



Helsinki-Uusimaa  
Regional Council



# THE BIDIRECTIONAL INTEGRATION PROGRAMME

Publication of the Helsinki-Uusimaa  
Regional Council B 53 - 2016

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# OUTLINE DESCRIPTION OF PUBLICATION

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**Abstract**

Kaksisuuntainen kotoutuminen -tavoiteohjelma on Uudenmaan maahanmuutto-ohjelma, jonka avulla varaudutaan kasvavaan maahanmuuttoon ja edistetään hyviä etnisiä suhteita. Se tuo esiin maahanmuuttoon liittyvät keskeisimmät haasteet ja kehittämiskohteet Uudellamaalla. Ohjelman yksitoista tavoitetta kuvaavat tilannetta, jossa kotoutuminen voi onnistua. Toimenpideaihiot taas esittelevät vahvistavia toimenpiteitä, olemassa olevia hyviä käytäntöjä sekä eri toimijoiden rooleja ja tehtäviä. Uusimaa on Suomen monikulttuurisin maakunta, jonne Suomen maahanmuutto jatkossakin keskittyy.

**Key words**

Uusimaa, maahanmuutto, kotoutuminen, kaksisuuntainen kotoutuminen, monikulttuurisuus

**Huomautuksia**

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# FOREWORD

The Bidirectional Integration Programme is a collaborative undertaking prepared during autumn 2014 and spring 2015 by Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council, the region's Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, and its municipalities. The programme was circulated to the Council's member municipalities for comment prior to the fourth week of June 2015. At this time, the refugee question did not yet constitute a central concern vis-à-vis integration. By the time the municipalities were due to deliver their opinions in mid-September, the situation had changed dramatically, and the newly prepared programme appeared obsolete before it had even been approved. This is not necessarily the case, however: While the need for the proposed measures has considerably increased, the measures themselves are still applicable.

As a result of the violent conflicts raging around the world, the number of asylum seekers has now reached over 60 million, with this figure estimated to keep increasing. Resulting pressures have impacted EU member states in particular, including Finland since summer 2015: The country is estimated to receive 30,000 asylum seekers over the course of the year. Those claiming asylum in Finland are provided reception services until their asylum applications have been processed. Once asylum has been granted, applicants become residents of municipalities and receive services designed to promote integration. Children and adolescents continue to attend school, whilst adults follow an integration plan which includes language tuition and employment support measures. Immigrants also require basic municipal services such as assistance with finding accommodation as well as integration-facilitating social and health care services, particularly in the early stages.

The Capital Region receives the bulk of this influx. Its municipalities along with those of the Uusimaa region thus have to prepare for a sharp surge in the number of immigrants and residence permits in a very short period of time. The State compensates municipalities for expenses incurred due to the provision of reception and integration support services in the form of compensatory payments and central government transfers. It should nevertheless be borne in mind that the Uusimaa region is going to incur significant expenses as a result of providing reception and integration services.

According to a September 2015 estimate by the Uusimaa region's collaborative working group, the coming years will see a considerable increase in the number of refugee arrivals and consequently in the need for immigrant integration services. During future calls for applications, it will be possible to access European Social Fund (ESF) funding in order to devise new approaches and to develop existing integration support measures provided by public authorities and civil society actors.

When the European Social Fund programme was drawn up and decisions were taken as to regional funding allocations, the current refugee situation was not taken into account. Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council has thus proposed that the Ministry of Employment and the Economy make an estimate of the expenses incurred by different regions as a result of increased immigration. On the basis of this estimate, ESF funding can then be reallocated so that the most affected regions receive additional resources during the remainder of the ongoing programming cycle.





## INTRODUCTION

The past few decades have witnessed a marked increase in Finland's popularity as a destination for immigration. In the 1990–2013 period, the number of foreign nationals residing in the country grew eightfold, from 26,000 to 208,000 residents (Statistics Finland, 2.2.2015). Population growth in Finland is increasingly dependent on immigration.

Immigrants to Finland constitute an extremely diverse group in terms of native language, cultural background, level of education, and several other factors. While immigration to Finland was, as recently as the early 1990s, largely synonymous with quota refugees and asylum seekers admitted into the country on humanitarian grounds, the factors driving immigration in the 21st century are more complex: Familial ties, studies and work are now the main reasons for migration to Finland. In 2013, for example, under 10% of residence permits were granted to persons who qualified for so-called international protection, i.e. refugees.

Uusimaa is home to a significant percentage of the country's foreign nationals and those who speak a foreign language as their mother tongue, with about half of this population residing in the region. The most common foreign countries of birth are Estonia, Russia and Somalia.

The Uusimaa region views immigration as mutually beneficial to both the immigrant and to Finnish society at large. As the driving force of the Finnish economy, the Uusimaa region gains in vitality as it absorbs multicultural actors with international networks. The region's strengths include wholesale trade, financial and insurance services, and information-intensive business services. Thanks to the region's good transport links and high-quality telecommunications, Uusimaa is host to two in three foreign businesses operating in Finland.

All signs and expert projections suggest that the trend of increased immigration and internationalization will continue for years to come, with the Uusimaa region affected to a greater extent than the country as a whole. The region's foreign-born residents are currently concentrated in its three large cities (Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa), but if housing prices in the Capital Region remain elevated, it is reasonable to assume that the immigrant population will spread out across the region.

The Uusimaa region is experiencing a range of changes due to the presence of an ever larger percentage of foreign-language speakers, foreign nationals and second-generation immigrants.



Bi- and multilingualism, new minority groups and various religions, values and cultural customs are assuming an increasingly prominent role in the everyday life of the region's inhabitants, from services, neighbourhoods and schools to nurseries, hobbies and the workplace.

For a metropolitan region, well-functioning integration is both a challenge and an opportunity. Integration policy seeks to equip immigrants with the information and skills required in Finnish society and on the labour market, while supporting them as they continue enjoying their own culture and using their own language (Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration 1386/2010).

Integration policy cuts across a number of administrative sectors, and necessitates close coordination between them at the national, regional and local levels. In addition to basic services, integration-promoting measures include dedicated integration services. Immigrants are not, however, viewed as simple recipients of services and measures, but are instead regarded as builders of a shared future.

You are holding in your hands Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council's immigration programme, which forms part of the region's effort to promote harmonious ethnic relations and prepare for the increase in immigrant arrivals. As a result of its rapidly diversifying population, Uusimaa has specific needs when it comes to immigration, and can thus aspire to assume a leading role among Finland's regions.

***OUR VISION: Uusimaa is a unified, multicultural and welcoming region that offers a safe and pleasant environment for all its inhabitants, regardless of their background or country of origin.***

This Bidirectional Integration Programme has grown out of the Uusimaa Programme and the latter's implementation plan. The purpose of this programme is to complement member municipalities' own integration programmes whilst stressing the bidirectional nature of integration: Successful integration is the result of a continuous interactive process that requires commitment from the immigrant as well as from the host society, and in which public authorities,

the third sector, educational institutions and businesses also have a role to play. As the immigrant integrates into society, the latter takes on a more multicultural quality.

As immigration remains a relatively recent phenomenon in the Finnish context, an increase in awareness and in the frequency of inter-group interaction constitutes a prerequisite for bidirectional integration. This programme seeks to highlight the central immigration-related challenges and development targets in the Uusimaa region. The programme also features interesting regional examples and instances of good practice, and draws attention to innovative measures designed to promote the welfare and harmonious coexistence of the region's multicultural population.

The programme enumerates goals and outlines measures designed to reach them. The latter deal with measures promoting bidirectional integration, practical examples (good practice), as well as the roles and tasks of various actors. The preparation of the programme was overseen by Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council, which serves the interests of the region's inhabitants, businesses and municipalities. The programme was drawn up in collaboration with the region's Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, its municipalities, and several other relevant actors (see Appendix 1).

