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Feasibility study on the potential of community-based sponsorship in Finland



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Kati Turtiainen, Henna Sapir

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Abstract

The report examines the development of community-sponsored integration in cooperation with the State, municipalities, organisations and civil society. The aim was to obtain information on how a community sponsorship model of integration would fit into the refugee resettlement programme in Finland. The respondents included municipalities receiving refugees, organisations, representatives of religious communities, researchers and individual volunteers.

A possible programme was positively received. In particular, the respondents hoped that the national programme would make it easier for refugees to settle in early, find social networks and plan their future realistically. Support for language learning and improved employment opportunities were also considered important.

The report proposes that a national coordinator be named for the programme whose task would be to ensure the programme meets its objectives, for example by training and supporting local operators. Meanwhile, a local coordinator would recruit community sponsors to be matched with the refugees and take responsibility for cooperation between the public sector and civil society.

If successful, a community-sponsored programme would support integration and prevent marginalisation. The programme could create permanent cooperation structures between authorities and civil society instead of cooperation based on individual projects.

The report has been produced in co-operation between the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of the Interior.

Keywords

immigrants, integration, immigration, communities, integration policy

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Yhteisölähtöisen kotoutumisen mahdollisuudet Suomessa

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Julkaisija	Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö		
Tekijä/t Kieli	Turtiainen, Kati ja Sapir, Henna Englanti	Sivumäärä	68
Tiivistelmä	<p>Raportissa tarkastellaan yhteisölähtöisen kotoutumisen kehittämistä yhteistyössä valtion, kuntien, järjestöjen ja kansalaisyhteiskunnan kanssa. Tavoitteena oli saada tietoa siitä, miten yhteisölähtöisen kotoutumisen malli sopisi pakolaisten uudelleensijoittamisohjelmaan Suomessa. Yhteisölähtöisestä kotoutumisesta kysyttiin pakolaisia vastaanottavilta kunnilta, järjestöiltä, uskonnollisten yhteisöjen edustajilta, tutkijoilta ja yksittäisiltä vapaaehtoisilta.</p> <p>Mahdollinen ohjelma sai myönteisen vastaanoton. Suomalaisen ohjelman toivotaan tehostavan erityisesti alkuvaiheen asettumista, sosiaalisten verkostojen löytymistä ja realistista tulevaisuuden suunnittelua. Tukea kielen oppimiseen ja työllistymismahdollisuuksien parantamista pidettiin myös tärkeinä.</p> <p>Raportissa ehdotetaan, että ohjelmalla olisi valtakunnallinen koordinaattori, jonka tehtävänä olisi huolehtia ohjelman tavoitteiden toteutumisesta mm. kouluttamalla ja tukemalla paikallisia toimijoita. Lisäksi paikallinen koordinaattori rekrytoisi yhteisökummeja, saattaisi kummit yhteen pakolaisten kanssa ja vastaisi julkisen sektorin ja kansalaisyhteiskunnan yhteistyöstä.</p> <p>Onnistuessaan yhteisölähtöinen ohjelma tukisi kotoutumista ja estäisi väliinpuotoamista. Ohjelma voisi luoda pysyviä rakenteita viranomaisten ja kansalaisyhteiskunnan yhteistyölle hankepainotteisen yhteistyön sijaan.</p> <p>Selvitys on tuotettu työ- ja elinkeinoministeriön ja sisäministeriön yhteistyönä.</p>		
Asiasanat	maahanmuuttajat, kotouttaminen, kotoutuminen, maahanmuutto, yhteisöt, kotouttamispolitiikka		
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Möjligheter till ideella sponsorprogram i Finland

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Utgivare	Arbets- och näringsministeriet		
Författare	Turtiainen, Kati och Sapir, Henna		
Språk	Engelska	Sidantal	68
Referat	<p>I rapporten granskas utvecklingen av ideella sponsorprogram i samarbete mellan staten, kommuner, organisationer och det civila samhället. Syftet har varit att få information om hur ideella sponsorprogram passar för vidarebosättningsprogrammet för flyktingar i Finland. Kommuner, organisationer, representanter för religiösa samfund, forskare och enskilda frivilliga som tar emot flyktingar fick svara på frågor om ideella sponsorprogram.</p> <p>Ett eventuellt program fick ett positivt mottagande. En förhoppning är att ett finländskt program ska effektivisera särskilt etableringen i inledningsskedet, hittandet av sociala nätverk och realistisk framtidsplanering. Det ansågs också viktigt att stödja språkinläring och förbättra möjligheterna att hitta arbete.</p> <p>I rapporten föreslås att programmet ska ha en nationell samordnare vars uppgift är att se till att målsättningarna för programmet uppnås, bland annat genom att utbilda och stödja lokala aktörer. Dessutom ska en lokal samordnare rekrytera faddrar för samarbete, föra samman faddrarna med flyktingar och svara för samarbetet mellan offentliga sektorn och det civila samhället.</p> <p>Ett framgångsrikt ideellt sponsorprogram stöder integration och motverkar marginalisering. Ett program kan skapa bestående strukturer för samarbete mellan myndigheter och det civila samhället, istället för ett projektbaserat samarbete.</p> <p>Utredningen har producerats i samarbete mellan arbets- och näringsministeriet och inrikesministeriet.</p>		
Nyckelord	invandrare, integrationsfrämjande, integration, invandring, gemenskap, integrationspolitik		
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SUMMARY

The report examines Finnish opportunities to develop community-based integration models in cooperation with the state, municipalities, non-governmental organizations and other civil society. The aim of the study is to obtain information on how the model would fit into the Finnish refugee resettlement program and tradition. The study examines the legal and practical feasibility of the possible program and assesses the programme's possibilities and challenges in the Finnish context. The recommendations of the study, as well as the planning of possible next steps, would pave the way for a discussion and decision-making on the possible establishment of a pilot project and a program.

Opportunities for community-based integration were asked of refugee host municipalities, organizations working for integration, representatives of churches and religious communities, researchers, and individuals volunteering. A Webropol survey was sent to all municipalities receiving quota refugees, to which a total of 32 municipalities across Finland responded. In addition, 20 interviews were conducted with a total of 37 participants from the above-mentioned parties.

The potential program was very welcomed by those involved in integration work. The program would be aimed at strengthening the integration of quota refugees. The main contribution of the Finnish program is to improve the efficiency of the settlement phase, to find social networks in different areas of life and realistic planning for the future. Supporting language learning and improving employment opportunities would also be key tasks for community sponsors.

The report proposes that the program have a national coordinator to ensure that the programme's objectives are met, inter alia by providing training and supporting local actors. The program should also have a local coordinator responsible for recruiting community sponsors, bringing sponsors and refugees together, and working closely with the public sector and civil society. Activities based on partnerships between different actors can be called a hybrid model.

Community-based integration program could provide targeted resources for the integration of refugees through means that are not possible alone in a traditional, state- and municipality-led integration model. If successful, a community-based program would support integration and prevent marginalisation. The program can also achieve permanent structures for cooperation between public authorities and civil society, rather than project-based cooperation.

YHTEENVETO

Raportissa tarkastellaan Suomen mahdollisuuksia kehittää yhteisölähtöisiä kotouttamisen malleja yhteistyössä valtion, kuntien, järjestöjen ja muun kansalaisyhteiskunnan kanssa. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on saada tietoa siitä, miten malli sopisi Suomen pakolaisten uudelleensijoittamisohjelmaan ja -perinteeseen. Tutkimuksella selvitetään ohjelman oikeudellista ja käytännön toteutettavuutta sekä arvioidaan ohjelman edellytyksiä ja mahdollisia haasteita Suomen kontekstissa. Selvityksen suositukset sekä mahdollisten seuraavien askelten kartoitus pohjustaisivat mahdollista ohjelman perustamista ja pilottiprojektista käytävää keskustelua ja päätöksentekoa.

Yhteisölähtöisen kotoutumisen mahdollisuuksista kysyttiin pakolaisia vastaanottavilta kunnilta, kotouttavaa työtä tekevilta järjestöiltä, kirkkojen ja uskonnollisten yhteisöjen edustajilta, tutkijoilta ja yksittäisiltä vapaaehtoistyössä toimivilta henkilöiltä. Kaikkiin kiintiöpakolaisia vastaanottaviin kuntiin lähetettiin Webropol-kysely, johon vastasi yhteensä 32 kuntaa eri puolilta Suomea. Tämän lisäksi toteutettiin 20 haastattelua, joihin osallistui yhteensä 37 henkilöä edellä mainituilta tahoilta.

Mahdollinen ohjelma sai myönteisen vastaanoton kotouttamistyön toimijoilta. Ohjelma asettuisi kiintiöpakolaisten kotoutumisen vahvistamiseen. Suomalaisen ohjelman pääpainoksi toivotaan erityisesti alkuvaiheen asettumisen tehostamista, sosiaalisten verkostojen löytymistä eri elämän alueille ja realistista tulevaisuuden suunnittelua. Myös kielen oppimisen tuki ja työllistymismahdollisuuksien parantaminen olisivat yhteisökummien keskeisiä tehtäviä.

Raportissa ehdotetaan, että ohjelmalla olisi valtakunnallinen koordinaattori, jonka tehtävänä on huolehtia ohjelman tavoitteiden toteutumisesta muun muassa järjestämällä koulutusta ja tukemalla paikallisia toimijoita. Ohjelmalla tulisi olla myös paikallinen koordinaattori, joka huolehtii yhteisökummien rekrytoinnista, kummien ja pakolaisten yhteen saattamisesta sekä julkisen sektorin ja kansalaisyhteiskunnan tiiviistä yhteistyöstä. Eri toimijoiden kumppanuuksiin perustuvaa toimintaa voidaan nimittää hybridimalliksi.

Yhteisölähtöisten kotoutumisohjelmien avulla voitaisiin tarjota kohdennettuja resursseja pakolaisten kotouttamiseen keinoilla, joihin perinteisessä, valtio- ja kuntajohtoisessa kotouttamismallissa ei ole mahdollisuuksia. Onnistuessaan yhteisölähtöinen ohjelma tukisi kotoutumista ja estäisi väliinpuotoamista. Ohjelmalla voidaan myös saavuttaa pysyviä rakenteita viranomaisten ja kansalaisyhteiskunnan väliseen yhteistyöhön hankepainotteisen yhteistyön sijaan.

Ohjelman käyttöön ottamisessa tunnistetaan käytännöllisiä riskejä, jotka liittyvät muun muassa valtion ja kuntien välisen yhteistyön yhteensovittamiseen sekä alueellisiin toimijoiden välisiin kumppanuuksiin. Selvityksessä ehdotetaan ohjelman pilotointia muutamassa kunnassa. Pilotoinnin aikana kehitettäisiin ja testattaisiin ohjelman arviointityökaluja. Onnistuessaan yhteisökummitoiminta voisi nopeuttaa kotoutumista, selkiyttää tähän toimintaan kohdennettuja rakenteita ja avata uusia pysyviä ratkaisuja pakolaisille tulevaisuudessa.

The implementation of the program identifies risks related to, among other things, the coordination of cooperation between the state and municipalities and regional partnerships between actors.

The report proposes piloting the program in a few municipalities. During the pilot, program evaluation tools will be developed and tested. If successful, community-based model could improve integration, clarify the structures and open up new permanent solutions for refugees in the future.

1 Starting point of the report

The global refugee situation is alarming. The number of refugees has nearly doubled over the last decade and existing means are not enough to create durable solutions for them. For this reason, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has appealed to nations to implement new programmes to complement regular resettlement practices and open new safe pathways for refugees. The New York Declaration (UN's General Assembly 2016)¹ and the UNHCR Global Compact on Refugees (UN's General Assembly 2018)² also call for the creation of complementary models for the resettlement of refugees. Various complementary pathways have already garnered global interest.

The European Commission released a communication³ on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum on 23.9.2020 and issued a recommendation for creating legal pathways to provide refugees with protection within the EU. The Commission encourages Member States to promote resettlement, humanitarian entry and other complementary pathways of entry and to establish so-called community sponsorship programmes in cooperation with civic society. A study⁴ published by the European Commission in 2018, on how community sponsorship could bring additional value to EU's resettlement efforts, provides background for this report.

This feasibility study analyses the potential to develop models of community-based sponsorship in Finland through cooperation between the state, municipalities, the third sector and the civic society at large. The goal of the study was to discover how these models would fit in with Finland's resettlement programme and tradition. The study strives to clarify the judicial and practical feasibility of the programme and evaluate the potential for and the challenges of the programme as well as its added value in the context of Finland.

