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## Snellman and the Finnish markka exhibition at the Bank of Finland Museum

The most recent seasonal exhibition at the Bank of Finland entitled *Snellman and the Finnish markka* opens on Tuesday 10 January at 11.00 am. This year Finland celebrates 200 years since the birth of Johan Vilhelm Snellman and 125 years since his death. The exhibition will be inaugurated by Sinikka Salo, Member of the Bank of Finland's Board. The exhibition runs until the end of 2006.

The exhibition focuses on the period 1863–1868, when Snellman, in his capacity as Chief of Finance, was closely involved with the Bank of Finland. Snellman's most significant achievement while holding this office was stabilisation of Finland's monetary conditions. In 1860, Finland had received a monetary unit of its own called the *markka*, the value of which was tied to the paper rouble, which continued to fluctuate. By pegging the value of the markka to silver in 1865, and thereby stabilising the value of the currency, J. V. Snellman completed the work of his predecessor Fabian Langenskiöld. The same objective – the stabilisation of the value of money – was also the key motive in the next major monetary reform, namely the introduction of the euro some 130 years later.

The exhibition has been prepared by Vappu Ikonen, researcher, and Juha Tarkka, adviser to the Board, both from the Bank of Finland. The visual outlook has been designed by architect Teemu Taskinen from Juhani Pallasmaa Architects.

The Bank of Finland honours J. V. Snellman's celebratory year by publishing a booklet "Suhteissa suurempaa voimaa – J. V. Snellmanin muistomerkki" about the statue, prepared by Mari Tossavainen, Master of Arts. This publication describes the competition for the design of the statue, the exchange of opinions surrounding the statue and the debate about the Finnish history and its prominent men, inspired by the awakening national spirit.

The statue of J. V. Snellman that now guards the Bank of Finland was unveiled in a festive ceremony described as follows: "On 12 May 1923, flags were draped throughout Helsinki. Representatives of students' associations with their pennants and the cadet corps had formed a semi-circle around the statue. Choirs and invited guests were standing on the steps of the House of Estates. Invited guests included diplomats, civil servants, army officers, members of parliament as well as representatives from the artistic and scientific communities and the media." The statue, which now stands in front of the Bank of Finland, was restored in summer 2005.

The Bank of Finland Museum is located in the Kruununuhaka area of Helsinki at Snellmaninkatu 2. The Museum's permanent exhibition illustrates the history of money and monetary policy, the operation of the central bank as part of the European System of Central Banks, financial phenomena and Finnish banknote art. The Museum features several interactive multimedia displays, which can be used to familiarise oneself with the world of money.

For further information and photos of the Museum, please visit [www.rahamuseo.fi](http://www.rahamuseo.fi). For further information about the exhibition and the Museum, please contact Jaakko Koskentola, curator, tel. +358 10 831 2981.

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