The programme is intended for use by public administration and its decision-makers, municipal residents, and civil society actors. The programme aims to do its part to influence the direction of regional immigration-related funding. It begins by providing a description of the Uusimaa region, outlining region-specific characteristics and questions related to immigration, and enumerating common goals intended to promote the region's interests. The second chapter focusses on the role of municipalities, while the third chapter discusses good ethnic relations and examines ways of creating a more favourable set of conditions for civil society actors. As the programme is implemented, steps will be taken to devise methods that can be used to assess the success of bidirectional integration in the future.

At the end of the programme you will find a glossary of principal concepts and a bibliography.



# 1. A MULTICULTURAL REGION

## The Region's Special Characteristics

Uusimaa is a region consisting of 26 municipalities and is home to 1.6 million people, or almost 29 percent of the Finnish population. A significant proportion of the region's inhabitants is concentrated in the Capital Region, whose population exceeds a million people. The equivalent figure for central Uusimaa (the so-called "Kuuma" municipalities) is over 300,000, while western Uusimaa is home to 100,000 and eastern Uusimaa to slightly under 80,000 people.

For several decades, the Uusimaa region has experienced a relatively higher population growth rate when compared to that of the country as a whole. According to demographic projections, this trend is set to continue over the next 20–30 years, and will increasingly be the result of immigration.

There are also marked differences between the region's municipalities: While some have already accumulated significant experience of providing immigration and integration services, others have only recently welcomed their first foreign-language speakers.

In 2014, 117,000 foreign nationals were residing in the Uusimaa region. There were over

171,000 foreign-language speakers, representing 11% of the region's population. Vantaa had the highest proportion of foreign-language speakers (14.4 % of the population), and Pukila the lowest (1.7% of the population). The residents of Uusimaa speak a total of over 150 languages at home. (Statistics Finland, 27.4.2015.)

Combined with an aging population, this immigration-based population growth generates considerable and partly unfamiliar challenges for housing, services and the labour market in the region. A closer examination of these will be provided in the later chapters.

### 1. GOAL (special question): The differentiation between districts and neighbourhoods has been stopped

People not only move between countries and cities, but also relocate within city limits. Settling and integrating into a new environment constitute unique processes influenced by the newcomer's personal circumstances, intrinsic motivation, social networks, knowledge of the local

environment, language skills, and the willingness and capacity of the surrounding society to welcome people from a variety of backgrounds.

Employment and education, familial and social relationships and hobbies have, until now, made Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa the primary destinations for foreign immigrants to Finland. As the number of arrivals increases, however, various pull factors will induce the immigrant population to spread into other municipalities within the region. By way of example, the western Uusimaa municipalities of Lohja and Karkkila saw a five–sixfold increase in the number of foreign–language speakers in the 2000–2013 period. The reason behind these rapid changes lies in the two municipalities’ strong industrial bases and traditions, which have created demand for skilled labour. Järvenpää has for its part attracted foreign–language speakers particularly from the Baltic states thanks to its renowned youth development activities in football, ice hockey and basketball. As for Espoo, the city’s pull factors include Aalto University and other educational opportunities on offer.

It is an established fact that international migration has exacerbated regional differentiation. Regional differentiation (also known as segregation) usually refers to differences and inequalities between the districts of a city, and ranges from income and wealth disparities to differences in lifestyles, education, age structure and ethnic background. While differentiation has the potential to generate greater diversity, innovative capacity and a broader skills base, its effects may also prove to be detrimental if deprivation concentrates in certain neighbourhoods or districts.

While the extent to which such segregation between immigrants and the native population has occurred in Finland remains limited in international comparison, differences between the Capital Region’s neighbourhoods have widened over the past decade and a half. The selective migration patterns exhibited by the native population and the surge in immigration are seen as the primary drivers of this trend, which is projected to continue in the future. (Vilkama 2011; Kainulainen 2013.)

**PROPOSED MEASURE: Let’s improve our town and country planning and housing so**

**as to ensure that the region develops in a balanced and well-functioning direction**

Helsinki–Uusimaa Regional Council is responsible for regional planning, whose aim is to underpin municipal planning efforts and guide fundamental aspects of the region’s everyday life: This includes making decisions as to the location of housing, workplaces, services, green spaces and cultural environments, as well as facilitating the smooth and efficient flow of traffic. In combination with municipal planning, regional planning seeks to ensure that the region’s inhabitants enjoy a well–functioning environment, whose development is balanced.

A unified urban structure promotes smart approaches to mobility: Residents are able to move around the region efficiently when alternative transport methods are available, and the time required to get around is reasonable. While the Capital Region offers comprehensive public transportation and a well–functioning transport system, the inhabitants of Uusimaa’s peripheries may have to travel long distances to access public services. Community planning seeks to promote approaches to transportation that are both environmentally friendly and give equal consideration to different population groups.

One of the main challenges the region faces consists in the elevated prices of housing, which both impact residents’ welfare and create inequalities on the housing market. The Capital Region’s long–standing housing shortage is especially detrimental to the members of its immigrant population, who are often disadvantaged in this regard when compared to the native population. Only rarely do the former have the means or the desire to become homeowners, and the need for new rented and right–of–occupancy housing is thus considerable.

Immigrant homelessness is a growing phenomenon, particularly in the Capital Region. In Helsinki, approximately one in four people accessing the city’s homelessness prevention housing advisory services is an immigrant. The present programme supports the development of regional and municipal planning so as to better take into account the impact of immigration, halt the ongoing differentiation among areas and neighbourhoods, and reduce the number of homeless residents.



## 2. GOAL (special question): Fewer obstacles to labour market access for immigrants

Finland's aging population, labour supply, worsening dependency ratio, and the correspondence between the skills offered by jobseekers and those sought by employers all present considerable challenges vis-à-vis the country's economy and competitiveness. Work and access to employment are centre stage in Finnish immigration and integration policy, and immigration is viewed as a partial solution to the problems engendered by a shrinking workforce. Furthermore, immigrants themselves consider employment the single most important factor in successful integration (Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2013a).

Uusimaa aims to create more favourable conditions for the recruitment and integration of international experts. According to the 2012–2013 EXPAT project overseen by Helsinki–Uusimaa Regional Council, Finland constitutes an attractive destination, but integration to Finnish society is hindered by bureaucracy and a lack of social contacts. Local networks and contacts as well as a sufficient knowledge of the country's service structure and established societal procedures facilitate integration and access to employment.

Municipalities, the Employment and Economic Development (TE) Office, the National Board of Education, business associations, the Helsinki Region Chamber of Commerce and regional business services all offer Uusimaa's immigrants services designed to promote access to employment, such as language tuition and career coaching. It should be noted, however, that a significant proportion of immigrants do not take advantage of these services, choosing instead to find employment and integrate into society without the help of public authorities.

As is the case in the rest of the country, foreign nationals resident in Uusimaa experience greater difficulty finding work than do members of the native population. In 2014, 26.9% of the former were unemployed, while the equivalent figure for the entire population was 10.1% (Statistics Finland 27.4.2015). Differences between groups are stark. Those immigrants whose country of origin offered limited opportunities for education

traditionally enjoy a high rate of employment, and immigrant women are more likely than the men to be unemployed. The opposite is true of the native population (Helsinki–Uusimaa Regional Council 2013).

The immigrant population does, however, represent a significant potential asset for the labour market, as four out of five immigrants fall within the working age range, and many are highly educated. Several factors do, however, complicate their access to the Finnish job market: Significant obstacles include an inadequate command of the national languages and difficulties related to the proper recognition of immigrants' skills. Furthermore, establishing equivalency between foreign and Finnish degrees remains problematic, and Finnish employers have been observed to prefer experience gained in Finland over that acquired elsewhere. (Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2013b.)