1 United Nations, New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, paragraph 14(a), 2016..

2 UNHCR Global Compact on Refugees.

3 European Commission, New Pact on Migration and Asylum, 23.9.2020.

4 European Commission, Department of Migration and Home Affairs, Study on the feasibility and added value of sponsorship schemes as a possible pathway to safe channels for admission to the EU, including resettlement, (EU Publications Office: Luxembourg, 2018).

Those municipalities that had an agreement in place with a Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centre) regarding the reception of quota refugees were asked for their input on the potential of the community-based sponsorship programme.⁵ Every municipality that had received quota refugees in recent years was sent a Webropol survey via a contact person in the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and ELY Centre. A total of 32 municipalities from all over Finland responded to the survey. These municipalities differed in size, refugee reception history and the size of their refugee quotas. Therefore, the responses are very representative of the diversity of the municipalities receiving quota refugees and the various integration practices that have been put in place during different times.⁶

In addition to the survey sent to municipalities, volunteers, researchers and representatives from both national and local associations and organisations were interviewed for this report. The interviewed organisations and other parties were selected on the basis of them being named as central cooperation partners in the municipal survey. Interviews with local third sector operators and volunteers were selected on the basis of focus group interviews on integration conducted by three municipalities. Furthermore, interviews were also conducted with German and Irish operators to gain insight on the organisation, contents and requirements for success of similar programmes realised in these countries.⁷

The report is provided a backdrop with a brief description of the global refugee situation, the refugee resettlement programme in effect in Finland (refugee quota) and Finland's immigrant situation. Then the report will discuss international and European agreements on the reception of refugees, the grounds and justifications for community-based sponsorship programmes and define the concept of community-based sponsorship in detail. This is followed by a description of existing European and global community-based

5 In 2016–2020, a total of 101 different municipalities received quota refugees. Over the last few years, the number of municipalities that received quota refugees varied as follows: 62 municipalities in 2016, 66 municipalities in 2017, 49 municipalities in 2018, 56 municipalities in 2019 and 48 municipalities in 2020. (Migri).

6 Some municipalities had been receiving quota refugees for over 30 years, some for around 10 years and few municipalities had only began to receive refugees in recent years. The size of the municipalities' annual refugee quota varied between fewer than 10 persons to over 100. The persons who responded to the survey worked as immigration or integration coordinators, social workers and social advisors in integration work and municipal leaders responsible for regional integration efforts. In some municipalities the integration team participated in responding to the survey.

7 There were 20 actual interviews conducted on the Zoom platform with 37 interviewees. A list of the interviewed persons is included as Appendix 1 of this report, with permission from the interviewees.

sponsorship programmes. Then the report moves on to analyse the operators that could be involved in the prospective community-based sponsorship programme in Finland, how these operators could cooperate and what the contents, challenges and added value of this programme would be and how pilot projects could be conducted. The results of this feasibility study aim to lay groundwork for discussion and decision-making about a possible pilot project.

2 Regarding the refugee situation here and abroad

2.1 On the global refugee situation

Globally, the number of refugees is increasing, the situation is expanding geographically and the creation of durable solutions is becoming even more complex. At the end of 2019, some 79.5 million persons have fled their homes as a result of war, armed conflict or other human rights infringements. Out of this group of people, 26 million are refugees, 4.2 million are asylum seekers and 47.7 million are persons who are internally displaced within their home countries. Additionally, 3.6 million Venezuelans have moved out of their country. Of all the persons who have fled their country, 85 % have ended up in developing countries that are themselves struggling with serious economic problems.⁸ At the same time, the need for refugee resettlement has doubled over the last few years, being 1.445 million persons in 2021. Quantitatively, Syrian refugees (40 % of all refugees) have the most pressing need for resettlement, followed by persons fleeing the South Sudan region (14 %) and those fleeing the Democratic Republic of Congo (11 %).⁹

The number of refugees admitted to resettlement programmes has been in decline since 2016. In 2016, resettling countries received 126 000 refugees at the behest of the UNHCR and some 36 700 refugees found resettlement through separate state programmes. In 2019, 26 countries received a total of 107 800 refugees through resettlement programmes, 63 700 of which were resettled by the UNHCR.¹⁰

Some 90 % of persons who arrived in the EU area in need of international protection arrived via so-called irregular and often life-threatening routes. At the beginning of 2020, a majority of refugees heading to Europe, over 4 million of them, were in Turkey. UNHCR estimates that the need for resettlement from Turkey is some 423 700 persons in 2021. In 2019, Europe received 29 066 refugees via a resettlement programme.¹¹

8 UNHCR GLOBAL TRENDS – Forced displacement in 2019.

9 UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2021.

10 UNHCR GLOBAL TRENDS – Forced displacement in 2019; UNHCR – Resettlement data.

11 UNHCR – Resettlement data.

2.2 Quota refugees in Finland

The number of foreign citizens living in Finland has been quite low when compared to other Nordic countries. One significant reason for this low level of immigration is that in the last century Finland did not attract labour from abroad like its Nordic neighbours. Instead, there has been significant emigration from Finland especially during periods of economic recession. An estimated one million people have emigrated from Finland in the 20th century. Up until the end of the 1980s, immigration to Finland consisted mostly of repatriation from Sweden or family-based immigration due to marriage. After the beginning of the 1990s, immigration grew as a result of the repatriation of Ingrian Finns and those seeking asylum in Finland. At the end of the decade immigration increased as a result of EU's freedom of movement. At the end of 2019, the share of foreign citizens was 4.8 % of the total population of Finland.¹²

Finland is known for its reception of quota refugees that has been ongoing for decades. The first refugees arrived in Finland from Chile in 1973. During the period 1979–1990 some 800 Vietnamese refugees arrived in Finland. They were Finland's first so-called quota refugees.¹³ A quota refugee means a person who has been granted refugee status¹⁴ by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and who arrives in Finland within a refugee quota annually decided by the Finnish Parliament directly from a refugee camp or from a city. The quota refugees arriving in Finland are chosen in cooperation with the UNHCR through a resettlement program that offers refugees a safe pathway to a third country that has granted them a residence permit. The purpose of resettlement is to offer refugees a permanent place of residence and make it possible to later receive citizenship. In addition to resettlement, other permanent solutions, made possible by the UNHCR, are safe return to one's home country and integration into the first country where one seeks asylum.¹⁵

Finland has been receiving quota refugees annually since 1985. In the 1990s Finland's annual refugee quota was 500 persons and it was increased to 750 persons as of 2001. In

12 Statistics Finland.

13 Valtonen 2019.

14 A refugee is any person who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it". UN General Assembly, Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, 30 January 1967, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 606.

15 UNHCR Resettlement Handbook: Chapter 1.

2014 and 2015 the number of quota refugees was exceptionally high, 1 050, because of the situation in Syria. Finland's quota was increased to 850 persons in 2020 and to 1 050 persons in 2021. In recent years Finland's refugee quota has been focused on selecting Syrian and Congolese refugees, refugees evacuated from Libya and emergency cases.¹⁶ In recent years there have been more municipal places for quota refugees than there have been people selected in the quota, so municipalities may not have been able to fill their reception quotas. Finland's refugee quota is quite small when compared to the quota of Sweden, for example, which has been 5 000 persons in recent years.

Persons seeking international protection have also been arriving in Finland for decades. In 2015, 32 476 asylum seekers arrived in Finland, which was more than ever before. However, the number of asylum seekers fell significantly in the following years. In 2019, only 4 550 persons sought asylum, slightly over half of whom were submitting their first application while just under half were subsequent applications.

16 UNHCR Resettlement Handbook: Country Chapter – Finland.

3 Agreements and plans concerning community-based sponsorship

3.1 The basis of community-based sponsorship in international agreements

The goal of the Global Compact on Refugees approved by the UN general assembly in December 2018 and the UNHCR's Three-Year Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways (2019–2021) is to expand the protection of refugees beyond regular resettlement programmes.¹⁷ In 2016, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees encouraged nations to develop alternative legal pathways to improve the situation of Syrian refugee.¹⁸

One of the four objectives of the Compact on Refugees¹⁹ is to expand efforts to resettle refugees into third countries and increase complementary pathways, such as community-based sponsorship programmes.²⁰ The other three objectives concern, firstly, easing the situation of those countries where refugees have fled to from their own countries, secondly, improving the survival chances of refugees and thirdly, improving the safety situation in countries of origin so that refugees could return home. According to the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees, models complementing regular resettlement programmes can be programmes supported by private individuals or various communities, such as Canada's long-standing community-based reception models that have formed the basis for the development of global refugee reception models²¹. In practice, the UNHCR supports Canada's global initiative that aims to offer instruction and tools for those countries interested in creating community-based reception models for refugees.²²

Other complementary models can include humanitarian visas and other models that support getting out of conflict zones (humanitarian corridors), supporting the educational opportunities of refugees via grants and student visas by means of partnerships between

17 Global Compact on Refugees; UNHCR The Three-Year Strategy (2019–2021).

18 UNHCR. Pathways for admission of Syrian refugees.

19 Global Compact on Refugees.

20 Ibid.

21 Global Compact on Refugees; Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI).

22 Ibid.

governments and academic organisations, for example, and bolstering the movement opportunities of refugee labour by means such as identifying those refugees that can directly find employment in third countries. The objective of the UN Global Compact on Refugees is to ensure that the routes created by complementary models function systemically and in a fashion that is gender sensitive and takes the protection needs of refugees into account.

In June 2019, UNHCR published a three-year strategy²³ pakolaisten for the resettlement of refugees and the ways to complement it. The strategy was created by listening to numerous stakeholder groups, such as states, national and international NGOs, the private sector, researchers, religious organisations, refugees and other UN organisations. The three-year strategy is based on the need to find a permanent solution for millions of refugees in the coming years²⁴. The strategy aims to distribute responsibility among nations supporting the refugee population, display mutual solidarity and increase the mobility of refugees through resettlement and complementary pathways for entry. The strategy sets the concrete goal of resettling one million refugees and placing two million refugees via complementary pathways by 2028. Achieving this goal requires new participating nations and new opportunities that complement traditional resettling programmes. This three-year strategy laid the foundation for the development of global models to complement regular resettlement programmes.

In July 2018, the immigration ministers of Argentina, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Spain issued a joint statement in which they commit to realising community-based refugee sponsorship as one of the means of sharing the responsibility for tackling the global refugee crisis, facilitating integration and searching for innovative solutions to protect refugees.²⁵ Models are now being developed in different parts of the world and they have become permanent practices in places such as Argentina, Australia, Germany, Ireland, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

The first Global Refugee Forum²⁶ was held in December 2019 in cooperation between states, international financing organisations, the private sector, operators in development cooperation, refugees and representatives from the civic society. The forum drafted

23 UNHCR The Three-Year Strategy (2019–2021).

24 Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2021.

25 Joint Statement – Ministers from Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Argentina, Spain and New Zealand underline their support for community-based refugee sponsorship, 16 July 2018.

26 UNHCR. 2019 Global Refugee Forum.

over 800 wide-ranging and significant commitments that support refugees and their communities in employment, education and resettlement.

3.2 The European foundation of integrating citizens of third countries

The European Commission approved an action plan and concrete measures for integrating citizens of third countries on 7.6.2016.²⁷ The goal of the action plan is to help member states develop and strengthen their integration policies. Even though the plan covers all citizens of third countries in the EU, it also contains measures to solve special challenges faced by refugees.

The plan contains measures in all areas of politics central to integration:

- Measures preceding departure and arrival: familiarising immigrants with their destination and preparing local communities to receive them
- Integration training: language training, including immigrant children in early childhood education, introduction to the society, reinforcing the understanding of diversity among teachers and other school staff, recruiting teachers with immigrant backgrounds
- Employment and vocational education: promoting early labour market integration and immigrant entrepreneurship by such means as quickly evaluating and recognising the possible skills and degrees of third country citizens with tools in use in the EU
- Accessibility of basic services, e.g., healthcare services that meet the needs of immigrants and training of healthcare staff. Creation of expertise networks dealing with the mental health of immigrants in cooperation with health authorities, NGOs and organisations of healthcare professionals to prevent and discover problems early and to provide treatment and support, for example
- Active immigrant participation in all areas of social life: increasing the participation of third country citizens in local democratic structures, promoting interaction with the receiving society through volunteering and sports and culture measures, focusing on the prevention of racism and xenophobia and creating programmes to dismantle prejudices

²⁷ European Commission. Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals.

