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LEARNING TO LIVE IN A NEW COUNTRY – EVERYDAY SOCIAL INTEGRATION

**Civil society and integration
– Nordic rural perspective**

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Timothy Heleniak and Alex Cuadrado



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Preface

Since the initiation of the Nordic Cooperation Programme for Integration of Immigrants in 2016 the Nordic Welfare Centre and Nordregio have collaborated on integration issues. This report is one of the outputs of this cooperation. See www.integrationnorden.org for more information.

The Nordic countries have varying experience of receiving and integrating refugees and other immigrants into our societies. Settling in a new country is a learning process that can be greatly facilitated by the help of civil society. This report focuses on the role of civil society in the everyday lives of immigrants and refugees.

The report has a rural and small community perspective throughout. In the first part different civil society actors such as aid organisations, mentorship programmes, sports clubs, and religious communities are in focus. The second part of the report describes the potential and challenges of multi-sectoral cooperation between municipalities and civil society organisations.

Alongside the report a series of events on integration and the role of civil society were arranged during 2019. A Nordic network meeting with civil society initiative actors and a webinar on the role of civil society and labour market informed the work of this report. A Nordic conference on social inclusion was held with representatives from civil society organisations and initiatives trying to answer the question: How do we increase social inclusion of refugees and newly arrived migrants by improving the conditions for civil society?

We are grateful for all those civil society participants from around the Nordic region who have generously shared their knowledge and experiences with us. We hope this report will inspire both existing and new initiatives by the civil society in cooperation with local authorities. Successful integration requires action and collaboration at many different levels and by many actors.

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Introduction and background

Integration can happen in multiple areas. In many ways, a subjective sense of belonging is created through shared social interactions and informal support networks. These constitute the ultimate indicators of living in an integrated society. They are even more fundamental to the daily quality of life and to social cohesion than material living conditions, instrumental economic benefits, and more abstract legal rights (Norris and Purunen, 2019). In terms of integration, civil society has been recognised as an important player in helping newly arrived immigrants, not least by providing valuable support, networks and contacts (Bärfvenberg, 2015:12).

Nordic rural areas face several societal challenges such as deindustrialisation, ageing and shrinking populations, or loss of public services (Åberg and Högman, 2015). Integrating newcomers in rural areas has been an additional challenge, because rural policy finds itself at crossroads between integration and the regeneration of rural societies (Arora-Jonsson, 2017). In addition, different ways of rationalising the situation, embodied at national and municipal levels of governance, have ended up addressing the integration of immigrants from different perspectives. This has led to tensions at a practical level (Hansen, 2018). In such contexts, the organisation of civil society differs between urban and rural areas. In rural areas, as distinct from urban ones, civic life is strongly tied to informal networks

such as family or neighbours, and identity is more related to place and the locality (Åberg and Högman, 2015). These are factors heavily involved in the role of civil society organisations.

Many smaller towns in the Nordic countries are experiencing a decrease in population. In some cases, they are being hit by school closures and empty houses. At the same time, refugees are being housed in smaller communities, which adds to the number of new inhabitants and spurs new potential for development. A number of more sparsely populated regions and municipalities across the Nordic region experience shortages of labour, and are therefore dependent upon migrant labour to a large extent. From an economic perspective it is feasible for many smaller communities and rural areas to boost their population in this way and for immigrants and refugees to settle in a welcoming community, making it a "win-win" situation. It is therefore very important that integration efforts succeed. We argue here that the perspective of rural areas is needed in order to showcase the fact that this is both possible and feasible.

Civil society's role in long term integration is an especially intriguing topic to explore, not least in relation to how it functions in less populated areas (such as *glesbygd*, *landdistrikterne* and *landsbyggd*) in the Nordic countries. We intend, in what follows, to draw together evidence from qualitative research

and evidence from interviews conducted in Nordregio's research on migrant workers around the Nordic countries along with other studies conducted on the subject.