While there has been a considerable increase in the number of foreign degree students in Finland since the turn of the millennium, they too often graduate without the necessary skills and experience required to remain: As is the case with other foreign-language speakers, these students' access to the job market is impeded by insufficient language skills as well as a lack of professional networks. Higher education establishments currently offer a range of courses taught in English, but steps should be taken in the future to not only include Finnish courses in all programmes, but also to facilitate foreign students' access to internships and placements. (Ministry of the Interior & Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2015.)

Integration training is commonly seen as an important component in dispensing Finnish or Swedish teaching and preparing immigrants for the labour market. In addition to the training provided by public authorities, the Uusimaa region offers a relatively wide range of language tuition services and online learning platforms organized by other actors. Public authorities should, if necessary, direct immigrants towards these additional services before the latter commence the integration training provided by the State. It should be borne in mind that for some, the traditional school environment is not ideal, and language tuition should thus endeavour to incorporate more practical alternative approaches when necessary.

**PROPOSED MEASURE: Let's improve early integration services for faster access to employment**

*Case Working in Finland*

Actors in the Capital Region are seeking to facilitate and expedite immigrants' access to employment. To this end, they have designed the so-called "Working in Finland" project, whose goal it is to streamline early integration services for all immigrants, take a demand-driven approach to improving immigrants' access to employment in businesses, develop better employment counselling services for immigrants, and empower immigrant associations to further the employment and career development of their members. The project also aims to improve integration training so as to place immigrants' skills and career plans as well as employers' needs firmly in the centre of the training.

The project is being carried out by the cities of Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa, the Helsinki Region Chamber of Commerce, the Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK), the Uusimaa TE Office, and Moniheli Ry, a network of multicultural associations. The project is supported by Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council. An extensive network of partners is also involved in the project.

**PROPOSED MEASURE: Let's establish a regional business advisory service for immigrants**

The first contact many immigrants to Finland have with the economy of their new home country comes in the form of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship can enable newcomers to attain financial independence and esteem in the eyes of others. It can also allow immigrants surrounded by an unfamiliar culture to earn a higher income when compared to heavily taxed paid employment.

*Case Start a Company in Finland*

The Uusimaa region supports immigrants' entrepreneurial spirit as well as entrepreneurial opportunities, and thus endeavours to attract up-and-coming businesses to the region. Uusimaa also offers a regional "Start a Company in Finland" advisory service run by NewCo Helsinki, which provides advisory and training services in six

languages (Finnish, Swedish, English, Russian, Estonian, Arabic), targeting the region's potential and current immigrant entrepreneurs. The service e.g. helps recent entrepreneurs network with each other. Innovative and ambitious startups receive services specifically designed for growth companies.

The business advisory service began life as an ESF-funded project. The funding model established in 2014 divided the costs of providing the service between the Capital Region's municipalities and Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council, and expanded the service to span the entire Uusimaa region. The region's Enterprise Agencies are partners in the project.

**PROPOSED MEASURE: Let's improve the recognition of skills and diplomas, professional skill mapping and skills tests so as to more efficiently harness immigrants' existing skills and competences**

The recognition of foreign degrees and qualifications as well as skills acquired abroad requires new processes and approaches.

*Case The "Identification and Recognition of Immigrants' Professional Skills" project*

In the 2014–2015 period, the Uusimaa TE Office is carrying out a project designed to improve the identification and recognition of immigrants' professional skills. The project consists in creating a model and productizing services provided by the Employment and Economic Development Administration. The aim is to enable more efficient identification and recognition of integration-stage immigrants' existing professional skills, thus expediting their access to employment on the Finnish job market.

The main emphasis of the project is placed on identifying and recognizing skills gained through upper-secondary-level vocational training. Over the course of the year 2014, TE Office staff received relevant training, and the service designed to map immigrants' competences and professional skills was productized and put out to tender.

The construction sector's tendering process was won by Amiedu, while Edupoli was the winner in the catering and care sector. The City of Helsinki has been an active participant in the

productization process, and Helsinki Vocational College has undertaken mapping work in all of the aforementioned sectors. Other partners include the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the National Board of Education.

Since the project's inception, this service has been dispensed as part of the TE Office's usual customer service provision, and has been available for the entirety of the region's immigrant population. The service has produced positive results: Customers who had previously not managed to gain access to vocational education have, with the help of the mapping process, been able to demonstrate their skills and thus begin their studies. The restaurant industry has seen the creation of a model co-designed with employers, in which mapping helps to select suitable students for the partial diploma in institutional catering services and for apprenticeship training in the restaurant industry.

The content of the skills mapping process and related supervisory systems (the Koulutusportti system) are set to be developed further, with new sectors added. Other plans include paying closer attention to post-mapping service paths, collaborating with employers on career pathing and on improving the potential of the mapping process, spreading the model to other Finnish regions, and carrying out international benchmarking.

## The Representation of Regional Interests

Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council represents the interests of the Uusimaa region's residents, and seeks to ensure that the region continues to provide an enjoyable environment in which to live and work. Regional interest representation consists above all in continuous, daily collaboration among a range of actors at the national, regional and international levels. These efforts primarily target the Parliament, the Government, ministries, agencies and EU institutions.

Through this Bidirectional Integration Programme, Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council, the Uusimaa Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment and the other actors involved in its formulation endeavour to

influence the decisions taken by public authorities and communities in the field of immigration so as to secure the greatest possible benefits for the Uusimaa region. Decision-makers must pay due attention to the particular needs the region has as a result of the size and composition of its population.

Integration measures and services aimed at immigrants are provided by the State, municipalities, Employment and Economic Development Offices (TE Offices), the police, organizations, associations and communities. Uusimaa's residents enjoy a relatively comprehensive range of services compared to the rest of the country, as all of the largest agencies are located in the region. It should be noted, however, that competition for services and access to education, for example, is intense. Furthermore, services are diffuse and do not always correspond to the individual needs and situation of immigrants or their families.

## 3. GOAL (special question): Making high-quality and timely language, integration and supplementary training available to all those who need it, across the entire region

Acquiring language and professional skills and learning about Finnish society constitute important factors in the integration process. A sufficient command of Finnish not only promotes integration into the surrounding society and improves immigrants' standing on the job market, but also facilitates a deeper understanding of service systems and relevant rights and duties. From the region's perspective, the presence of a rich palette of languages enhances competitiveness and provides better opportunities for residents to succeed.

The aim of the integration training provided for adult immigrants consists in promoting and supporting their ability to participate in the life of their new home country as an active member of society. Integration training includes Finnish or Swedish language tuition, which aims to facilitate access to employment and education. (Ministry of the Interior & Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2015.)



### PROPOSED MEASURE: Let's direct additional resources towards language and integration training

When the goal is to equip immigrants with the skills and knowledge required for active participation in society, relevant and need-based integration training constitutes the single most significant integrative measure. It is important that each newcomer receive the necessary tools to access the job market through language, vocational or other supplementary training geared to his or her specific situation.

The Employment and Economic Development (TE) Office has the primary responsibility for supporting adult immigrants' access to employment and organizing integration training. The Uusimaa TE Office delivers all integration-promoting services and measures, including integration training, while the Uusimaa Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment is tasked with planning, purchasing and supervising integration training as well as overseeing the TE Office. Prior to commencing training, all TE Office customers undergo an initial assessment of language skills, whose results determine the level and pace of integration training.

In 2014, employment-based integration training organized in the Uusimaa region has been allocated a budget of 22 million euros. In spite of the fact that the sums allocated to integration training have increased in recent years, too often do immigrants still have to wait a long time to access it.