To achieve the goals described above, the EU must play a strong role in coordinating the different operators and stakeholder groups and in communications in the area of immigrant integration. To this end, the European Commission has established a European network of integration²⁸ that coordinates the reciprocal learning of member states with targeted training measures, for example. The network also has the goal of promoting cooperation between national, local and regional authorities, civic organisations and other EU-level networks in member states in activities related to integration. The EU itself does not have a shared integration policy; integration is a matter that is decided on the national level.

The European Migration Forum²⁹ is a platform for dialogue between civic society and EU institutions on matters related to the integration of third country citizens. The forum brings together operators from civic society, regional authorities and representatives of member states and EU institutions. The forum aims to increase understanding of the central challenges to integration and find ways to support operators as they strive to meet the needs of immigrants. Furthermore, the European Commission has established an action plan for the EU³⁰ concerning cities and matters related to the integration of third country citizens. The goal of the plan is to bolster dialogue between local communities and the civic society (including immigrant communities and organisations) with regular meetings where issues related to integration measures and their funding are discussed.

3.3 Towards community-based sponsorship in Europe

The global initiative³¹ formulated in 2016 to develop a global refugee reception model sped up the creation of European community-based sponsorship programmes. The purpose of the initiative was to encourage and support nations in adapting refugee sponsorship programmes developed in Canada to suit their respective societies. UNHCR's three-year strategy also hastened the actual implementation of complementary models in Europe. In fact, some 30 000 persons have arrived in Europe via community-based programmes between 2013–2018.

28 European Commission. European Website on Integration.

29 European Economic and Social Committee..

30 European Commission. Inclusion of migrants and refugees in cities.

31 Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI).

Because of the dire need for safe pathways, the European Commission published a communication on 23.9.2020³² that encouraged EU member states to establish community-based programmes in cooperation with civic society. The communication urges member states to facilitate the entry of persons in need of international protection or in a vulnerable situation into their territories. To increase the number of humanitarian pathways of entry, member states are advised to cooperate closely with civic society so that private supporters, groups comprising of private individuals or non-profit organisations can participate at different stages of the programme beginning with the identification of persons in need of protection in countries outside of the EU and ending with integration following resettlement into the new country.³³

32 European Commission. Commission Recommendation (EU) 2020/1364, issued on 23 September 2020, on legal pathways to protection in the EU: promoting resettlement, humanitarian admission and other complementary pathways. .

33 Ibid.

4 Defining community-based sponsorship

Many definitions exist for a community-based refugee reception model, but all of them share the division of responsibility for the reception of refugees between the public sector and the civic society³⁴. The private sponsorship of refugees (PSR) programme³⁵ that was already implemented in Canada 40 years ago serves as the practical and conceptual foundation for programmes established across the globe. PSR allows private individuals, communities and organisations to both choose and receive refugees in addition to the state's resettlement programme. A central factor of the concept is that individuals and groups offer financial, emotional and practical support to refugees as they settle and integrate into a new country.³⁶

On a general level, community-based sponsorship programmes contain the following principles³⁷:

- Systematic admission of refugees
- Safe and legal pathways to ensure protection – in the best case scenario as an addition to existing resettlement programmes
- Sharing the responsibility for financial and social support that occurs within a specific period of time between the state, civic society and individuals
- The state retains primary responsibility for the integration of refugees

There is no shared definition for programmes implemented in Europe. However, what all of the programmes have in common is that they all transfer at least some of the responsibility for identifying refugees for selection and conducting integration work tasks both prior to and after entry from the State into communities. The operators are various organisations from the civic society or private individuals. The tasks vary from financial support (e.g., fund-raising) to the provision of services and other kinds of support.

34 Euroopan komissio 2018..

35 The Canadian Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Program.

36 UNHCR, 'Complementary Pathways for Admission of Refugees to Third Countries: Key considerations'.

37 European Commission, 'Study on the feasibility and added value of sponsorship'; Fratzke 2017.

The contents of the tasks that are transferred from the state to private operators varies between the different programmes. According to a report produced by the European Commission³⁸ the programmes implemented in EU countries contain the following practical elements::

- Identifying and choosing a refugee/family
- Arranging and/or funding pre-departure orientation and medical screening
- Arranging and/or funding travel to the destination country
- Arranging or providing material support in the reception stage (e.g., housing, financial support, food, clothing)
- Arranging or funding costs related to health care (e.g., medical insurance)
- Arranging or providing integration support (e.g., orientation to the new community, language training, job seeking)

The precise definition of community-based sponsorship is difficult because of the diversity of the programmes and their expansion in different parts of Europe and the world at large. For this reason, the terms *private sponsorship or community sponsorship* have become umbrella terms for community-based sponsorship programmes realised in different countries and different local contexts. Community sponsorship models may be divided into those that aim to increase the number of complementary pathways of entry and those where communality is a tool for supporting refugees who have arrived via other routes. In the former programmes the sponsors support the entry and integration of the refugees they have named. In these programmes the person's need of protection is paramount. These programmes aim to increase the resettlement opportunities of refugees and promote the sharing of responsibility in order to find permanent solutions for persons in need of protection. In the latter programmes the communities and private individuals participate in the reception and integration of refugees who have arrived via resettlement programmes or other routes. These other routes can include education opportunities or humanitarian visas, for example.

In this report the concept *community sponsorship* refers to the latter. Community sponsorship means a programme of community-based sponsorship that centres clear selection of operators, their roles and the goals set for the programme. The central goal of a community sponsorship model is to reinforce *complementary pathways* in the long-term and increase the refugee quota. This goal separates community sponsorship programmes from regular volunteering.

38 Ibid, 36.

Another crucial difference between community sponsorship and volunteering is that the latter may be more flexible, loosely defined and take its shape in the relationship between the volunteer and the “beneficiary”, for example. On the other hand, volunteering may also be goal-oriented activity based on various agreements. *Community engagement*, or the presence of the community in the integration effort, may be seen as a wider commitment of various communities to facilitate integration. A community sponsorship programme can be brought about by better focusing the presence of communities, and especially by having their members commit to the various tasks.

5 Community sponsorship in different countries

5.1 Canada's private sponsorship programme as the starting point

The Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) programme established in Canada in 1978 is the most well known and most extensive community sponsorship programme. Canada's PSR programme has three different realisation options. In the oldest one the sponsors choose and bring the refugees they name into Canada and are responsible for the costs related to their reception. A sponsor group consisting of at least five persons names a person or family for resettlement in their application. If the application is approved, the sponsor group is responsible for all financial, emotional and other integration support for a period of one year. This version of the programme is especially used to bring family members of refugees admitted through other private sponsorship models or the state's resettlement programme into Canada.

In the second option, the Blended Visa Office Referred (BVOR) programme³⁹ sponsors select refugees from the refugee register controlled by the UNHCR with the help of authorities responsible for their reception. The state authorities responsible for the reception of the refugees financially support the subsistence of the refugees for a period of six months. All other support is provided by the sponsors.

The third programme is rarer but nonetheless an option for refugees with special needs relating to health care or for other reasons. The so-called Joint Assistance Sponsorship (JAS) programme works the same as the previously described programme, only in this version the state provides financial support for a period of one year together with the sponsors. Regardless of the programme through which refugees gain entry, they undergo safety and health care inspections before a residence permit is granted.

In recent years the UNHCR, Canada's immigration agency and Amnesty International have supported the BVOR programme to fill unused reception capacity. As for sponsors, they wish to operate in completely private programmes because otherwise the family

39 Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

members of those they support, such as parents or siblings, could not gain entry to the country.⁴⁰

All refugees arriving in Canada through the various programmes are granted a permanent residence permit. They also receive all state-funded reception services and Canadian citizenship three years after gaining the residence permit. The spouse and children of a refugee have the right to family reunification if the primary beneficiary submits an application within one year of arriving in the country.

A significant number of private individuals and organisations from civic society are committed to Canada's private sponsorship models. The fact that nearly 300 000 refugees have arrived in Canada through these programmes is a testament to their significance. For example, in 2017 nearly one half of some 40 000 Syrian refugees gained entry to Canada through private sponsors.⁴¹

Canada's programme has proven to be effective in the reception and integration of refugees. A crucial factor in the success of the programme relates to how the refugees gain access to the existing networks of their sponsors and thus gain social capital. Sponsors also enter into local partnerships with operators who are involved with either immigrant integration work or financial assistance. These may be municipal or regional immigration operators, representatives of the federation or province, employer organisations, health care organisations, ethno-cultural or religious associations, schools or academic communities. Recent studies⁴² on Canada's resettlement programme demonstrate that the employment rate of privately sponsored refugees is higher and they use fewer public benefits than refugees supported by the state.

Canada's model has been applied in Australia and New Zealand, among other places. In Australia the programmes became established in 2017 with the objective of annually helping 1 000 refugees who have good integration prospects in the Australian labour market. This is why companies act as sponsors and strive to arrange employment even before the person arrives in Australia.⁴³ New Zealand has also been piloting the Canadian model since 2017. The sponsorship programme is set to continue at least until 2024 with a goal of assisting 150 refugees in addition to the 1 500 refugees selected in the refugee

40 The Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI).

41 Hyndman, Payne, & Jimenez 2017.

42 Ibid.

43 European Commission, 'Study on the feasibility and added value of sponsorship', 35.

quota. The government of New Zealand has also drafted an agreement with organisations involved in the reception of refugees.⁴⁴

Argentina also introduced a community sponsorship programme called Programa Siria in 2014. The programme allows any group of at least three persons, or a group formed by a community, to pay for all the expenses resulting from the reception, housing and everyday life of Syrian refugees for a period of three years after their arrival in the country. In practice, the Argentinian government has entered into an agreement with the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), which has aided over 400 refugees into the country by the year 2020.⁴⁵

5.2 Community sponsorship programmes in Europe

Many European nations have developed and piloted various community sponsorship programmes. The first such programmes were initiated in 2013 as a response to the refugee crises of Syria and Iraq. The programmes became more numerous as a result of the heavy influx of asylum seekers in 2015 and people's increased desire to help. Some of these programmes ended after the pilot period while others became permanent features of the integration activities of their countries. In recent years community sponsorship programmes have been enacted in the United Kingdom, Germany, Ireland, Spain, Italy and France, among others. In Europe, community sponsorship has been applied in models aimed at family members, models for quota refugees and humanitarian visa models and other models that support getting away from conflict areas (Humanitarian Corridors programmes). In all of these programmes the civic society and its organisations commit to receiving and integrating refugees. These programmes have helped grow the number of refugees received in most countries, which has been a central motivating factor in committing the civic society to these programmes.⁴⁶

Community sponsorship programmes for quota refugees have been developed on the basis of the Canadian model. The first such programme aimed at quota refugees started in the UK in 2016, with Portugal, Ireland and Spain's Basque Provinces starting their programmes in the following years. In this model the UNHCR is responsible for selecting the refugees and the refugees are then able to decide whether they wish to participate in a regular state-run integration programme or a community sponsorship model. A community sponsorship programme where the UNHCR selected additional refugees on

44 New Zealand Immigration. Refugee and protection.

45 Bond ym. 2019.

46 European Commission, 'Study on the feasibility and added value of sponsorship' 2018

top of the regular refugee quota was also piloted in Germany. In programmes aimed at quota refugees the participating organisations support volunteer community sponsors in the reception and integration of refugees.⁴⁷

Models aimed at family members were the first community sponsorship programmes in Europe and they were directed at those family members of persons residing legally in the European Union who did not meet family reunification criteria. The first programme aimed at family members was implemented in Germany in 2013. A similar programme was later enacted in France, for example. In these programmes Syrians and Iraqis permanently residing in Germany, for example, became community sponsors for their relatives living in their home countries. These family members were granted a two-year residence permit on humanitarian grounds. The community sponsors committed to covering all financial costs resulting from the new refugees. The programme has been criticised especially for this obligation placed on the sponsors to cover the costs. As a response to the critique, NGOs have begun to support the sponsors by collecting small monthly donations (of 10–20 euros). The benefit of models aimed at family members is that the new refugees are being welcomed by a community already consisting of their relatives, which facilitates integration and prevents experiences of loneliness and isolation. On the other hand, a community consisting of family members may slow one's familiarisation with the rest of society. In models aimed at family members, the participation of organisations may serve as a bridge between the families and the society at large.⁴⁸

Humanitarian visas and other models that support fleeing conflict areas (Humanitarian Corridors programmes) have been in use in Italy, France and Belgium since 2015. The purpose of these programmes is to offer safe alternatives to the dangerous crossing of the Mediterranean for the purpose of escaping conflict zones. The enacting of these programmes was preceded by increased solidarity among citizens towards refugees and Pope Francis' encouragement to religious communities to participate in the reception of refugees. Many Christian communities and organisations, such as Caritas and the Community of Sant'Egidio, came to an agreement with the state on the number of refugees they would take in. According to statistics from 2019, Italy received over 2 000 refugees through these programmes while France received nearly 400 and Belgium received 150. In these programmes Christian communities and organisations agreed on the number of refugees with the state and participated in the entire reception process from choosing the refugees to integration. Humanitarian Corridors programmes have

47 European Commission, 'Study on the feasibility and added value of sponsorship' 2018; SHARE 2019; Interviews with German and Irish operators in community sponsorship programmes.