Nordregio's research *From Migrants to Workers* (2017), reported that the civil society can play an important role in the integration of immigrants. However, several sources point to the fact that this valuable asset (or part of it) can be lost when no one has the clear responsibility for coordinating it (Harbo et al., 2017). The importance of civil society organisations and associations is also illustrated in a report from the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF), where it is claimed that such bodies are crucial for the process of integration, both with regard to urgent needs and to longer-term efforts (MUCF, 2016). In addition, a Norwegian study points out how participation by elderly immigrants in civic activities is vital in relation to their health and wellbeing (Gele and Harsløf, 2012). This is important knowledge, because the number of elderly immigrants is increasing.

In a comparative study across 14 European Union (EU) countries, where Sweden was the only Nordic nation, findings about these countries' performances and efforts to include refugees and immigrants so they become active citizens was evaluated as mediocre at best, and poor in most cases, when it came to fostering the participation of BIPs (business integration participants), involving receiving societies in the integration process, and acknowledging the two-way character of integration. The countries assessed failed to build bridges that could help bring together refugees and the receiving society. Only in Portugal and Sweden did national strategy documents explicitly call for citizens to become actively involved. Six out of the 14 countries have seen publicly funded

campaigns aimed at sensitising the public towards the situation and needs of refugees. Throughout all of the countries assessed, encouragement and support for voluntary initiatives to complement public policies was pretty much absent from the central government side (Wolffhardt et al., 2019).

How civil society can create meaningful meeting places is also considered important for integration. Ordinary people across society have the ability to create a welcoming atmosphere, as well as to help with day-to-day issues for newcomers. Alongside interactions with the local community, evidence shows that establishing a social network can lead to employment. Indeed, numerous studies report that it is even seen as one of the most important ways to get a job. An example is set out in the example of the Härjedalen integration experience (Härjedalens kommun, 2015). Here the municipality encourages and mediates friendships between newly arrived immigrants and local people. This example, and that of other municipalities in Jämtland, has demonstrated the inherent importance of this connection with the community, and of coordinators to maintain contact with, and support for, civil society. Other examples include the arrival of quota refugees¹ to Ísafjörður, Iceland in 1996. A part of the integration programme has involved mobilising the local community and getting volunteer families to provide support and friendship. Looking back, this proved a successful method for integrating newcomers in the minds of many residents. However, when no one specifically has a responsibility to mobilise civil society, the risk is that that immigrants gain little by way of connection to the local community, apart from interactions with their compatriots, which has been the experience for many migrant workers who have arrived more recently (Harbo et al., 2017).

¹ A quota refugee is a person who has fled his or her home country and been selected by the UN's refugee agency, UNHCR, to be resettled to a third country which offers them protection.



PHOTO: MADIS SCHMIDT RASMUSSEN

The importance of social networks and social interactions

The tradition of association life (*föreningsliv*) is strong in many areas of the Nordic countries, but the activities and possibilities arising from this do not always reach out to newcomers. Common forums such as the local choir, golf buddies, book clubs, women's knitting clubs, or participation in courses offered at public adult education centres are crucial social gatherings. They serve the purpose of securing social cohesion in communities around the Nordics. However, this may be felt to be something of a cool embrace for newcomers. Those newly arrived are often unfamiliar with what cultural associations are present, and may be equally unaware of how to look for information about the existing options. Also, even if appropriate information is received, there may be other obstacles – such as cost and access to equipment or materials, as well as transport (Bärfvenberg, 2015:12).

An extensive literature has sought to understand the social integration of newcomers, conceived as a two-way process of mutual adaptation between migrants and host societies; one in which strangers are incorporated into social, economic, cultural and political life in their new home (Norris and Purunen, 2019). Through a range of studies looking at successful integration, it has been argued that local institutions should play an important and increasing

role in integrating migrants into non-work-related relationships. This has the potential to improve the social dimension of the migrant's integration in various fields. The notion of social capital (a theoretical approach developed by Bourdieu) has been used to understand the experiences of new migrants and the subjective elements of their integration. It allows a better understanding of how new migrants bond to community and family networks, and membership of organisations, and how they develop a sense of security and social trust.