As the total number of immigrants in the region has increased, so has that of newcomers waiting to access integration training. While no completely reliable statistics exist on wait times, the average immigrant has to wait six months between the initial assessment and integration training. The larger budget has so far not produced the desired results with regard to cutting wait times, and the situation has remained unchanged over the past few years.

Several aspects of the early integration process will still need to be developed in order to ensure its smooth progression, beginning with improving the service process provided by the TE Office in the early stages, and enhancing the cooperation between the various actors dispensing language tuition. The

State must allocate greater budgetary and human resources to the development of integration training so that all Uusimaa residents can enjoy equal access to language and integration training. The so-called integration guarantee developed along with the present programme fixes the maximum wait time for training services at two months.

In addition to ensuring the timeliness of integration training, the integration guarantee serves as a tool of quality assurance. Improving the content and quality of integration training requires the cooperation of all relevant actors. Improvement measures should include developing the skills of those organizing and dispensing integration training: Integration training teachers must hold a pedagogical qualification, and Finnish teachers must have completed studies in Finnish as a second language. The quality of teaching could be enhanced through supplementary studies in the field of immigration. At the moment, the content of training programmes and teachers' level of competence vary from one municipality to the next.

Since 2014, the region has piloted a more employment-centric approach to integration training by means of a model combining content from integration training and vocational training. The development of this approach will be continued, as will the examination of the impact of improving traditional measures on the effectiveness of integration training.

### PROPOSED MEASURE: Let's carry out holistic reform of integration training provision

It is necessary to assess the need for reform of integration training provision, considering the latter in all its aspects. The aim is to reform the organization and funding models of the integration training provided to different groups in order to ensure that training is sufficiently available and of a high quality. These efforts will be linked with those undertaken as part of the "At Home in Finland" pilot projects as well as with projects in the field of combating illiteracy.

### 4. GOAL (special goal): Integration efforts are funded on a more permanent basis

Several national projects launched in recent years (e.g. ALPO and Participative Integration

in Finland) have been aimed at developing early integration services. Projects funded from the European Refugee Fund have had a significant positive impact with regard to assigning persons in receipt of international protection to municipalities and developing cooperation among public authorities. Immigrant integration has additionally been supported by several local, national and international projects.

There is significant variation in the effectiveness and results of these projects, however, and actors have not managed, for example, to fuse early-stage services, integration training, and paths to further education and employment into an individualized, flexible and diverse continuum (Ministry of the Interior & Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2015).

**PROPOSED MEASURE: The State budget should allocate municipalities sufficient resources to integrate immigrants and to adapt basic services**

March 2014 saw the Centre of Expertise in Immigrant Integration become operational. This Centre, which forms part of the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, is tasked with supporting and promoting expertise in immigrant integration work at the national, regional and local levels. The Centre conducts investigations into integrative measures in order to assess and monitor their effectiveness. It also disseminates information regarding aspects of the process that require improvement, good practice, and significant research findings related to integration measures.

While the establishment of the Centre of Expertise was a step in the right direction, it alone is not sufficient. Municipalities bear considerable responsibility for the integration of immigrants, and thus require additional resources and permanent funding in order to receive immigrants and develop basic services as well as specific integration services. Social and health care services and education and cultural services constitute the largest items of expenditure incurred by municipalities. It is imperative that the State continue to factor the additional expenses incurred due to immigration into the system of central government transfers.

The system of central government transfers seeks primarily to ensure that municipalities around the country have adequate resources to perform their statutory functions and duties while maintaining municipal taxation and service fees at a reasonable level, regardless of each municipality's specific circumstances, need for services, and the differences between their revenue bases. As of the beginning of the year 2015, the total number of foreign-language speakers resident in a municipality increases the subsidy it receives for basic service provision.

In addition to the allocation of adequate resources for basic service provision, Uusimaa's municipalities would like to see the State assume a larger role in ensuring that those immigrants who have been granted residence permits could move to municipalities in a controlled fashion. The fact that those who have obtained a positive decision currently move independently has e.g. hindered the timely start of the integration process and increased the rate of homelessness, particularly in the Capital Region (Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities 2013). Municipal decision-makers must be kept up to date on immigration and its effects. It is also important that municipalities possess adequate resources to integrate immigrants accepted into the country on humanitarian grounds.

In recent years, central government transfers intended to compensate municipalities for receiving refugees have been supplemented with funding from the European Refugee Fund's Sylvia project. The future goals are to simplify the compensation system and elevate the level of legally mandated compensatory payments to match the expenses incurred.

From the perspective of Finland's quota refugee policy, affording municipalities the opportunity to receive refugees without delay constitutes the best way to create the circumstances necessary for bidirectional integration. A speedy reception is essential, particularly in the case of emergencies, and often means that municipal services have to adapt to the situation at hand.

## 2. MUNICIPALITIES PROVIDE SERVICES

For immigrants, becoming a municipal resident forms the basis for integration. The Integration Act stipulates that in order to promote integration and consolidate cross-sectoral cooperation, a municipality or a group of municipalities working together must draw up an integration programme, which must then be approved by the municipal councils of each of the involved municipalities and reviewed at least once every four years.

The majority of the Uusimaa region's

municipalities (16/26) currently have an active integration programme, whose aim it is to function as a kind of toolbox containing the integration-promoting services provided by the various branches of municipal government.

Municipalities have general and coordinative responsibility for developing, planning and monitoring the integration of immigrants. The objective of basic and early-stage services and specific integration services is to promote unbroken paths of immigration.

Table: Integration programmes in Uusimaa's municipalities (Uusimaa Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment 23.4.2015)

Municipality	Integration Programme Y/N	Approved by municipal council
Askola	E	-
Espoo	K	04/2014
Hanko	K	11/2012
Helsinki	K	06/2014
Hyvinkää	K	11/2013
Ingå	K	Expired / n/a
Järvenpää	K	06/2014
Karkkila	K	Expired / n/a
Kauniainen	K	11/2013
Kerava	K	2013
Kirkkonummi	K	02/2014
Lapinjärvi	K	12/2013
Lohja	K	05/2013
Loviisa	K	12/2013
Myrskylä	E	-
Mäntsälä	K	Expired / n/a
Nurmijärvi	K	05/2014
Pornainen	E	-
Porvoo	K	5/2012
Pukkila	K	Expired / n/a
Raseborg	K	11/2012
Sipoo	K	12/2013
Siuntio	E	-
Tuusula	K	Expired / n/a
Vantaa	K	05/2014
Vihti	K	Expired / n/a

### 5. GOAL: Basic services have been developed so as to more efficiently take into account the individual needs of a changing population, including those of families

The primary mission of municipalities is to facilitate the everyday lives of their residents by providing services. It is important that basic municipal services (including digital services, which are assuming an ever more prominent role) are designed to serve immigrants in addition to the native population. Early childhood education, schooling and social and health care services constitute especially significant pieces of the integration puzzle.

The availability and suitability of services for foreign-language speakers varies considerably among the Uusimaa region's municipalities. While the supply of interpreters, for example, is relatively good in the Capital Region, a shortage in other areas may significantly limit the effectiveness of services. When designing services, it is necessary to give due consideration to the varying abilities of different groups to benefit from them.

### PROPOSED MEASURE: Let's promote bidirectional integration in basic service provision

The current set of basic services and digital services must be developed across the entire region so as to better take into account the individual needs of a



changing population, including those of families. A family-centric approach can not only serve to prevent multi-speed integration, but also helps reach those newcomers who would otherwise be at risk of exclusion from services. This group includes e.g. housewives and students.

Training municipal personnel and ensuring that they have an adequate understanding of immigration matters forms a significant component in the process of developing basic services. It is essential that personnel be capable of identifying the services an immigrant requires and, if necessary, directing him or her towards other services. Measures must additionally be focussed, as necessary, on areas that present an increased risk of inequality and social exclusion. (Ministry of the Interior & Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2015.) The Centre of Expertise in Immigrant Integration is doing its part to support municipalities by disseminating relevant information, conducting investigations and connecting experts in different fields.