48 European Commission, 'Study on the feasibility and added value of sponsorship' 2018; SHARE 2019, 12–14.

offered protection to especially vulnerable people such as families with children and the elderly, who would likely not be eligible for entry via refugee quotas. Organisations operating in the countries of origin, churches and the UNHCR have been widely utilised in the selection of the persons in need of protection. The refugees enter the country of destination with a humanitarian visa and apply for asylum there. Until asylum is granted, the organisations are responsible for the costs of the refugees and local community sponsor groups participate in supporting the refugee family for an agreed upon period of time.⁴⁹

UNHCR has studied the applicability of community sponsorship in Sweden and Denmark. As of now no decisions to initiate such programmes have been made. However, the results of these studies provide important information for this report.

The study on Denmark outlines the operational preconditions for a programme based on the structure of the European model aimed at quota refugees. The study suggests that the state enters into an agreement with a few NGOs on the launch of such a programme. Immigration authorities would notify the NGOs of refugees entering the programme, after which the organisations would choose and train community sponsors and bring them into contact with the refugees. The role of the NGOs would also include supporting the community sponsors. Community sponsors would either be volunteers from a supporting organisation or groups formed by five or more people approved for the task either by a supporting organisation or the authorities. The envisioned role for municipalities is cooperation, relaying experiences to community sponsor groups and taking responsibility for the integration of the refugees once the agreement period of the community sponsors expires.

The study on Denmark highlights the fact that in Denmark quota refugees have a statutory right to free education, healthcare, family reunification and social benefits. Before a Danish community sponsorship programme is enacted, the division of responsibility between the state and the community sponsors should be clarified with regard to the costs of the early stages of refugee integration. One option is that the state would be responsible for the plane tickets, social orientation and language training of the refugees. For their part, community sponsors would be responsible for furnishing the apartments of the refugees and supporting their employment. The employment support provided by the community sponsors would include practical utilisation of their networks and assisting the refugees in the drafting of CVs and job applications. Externalising the employment support to community sponsors is seen to reduce the state's costs in this regard. The community sponsors should not give money directly to the refugees, as this is

49 SHARE 2019: Fostering Community Sponsorship Across Europe, 15–18.

considered harmful for the sponsor relationship. In fact, the study suggests that refugees in the community sponsorship programme would receive the needed benefits from the state and the community sponsors would then compensate the state for these benefits once the sponsorship period expires. Alternatively, the community sponsors could pay an agreed upon sum to a state fund or to municipalities that would then be responsible for making monthly benefit payments to the refugees.

The study on Denmark concludes that a community sponsorship programme could improve the integration of refugees and possibly reduce costs to the state on both the short and the long term. Denmark's strong tradition of volunteering and the high level of activity in its civic society in matters related to integration over the last few years would serve as a great basis for a community sponsorship programme. Danish politicians, authorities and organisations have demonstrated an interest in piloting such a programme. Considering the high tax rate and high cost of living in Denmark, the notion of community sponsors providing financial support is met with some resistance, but it is not considered impossible. The perceived benefits of community sponsorship include better relations between population groups and more effective integration. A possible paradigm shift in immigration policy towards providing temporary protection is seen as a challenge for the realisation of such a programme in Denmark. The willingness and ability of community sponsors to participate on covering the integration costs of refugees may also become an obstacle.⁵⁰

The study on Sweden emphasizes that the responsibility for refugee integration should remain with the state. The tasks of the community sponsors should be very practical and not unreasonably demanding. Community sponsorship could last for a fixed period of one year and include orientation into the community and the creation of social contacts. Community sponsors could also help refugees find apartments. The study on Sweden considers it important that the already existing and functioning practices in place in municipalities and organisations are utilised or expanded upon in the community sponsorship pilot project. The most significant challenge to community sponsorship in Sweden is the deeply engrained idea that integration is primarily the responsibility of the authorities. Especially operators from civic society have voiced concerns that the state's responsibilities are privatised or transferred onto organisations. The role organisations play in integration has indeed grown in recent years, but the lack of coordination and funding is seen as a challenge for them. Furthermore, as a result of the high expectations placed on civic society in 2015 when a large number of asylum seekers arrived, many volunteers working with refugees became exhausted. In Sweden there is also fear of the possible impacts the programme has on immigration policy. What this means is that community

50 Feith Tan, 2019.

sponsorship and the promotion of legal pathways of entry should not replace the right to seek asylum.⁵¹

5.3 Practices of European programmes

There is variation between European nations in how community sponsorship programmes are coordinated and how the sponsors are selected and trained and what their tasks are. Regarding the coordination of the programmes, states have entered into agreements with suitable national organisations. These organisations then have a central role in the planning, development and implementation of the programme. Among other duties, the organisations have coordinated the programme, recruited and trained volunteers to become community sponsors, supported sponsors and refugees during the programme and operated as a bridge between authorities and the sponsors. The organisations selected for cooperation have had previous experience in working with refugees and persons in especially vulnerable positions, and most of them also have connections to operations on the local level. Locally, the organisations have recruited community sponsors from their own networks.

In Germany a steering group was founded to plan the community sponsorship programme. This group consisted of representatives from the ministry of the interior, immigration office and several national organisations and foundations working with refugees. Three organisations (the Red Cross, Caritas and the Protestant Church of Westphalia) were selected for the actual pilot programme and they would establish three support points for community sponsors in different parts of Germany. The organisations were responsible for recruiting and supporting the community sponsors. When needed, the sponsors could contact the support point for their region. If a sponsorship relationship became severed for some reason, the support point would strive to find a new group of community sponsors for the refugee.

The United Kingdom also established a separate group of operators, Reset, to coordinate and develop a national community sponsorship programme. Reset's employees are specialists with a background in refugee work and the third sector. Reset offers training, instruction and support to the programme's different stakeholder groups. On the local level, religious communities and NGOs work as cooperation organisations and community sponsor groups are often formed from within their networks.⁵²

51 Feith Tan, 2020.

52 Reset UK. 2021.

The objectives of community sponsorship programmes define who is selected for the programme and at what stage of the refugee process. Community sponsor groups are formed by local persons who are often already familiar with each other. The community sponsor groups usually consist of five to ten volunteers. Most often the community sponsors are active members of the participating organisations and churches or religious communities, or they have been recruited for the task from within their networks. While this is the case, the programs have allowed anyone to apply to become a community sponsor as the sponsors are primarily selected via an official application process. When choosing community sponsors, the applicants' motives, strengths and ability to commit to the task are evaluated. In their applications, community sponsor groups describe their readiness and applicability for the task and present a community sponsorship plan that lists local operators while ensuring that the safety and data protection of all parties involved are guaranteed. Community sponsors have also been required to present their criminal records. In many countries a safety assessment is seen as crucial before a person can operate as a community sponsor.

In many programmes the tasks of community sponsors are quite extensive and comprehensive and they cannot be directly applied to the service system of the Finnish welfare state. Fund-raising, providing financial support and procuring apartments for refugees have been a central part of the tasks of community sponsor groups in these programmes. In some countries the participating organisations have carried significant financial responsibility for the living costs of refugees. In some countries this responsibility is on the community sponsor groups (e.g., in Ireland). Because of the extensive duties, community sponsor groups, and often the broader organisations that they represent, are committed to the reception and integration of refugees.

In European models community sponsorship is systematic and goal-oriented activity that cannot be compared to regular volunteering. Community sponsors have been responsible for nearly everything related to the resettlement of refugees with the exception of social and healthcare services. However, community sponsors could also be tasked with steering refugees to the services they need. In Ireland, for example, community sponsors have taken care of making appointments to the health centre, enrolling children to school, arranging language instruction and steering refugees to social services in the early stages of integration. Community sponsors have also offered refugees practical help in everyday matters and ensured that the refugees are taken to their scheduled meetings. Sponsors have also familiarised refugees to their new place of residence and the people living there. They have utilised their own networks and also helped refugees to network to facilitate their employment.⁵³

53 kts. esim. Government of UK. Community Sponsorship Guide 2018; Government of Ireland. Community Sponsorship Ireland.

Community sponsors have undergone a brief training for their task. The extent of this training has varied from a few hours to a few days. Many community sponsors have had no previous experience in working with refugees, which has made adequate support from the organisations and authorities vital for their ability to function in the role. Community sponsors have also received peer support and mentoring from more experienced sponsors.

In European community sponsorship programmes, national steering groups and parties responsible for the coordination of the programme monitor and evaluate the realisation of the programme and look for areas where development is needed. In the UK, University of Birmingham's Institute for Research into Superdiversity has conducted a three-year evaluation study on the country's community sponsorship programme.⁵⁴ The UK has one body responsible for immigration matters for every 12 local regions, and this body supports sponsors and makes audit visits three times a year once operations have begun. They also talk with and interview both community sponsors and refugees. Germany is currently drafting evaluation criteria for the programme. The pilot project currently ongoing in Spain's Basque Provinces has also undergone preliminary evaluation. The pilot stage was deemed to be a success and to form a sound foundation for the expansion of the programme.⁵⁵ Various evaluation models have also been developed in Canada that analyse the relevance and management of the programme, the various forms private community sponsorship programmes and their costs and development suggestions. Canada is also planning an extensive comparative study between those refugees who participate in reception services and those who do not.⁵⁶

European programmes have been funded in various ways. In Germany the operations are funded by foundations that also participated in the founding costs of the programme. Christian organisations are primarily responsible for providing financial support to refugees and paying for their housing expenses in Germany and Spain. The UK established a separate operator, Reset, which gains its funding from the home office and the third sector. In some countries the programme is funded by the AMIF fund. In a few European models raising funds to pay for the refugees' rent, clothing, furniture and other goods in the early stage of integration would seem to be one crucial task of the "sponsors".

54 Phillimore, Reyes & Hassan 2020.

55 Manzanedo 2019.

56 Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI).

6 The feasibility of promoting community sponsorship in Finland

6.1 Integration work conducted by civic operators as the foundation of the programme

The Finnish system of organisations related to integration is very broad and diverse. The third sector contains a tremendous amount of potential and already existing structures that could be utilised in a possible community sponsorship programme. This chapter describes the kind of work the different national and local organisations do with regard to integration either as their main mission or as part of their operations.

A few national organisations that have operated for decades, such as the Finnish Red Cross (FRC) and the Finnish Refugee Council, have established themselves as supporters of immigrant integration. Among other duties, FRC⁵⁷ coordinates national reception efforts and the network of organisations that provide support for integration. The purpose of networking is to bolster the cooperation between authorities and the third sector in order to facilitate integration, promote advocacy work and develop expertise and volunteering efforts in the organisations in support of integration. Meetings are held to exchange current information on the third sector's integration efforts, strengthen dialogue between the authorities responsible and the third sector operators and share good practices of reciprocal integration. To increase the visibility of already existing integration efforts, FRC has created an integration platform for the different operators in the space that collects information on the integration work conducted by organisations on the local, regional and national levels.

The Finnish Refugee Council⁵⁸ also has a long-standing tradition of developing practices that support integration in various ways. At the moment the Refugee Council is working in close cooperation with municipalities receiving quota refugees. Their project has trained some twenty instructors with different language backgrounds to provide initial social orientation to new refugees in the municipalities. The Council's organisation incubator trains immigrant organisations and supports their operations. Employees who speak Arabic or Somali also serve as cultural interpreters between immigrants and other

57 Red Cross 2021.

58 Finnish Refugee Council 2021.

employees. Furthermore, volunteers also support immigrants in various ways, such as teaching them Finnish.

There are also many national umbrella organisations and networks that focus on integration. Moniheli ry.⁵⁹, for example, is a national network focusing on integration work that was founded by persons with immigrant backgrounds. It has over 140 participating associations and includes people with over 50 different nationalities. The main objective of the association is to integrate refugees and other immigrants into Finland and Finnishness. Moniheli is also the only Finnish organisation chosen to develop integration practices in the European Commission's Expert Group on the Views of Migrants⁶⁰. Moniheli's member associations are primarily of immigrant backgrounds, but the membership also includes Finnish associations.

