional and consumer products and services (including fashion and footwear).

F. Finnpartnership's Matchmaking Service

Finding local business partners is critical when you are planning to import your products to Finland. With the help of [Finnpartnership's Matchmaking Service](#), companies in developing countries can seek out business partners from Finland. The service is free-of-charge.

Finnpartnership will provide visibility for registered companies and their business proposals in Finland. Once your company has been registered to the service, a public introduction profile is created and added on Finnpartnership's public [Matchmaking database](#). All the registered companies are also included in Finnpartnership's monthly newsletter and your business proposal can be presented at events that are attended by Finnish companies that are interested in finding new business partners. Finnpartnership may also present your company to other import/export organisations, business promotion organisations and to chambers of commerce. Also, a direct one-to-one introduction can be made if a potential partner candidate is found.

Disclaimer: Prices and other information presented in the report might be subject to change. Finnpartnership or other parties taking part in the production of the report, do not take responsibility of possible inaccuracies in the information presented in the report.

G. Useful links and references

- [CBI. Exporting footwear to Europe;](#)
- [Clean Clothes Campaign;](#)
- [EU Ecolabel for Footwear;](#)
- [EU Trade Helpdesk;](#)
- [European Chemicals Agency \(ECHA\);](#)
- [European Committee for Standardization \(CEN\);](#)
- [European footwear legislation;](#)
- [Finland Chamber of Commerce;](#)
- [Finnish Commerce Federation;](#)
- [Finnish Customs;](#)
- [Finnish Safety and Chemicals Agency \(Tukes\);](#)
- [Finnish Shoe and Leather Industry Association;](#)
- [Finnish Standards Association SFS;](#)
- [Finnish Textile and Fashion association;](#)
- [Finnpartnership's Matchmaking Service;](#)
- [Helsinki Fashion Week;](#)
- [International Standardization Organization \(ISO\);](#)
- [Statista;](#)
- [The Association of Products and Services Trade \(ETU\);](#)
- [REACH.](#)