Inadequate language skills as well as the multi-level, fragmented nature of the Finnish service provision system may complicate immigrants' access to services. More attention should thus be paid to providing special treatment as well as guidance and advice in the immigrant's own language.

*Case Municipal dental care services in Helsinki employ a multiculturalism expert*

According to international studies, children of mothers from immigrant backgrounds are at a clearly higher risk of oral disease when compared to their peers. In order to promote the health of immigrants and reduce the need for remedial treatment, dental care services in Helsinki employ an expert familiar with issues surrounding multiculturalism.

The expert is tasked with informing immigrants about how to access dental care services provided by the city of Helsinki, and explaining why it is important to undergo complete dental treatment via a check-up appointment. The expert also gives customers tips for keeping their own as well as their families' mouths healthy. Ideally, this advice spreads throughout entire communities. This service primarily targets recent immigrants, as

guidance at an early stage can have an important impact on the routines newcomers establish in the early days of the integration process.

The expert meets and informs adult immigrants mainly during the Finnish lessons and early-stage briefings organized as part of their integration training. Students from immigrant backgrounds attending preparatory classes receive oral health check-ups and health promotion lessons. In addition to health education, participants are supplied with relevant plain-language materials and bilingual general instructions. The expert can be contacted for further questions via the smartphone application WhatsApp.

In addition to disseminating advice to immigrants, the expert keeps the city's various care units and other actors informed about the kinds of things that should be borne in mind when treating patients from immigrant backgrounds. In the 2013–2014 period, the expert met with 3,000 immigrants, organized 160 training and other events, and collaborated with e.g. dental nurse and dental hygienist students, the Finnish Heart Association, the HIV Foundation, the Inkerikeskus Centre, Helsinki Deaconess Institute and dozens of other organizations.

The unique contribution of the multiculturalism expert to the city's oral health care services has received praise. Future goals include developing ways of reaching immigrants at especially high risk of social exclusion, and of increasing the role of hands-on approaches to teaching and training, such as through the use of games.

## 6. GOAL: Improved access to education and employment for children and adolescents from immigrant backgrounds

Finland's immigrant population is young. In 2009, 7% of the pupils in Uusimaa's primary and secondary schools were foreign-language speakers, while the equivalent figures for academic and vocational upper-secondary schools were 4.5% and 7.8% respectively. (Teräs & Kilpi-Jakonen 2013.) As these percentages increase each year, so does the need for a greater awareness of multiculturalism on the part of the school system.

Recent studies have demonstrated that while immigrants and their children hold education in high esteem, their academic performance is,



on average, less strong than that of the native population. Immigrant children and adolescents also face welfare-related challenges and bullying more often than their peers. (Ministry of the Interior & Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2015.) Furthermore, immigrants who have passed the compulsory education age find it difficult, if not impossible, to find suitable education.

When compared to the native population, young immigrants are at a considerably higher risk of exclusion from the labour force. Unbroken integrative and educational paths along with a sufficient command of the Finnish language promote access to employment and prevent exclusion.

All of the Uusimaa region's largest municipalities offer immigrants preparatory education and training as well as native language and Finnish tuition. In Helsinki, for example, young immigrants who lack the necessary skills may additionally pursue Finnish language studies whilst taking vocational training courses and obtaining certificates or licences. This training is part of the open studies courses offered by Helsinki Vocational College.

Children and adolescents from immigrant backgrounds form a heterogeneous group, and a single educational path is thus not suitable for all of them. With the future of an ethnically equal society in mind, children and adolescents from immigrant backgrounds should be offered particular support.

### PROPOSED MEASURE: Let's improve pupil and student welfare services

As is the case for the native population, immigrant pupils and students require support both in schools and universities and outside them. Pupil and student welfare services are tasked with providing support and serving as a facilitator for communication between schools and homes. It is essential to offer students timely and sufficient support, involve families with different native languages in the process, and disseminate information about the Finnish school system.

*Case Porvoo's KOTA project aims to create more favourable conditions for education*

Since 2013, the City of Porvoo has received special assistance from the State in order to improve educational equality. The supported measures seek to create more favourable conditions for education in areas suffering from socioeconomic deprivation, including unemployment, poverty and a high number of students from immigrant backgrounds. Eight schools in Porvoo benefit from this assistance.

With the help of this special assistance, the City of Porvoo has launched the KOTA project, whose aim is to reinforce preventive and supportive measures, which in turn serve to promote educational quality and equality and create more favourable conditions for young people to pursue schooling and perform well academically. The KOTA project employs five guidance counsellors, two school coaches, an immigrant coordinator and a school social worker. The project has been granted funding up until the end of 2016.

### PROPOSED MEASURE: Let's support young people not in education or employment

Over the course of the year 2015, the Cities of Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa as well as the central Uusimaa municipalities of Järvenpää, Kerava and Tuusula are set to benefit from the establishment of a network of one-stop guidance centres known as Ohjaamo, which offer a comprehensive range of easy-to-access services for young people in the region. These centres are tasked with providing young people not in education or employment with strong individualized support as well as training, employment and rehabilitation services, all under

one roof. Digital service provision is tied in with the Ohjaamo centres e.g. through the possibility of contacting them via Skype.

The Ohjaamo network is based on the idea of wide-ranging cooperation within and between cities and municipalities, underpinned by a national online guidance service which is currently in development. The national development of the Ohjaamo centres across the country is carried out within the framework of the Kohtaamo project. The responsibility for developing Ohjaamo rests with the Ministry of Employment and the Economy and Central Finland's Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, along with other national and regional actors. The Ohjaamo project constitutes one of the key projects of the current Government's programme.

## 7. GOAL: Municipal employers lead the way in hiring foreign employees and successful diversity management.

As is the case elsewhere, questions around diversity in the world of work have recently emerged into public discussion in Finland. By tapping into the range of backgrounds, skills and qualities on offer, the working environment can be developed in a more innovative, productive and responsible direction. Such efforts require diversity management and help to prevent discrimination against ethnicities and minorities on the labour market.

Companies and organizations with a comparatively prominent multicultural presence are a natural corollary of the fact that Finland's immigrant population continues to concentrate in the Uusimaa region. The percentage in the region's labour force of foreign-language speakers and foreign nationals nevertheless remains small. It is imperative, in order to preserve the vitality of the region's municipalities and districts, that immigrants' skills and experience be harnessed more efficiently.

## PROPOSED MEASURE: Let's develop and disseminate recruitment and familiarization schemes designed to boost immigrants' access to employment

In order to ensure that they operate according to a customer-centric approach, many of Uusimaa's municipalities have reformed their staffing policies

with the aim of representing immigrant groups among municipal personnel in proportion to their share of the total population. It is recommended that e.g. the State administration and the police also adopt this principle. As the civil service acquires a wider base of cultural and linguistic competence, an ever-growing and diversifying immigrant population can be supported through higher-quality services, such as education provision.

### *Case Espoo's recruitment scheme*

Espoo has developed a recruitment scheme designed to boost immigrants' access to employment. With the help of this scheme, the city is endeavouring to adjust the percentage in its personnel of foreign-language speakers so as to better reflect their share of the city's population. Furthermore, the scheme seeks to increase the number of foreign-language speakers working in a range of different units as well as in managerial and specialist positions.

Those participating in the scheme are unemployed foreign-language speakers who have registered as jobseekers at the TE Office. In late 2014, foreign-language speakers constituted 13.3% of the city's population, while the equivalent figure among its personnel was 5.6%. Approximately 80% of the immigrants who have taken part in the scheme have not sought the TE Office's services since.