Immigrant associations have also founded national or regional umbrella organisations that aim to support the integration of a specific ethnic or national group, for example. The operations of these umbrella organisations that focus on integration are primarily organised through local associations. The national organisations may also focus on integration work conducted among a certain language group. As an example of this, the Finnish-Syrian Friendship Society.⁶¹ serves as a bridge between new arrivals and the original population. One central task of the Society is to communicate with the Arabic-speaking population to ensure they receive accurate information about current events, for example. The Society's operations include service coordination, errand services and group activities that familiarise newcomers with Finnish society and culture.

The integration work of the organisations may also clearly focus around a certain topic. The Let's Read Together network⁶² coordinates a network of some 600 volunteers in 30 locations and teaches Finnish reading and writing skills to immigrants, especially women. The language learning focuses on everyday language skills. The network's groups are attended primarily by persons who might be excluded from regular integration training, such as stay-at-home parents, seniors and those who are unable to read or write. Extremely committed long-term volunteers are the network's key strength.

The organisations also develop expertise to support the integration of refugees with special needs. For example, the operations of Jyväskylän Settlement Association in Jyväskylä

59 Moniheli ry.

60 The purpose of this Expert Group is to advise and provide expertise in matters related to immigration, asylum and integration policy.

61 Finnish-Syrian Friendship Society (Suomi-Syyria ystävyyssseura ry.)

62 Let's Read Together network (Luetaan yhdessä verkosto).

are focused on educating youths of immigrant backgrounds with special needs and little schooling. The need for special support could mean learning disabilities or very low level of schooling, which prevents the person from completing integration training or adult basic education, or from proceeding further in their studies.

Many traditional organisations such as the Martha Organisation, Finland's Villages Association, the 4H Organisation and the Finnish Settlement Movement also steer their operations towards supporting integration. By a conservative estimate there are hundreds of local organisations that operate under a national organisation or as independent associations. Much of the integration work discussed above is conducted by volunteers, but a major part of the operation of these organisations is based on project funding. Small local associations can be significant local operators in the area of integration. For example, the Better Together association (Paremmiin yhdessä ry.) that operates in Jyväskylä has ten employees and several integration projects. The interviews conducted for this report strongly highlight the fact that numerous good practices related to integration have not become established after funding has ran out.⁶³

The long-term development of integration practices in organisations has been based on permanent funding. Many cities have developed low-threshold meeting places that serve both recent immigrants and those who have lived in Finland for longer and attract scores of volunteers to participate in their work. Naistari in Tampere, for example, has developed activities especially for immigrant women and their families. Naistari offers peer support in matters related to child rearing, for example, and they also think about education and employment issues. For many women, Naistari acts as a substitute for the missing network of relatives.

Churches and religious communities play a significant role in supporting the integration of immigrants. Deacons of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church have already been conducting integration work since the beginning of the 1990s. The immigrant work conducted in parishes and the integration work conducted in municipalities have led to established structures and practices. For example, in Kotka the municipality and the parish have a joint coordinator of immigrant work. In some places the church's integration workers participate in the actual reception of quota refugees. Volunteers are a crucial resource for the parishes as well. The integration work of the church also grants financial support in situations where support from the municipality or Kela, the Social Insurance

63 For example, the Participative Integration in Finland (Osallisena Suomessa) project aimed to utilise information and experiences accumulated in various projects as comprehensively as possible and looked for good practices with national utility value. There were almost 200 ongoing projects funded by the EU and Finland's Slot Machine Association alone. Pöyhönen, S., Tarnanen, M., Vehviläinen, E.-M., Virtanen, A. & L. Pihlaja 2010.

Institution of Finland, is unavailable. These kinds of situations arise in conjunction with family reunifications, for example. Parishes also offer support person, friend family and peer support activities. Volunteers might organise basic Finnish instruction in situations where freshly arrived refugees do not yet have access to language training. Information and orientation days as well as trips and camps are also organised for groups of quota refugees to familiarise them with Finnish society, nature and people. In many municipalities the church's integration workers also help refugees find their own spiritual community regardless of their religion. In some municipalities it is the social advisors who steer refugees to their spiritual communities. Other Christian churches and religious communities also offer plenty of activities that support integration.

Mosques are also a part of the civic society of Finland. In addition to religious and social interaction, many mosques have a clear goal of promoting positive integration of their members into Finnish society while maintaining Islamic values. Families are supported in parenthood and questions of child welfare are discussed, children are helped with their homework and financial support is offered. Religious teaching is not only studying the Quran but it also involves pondering about parenthood or making plans for the future with regard to studies, for example. Mosques also function as important social spaces where people network and meet friends.⁶⁴ Muslims living in Finland are a very heterogeneous group and mosques only represent a portion of the Muslims in Finland. In fact, many do not want registered religious communities to represent them as there are great differences in the ways mosques operate. The religious conceptions also vary greatly between mosques just as they do between different Christian churches and communities. Therefore it is significant to be aware of the differences among Muslims and look at the critical points of possible umbrella thinking as one would do in ecumenism. Many mosques also face financial challenges and operate mostly with the help of volunteers.

6.2 Development of cooperation between municipalities and organisations as a starting point for community sponsorship

The municipal survey yielded 80 different national or local operators from the civic society that the municipalities were cooperating with in matters of integration. Many municipalities also have established networks of integration operators. In municipalities that have been receiving quota refugees for decades, the practices of cooperation with

64 al-Sharmani 2018; Tiilikainen, al-Sharmani & Mustasaari (eds.) 2019.

the organisations have become established. The desire of the organisations to participate in integration work, the expertise of the organisations and their wide networks of volunteers were named as central factors for this cooperation.

Cooperation with organisations has become established practice in nearly all of the municipalities and all of them are cooperating with at least one operator from outside of the public sector. Half of the municipalities that responded to the survey engaged in established cooperation with the Finnish Red Cross. Immigrant associations, the Finnish Settlement movement, Martha Organisation, Mannerheim League for Child Welfare, sports clubs, Let's Read Together network, various educational institutions and volunteers operating in the municipality were also named as functional cooperation partners. Some municipalities are actively developing their cooperative practices and the help of organisations is sought flexibly depending on the needs of refugees.

Over half of the municipalities are engaged in cooperation with parishes and religious communities. The Evangelical Lutheran Church has put effort into hiring employees to support refugee integration and to organise activities for them. The status of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finnish society is very different than that of small religious communities because of the Church's power to levy taxes. In some of the municipalities the cooperation occurs primarily with the local parish of the Church, but many municipalities also made a mention of other Christian congregations or an Islamic community. There is a hope that registered mosques would participate in community sponsorship. The unofficial and unorganised neighbourhood networks of Muslims, e.g., women, could also support new immigrants. They could have a lot to offer to the newcomers.

The survey and the interviews conducted for this report yielded plenty of descriptions of functional models of cooperation. As an example of a locally operating network, take the network established by the Domino project of Jyväskylän Better Together Association (Paremmiin yhdessä ry), which includes a Facebook group and where each operator gets to promote their activities intended for immigrants. The purpose of the network is to bring immigrants and Finns together. In many municipalities the partner organisations are involved in providing quota refugees with digital guidance, housing-related guidance, orientation into the community, (telephone) guidance in the refugees' own language, help with school work, steering into sports and other hobby groups and camps, trips and friend family activities. Lately the organisations have also been creating WhatsApp groups for various specific purposes.

Generally speaking, the municipality provides those services it must provide according to the Social Welfare Act, but many responses describe opportunities to provide all other services in cooperation with organisations. The evaluation of service needs is clearly seen

as a responsibility of the municipality. In many responses, cooperation with Kela (the Social Insurance Institution of Finland) and the Public Employment and Business Services, and providing support for these services, is seen as a responsibility of the municipality. In some municipalities, assisting with applications and making appointments are considered tasks of the partner organisations, but the creation of everyday networks is named as their primary task. The responses of many municipalities bring up that the municipality is responsible for coordinating the cooperation with the organisations and for convening the regional networks. Municipalities also support volunteers working with refugees. In some municipalities the cooperation is active and systematic and the operations are developed together with the partner organisations.

The survey and the interviews highlight the fact that cooperation between the municipality and organisations is written into the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration, but this cooperation may hinge on whether the municipality is willing to utilise project funding and how the municipal use of funds is prioritised. The cooperation may also hinge on whether the organisations receive external funding (mostly project funding) for integration work.

In other words, the cooperation between municipalities and the civic society is quite extensive and strongly localised. Existing good practices and the expertise of the third sector should be utilised in the planning, development and implementation of community sponsorship programmes. The expertise of the civic society could be disseminated in the possible steering group of the community sponsorship programme, for example. Many national organisations, such as the Finnish Refugee Council, FRC and Moniheli, have local member networks, robust expertise in immigration, integration and the refugees' countries of origin and national cooperation with municipalities receiving quota refugees. The Let's Read Together network has ten years of experience in how volunteers are successfully recruited and committed to their work.

All in all, the cooperation that already exists between municipalities and organisations is enough to provide a functional foundation for a community sponsorship programme.

6.3 Coordination of the community sponsorship programme

The success of the programmes realised in different countries has been ensured by careful planning and coordination of the operations. In Finland the programme should be planned using national and local structures already in place. New and cumbersome bureaucracy is not needed and it is therefore seen as important that resources that already

exist are channelled to benefit new refugees. The organisations were in agreement that there should be a national body that coordinates the programme according to the goals set for it and organises training for local operators. This ensures that knowledge accrued locally may be utilised across Finland. The coordinating body would also cooperate with such organisations as the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI). A willingness to undertake national coordination has also been expressed.

The coordinating organisation would assemble a group of specialists and operators to serve local community sponsor activities. This specialist network should involve immigrant organisations, both new and already established organisations focused on the promotion of integration as well as organisations that have expanded their operations into the area of immigrant integration. These organisations could include national organisations such as those mentioned above and long-standing Finnish specialist organisations (such as the Family Federation of Finland, the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare and Save the Children).

When compared to other European programmes, Finnish municipalities have a strong autonomy when it comes to organising reception and integration services⁶⁵. The nearly unanimous view of the survey participants is that the actual community sponsorship activity occurring on the local level cannot be coordinated solely on the national level because the municipalities are very different from each other. The municipalities also have functional structures that should be utilised in community sponsorship activities (see Chapter 6.2.). These include, for example, the existing networks of the municipalities, locally operating organisations, parishes and religious communities. The municipalities have also been training volunteers for integration work for decades. Community sponsorship activities should also be expanded beyond the already operating organisations and municipal volunteers to those who do not wish to commit to being a part of any organisation.

Over half of the municipalities surveyed demonstrated an interest in coordinating community sponsorship activities. Those municipalities that are already coordinating volunteer work could easily expand their efforts towards community sponsorship. Some municipalities see their role as facilitators of the operations by offering facilities and training community sponsors together with the partner organisations, as well as offering support to community sponsors through supervision of work, for example. The role of municipalities is also seen to include bringing refugees and community sponsors together based on the needs of the refugees and the abilities of the sponsors. The role of the municipality could also include disseminating information about community

65 Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1386/2010).

sponsorship activities to the sponsors and refugees. The practical local coordination of the operations could also be handled by a work pair comprising of somebody from the municipality and somebody from the organisation assigned to coordination. This last-mentioned method was nearly unanimously endorsed by the organisations and it was also named as one of the key preconditions for the success of the programme. Only a few municipalities highlighted the importance of equal, close and reciprocal cooperation between municipalities and organisations in the planning, evaluation and development of operations.

One significant streak running through the survey is that the third sector and the civic society more broadly should be able to operate from their own starting points and strengths. If the public sector is to serve as the coordinator of community sponsorship activities, these starting points should be taken seriously. In genuine partnerships all parties recognise each other's strengths. For example, in the current model in place in Kotka networks are deemed functional and agreements are drafted on which tasks related to the reception of refugees belong to whom.

All factors considered, operations on the local level should be coordinated by a body that is well trusted among local networks and has experience and expertise in integration and the workings of the Finnish service system. As described above, a majority of organisations envision a local organisation as the coordinating body. This ensures that the model would actually be community-based and not solely based on the conditions of integration work defined by the authorities. The central tasks of the coordinating body would be to organise the selection of community sponsors, bring refugees and sponsors together and ensure the fluency of cooperation and the transparency of the roles of each party. Especially in the early stages of integration the support would be tangible and conducted in close cooperation with the municipality's integration work.

