

The recruitment and training of frontier and coast guardsmen

The Frontier Guard operates under the Ministry of the Interior. In addition to headquarters it includes four frontier guard districts (Southeast Finland, North Karelia, Kainuu and Lapland) and three coast guard districts (Gulf of Finland, Archipelago Sea and Gulf of Bothnia). Each of these is divided into sub-districts. The Frontier Guard also includes the Frontier and Coast Guard School and the Air Patrol Squadron. The Chief of the Frontier Guard exercises operational command.

The Frontier Guard's budget for 2003 is 189 million euros. At the end of 2002 the Frontier Guard had 3,125 employees, including 1,767 frontier and coast guardsmen. The Frontier Guard's main functions, border guarding and passport control, account for over 90% of work input.

The Frontier Guard has conducted passport control to a limited extent since it began operating. Using the same personnel to guard borders and conduct passport control has been natural and the best alternative, with the main emphasis clearly on border guarding. With the increase in the volume of passport control, rising demands in this area and the increase in the number of personnel who mainly conduct passport control, the State Audit Office has questioned the effectiveness of the present system and how frontier and coast guardsmen are recruited and trained. The main question in the audit was whether it makes sense economically to recruit and train part of personnel for passport control tasks only.

Border guarding and passport control tasks are performed by frontier and coast guardsmen. They receive their basic training at the Frontier and Coast Guard School. This basic training includes border guarding and passport control. Candidates for basic training must have completed non-commissioned officer training in the military and must meet certain physical and mental requirements.

Most frontier and coast guardsmen are specialized mainly in border guarding or passport control tasks. Specialization has made it possible to achieve a high level of expertise and competence in both these areas.

The audit also indicated that it is a good idea for basic training to provide all frontier and coast guardsmen information and skills in both border guarding and passport control tasks.

The State Audit Office has issued the following recommendations on the basis of the audit.

First of all the Frontier Guard should consider whether it is practical to establish and recruit personnel specialized in passport control and to give them training limited to this task.

Secondly the Frontier Guard should determine whether personnel could be recruited for passport control tasks without having completed military service.

Thirdly the Frontier Guard should consider whether basic training for frontier and coast guardsmen should be differentiated partly according to future tasks.