### *Case Vantaa's familiarization scheme*

Vantaa's services for the elderly and the disabled have been experiencing recruitment-related difficulties, and have thus developed a familiarization scheme whose goal it is to achieve a greater degree of sensitivity to the needs of people from immigrant backgrounds. The city has also developed good methods of assessing Finnish language competence. While experiences of these efforts have been positive, much work remains before diversity can be seen to constitute a normal part of working communities' everyday activities. The city is also endeavouring to combat prejudice against people from different backgrounds by e.g. issuing managers with the "Keys to Successful Diversity Management" information pack, which includes practical advice on recruitment, combating discrimination, and more.



### 3. GOOD ETHNIC RELATIONS AND THE CREATION OF MORE FAVOURABLE CONDITIONS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

Good ethnic relations represent the cornerstone of bidirectional integration. The Government-appointed National Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations and its regional advisory boards are tasked with promoting ethnic relations, i.e. the interaction between different communities and groups in Finland. The Integration Act stipulates that municipalities' integration programmes must entail measures designed to promote ethnic equality and good ethnic relations, while preventing discrimination.

The "Good Relations" project, launched by the Ministry of the Interior, provided a definition of "good ethnic relations". The project entailed producing several practical guides which are especially useful at the local level. The project also considered ways in which the United Kingdom's framework of domains as indicators of the state of ethnic relations could be transposed into the Finnish context.

The domains of good ethnic relations comprise attitudes, personal security, interaction with others, and participation and influence. These domains reserve a significant role for civil society actors, whose more efficient operation the present programme aims to enable.

#### 8. GOAL: Civil society is utilized to greater effect in the integration process

The term "civil society" most commonly refers to all the voluntarily organized humanitarian and nonprofit activities that do not fall within the purview of the public sector, i.e. the State or municipalities. Civil society includes third-sector actors such as non-governmental organizations, associations, sports clubs and religious organizations.

Non-governmental organizations, associations and religious organizations undertake significant integration work and complement the services provided by the public sector. They offer e.g. recreational activities and advisory and guidance services. They also help immigrants maintain their own languages and cultures, serve as an important intercultural link, and integrate newcomers into their new home country. The social contacts immigrants gain thanks to these organizations and associations can be seen as an especially significant factor in the integration process.

Non-governmental and religious organizations founded by immigrants are very active in their operations across Finland and in Uusimaa in particular. This point is illustrated by the fact that Uusimaa is home to more than half of the associations founded by the vast majority of immigrant groups (Pykkönen & Martikainen 2013).

#### PROPOSED MEASURE: Let's reinforce the cooperation between actors and the third sector's role in the integration process

Well-functioning integration requires cross-sectoral cooperation. As the number of incoming immigrants increases and the public sector's resources diminish, it is essential that the division of labour between actors undertaking immigration-related work be unambiguous, and that they cooperate in an increasingly efficient manner. In the near future this should entail particular efforts to reinforce integration-related cooperation with the third sector. The Netherlands and the United Kingdom provide two examples of good practice and long-established tradition with regard to such collaboration.

During 2015, the Ministry of Employment and the Economy is set to draw up a new organization strategy whose aim is to bring about closer cooperation between public authorities and the third sector. Uusimaa's municipalities pledge, through the present programme, to utilize the skills and expertise of organizations and associations to ever greater effect in the integration process. Municipalities work in partnership with organizations and associations in e.g. development projects, assist them in procuring funding, and also grant them direct financial support.

### PROPOSED MEASURE: Let's increase dialogue with religious communities

As the number of immigrants to Finland has increased, so has the country's religious diversity. This growth has been particularly significant in the Muslim community, but Christian churches have also seen their standing strengthened. According to a 2009 estimate, two thirds of all immigrants resident in Finland were of the Christian faith. Religious communities and organizations help to e.g. maintain immigrants' religious, ethnic and cultural traditions, give newcomers advice on life in their new home country, and provide them with social contacts. (Pyykkönen & Martikainen 2013.)

Membership in a religious community is extremely important for many immigrants. Religious communities may also help public authorities reach those immigrants who are not currently in receipt of public services and measures.

In some cases, organizations whose focus is on immigrants' native culture or religion may isolate individuals or groups from Finnish society (Pyykkönen & Martikainen 2013). In addition to societal isolation, the rise of religious extremism and the radicalization of young people have emerged into public discussion. As a way of preventing the advance of such phenomena, actors in the Uusimaa region are currently developing methods designed to increase the dialogue between religious communities and the various sectors of society.

#### *Case The Regional Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations*

In 2014, the Ministry of the Interior named improving the visibility of integration-promoting

activities undertaken by religious communities, particularly in the eyes of public authorities, as the main focus of the Regional Advisory Boards for Ethnic Relations. The Uusimaa region commissioned a report on the subject, which details, by locality, the services offered by the respondent religious communities that can be seen as complementary to those provided by public authorities. This information pack has been distributed to the region's Employment and Economic Development Offices and municipalities in order to help authorities direct their customers towards the aforementioned services and activities.

#### *Case Religious dialogue in Vantaa*

Since 2008, the rectors and imams of Vantaa's congregations have held regular meetings with the aim of forging links of friendship between Muslims and Christians. Practical cooperation between the two religions has entailed e.g. organizing a range of events, which have enabled Muslims and Christians to exchange information about their respective religions.

The close communication between Muslims and Christians has shown that the two communities have more in common than is usually thought. Both groups share the desire to live peaceful, good lives, and practice their respective religions freely. Concern about the well-being of families, children, and young people is also common to the two groups.

Between spring 2013 and autumn 2014, Muslim and Christian women in the Koivukylä area also organized discussion groups open to all those wishing to participate. These gatherings attracted women of different ages from immigrant and native backgrounds, who eschewed abstract terms such as "religious dialogue" in favour of discussions on the role of faith in their everyday lives – a topic to which all participants could contribute personal experiences.

The women selected the themes for the discussions themselves, and examined topics including bringing up children, the role of women in society, festivals and clothing. While the discussions demonstrated that participants from both faiths held prejudices against and lacked awareness of the other religion, they also helped to

combat prejudice and increase interaction between the two communities. The discussion groups were convened by the City of Vantaa, its congregations, and the Somali Cultural Association of east Vantaa.

#### *Case Järvenpää's Tatar community*

Finland has had a Tatar minority since the 19th century. The most significant migratory flows date back to the 1870–1920 period, during which Tatar merchants and soldiers settled in the Vyborg region.

When the Karelian Isthmus was ceded to the Soviet Union after the wars, its Finnish population, including the Tatars, left. The majority of the latter settled in the Helsinki region, while others moved to Turku, Tampere and Järvenpää among other localities.

Järvenpää's Tatars settled in the district of Kinnari, and started trading in buttons and textiles. Some became farmers. The post-war period saw the arrival of more Tatar families. In the 1940s, Järvenpää's Tatar community built a mosque in the town with the help of funds collected from Tatars across the country. The mosque is owned by the Finnish Islamic Association.

The Järvenpää mosque is still Finland's only mosque to feature a minaret. It has served as a gathering place for Tatars from various areas, and used to regularly host courses on language and religion for children. These days the mosque is only in active use during Ramadan, the month of fasting, as well as during two other religious festivals.

It is said that the case of the Tatars constitutes a textbook example of successful integration: The community has been able to adapt to Finnish culture while preserving its own age-old lifestyle and religious festivals. This process of adaptation owes its success in large part to the community's integration into the workforce.