6.4 Selection of refugees for the programme

The community sponsorship model in Finland would concern refugees already selected for the Finnish resettlement quota. In principle, the desire is to not exclude anyone from the programme. The community sponsors and the refugees must fit each other's needs and therefore the expertise of the sponsor group is a crucial criterion for their compatibility with the refugees. The views of the municipalities and the organisations differed somewhat with regard to who should be selected for the programme. Some one fifth of municipalities would be ready to select all refugees arriving at the municipality for the programme, especially if the number of refugees the municipality receives is small. A few responses suggest that the community sponsorship programme should be tailored on a case-by-case basis so that refugees would be steered into the programme via a

service need evaluation, for example, and the needs of the refugees would be matched with the abilities of the sponsors. None of the responses contained any specific grounds on which refugees could not participate in the programme. Excluding someone from the programme might even seem unjust. However, participation in the programme should be voluntary and its benefits to the refugees should be justified.

However, representatives from both the municipalities and the organisations name groups, such as persons unable to read or write, who might require plenty of support in the resettlement stage and for whom the three-year integration period might not be enough to gain the ability to use services independently and create functional networks in a new environment. Choosing refugees in a vulnerable position for the programme would comply well with the UNHCR's selection criteria for quota refugees. Persons in need of immediate resettlement, so-called emergency cases, are also often in a vulnerable position and require lots of support at different stages of the integration process⁶⁶. A few of the responses from municipalities bring up the issue of how the situations of especially vulnerable refugees might be very demanding and stressing for the community sponsors and therefore the sponsorship operations would require thorough orientation, adequate support and seamless cooperation with municipal employees. Refugees in vulnerable positions and persons chosen as emergency cases might benefit from additional tangible support related to their everyday lives, for example. A serious illness of a family member, for example, might also drain the family's resources, which might leave some family members to fend for themselves. In these situations the community sponsor's support to "normalise" life might be of significant help for the family.

The interviews also highlight the fact that refugees moving into larger Finnish cities are at greater risk of falling outside of services and networks than refugees moving into rural towns. Of course, the challenges are different in urban centres and the countryside. The creation of networks has been a special focus in many small towns and with some extra effort these networks could serve as a community sponsorship model. The interviews brought up the fact that in major cities reciprocal integration might not take place as it is easier to live inside one's own community in these places. Therefore, the differences between different towns and cities must be taken into account when choosing refugees for community sponsorship.

The unanimous view of both municipalities and organisations is that the selection of refugees for the programme would occur after they have arrived in the municipality

66 Some 100 persons suggested by the UNHCR are selected for the Finnish refugee quota each year on the basis of urgent resettlement. These people are not interviewed by representatives of the Finnish state like the other persons selected for the quota are.

and in conjunction with possible initial orientation. If the initial orientation that occurs during the first few weeks is conducted in cooperation between the municipality and immigrant associations, it would be natural to enter into further agreements at this stage. Choosing refugees for the programme would be conducted in cooperation between the coordinating organisation and the municipality so that the refugee who has arrived in the municipality is present and knows what is being discussed. Over half of municipal respondents suggest that municipal immigrant and integration services employees would be responsible for choosing the refugees for the programme. This suggestion is justified by the employees of municipal immigrant services being the most familiar with the persons involved and the best able to evaluate their need of support in relation to the abilities of the community sponsors. However, nearly half of municipal respondents suggest that the refugees should be selected in cooperation between several bodies. Some responses suggest an evaluation group formed by different parties.

A local coordinating body would be responsible for bringing refugees together with community sponsors. Practical operations should be tailored on the basis of the size of the municipality and the involved operators so that the system does not become excessively complex and drain resources from the operations themselves.

6.5 Who can become a sponsor?

Based on the views expressed by the municipalities and organisations participating in this report, it is not possible to define precise criteria for community sponsors in an activity as multi-faceted as this. Most of the municipalities suggested that community sponsor groups would consist of various organisation and volunteers with experience in integration work. Many of the respondents considered it important that the organisations and volunteers have prior experience with and understanding of refugees and integration. Both the municipalities and the organisations expressed the view that in principle the only needed requirement for becoming a community sponsor is the interest to become one. Overall, there is a hope that the community sponsors would be local, committed and trained for the task.

Based on this report it is clear that the already existing volunteer networks of immigrant associations, other organisations, churches, religious communities and municipalities create one obvious foundation for the recruitment of community sponsors. Nearly a third of municipal respondents and all organisations mentioned immigrant associations and already integrated immigrants as possible community sponsors. Furthermore, a hope was expressed especially by the organisations that the community sponsors would also have connections to working life via entrepreneur or industry associations (e.g., in the trade sector), for example. Representatives from organisations that support the employment of

immigrants (such as the Finnish Refugee Council and Startup Refugees) could also serve as community sponsors as they are knowledgeable of the needs of companies.

Additionally, the on-the-job training periods of educational institutions could be connected to community sponsorship activities in regions where there are applicable schools and faculties. A good example of such development is the Helmi project funded by the European Refugee Fund (ERF) in which teacher students complete their on-the-job teacher training in homework clubs for refugee children. Educational institutions could also be used to recruit community sponsors more broadly. In fact, these institutions have been a significant channel for finding volunteers in many municipalities.

The local body coordinating the community sponsorship activities would be responsible for recruiting the sponsors. Sponsors could be sought with an open application and interview process. A person's motivation to commit to being a sponsor is a crucial criterion. At its best, a community sponsor group would be one that not only helps refugees find and create social networks but also contains expertise in various areas such as supporting of parenthood, orientation into trades or working life and other forms of peer support (see Chapter 6.6.). The ranks of recently retired volunteers, for example, contain many highly educated people with various kinds of expertise who could also make use of their own existing networks. As much as possible, community sponsor groups would also contain both native Finns and persons who have arrived in Finland as immigrants themselves. The presence of earlier immigrants in community sponsorship activities was even seen as necessary.

Community sponsors should be selected from among those who are already volunteering as well as from outside of the volunteer sphere. In addition to volunteers involved with integration or other volunteer work, the community sponsor group should be expanded so that the starting point is not to simply recruit a person for a certain task but to find people with expertise that they can utilise in their role as community sponsor. For example, certain professions, background as an entrepreneur or similar life situations could be the focus when selecting community sponsors. The involvement of young people, both native Finns and earlier immigrants, is also seen as significant. Young people can act as peers and give a face to successful integration.

When community sponsors are recruited via organisations, it requires that the sponsors commit to the organisation's values and possible instructions it issues. However, the role of community sponsor should be based on commitment to the basic values defined for this specific task. An aspiration towards communality and respect for differences are seen as especially significant values.

6.6 The number and tasks of community sponsors

Community sponsorship activities must be based on an agreement between the sponsor group and the local coordinating body on the division of jointly agreed roles and responsibilities. The members of the sponsor group are to agree amongst themselves on each other's areas of expertise and the tasks that go with it. The estimated size of a sponsor group is approximately five persons. Many municipalities estimate that a suitable size for the group could be two to five persons or organisations. In any case, there needs to be enough sponsors so that no single person becomes overburdened. A community sponsor group may also be formed for a single family, in which case the sponsors could be chosen based on the family's needs.

Tasks of community sponsors in the initial refugee reception stage

In Finland community sponsorship activities would be focused on supporting the integration of quota refugees. Municipalities have developed functional models for supporting the early stages of refugee integration together with volunteers. In small municipalities that receive a small number of refugee families the established cooperation practices with friend families and organisations might already be quite comprehensive. The tasks of friend families currently include orientation into everyday life, expansion of social networks, supporting language learning and, in some municipalities, steering refugees towards employment.

The 3V project funded by the ERF and managed by the North Ostrobothnia ELY Center in cooperation with the ELY Center of Central Finland, North Karelia and Southwest Finland is a good example of a functional model developed for early stage integration. The primary objective of this project was to develop the role and participation of refugee communities and associations in the early stages of refugee reception. The project modelled the refugee reception process with regard to how immigrant associations were involved in the cooperation with municipalities. The 3V project was realised in the homes and immediate surroundings of refugees. The most crucial tasks were reception at the airport, transportation home with a municipal employee and orientation into housing-related rules, the city and various networks.

The project shared elements with the cooperation many municipalities and organisation are engaged in. The central aspect of the model was the planning of tangible real-life tasks together with organisations and municipal employees involved in integration work. The model is committed to on a fixed-term basis. The project included similar elements to FRC's activity related to voluntary housing support, which is committed to for three or six months at a time. In these situations both parties are aware of the fixed-term nature of the activity.

Another example of support in the early stages of integration is a model developed in the Kototori meeting place in Tampere in which quota refugees are assigned their own personal volunteers who are trained and supervised in their work. The volunteers are given the following goals: 1) Know the home 2) Know the neighbourhood 3) Know the services and organisations. If the volunteer and the recently arrived immigrant do not have a shared language, the time the immigrant spends with the volunteer is based on action and doing things together.

One task of community sponsors assigned by either municipalities or organisations could be to provide guidance and steer recently arrived refugees to the services they need in their own language. For example, those persons who underwent initial guidance in their own language in the 3V project could quickly assume control of their day-to-day life. The immigrant associations functioned as a kind of “barker” that immersed the newcomers into the new society. One notion that emerged from the interviews is that when refugees are immediately welcomed in a communal fashion it reminds people of the fact that people do not integrate into immigration services but into communities. In the 3V project it also made the work of the authorities easier when the community was tasked with ensuring that the newcomers would find their way to scheduled meetings.

Tasks of community sponsors after the initial refugee reception stage

The central task of community sponsors would be the creation of social networks in different areas of life. The significant issue would be acting as a bridge to social networks and opening up various roles for the refugee as a member of society. These networks may include meeting places, groups related to organisations and leisure time or peership related to parenthood, profession or chronic illness, for example. Networks related to various advocacy work are also seen to provide important added value. For example, many people who were focused on social or global advocacy in their countries of origin will immediately seek out opportunities to continue these activities in their new surroundings and this could be the cornerstone of their integration⁶⁷.

In the view of approximately one half of municipal respondents the tasks of community sponsors would focus on tangible everyday help, guidance, support and company. The tasks could include guidance in housing-related matters and support in the practising of digital and language skills, for example. Steering refugees into low-threshold meeting places and especially committing them to various activities are seen as tasks of community sponsors. There are often immediate disappointments in the sports hobbies of children and youths as a result of misunderstandings, for example. A simple carpool

⁶⁷ See also Turtiainen 2012.

ride or uncertainty about the responsibilities of parents can sometimes exclude a young person from hobbies. The same applies to participation opportunities for adults.

One suggested task for community sponsors is orienting refugees into the community through residents' associations, for example. The responses also indicate that native Finnish neighbours may be shy towards newcomers and they might not try to actively make contact with their new neighbours. Even a small number of social contacts in the area is known to have a reinforcing effect on a person's well-being and sense of participation.⁶⁸ The existence of networks would also allow the newcomers to start using their Finnish or Swedish skills right from the start.

The municipalities and the organisations share the view that statutory official duties such as the evaluation of service needs, service plans, child protection and other social welfare services are clearly the responsibility of the municipalities in the community sponsorship programme. A third of municipalities also hope that guidance and support relating to dealing with authorities would remain municipal responsibilities. Many responses from municipalities emphasise the municipality's responsibility in guidance and instruction related to the refugees' financial situation and benefits. A few of the responses make a specific mention of procuring a bank card and the risks related to online banking. Some organisations also have the principle that their volunteers do not handle monetary issues.

Municipal social work and counselling that takes place in the refugees' homes and everyday lives could also be realised in cooperation with community sponsors if so agreed upon separately. A community sponsor could also be present in other meetings with authorities if the refugee so desires. Having a volunteer or a member of a friend family or religious community present in meetings with a social worker, social advisor or psychologist has been tried in many municipalities and it has yielded positive results. This model would also reduce opportunities for miscommunication and reinforce the implementation of the learned information into everyday life. The authorities and representatives of organisations also have experience with how cooperation reinforces the processing of information and increases mutual trust between all the parties involved. The importance of seamless cooperation between the community sponsors and the municipality may also be seen in how the responses point out that the sponsors might be able to recognise the need for more robust support and then steer the refugees towards professional help with a social worker or psychologist, for example. The community sponsors do not need to be familiar with the entire system. That is what the professionals are for.

68 See Kokkonen 2010.

In summary it could be stated that the municipalities have a statutory responsibility for coordinating the immigration work in their area (overall and coordination responsibility), but with the exception of official decision-making and services that require special expertise the distribution of labour regarding all other tasks is up to agreement between municipal employees and community sponsors. However, if the community sponsors are unable to conduct their work as agreed for one reason or another, the responsibility always remains with the municipality.