Social and political frameworks are crucially important for social and cultural participation. The same applies to institutional initiatives within education, the labour market and housing (Crul and Schneider, 2010). The 'civic turn', from the point of view of the authorities in Nordic countries, is closely linked to an emphasis on labour market integration as a means to independence, coupled with sustainable integration (Phillimore and Goodson, 2006). Work is presumed to facilitate contact with local people and colleagues, to make a positive future possible, and to increase the social capital of migrants. Associated with this is **the idea that economic independence is the best way to become engaged in society. While employment has many benefits for integration, it is social capital that mobilises factors likely to engage**

newcomers in local and diaspora communities, as opposed to expanding work-related social networks. This entails providing informal support networks within ethnic communities and through kinship ties, as well as facilitating connections with neighbours, friends and residents in host communities. There are clear indications that social integration supporting the creation of social capital in a new setting can be a crucial precondition in making newcomers employable. This is a perspective on integration that needs further consideration.

Social capital can be boosted through formal organisational networks (such as active membership of sports clubs, trade unions, religious organisations and local voluntary associations), through informal bonds among social groups and local networks of friends and family, as well as through cultivating feelings of security and social trust (Putnam, 1993², in Norris and Puranen, 2019). Recent research has pointed to different factors which are important in adapting to Swedish customs and laws. Informal contact with Swedish society and the strength of the network involved play a role, as well as the feeling of security. One perspective is that it is particularly important to orient newcomers to the new society they are joining through appropriate use of the Swedish media. Television, radio, newspapers and other media communicating local, regional and national news provides an opportunity to be informed about what is happening around you on many levels. However, trust towards neighbours and strangers, and active membership in a range of voluntary associations, were not significant predictors for feeling at home (ibid).

Compared to other European societies, Sweden has traditionally offered generous opportunities to

newcomers. In 1975, for example, Sweden adopted an official policy of multiculturalism. This included respecting ethnic and religious pluralism, for example through state-funded minority cultural associations (Norris and Purunen, 2019). Similar efforts evolved in Finland and Norway later. Study of the effects of this policy on cultural associations indicate that there is a multitude of topics funded by MUCF (Myndigheten för ungdom och civil samhällsfrågor) in Sweden. These include projects on democratisation, and especially civil society involvement with projects in rural communities, such as Dalarna (MUCF, 2019). However, this generous policy has come under scrutiny for not making a clear enough distinction between recipient organisations which nurture democracy and those which do not (Wolffhardt, et al., 2019).

The importance and effect of engaging and mobilising minority cultural associations in civil society integration in other Nordic countries needs to be studied further.

A myriad of local organisations, voluntary forums and churches can help to influence a local inhabitant's perceptions of newcomers (Labriandis and Sykas, 2013). Voluntary organisations with embedded knowledge concerning the local area and information about the labour market, housing opportunities and so on, help immigrants to navigate in the new society and community. This happens through supporting, guiding and referring them to relevant agents, for example. Smaller communities can have key people or community guardians who can assist – for instance, a local priest who proves essential in helping out with passport issues, registration forms and other paperwork (McAvaery, 2012). In a Nordic context there may be people serving in roles in the

² Norris and Purunen refer to Putnam, whose influential theory emphasised that cultural integration and social trust across diverse ethnic groups could be strengthened by bridging forms of social capital, such as membership and activism within social clubs and voluntary associations which include a diverse cross-section of the local community, such as political parties and trade unions. They pinpoint that "bonding" forms of social capital (exemplified by kinship, religious affiliation and ethnic ties) can also serve as important resources for helping international migrants settle into their local communities, reducing the risks of social isolation and providing an informal safety net. Later work by Putnam (2007), who has also been heavily referred to in terms of rural regional development and the importance of social capital for revitalising smaller towns in rural America, cautioned that social trust was often lower in more ethnically diverse local communities (in the USA).

local community other than the priest, for example teachers. It is important to acknowledge the efforts of local volunteers in engaging migrant newcomers, and in enabling their inclusion.