### **9. GOAL: Interaction between immigrants and the native population has increased, while racism, hate speech and discrimination have decreased**

While integration services and language tuition constitute an important component of helping immigrants adapt to a new environment,

integration in the true sense of the term takes place at the level of civil society, in everyday situations and in the communities to which immigrants belong. From this perspective, everyday encounters and social networks assume a centrally important role. Multiculturalism in neighbourhoods and other areas has the potential to enrich the lives of their inhabitants, but is often also a source of conflict.

For bidirectional integration to succeed, mutual respect must extend to all people, and diversity must be accepted and valued. The hate speech that has gained ground in the 21st century, particularly in Europe, has targeted immigrants and ethnic minorities. And as is the case elsewhere, such racism in the Finnish context has often arisen from fear and suspicion rather than any factual basis (Kettunen & Egharevba 2014).

By keeping negative attitudes, stereotypes and discrimination at bay, interaction between the various groups that make up the population creates the necessary preconditions for good ethnic relations. For the children in Uusimaa's and especially the Capital Region's schools, multiculturalism already constitutes an indissociable facet of everyday life. By contrast, the interaction between adults and young people may still be much less frequent in some cases.

As stipulated by the Integration Act, the process of integrating into society should not be limited to acquiring its language, culture and customs, but should also enable immigrants to maintain their own language, culture and religion. Official measures designed to achieve this goal consist in affording children the opportunity to study their native language and religion at school, and granting public assistance to associations run by immigrants and new minorities (Saukkonen 2013.)

The public sector alone can not guarantee the harmonious functioning of a multicultural society; This also requires openness to and acceptance of difference, which in turn gives rise to attitudes of positivity and tolerance. By way of a recent example, the native population's increasingly hostile attitude towards Russian-speakers has caused more and more school-age Russian-speaking children to refuse to speak his or her native language (Silfver 2014). Maintaining a positive relationship with one's own language



and culture thus always requires support from the surrounding society (Toivanen 2014).

### PROPOSED MEASURE: Let's improve the functionality of residents' everyday lives

This programme wants to challenge the Uusimaa region's inhabitants to improve common well-being through small gestures, such as greeting neighbours and sharing positive stories and experiences about life in a multicultural environment.

Sports and recreation, cultural and open education services provide a natural connection between people from a diversity of backgrounds and constitute an integral part of Finnish civil society. In order to foster a sense of community and prevent social exclusion, the Uusimaa region seeks to ensure that all of the groups that make up its population are aware of and have access to a wide range of activities across the entire region.

Measures designed to facilitate cross-cultural encounters and promote social unity in the region's neighbourhoods have included creating

meeting places and cultural cafés, organizing public events, and giving support to a range of resident, befriending and mentor family activities. Housing consultation and neighbourhood mediation services have also helped make neighbourhoods pleasant and improve the well-being of their inhabitants.

#### *Case Band workshop*

In collaboration with the city's Education Department and Cultural Office, The Helsinki Pop & Jazz Conservatory organizes band workshops for children at nine comprehensive schools in east Helsinki. Approximately one in two participants comes from an immigrant background. The workshops adopt a so-called low-threshold approach in order to get children excited about taking up music as a hobby. The children attend these workshops in the afternoon in the music classrooms of their own schools. Plans for future workshops include e.g. music technology teaching and a rap workshop aimed at students from African backgrounds.



### *Case The Neighbourhood Mediation Centre*

With the help of targeted funding from the Finnish Slot Machine Association RAY, the Finnish Refugee Council established the Neighbourhood Mediation Centre in early 2015. The Centre seeks to prevent and mediate conflicts between neighbours in the Capital, Tampere and Turku Regions, and provides a free national consultation service for building managers, housing consultants and others in order to facilitate the resolution of conflicts between neighbours.

Neighbourhood mediation is a means to intervene in disruptive and difficult situations and conflicts. These include disruptive behaviour, the inappropriate use of common spaces, conflicts between two or more neighbours, problems arising from the work of residents' associations, mistrust between real estate companies and residents, and conflicts of an ethnic or cultural nature.

The Centre also offers residents training and participatory activities designed to improve the dialogue and relationships between neighbours and make neighbourhoods safer and more equal. Such services play an important role when localities receive new residents from abroad, for example, or when the goal is to otherwise promote good relations between people and population groups.

The mediation service arose from the KOTILO project funded by RAY from 2006 to 2013, whose aim was to improve the liveability of multicultural neighbourhoods.

## **10. GOAL: Immigrants are increasingly active participants in society**

The proposed measures put forward in the present programme endeavour to create an environment in which future immigrants to Finland assume an increasingly active role in society and contribute to its development. This idea stands in stark contrast to the conception of immigrants as mere recipients of services and measures.

For immigrants to lead functional, meaningful lives in Finland, it is imperative that they have the opportunity to influence change, make their own choices, and experience a sense of belonging with regard to the surrounding society and communities. If immigrants feel welcome in their new home, are greeted with openness by its inhabitants, feel safe, and frequently interact

with the people around them, they are more likely to participate in communal activities and events (Ministry of the Interior & Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2015.)

### **PROPOSED MEASURE: Let's empower immigrants to participate in and influence society**

As the percentage of immigrants in the Finnish population increases, it becomes increasingly important that the voice of multiculturalism be heard loudly and clearly in the different sectors of society. The degree to which immigrants are involved in society is usually evaluated based on voter turnout and participation in political decision-making and third-sector activities.

Voter turnout among immigrants has traditionally been lower when compared to the native population, as has their rate of participation in political decision-making. This trend seems to be slowly reversing, however. For example, Finland recently elected its first two Members of Parliament from immigrant backgrounds as Afghan-born Social Democrat Nasima Razmyar and Turkish-born Green League member Ozan Yanar won seats in the constituency of Helsinki in the spring 2015 election.

According to a study published by the Ministry of Justice, electoral participation among immigrants varies depending on previous experience of political participation, socioeconomic status, age, and education. These factors should also be taken into account when designing integration measures; An awareness of the state of democracy in immigrants' countries of origin, for example, could prove useful for those dispensing integration training (Centre of Expertise in Immigrant Integration 2015.)

### *Case Advisory boards*

The largest Uusimaa municipalities have benefited from the establishment of advisory boards whose task it is to deal with matters common to all immigrants. The boards e.g. prepare proposals related to immigrant and minority affairs and hear presentations by immigrants and organizations and groups representing them.

"Everyone's Elections" was a series of events organized in connection with the spring 2015 Finnish parliamentary elections. The iCount project headed by the Moniheli Network of Multicultural Associations served as the campaign's principal coordinator, and sought to improve the dialogue between immigrants, public authorities and political parties, raise awareness of the Finnish political system, and foster increased participation in society by immigrants as part of the integration process.

An election panel planned and organized in collaboration with the iCount project, the Ministry of Justice, the Regional Advisory Boards for Ethnic Relations, municipalities and local third-sector actors highlighted some of the challenges arising from the diversification and internationalization of our society, and sought to spark interest among new members of the Finnish population in discussing and shaping the society around them.

Uusimaa's election panels convened in Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa. The overall success of both the planning stages and the events themselves is sure to encourage the various actors involved to engage in even closer collaboration in the future.

## **11. GOAL: The region's actors have taken wide-ranging advantage of national and international funding opportunities in order to finance development projects**

Earlier in the present programme, the authors expressed the wish to move from project-based funding to a more permanent arrangement. Even though the Uusimaa region's share of the European Union's national project funding has diminished with each programming cycle, integration development efforts must not neglect the possibility of obtaining project funding from a variety of sources.

Project funding is required in order to e.g. test and disseminate new good practices from abroad in the Finnish context. This point is especially relevant in Uusimaa's big cities, whose development efforts can not repose upon domestic examples; They thus attach considerable importance to international practices and networks.

The present programme seeks to encourage the region's actors to tap into a variety of sources that fund integration efforts, such as the "At Home in Finland" programme launched in 2015, and the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund subsumed under the European Union's Home Affairs Funds. For more information on sources of funding, consult e.g. Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council's EU services.