What follows are two tasks suggested for community sponsors especially in the interviews with organisation representatives that warrant closer inspection. These tasks have to do with future planning that culminates in education and employment. They are also essential tasks of community sponsors in many countries.

Supporting entry into education

Supporting refugees in future planning alongside the official steering system would be one important task of the community sponsors. The interviews strongly highlight the fact that there is not enough time in the official steering system for future planning or opportunities for individual counselling to meet the needs of especially young people. The organisations bring up that even if they also put effort into offering guidance that complements the official system, future planning still needs adults who could truly familiarise themselves with the youths' life situation and imbue them with a belief in the future. Community sponsors could make the spectrum of professions and education paths visible in ways that support realistic and practical future planning.⁶⁹ Making educational opportunities more transparent is seen as essential, because youths with refugee backgrounds are rarely given enough information and support at home in this regard, or the youths may be faced with unrealistic expectations. The service system also often steers youths to professions that require a lower level of education than what they aspire to. The task of the community sponsor would not be limited to simply describing future possibilities but it would also involve inspiring the refugees to believe in their own prospects. This is exactly the kind of task that requires positive interactive relationships. The self-esteem of traumatised refugees especially can be shattered and they might not have the strength to consider their own future. Based on the interviews this task requires community sponsors with the expertise and motivation to operate in these areas of life.

⁶⁹ To help steer more immigrants into higher education, such services as SIMHE (Supporting Immigrants in Higher Education in Finland) have been established in which the key factors are recognition of prior learning, networking and directing immigrants into higher education. SIMHE.

Orientation towards the future and working life

Future planning with regard to career planning culminates in employment. However, not every immigrant finds their place or advances in Finnish working life, even if they were highly educated. Based on the interviews, there are plenty of challenges for community sponsors in this regard and they are needed. Gaining entry to working life requires social networks that allow one to make contacts and gain references. The community sponsors would also be tasked with cooperating with existing projects and networks aiming to help people find employment. Mentoring, entrepreneurship support, development of working life skills and matching the needs of companies to those of immigrants are conducted in both national and regional networks and projects⁷⁰. The idea that in the tasks described above a community sponsor with an immigrant background would also serve as a role model to new refugees from the moment they arrive onwards also emerged in the interviews. Community sponsor activities aimed towards the future would also strive to prevent situations where especially those with low levels of education, but also those with university degrees, are stuck in long-term unemployment or the so-called intermediate labour market after their integration period is over.

Community sponsors could also be persons “with an eye on the ball” regarding the needs of local working life. This could mean making the hiring of new employees as easy as possible for employers. From the perspective of companies, getting involved in projects might sound difficult and a person knowledgeable of local working life and the strengths of the refugee could bypass all bureaucracy and directly suggest an employee to a company. This occurs in smaller municipalities, for example, where social networks are strong. Positive experiences with this kind of activity have been gained in the WIISE network, for example.⁷¹

The perspective related to employment and future planning was also highlighted in the significance of various multicultural centres or designated open spaces in life situations where one needs everyday support.⁷² For example, stay-at-home parents with multiple children do not think that they would be going to work or enrolling in school any time soon, but being constantly aware of the opportunities and having a knowledge of the educational system activates one’s own future planning. Low-threshold meeting places that enable everyday encounters support the everyday life of persons who might otherwise stay at home without the opportunity to speak Finnish. Everyday social

70 E.g., Startup Refugees Finland, Auroras, projects of the Finnish Refugee Council and many local associations..

71 WIISE.

72 The operations of Naistari, for example, have resulted in some 200 visitors gaining employment or enrolling in education.

relationships with groups also facilitate language learning.⁷³ Everyday support must not be overlooked in community sponsorship activities either, because it has value in itself and it may have long-reaching positive consequences in the future. The employment of immigrant women especially is a challenge that relates to both the structures of working life and the life situations of immigrants (e.g., gender roles) and needs special attention.⁷⁴

Everyday support, educational opportunities and orientation towards working life are also seen as important in the integration of persons who have arrived in the country without the ability to read or write who nonetheless possess skills and competencies but these do not meet the needs of working life. Employment is also an extremely significant intergenerational model because unemployed parents who stay at home are at risk of becoming socially excluded. The interviews strongly highlight the issue that even if the working life skills of immigrants are focused on in various projects and in general edification work, employment should be delved into in a manner that goes deeper into the obstacles to employment as well. Besides discriminatory structures in working life, sometimes the reasons for unemployment may also be found in gender roles, family dynamics or the aforementioned lack of faith in one's own abilities.

The tasks of community sponsors discussed in this chapter are compiled into one place in Chapter 7, which discusses the possible pilot program (Figure 1).

6.7 Community sponsor training and support

The national coordinator of the programme could be responsible for training the community sponsors. This training should place a special emphasis on the roles and tasks of the community sponsor, relevant ethical questions and the factors related to increasing the refugees' own participation. The training should also make the distinction between community sponsors and volunteers or private individuals clear. The training could utilise material produced in other countries, such as Canada, insofar as it is applicable.⁷⁵

Two central principles that need to be taken into account in the training came up in several interviews. The first concerns an excessive emphasis on activation in situations that call for care and support. The flip side of this is doing too much on behalf of the other person and turning them passive when their own agency should be reinforced. This dilemma of care and agency is strongly present in community sponsorship activities

73 See. Remes 2016.

74 Saukkonen 2020, 190–196.

75 Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative.

where elements of both support and reinforcement of one's agency in a new environment are present.

The second central principle relates to reciprocal integration. An incomplete understanding of reciprocity might leave the immigrants themselves excluded from the implementation of the programme. On the contrary: immigrants who have arrived in the country earlier should play a strong role in the planning and implementation of the programme. The interviews reminded us of the old principle: Not for us but together with us.

The interviews brought up the issue where in regular volunteering activities one might from time to time come across prejudices about religions, cultures and gender roles, for example. For this reason the training should address cultural and gender sensitivity and religious literacy. Interviewees from immigrant backgrounds would especially highlight how "prying" into one's political, religious or refugee backgrounds could trigger traumas that people have to live with. The interviewees believe that these matters should be primarily left to sessions with professionals. The themes of racism and hate speech could also be included in the training. Many responses also suggest themes related to trauma or the psychosocial support of refugees to be included. National organisations have accumulated a lot of knowledge about the refugees' countries of origin, which should also be incorporated into the training.

National organisations also offer plenty of various kinds of training that could be utilised in the training of community sponsors where applicable. For example, the Finnish Refugee Council organises peer instructor training that takes place on weekends. FRC has recently been developing its training practices to allow volunteers to pick and choose a training package that suits them from a selection brief modules. National training sessions could also be organised over the Internet.

Local organisations and municipalities have varying practices for the training of volunteers. If a community sponsor is recruited via an organisation, the sponsor is presumably already somewhat familiar with issues relating to refugees. Municipalities and organisations also train volunteers continuously and this training could be made a part of the community sponsorship programme where applicable. Municipalities and organisations also train volunteers for specific tasks, such as language teaching, housing counselling, school support or friend family activities. These trainings could also be directly utilised for community sponsors in accordance with their duties.

In orientation related to activities in the initial stage of resettlement, tangible lists on the division duties between the municipality and its community sponsors could be created. These kinds of models have been developed in projects such as the 3V project and in cooperation between municipalities and organisations all over Finland.

In addition to training, community sponsors should be provided with regular support and instruction during their sponsorship period to answer emerging questions, specify the division of duties and allow for the sharing of information. Peer support among community sponsors is also seen as an important form of support. There is already plenty of this kind of activity in organisations, churches and municipalities. Existing structures could be utilised in the planning and implementation of both training and continuous support. A national seminar could be held once a year where pressing questions concerning community sponsorship in both Finland and elsewhere in Europe are discussed.

7 Outlining the pilot programme

The possible pilot project would adhere to the structure and practices of the community sponsorship programme described in this report (see also Figure 1). A national organisation would be selected as the coordinator of the programme. This organisation would be responsible for coordinating the programme with municipalities or other service providing areas. The national coordinator and the municipalities selected for the programme would negotiate the selection of local coordinators that would then be responsible for selecting the community sponsors in their area. The municipalities or other service providing areas chosen for the pilot project should be different from each other to ensure that the project produces different experiences and comparable data on the applicability of the programme in different areas. The pilot municipalities should differ from each other in terms of size, refugee reception history, size of their refugee quotas and level of organisation regarding the third sector and volunteer work. The number of municipalities could be five to seven, for example.

Refugees would be selected for the programme after they arrive at the municipality. In principle, the desire is to not exclude anyone from the programme, but in practice the competencies of the community sponsors form the basis for who can be selected. The municipalities expressed the hope that the programme could also admit persons in vulnerable positions because they could especially benefit from the support of a community sponsor in tangible everyday matters.

The pilot project should run for a period of two to three years. In the initial stage of the project the programme is organised and the community sponsors are selected. The selection of refugees only takes place after this initial stage. The time the community sponsors and refugees commit to interacting with each other could vary between one year to a maximum of two years, depending on the task. The preparation period required by the pilot project depends on how it is funded. The AMIF fund would make for a natural funding instrument for the pilot stage. A national organisation would take primary responsibility for the administrative arrangements of the pilot stage. In addition to funding the national coordinator, regional operators should be funded so that the area's sponsor groups and local coordinators receive the funding they need.

Figure 1. Yhteisölähtöisen kotouttamisen toimijat, tehtävät ja prosessi.



Making factors related to the success or challenges of the programme visible could be considered one criterion for the success of the pilot programme. Other essential criteria for success could include the following: how much social and human capital do the participants of the programme gain and how meaningful do they consider the programme to be for their own integration, how committed the community sponsors and the refugees are to the programme and how well is the cooperation between the municipality, the coordinators and the community sponsors realised. If refugees selected for the programme have arrived in the country in a vulnerable position or there are special challenges to integration, these factors should be taken into account in the form of slower progression towards education and employment, for example. The pilot project would also bring to light what kind of community sponsors are in short supply and how the training and support they need should be arranged. The pilot project should also be evaluated on the basis of the sufficiency of the number of community sponsors and the diversity of their expertise. Furthermore, the relationship between national and local operations should also be evaluated. On the whole, the purpose of the evaluation is to highlight the added value of the programme in comparison to traditional methods.

One objective of the pilot programme is to develop the aforementioned monitoring and evaluation criteria of the programme to suit the Finnish model. This development work could be conducted in cooperation with local operators and such international operators who are engaged in similar programmes. The action plan of the network of integration organisations coordinated by FRC contains an entry for the year 2021 concerning the development of an impact gauge for integration work, which could be of some help in the pilot stage of the community sponsorship programme.

8 The added value and critical points of community sponsorship

The benefits of the community sponsorship programme are viewed as very multi-faceted in both the organisations and the municipalities that participated in this report. What follows is a list of some of the benefits enabled by the programme that came up in the interviews and the survey.

Speeding up of the initial stage of integration

- Positive experiences related to resettlement and the fluency of practical matters are seen as significant for good integration outcomes. The effort put in by members of the refugees' own communities and native Finnish community sponsors is seen as significant right after arrival to make refugees feel themselves welcome in the community. The speed at which the initial stage progresses should take into account each individual's different background and life situation.⁷⁶

Cooperation between municipalities, organisations and community sponsors is clarified and the partnerships are recognised

- In municipalities where the cooperation with organisations is unorganised, random and overlapping, the programme would clarify the structures between the municipality and the organisations. The programme would also clarify the status of the participating organisations as partners of the municipality.

76 See also Saukkonen 2020, 183–170.

The added value brought by the expertise of the sponsors and their commitment

- The programme would enable better allocation of the expertise of volunteers and allow for the discovery of new persons whose expertise brings clear added value to the work conducted by public authorities. In addition to the added value of new kinds of expertise, the sponsors also bring added value through their time commitment.

Everyday partnerships prevent psychosocial problems

- The community sponsors would be tasked with ensuring peer support and everyday partnerships for refugees. The refugees could gain access to the sponsors' existing networks and the sponsors could actively expand other social networks necessary for the refugees. At its best, community sponsor activities could prevent psychosocial problems that result from loneliness and lack of everyday partnerships.⁷⁷ Social relationships with members of the native population are described as equally important as a roof over one's head.