Some studies have shown that it is especially male refugees who come alone (single males) who lack contact and who are less prone to participate in activities arranged for refugees (Herslund, Lund and Sehested, 2018). Information on the behaviour and participation of young women in activities arranged for refugees, or their participation in voluntary work, is lacking and needed. On the other hand, there are numerous studies showing that immigrants who bring children with them can benefit in terms of integration because of their children. So school enrolment or daycare institutions can build a bridge between the family and the local community, for example (Parra and Pfeffer, 2006). Children engage more in the local milieu than their parents (Crul and Schneider, 2010), and the options for engagement are often more diverse. On the other hand, when migrants lack local language skills the family network will only have access to low income jobs made available by entrepreneurs with the same cultural origins (Pfeffer and Parra, 2009). An extended network beyond family boundaries or the ethnic diaspora is therefore crucial in securing sustainable integration.

Involvement and participation are the cornerstones of a democracy. It is not a challenge to democracy that different social groups get involved and participate to a different degree, as can be seen internationally and in the Nordic region. For example, it is consistent with the fact that many immigrant groups have lower involvement and participation rates than the majority population in most countries. There are many and various explanations for the lower level of social participation among immigrant groups. It can be a cultural characteristic of groups, of political institutions or of structures of opportunity. It can relate to the length of time spent in the host country, to national origin, to the employment rate, to levels of education, trust, social networks, language skills, political values, levels of knowledge and a sense of belonging. To discuss these factors more closely, we need to make a distinction between traditional explanations at the individual level, and explanations which are linked to more immigration-specific characteristics – such as language skills, the culture of community engagement and social trust. Trust can be both a manifestation and a prerequisite for participation, and it is certainly possible that the two phenomena affect each other mutually (Eimhjellen, et al., 2020).



Smaller municipalities and everyday integration

Everyday integration is a term applied by Norwegian authorities to characterise the social arena of integration that is not necessarily closely linked to a newcomer becoming employed, but is more widely associated with becoming functional in navigating the everyday tasks necessary to living in a new society. We value this approach, and will therefore apply it hereafter to everyday integration.

It happens to people when they meet in both small and larger social arenas, in more formal and informal communities like the workplace, in the kindergarten and in school, in the neighbourhood and in vicinity to where newcomers live, as well as in cultural life through engagement in voluntary organisations and other aspects of civil society. With increased digitalisation, social media are also important virtual meeting spaces, especially for children and young people. Everyday integration requires, first and foremost, effort from the individual immigrant. But it also requires that the immigrants encounter open mindedness and that their participation is enabled. Everyday integration is thus about living conditions, and concerns the host society's willingness and capacity to include immigrants in formal and informal communities. Everyday integration is about creating trust, belonging, networks and participation. Because this is something that happens in the

encounter between people, it is not something that can be adopted formally or mobilised by the public sector alone.

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society says in a recent report that there are indications that civil society actors sense a lack of knowledge and understanding about their role in the public sector, something which affects the long-term financial conditions of their organisations. Also, in smaller communities where the civil organisations tend to possess a less formal organisational form than in larger municipalities, this can have an even greater effect. Comprehensive administration, bureaucracy and existing procurement regulations can produce additional obstacles in organisations with less formal organisational frameworks. These obstacles, alongside other factors, can therefore impact on and undermine the realisation of principles of diversity and quality by preventing different initiatives from making progress (MUCF, 2016).

"The organisation's experience is that, among other things, there is a lack of knowledge and understanding about civil society within the public sector, and also that the long-term economic pre-conditions needed to develop their own activities and organisations are missing." (MUCF, 2016).

Migrating to a small and sparsely populated area can involve making a positive contribution to social life. Where local inhabitants engage in civil society and find reasons to meet, organise and participate in activities to get to know new inhabitants, this was obvious in Nordregio's visit to Näliden in Jämtland 2016 (Harbo et al., 2017) as well as in Landsby forum and Sønderborg municipality in Denmark (Nielsen and Skovbjerg, 2019). There is also evidence from Norway in Herøy municipality. "The leader of a volunteer organisation has a broad base of outreach to many of the newly arrived migrants in the municipality, and can work towards creating social cohesion between Norwegians and migrants living in the same municipality through different activities, such as language cafés, cultural evenings, etc." (Integration coordinator in Herøy municipality, Norway).

