***President Sauli Niinistö:***

**EXPATRIATE FINNS – AN ESSENTIAL RESOURCE FOR FINLAND**

**President Sauli Niinistö considers expatriate Finns, their communities and expatriate media to be an invaluable resource for Finland.**

In an interview in the new issue of *Finland Bridge* magazine, published by Finnish expatriates’ advice and service organization the Finland Society, President Niinistö says that he is certain that expatriate Finns can create an image of Finland that has a broader significance as well.

“Expatriate Finns are excellent at keeping the flag flying and promoting Finnishness around the world,” the President says.

He also points out that many expatriates are ready to concretely advance the interests of Finns they know or those of their Finnish contacts in the countries where they live.

When asked about the significance of the increasing number of Finns studying and gaining work experience overseas for Finnish society, President Niinistö says: “The world is very international and particularly working life and many other roles require internationalism – know-how in it and mastering it – so this is an extremely important, concrete matter.”

President Niinistö’s own experience of expatriatism is limited to living in Luxemburg for a few years. In the *Finland Bridge* interview, he shares other experiences of Finnish expatriatism.

“One experience that has particularly stuck in my mind was a trip to the United States during our centenary year of independence, when my wife and I went to places such as Minnesota, where there was a really splendid atmosphere. There you could see that expatriates have a very warm, deep relationship with their home country.”

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**Figures and activities**

There are some 1,500 expatriate communities worldwide, who work successfully on behalf of Finland’s language and culture and to strengthen communality. In addition, there are dozens of Finnish media outlets overseas.

As a result of migration, about 300,000 Finnish citizens live permanently abroad. More than 250,000 of them are eligible to vote. There are also about two million people of Finnish background living outside Finland.

As an expert on Finnish expatriatism, the Finland Society has for more than 90 years worked to advance the interests of Finnish abroad and build networks between Finland and its expatriates. Much has been achieved at the initiative of the Finland Society and expatriates, such as dual citizenship, postal voting, rehabilitation of expatriate veterans in their countries of residence as well as exchange programs bringing Finnish social and healthcare trainees to work at Finnish nursing homes overseas.

The digital version of Finland Bridge 4/2020 is available at <https://www.lukusali.fi/?p=Suomen%20Silta>

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