The motivation to integrate is maintained and reinforced

- One perceived crucial benefit of the programme is the maintaining of hope for the future. Orientation towards the future manifests itself differently at different stages of one's life. The importance of sustaining one's motivation is justified by how difficult it is to reawaken the motivation and belief in one's self and one's prospects once they have been lost. For this reason the community sponsors would be tasked to ensure that the refugees find the complementary support they need with regard to schooling, studies, employment prospects and everyday support in addition to the integration work conducted by the public sector.

Positive population relationships are reinforced

- The fact that community sponsorship reinforces positive relationships between population groups is seen to bring added value. The programme would increase the participation and influencing opportunities of the

77 Kuusio & al. 2020.

extensive third sector and especially the refugees themselves on the local and regional levels, as well as in the planning and implementation of national integration policy via third sector cooperation.

Social cohesion and mutual trust are reinforced

- The reinforcing of social cohesion is seen as a central added value of community sponsorship. Increased trust in the interaction and partnerships between public authorities, organisations, community sponsors and recently arrived immigrants was especially highlighted. A high level of trust also increases the sense of security and produces experiences of caring

Easing of regional segregation

- On the structural level one benefit of the programme could be a reduction in regional segregation. This benefit could be achieved through deeper attachment to rural towns or small cities, for example. Refugees often move from small towns to growth centres where they primarily attach to communities that speak their language.

Increased refugee quota in the future

- One of the central perceived long-term benefits of the programme is the awakening of political interests to the effect that the refugee quota could be increased in the future. This would play a small part in increasing the number of safe and legal pathways of entry for refugees while increasing the number of options for those who have been waiting for years in refugee camps or other temporary conditions.

What follows next is a list of possible critical points of community sponsorships that emerged from this report. Describing these mostly practical concerns is considered important because special attention should be paid to these points when planning and implementing the possible actual programme.

Concern over integrating local and national operations

- One recognised challenge of the programme is the integration of national and local operations, even though this should – if successful – be one of the core strengths of the programme. Local good practices of community sponsorship should also be made nationwide.

Concern over the functionality of local partnerships

- The interviewed organisations brought up their concern over incomplete partnerships where the authorities and community sponsors are conducting overlapping work or where the parties do not recognise each other's duties. For this reason operators should be very careful to ensure that they enter into partnerships according to the objectives of the community sponsorship programme, i.e., in such a manner where everyone involved identifies and recognises the added value of each other's work, thus bringing the different expertise of all the different operations to bear for the benefit of everyone.

Concern over increased bureaucracy and project work

- One central concern is the increase of bureaucracy and losing the benefits of community sponsorship to project work. Neither the municipalities nor the organisations need the bureaucracy that result from constantly having to submit new project applications, which drain resources from the actual operations. For this reason they hope that programme brings permanent structures and funding.

Concern over disseminating faulty information and lack of reciprocity

- One perceived risk of community sponsorship is the possible dissemination of incorrect information or making information available in a format that harms the cooperation and increases mistrust between refugees and the authorities. There is the risk of presenting information in a normative and disrespectful manner as "do no do this lists" or "here in Finland lists" in which case alternatives, peership and the reciprocity of the cooperation relationship go unrecognised. A possible ethos for community sponsors could be needed in many of their tasks, but the risk with that is that it could neglect the reinforcement of the refugees' own agency.

Concerns over commitment to the operations and the blurring of roles

- One critical factor for the success of the programme is the level of commitment of both the refugees and the community sponsors. Another factor is unrealistic or erroneous expectations on both sides. The commitment of authorities is also seen as a crucial requisite for success. Erroneous expectations can lead to the blurring of roles. The clarity of the roles can be ensured with adequate orientation and support.

9 Conclusions and recommendations

New sponsorship programmes have been implemented in different countries using a combination of political will and administrative creativity. Researchers⁷⁸ have compared the community-based sponsorship programmes of Canada, the UK, New Zealand and Argentina from legal and administrative perspectives. These programmes do not require extensive legal reforms, with the exception of the traditional Canadian models. The central criterion for the success of these programme is diligence in their implementation. The community sponsors should also feel that their activities are meaningful and worthwhile so that the operating and expansion conditions of the programmes remain in effect. As a conclusion of the comparison, the researchers were convinced that the programmes had improved the lives of both the refugees and the communities that received them. Based on the results they welcome new creative solutions for the resettlement of refugees.

The planning, implementation and objectives of community-based sponsorship programmes have varied from country to country in the European context⁷⁹ Some programmes have aimed to increase the number of refugees received (e.g., the Humanitarian Corridors programmes) while others have focused on ensuring admission to groups that fall outside of refugee quotas (e.g., relatives that do not meet family reunification criteria) and yet others have striven to improve the integration of refugees (e.g., the programme directed at quota refugees in the UK). The planning and implementation of the programmes have depended on their objectives and the legal frameworks, service structures and civic cultures of their respective countries. A common denominator for the various programmes is the division of responsibilities by agreement to operators outside of the public sector.

The possible Finnish programme would be positioned to reinforce the integration of quota refugees after they have arrived in the country. The logic of the universal services of the Finnish welfare state and the tradition of our Non-discrimination Act do not recognise the ensuring of services using funding from private individuals or companies. For this reason such models of community sponsorship where private individuals or organisations pay for the refugees' housing or other services in the early stages of integration, for example, are not compatible with Finnish society. In the proposed Finnish model the role of the public

78 Bond ym. 2019.

79 European Commission, 'Study on the feasibility and added value of sponsorship'.

sector in the reception and integration of refugees would not be reduced but instead the focus of the work of authorities would be partially shifted to bolstering cooperation with the civic society in accordance with the principles of the community-based sponsorship programme. In this regard there would be a paradigm shift in the integration work conducted by the public sector in at least those areas where there are currently no genuine work-related partnerships between the public sector and the civic society.

This report also identified a certain extent of concern for the weakening of the traditional refugee resettlement obligations of states and the choosing of refugees on the basis of the needs of the labour force⁸⁰. In the possible Finnish model the role of the state is not meant to diminish because the model would have no effect on such matters as the selection of quota refugees, the responsibilities of travel arrangements or municipal compensations. In this report the perceived risks concerning the programme were mostly practical challenges related to service structures and committing the various parties to the programme, which can be met with careful and diligent planning and implementation.

The crucial added value of the programme relates to the bolstering of reciprocal integration. The new programme could act as a facilitator of change in those local communities where the refugees live.⁸¹ Generally speaking, the civic society plays a significant role in the construction of a multicultural society.⁸² For this purpose the new model would bring added value by offering targeted resources for the integration of refugees using methods that are not possible in the traditional state and municipality-led integration model. The programme could also lead to permanent structures of cooperation and genuine partnerships between authorities and operators from civic society instead of simply working together in relation to projects in a somewhat random manner.

Community sponsorship activities would complement the integration work conducted by the state and the municipalities. The programme would be a good fit for the Finnish tradition of refugee integration because the existing potential of the Finnish civic society is seen to form a robust foundation for the operations. The work would be conducted in close cooperation between the community sponsors and the authorities in a manner that could be described as a hybrid model. The operations would be based on a quite loose framework that enables the participation of different operators, individual persons, communities and organisations as extensively as possible.

80 Also Fraztke & al. 2019, 5; 2020; European Commission, 'Study on the feasibility and added value of sponsorship', 35..

81 Also Van Selm 2020, 139.

82 Also Saukkonen, 2020, 235.

A tangible next step would be to find out who would be willing to pilot the programme on a national level. Funding for the pilot stage could be applied for from the AMIF fund. The national coordination of the programme clarifies the focus of community sponsorship activities, creates evaluation criteria for the programme and probes future funding opportunities. The need for external funding is primarily focused on the national and local coordination of the programme. The community sponsors of small associations with few resources, especially those run by immigrants, would also require funding.

The practical planning of the pilot stage can be realised on the basis of the suggestions resulting from this report in a manner described in Chapter 7. When recruiting regional community sponsors, the differences between the regions and the existing cooperation between the municipalities and organisations in the area should be taken into account. Small associations and persons who have arrived in Finland as immigrants themselves should also be noted when looking for community sponsors.

This report concludes that when successful, community sponsorship hastens integration, clarifies the structures designated for integration and could open new permanent solutions for refugees. Based on the experiences gained during the pilot stage the programme could be developed further and then, hopefully, it will expand to new municipalities. Even though the community sponsorship programmes of Europe are small-scale operations at the moment, they might steer direction of reception programmes on the long-term⁸³.

The hope expressed in this report is that the pilot stage would be so successful that the more permanent presence of the communities in the integration work could be used to justify at least an increase of the refugee quota. The possible growing of the quota requires political measures. The goal of increasing the refugee quota is, after all, at the core of community-based sponsorship.⁸⁴

83 Van Selm 2020.

84 Feith Tan 2021.

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Appendix 1: Interviewees

- 14.12.2020 Ben Malinen, Domestic Programme Director, Finnish Refugee Council
- 16.12.2020 Johanna Matikainen, Development Manager of the Migration Programme, and Maria Pikkarainen, Integration Coordinator, Finnish Red Cross
- 18.12.2020 Ulla Siirto, Multiculturalism and Immigrant Specialist, National Ecclesiastical Board
Lea Periaho, Deacon of Immigrant Work, Jyväskylä Parish
Maarit Koskensalo-Tiainen, Coordinator of Immigrant Work, Kymsote and Kotka Parish
Pia Sahi, Deacon, Kuopio Parish Union
- 21.12.2020 Mania Alkhatib, Executive Director, and Emmiina Vesalainen, Specialist of Bridges for Arabic Speakers activities, Finnish-Syrian Friendship Society.
- 21.12.2020 Sirkku Paajanen, Developer and Social Worker, Joonas Kiviranta, Social Counsellor, Kototori, City of Tampere
- 22.12.2020 Marita Häkkinen, Designer, SIMHE - Supporting Immigrants in Higher Education in Finland, Jyväskylä University
- 29.12.2020 Jassin Rezai, Youth Work Instructor, Afghan Association of Jyväskylä.
- 8.1.2021 Group interview with operators from the Pietarsaari area:
Pia Fraktman, Integration and Employment Coordinator, the Pietarsaari area
Melina Saari, Nykarleby flyktingvänner:
Kristiina Slotte, Röda korset i Kronoby
Linnea Svenlin, vänfamilj
- 11.1.2021 Paul Abbey, African Association of Jyväskylä, Wari ry. (Union of multicultural associations in Central Finland)
- 13.1.2021 Group interview with operators from Jyväskylä:
Arja Seppälä, General Manager, and Anu Juurakko, Volunteer Work Coordinator, Multicultural Center Gloria
Margarita Goda-Savolainen, Social Worker, Immigration Services of the City of Jyväskylä,
Emmanuel Sibomana, Executive Manager of Paremmin Yhdessä ry (and an employee of the Immigrant Competence Center)
- 14.1.2021 Giuliano Prisada, Wiise (Work integration for immigrant service)
- 18.1.2021 Abdirahim Hussein, Executive Director, Moniheli ry.
- 19.1.2021 Suvi Nieminen, Head of Unit, International Women's Meeting Point Naistari (Tampere)
- 19.1.2021 Group interview with operators from Germany:
Katharina Mayr and Elena Knezevic, Civil society contact point:
Florian Tissot, Dr. Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)
Rebecca Einhoff, UNHCR/Berlin
Franziska Harsch and Meike Struss, Immigration Law, Humanitarian Admission, Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community
- 21.1.2021 Roija Aflatuni, Coordinator-Instructor, Settelement of Jyvälä, Jyväskylän Settelementti ry.
- 21.1.2021 Henna-Maija Syrjälä, Executive Manager, Let's Read Together network

22.1.2021 Sari Pöyhönen, Professor, and Sonya Sahradyan, Researcher, Centre for Applied Language Studies, Jyväskylä University

25.1.2021 Lynne Glasscoe, private sponsor in Ireland

1.2.2021 Mulki al-Sharmani, Assistant Professor, University of Helsinki, Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies

2.2.2021 Marwa Wahhoud, Public Relations Consultant (participant in private sponsorship program in Ireland)

20 interviews with 37 different persons

Feasibility study on the potential of community-based sponsorship in Finland

The report Feasibility study on the potential of communitybased sponsorship in Finland examines the development of community-sponsored integration in cooperation with the State, municipalities, organisations and civil society. The aim was to obtain information on how a community sponsorship model of integration would fit into the refugee resettlement programme in Finland. A possible programme was positively received. In particular, the respondents hoped that the national programme would make it easier for refugees to settle in early, find social networks and plan their future realistically. The programme could create permanent cooperation structures between authorities and civil society instead of cooperation based on individual projects. The report has been produced in co-operation between the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of the Interior.

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