However, in smaller communities where generation after generation of families have been living continuously, the feeling of cohesion may be strongly intertwined with countryside values around family and social relations. A community defined by homogeneity and closeness is an ideal that migrants,

being newcomers of a different origin, may find challenging to live up to (Chavez, 2005). Time may therefore be a significant factor in determining the degree of social integration. Getting used to each other may take time, especially if the local community is tight knit and newcomers with weak local ties need to find their feet in these new conditions. According to American studies, socialisation is most likely to make migrants feel at home in the host society in second and third generation minority groups, because they are more influenced by agencies of cultural transmission and socialisation in general – including families, schools, the mass media, and bridging social networks in the host community (Ingelhart, 2018, in Norris and Purunen, 2019). The importance of the time perspective (the understanding that these processes take time) cannot be underestimated.

In a Norwegian research (Djuve et al., 2017), some participants who had lived in asylum centres said how, in their experience, it was easier to get in touch with locals in smaller communities, while others living in smaller communities said that they had experien-



ced problems getting acquainted with Norwegians. Accordingly, the size of the community does not guarantee interaction and integration in the local community. Having children is generally a factor which has a positive impact on the integration of immigrants, however. Parents accompany their children, participate in their activities, and make contact with Norwegian parents and employees in schools and kindergartens (Djuve et al., 2017). Research from Norway concludes, however, that many refugees and asylum seekers from countries with different value systems and cultures feel alienated, because the cultural strategies that families and communities use to support children in Norway may be different from theirs. Successful settlement therefore requires understanding about what supports children in their indigenous cultures, in order to be able to meet them in culturally appropriate ways (Hollekim et al., 2016, Ottemöller and Daniel, 2017).

The key enablers or volunteer actors who are crucial to social integration may vary in different smaller communities. A local teacher may go to a great

length in helping immigrant kids to prioritise both the Icelandic language and the mother tongue in Ísafjörður municipality (NW Iceland). Some key people in smaller communities – whether they act in the role of teachers, priests or others – may be crucial in helping the newly-arrived settle and feel socially included.

A recent example in a German village, covered in an in-depth article in *The New York Times*, might as well apply to some Nordic village or town facing an ageing population. The story showed how a German mayor took the initiative to invite refugees to his village to save the local school, despite the fact that inhabitants had voted for the far-right Alternative for Germany party in the latest elections. In general, the community was sceptical, and inhabitants were not optimistic that this would work out. However, many villagers committed to welcoming the newcomers. The refugees described in an interview how they felt included in the village family, showing how an unfavourable atmosphere can be changed, with some effort from all involved (Bennhold, 2019).



Is trust a factor in how well everyday integration works?

A key indicator of social cohesion is the extent to which individuals express feelings of trust towards others (OECD, 2019). Trust is essential, but alien systems and the way things work in the new host country may disrupt the sense of trust for many newcomers. In the developing world, traditional social networks of exchange and reciprocity are critical components of household security, disaster relief, and social wellbeing – especially in rural areas (Baird and Gray, 2014). Coming to a cold-feeing hemisphere where neighbours rarely talk together, or invite each other to their homes for dinner, can be difficult. People's behaviour can be radically different and more reserved than 'back home', and this may be a big culture shock. Even if organisational culture is strong locally, it may be a surprise to see how few daily encounters there are between neighbours. In smaller communities, this may be somewhat easier.

