**Gloomy outlook**

**PAULINA PIETILA - STT**

**From page 1.**

The economic outlook in the mobile industry is especially bleak this year, with sales predicted to drop by four per cent. When purchasing power is generally weak, large outlets are put off, even in the sales of cars, household appliances, and electronics in particular.

According to chief economist Jaana Kurujoja of the Federation of Finnish Commerce, sales in the automobile sector managed to recuperate from the 2009 recession by as much as 16 per cent, with the exception of especially good for sales. Sales were driven up last year also by the knowledge of the impending increase in automobile tax. “The trade that normally would have been done early this year occurred late last year instead.”

Employment levels in the sector have been predict- ed to drop by two per cent this year, and Kurujoja be-lieves that layoffs in wholesale trade are also likely. “During 2009 the automobile sales and wholesale sec- tors managed to get by with temporary lay-offs, and continue to function well, even without the experienced staff. In the current economic situ- ation, that will no longer be possible.”

Greater interest in foreign-based online stores

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The Federation of Finnish Commerce fears that the govern- ment’s planned VAT increases will spur consumers to turn to foreign-based on-line stores, and in sales from websites based outside the EU.

The figures for 2011 have not yet been published, but the online share of the market is growing all the time.” According to the econo- mist, this is both a threat and an opportunity for Finnish retailers. “We cite a recent survey- ing by the Federation that shows generally high interest in purchasing from cheaper foreign-based online stores.

We administered the survey to 2,500 inter- net users, and 45 per cent respond-

**Triumphant returns**

**ELIOT BAKER - ELIT TIMES**

Finnish early education lures back some highly skilled expatriates.

Aamulehti: Radical drop in adoptions from abroad

**A family-driven decision**

Neuroscientist Petri Ala-Lauri- la and his wife Sari returned with their toddler son, Emil, after several years of post-doc work in the US. “I am excited to join the Finn- ish neuroscience commu- nity after all these years in the USA,” says Ala-Laurila. “I look forward to setting up my own research in Finland while retaining strong con- nections to the US neurosci- ence community.”

A menu of Nordic perks

90 per cent of Finnish daycares are public, for-profit centers. Finland ranks around the top of OECD countries in terms of number of under-qualifi ed staff. While retaining strong con- nections to the US neuroscience community, I am also glad to see that Finland can attract insanely great inter- national post-docs.”

Quality care

The early childcare educa- tion systems in Finland and the Nordic countries rank at the top of OECD countries in terms of quality services for under- threes, staff qualifications, gov- ernment funding and Family subsidies, according to an ar- ticle published January 2008 in the Review of Economics of the Household.

Depending on household income, Finnish families pay from nothing to a maximum of 15 per cent of those costs, or 245 euros, per child, per month. That compares with a maximum of 28-45 per cent of total costs in Norway, 33 per cent max in Denmark (which spends easily the most per child on early childhood edu- cation in Europe, roughly dou- bling Finland’s expenditure), and 50 per cent max in Sweden.

Financial daycare staff are highly qualifi ed. One in three of the staff must have at least a Bachelor’s degree, and the adult-to-child ratio must not exceed one-to-sev- en for 3-6-year-olds and one- to-four for kids under three. In most OECD countries, according to the article, the ra- tio is one-to-two.

The low costs and high quality services for under- three-year-olds is “outstanding” in Nordic countries compared to other OECD countries. The numbers even out for kids over three in many OECD countries, where childcare at that age is con- sidered education.

A Finnish school system for all

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