## **PROPOSED MEASURE: Let's devise joint pilot projects for the "At Home in Finland" programme**

"At Home in Finland" is a national ESF project overseen by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy and coordinated by the Uusimaa Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment. The project aims to develop integration services and processes so as to ensure their high quality, effectiveness and accessibility, regardless of immigrants' personal circumstances.

The project comprises two distinct, mutually reinforcing subprojects: The first, entitled "Good Start", utilizes pilot projects in order to develop a model for the set of early-stage integration services, while the "Good Path" section is intended to improve the skills and expertise of the regional and local authorities who undertake integration work.

The set of services created as a result of the "Good Start" subproject aims to expedite the beginning of the integration process, improve the identification of customers' individual needs, and support their transition into additional services, education and employment.

During 2015, the subproject is looking for 5–7 regional pilot projects. The models devised as a result of the pilot projects should be based on as wide-ranging a network as possible, including municipalities, Employment and Economic Development Offices, the third sector, and employers. The Bidirectional Integration Programme encourages actors in the Uusimaa region to collaborate on planning and applying for a joint pilot project.

# GLOSSARY

**Asylum seeker:** A person seeking asylum and the right of residence in a foreign country. An asylum seeker has not yet been granted a residence permit in Finland.

**Basic services:** All the statutory services whose organization and funding are the responsibility of municipalities. The term particularly refers to the statutory social care, health care, education and cultural services that fall within the purview of the system of central government transfers.

**Bidirectional integration:** A continuous interactive process between the immigrant and the host society. Integration requires commitment on the part of all relevant actors, including the immigrant and native populations, public authorities, the third sector, educational institutions and businesses. As the immigrant integrates into society, the latter takes on a more multicultural quality.

**Civil society:** Refers to all the voluntarily organized humanitarian and nonprofit activities that do not fall within the purview of the public sector, i.e. the State or municipalities. Civil society includes third-sector actors such as non-governmental organizations, associations, sports clubs and religious organizations.

**Foreign national:** A person who does not hold Finnish nationality.

**Foreign-language speaker:** A person resident in Finland whose mother tongue is other than Finnish, Swedish or Sami.

**Good ethnic relations:** The interaction between different communities and groups. Good ethnic relations promote ethnic equality.

**Immigrant:** A person who leaves one country in order to take up residence in another. An umbrella term under which the full range of reasons for migrating can be subsumed.

**Integration guarantee:** A concept first launched in the Bidirectional Integration Programme. The guarantee serves to ensure that wait times for language tuition and integration training do not exceed two months, and that training is dispensed in a timely and high-quality fashion.

**Integration measures:** The measures implemented by public authorities in order to promote and support integration. These are defined in the individual integration plan.

**Integration plan:** A plan devised for an immigrant individual or family, which includes measures and services designed to help them acquire a sufficient command of Finnish or Swedish as well as other necessary skills and information.

**Integration policy:** Refers to all measures taken by public authorities in order to promote integration.

**Integration programme:** As stipulated by the Integration Act, a municipality or a group thereof must devise an

integration programme designed to promote integration and consolidate cross-sectoral cooperation. The programme must be approved by the municipal councils of each of the involved municipalities and reviewed at least once every four years.

**Integration training:** Consists in training designed to promote access to employment and further education and improve the skills necessary for participation in society, including Finnish or Swedish tuition and, as necessary, training in other areas such as reading and writing. This training is principally organized as employment training. Voluntary non-vocational studies may also be included in an immigrant's individual integration plan, in which case he or she can receive an integration allowance.

**Integration:** The individual trajectory of an immigrant, whose goal is to gain access to employment and participate in society while maintaining the immigrant's own language and culture.

**Person in receipt of international protection:** A person who has been granted refugee status or a residence permit on subsidiary or humanitarian protection grounds.

**Quota refugee:** Person whom the the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has designated as a refugee, and who has been granted an entry permit to Finland as part of the refugee quota approved in the State budget.

**Refugee:** A foreigner who has legitimate grounds to fear persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion. Refugee status is granted to persons who either obtain asylum in a country or are designated as refugees by the UNHCR.

**Regional differentiation (segregation):** Refers to the differences and inequalities between the districts of a city, ranging from income and wealth disparities to differences in lifestyles, education, age structure and ethnic background.

**Second-generation immigrant:** A person who resides in Finland and is the offspring of an immigrant to Finland.

**System of central government transfers:** Seeks to ensure that municipalities across the country have adequate resources to provide statutory public services, thus guaranteeing a certain level of basic service provision to all citizens regardless of where in the country they live. This is achieved by compensating municipalities for differences in revenue bases and expenses incurred as a result of service provision.

**Third sector:** Occupies the space between the private and public sectors and families. Third-sector actors include associations, cooperatives and foundations. These actors do not seek profit.

*Source (adapted): Ministry of Employment and the Economy (2012).*

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# APPENDIX

## Appendix 1. The actors involved in drawing up the Bidirectional Integration Programme

The principal responsibility for writing the Bidirectional Integration Programme rested with Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council, with the support of Uusimaa's working group on immigration. The working group comprised the following actors:

The Cities of Espoo, Hanko, Helsinki, Hyvinkää, Järvenpää, Kauniainen, Karkkila, Lohja, Loviisa, Porvoo, Raasepori and Vantaa and the municipalities of Kirkkonummi, Mäntsälä, Nurmijärvi, Sipoo, Siuntio, Tuusula and Vihti. The working group also included the Uusimaa Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment and the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities. Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council coordinated the working group's efforts. The group discussed the programme in 9 meetings during 2014 and spring 2015.

Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council organized an official launch event at Finlandia Hall on 5 December 2014 to mark the beginning of the process that would result in the Bidirectional Integration Programme. The "Integration and Multiculturalism in Uusimaa" ceremony gathered together all of the region's actors active in the field of immigration. In addition to interesting presentations, the event provided a forum for the identification of common immigration- and integration-related challenges and measures. The following actors were represented:

- Axxell Multicultural Centre
- Cupore
- Diak
- Diversa Consulting
- Familia Club ry Multicultural Association
- Filoksenia ry
- Föreningen Luckan
- Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council
- Hyria Education Oy
- Kirkkonummi municipality
- Metropolia
- Monik ry
- MONIKA Multicultural Women's Association

- NewCo YritysHelsinki
- Nicehearts of Vantaa
- Plan Finland
- Sipoo municipality
- The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities
- The City of Espoo
- The City of Helsinki
- The City of Helsinki Police Department
- The City of Järvenpää
- The City of Kerava
- The City of Lohja
- The City of Porvoo
- The City of Vantaa
- The Family Federation of Finland
- The Finnish Immigration Service
- The Finnish League for Human Rights
- The Finnish Refugee Council
- The Finnish Refugee Council / Organization Incubator
- The Finnish Trade Union of Educators (OAJ)
- The Guide and Scout District of Uusimaa / Nurmijärvi municipality
- The Helsinki Region Chamber of Commerce
- The Ministry of Employment and the Economy
- The Ministry of the Interior
- The Monimaa Association of Vantaa
- The National Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations
- The Organization Incubator, Finnish Refugee Council
- The R3 Immigrant Youth Support Association
- The Uusimaa Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment
- The Uusimaa Employment and Economic Development Office
- The Vamlas Foundation
- The Vantaa Circle of Associations
- The Western Uusimaa Migrant Service
- Tuusula municipality

Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council additionally met with and interviewed the following actors in connection with this programme: The FIBS Corporate Responsibility Network, the Institute of Adult Education in Helsinki, the North Karelia Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, Hakunila International Organization, and the Finnish Red Cross.

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