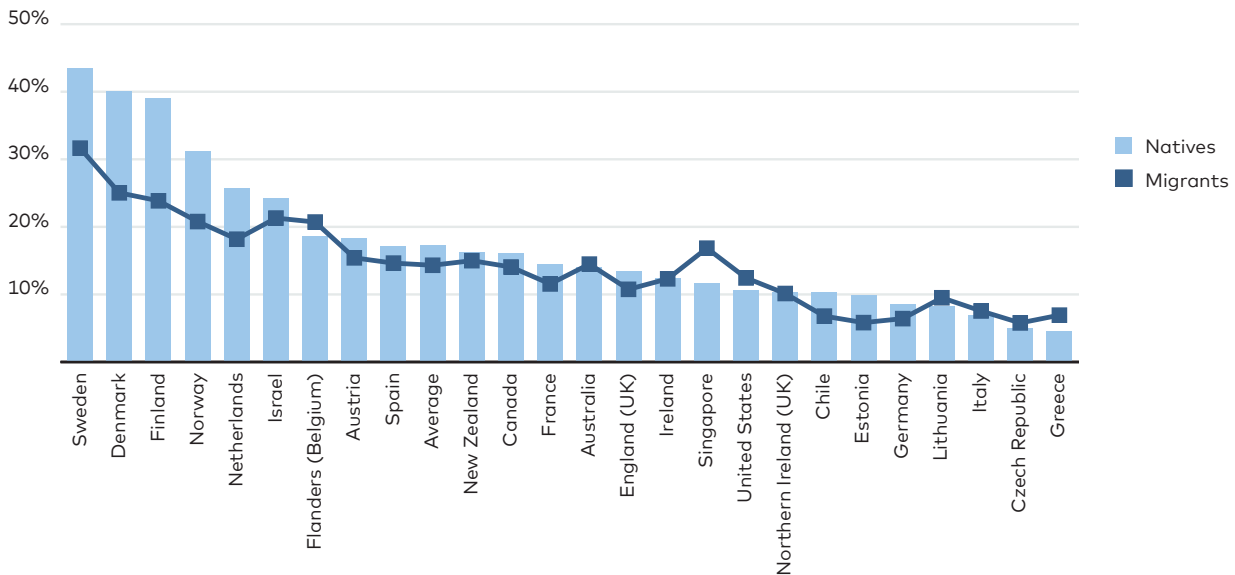
According to Norwegian authorities, the Norwegian government's goal is to ensure that immigrants have an increased sense of belonging and participation in society as whole, for example through organising common meeting places. According to a recent OECD report, trust among immigrants in most Nordic countries is higher than in the rest of the OECD. This is true for Sweden, Denmark and Finland, while Norway averages with Israel and Belgium in the figu-

res set out below. Promoting shared meeting arenas is important.

Most Nordic governments want to mobilise civil society better in ensuring integration and in strengthening cooperation within sport, among voluntary organisations, in cultural life, in religious communities and among social entrepreneurs, in order to secure many more arenas for meetings and encounters. The governments of Norway and Sweden provide targeted support schemes that involve funding for initiatives promoting and prioritising meeting points for immigrants and the indigenous population (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2018, Statens offentlige utredninger, 2016). While this enables activities that might otherwise not be organised, some arenas which are a natural part of the community infrastructure are ideal meeting points for various activities, e.g. the libraries.

"Libraries are excellent meeting places, with an untapped potential for integration activities. There are already many relevant international magazines and books, and with more activities focusing on social events it could lead to network building between migrants and native Norwegians. Distriktssenteret in Norway made "Inkluderingsnavet Berg folkebibliotek", a short film illustrating how the library

Figure 1: Trust by origin (natives and those born abroad) in OECD countries.



Trust is represented here as the percentage of people who answered disagree or completely disagree that you will be taken advantage of if you are not careful (in the PIAAC 2012/2015). Immigrants are defined as people born in a country other than that in which they took the survey. The darker colour; born in the country, the lighter colour; born in another country. Source: OECD, *Road to integration*, 2019

can be a good place to meet and organise activities in the community.” (Local official in Bodø municipality, Norway).

In many other smaller communities around the Nordic Region, libraries have played the role of everyday meeting places for substantial groups of newcomers. Some organisations involved in social integration have also engaged in the “*Menneskebiblioteket*” (human library) which have been mobilised in several countries – among them Norway, with Folkehjelpen supported by UNESCO. This way of meeting people creates dialogue between two individuals, the questioner and the “book” (the human being who makes herself available for loans!) to challenge prejudice and secure diversity. Civil society organisations in Funen, Denmark, have engaged like this. *Norges bygdekvinnelag* also initiated seminars with immigrant women on how to run organisations, take care of economy, and discover the meeting protocols that need to be learned to mobilise inclusion through ‘human library’ principles, which are about listening to other people’s life stories (NBK, 2018).

The governments of Norway and Denmark want to strengthen communities and reduce barriers for participation (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2018; UIM, 2019). Hardship in living conditions is a barrier to participation. In Norway, immigrants endure worse living conditions than the population in general, in regard to the economy, social contact networks, housing and health conditions (living con-

dition survey, 2016). Living conditions usually improve the longer people have stayed and lived in the country, and from one generation to the next. Everyday integration is important because it strengthens trust in the central institutions of society. Immigrants have high trust in institutions generally and strong sense of belonging to Norway (Living conditions survey, 2016). This is also supported by other similar surveys in Sweden (Norris and Puranen, 2019). In Denmark, the authorities have identified that only 54% of immigrants and their descendants are members of a civil organisation (78% for natives). Evidence from the Norwegian living condition survey shows that a sense of belonging increases with length of stay, and on average this sense is stronger towards Norway than to the country they emigrated from. Native Norwegians with immigrant parents feel a greater sense of belonging to Norway than the parents do to their former home country. Trust in the political system, the juridical system, the health care system and the police is as high, or higher, than the general population.

Trust in fellow citizens is lower among immigrants than among the general public, both in Norway and in Denmark (living condition survey, 2016). The survey sees increased civil engagement by this group as a way to increase trust among ethnic Danes and Norwegians, immigrants and their children in their fellow citizens (UIM, 2019, Kunnskapsministeriet, 2018). Very recent research from Norway shows that there is a link between voluntarism and social trust (dugnad)

among immigrants, and especially in organisations that gather different types of people together (Eimhjellen et al., 2020). Trust, however, is not a given that will simply evolve by itself. The host society needs to mobilise, as do newcomers. Some immigrants come from societies without civil society organisations, and may thus be sceptical about what this engagement may entail, especially if the system where they derive their values from is prone to the dominance of paternalistic and religious structures shaping their world view (Norris and Puranen, 2018). Many people who have fled war-torn regions have left behind conditions where trust in authorities and institutions has been eroded deeply in the course of the tragedies they have experienced. According to recent research in Sweden, trust in neighbours and strangers, together with active membership in a range of voluntary associations, were not significant predictors for feeling at home. Contact with informal networks and the strength of those networks was crucial, however (Norris and Puranen, 2019).

Immigrants encounter society in many different arenas, and also through various public services.

Children participate in daycare, kindergarten and school, and parents are expected to engage with those institutions, plus the after-school care (SFO). These institutions are unique, because the children go there irrespective of their background, and ideally there should be no segregation. They are also arenas where we as a society can meet other parents and build trust and cohesion. Throughout different phases of life, immigrants are also in contact with other public services, such as the health service and other services. So, while neighbours may at first not be crucial in how trust is built and how the feeling of belonging builds up among immigrants, these informal and social networks enable immigrants to navigate everyday life, and hence build trust in society, institutions and organisations. In a longer-term perspective, this will be the case with close knit community and neighbours. Being caught up in toxic nostalgia or feeling hostility around you in the new home is not good or fruitful, and can be relieved by fighting isolation with more and better social encounters. The community around you is, therefore, important when it comes to establishing these social encounters (Asia Abdillahi, 2019).





Religious communities

The idea that religious communities are an important aspect in the integration of immigrants is undisputed in the body of research addressing this issue (Kjellin, 2019). However, 'there are particularities to each situation' (Kjellin, 2019). For example, in the case of unaccompanied minors, religion can be a crucial coping strategy for them, because it can provide feelings of continuity with their previous life and adaptation to the new one (Raghallaigh and Gilligan, 2010). This highlights one of religion's roles that other civil society groups can emulate. Ideström and Linde, for example, make reference to the role of civil society organisations (CSOs) in giving immigrants agency and voice in the public arena (Ideström and Linde, 2019). Elander and Fridolfsson also acknowledge the role of civil society organisations in putting immigrants' issues on the political agenda, as well as their role in integrating newcomers through organising study circles or providing support for immigrant children (2012). Hansen's research on the role of civil organisations in rural Sweden has shown the existence of two motives behind the practices of integration carried out in those areas. He argues that compassion and political statements, led CSO activists to engage in the accommodation of refugees. In contrast to the bureaucratic and rational response of the authorities, civic organisations' actions were based on a view of refugees as

fellow human beings (Hansen, 2018). Politically, rural civil organisations' actions were aimed at showing that rural areas are not narrow-minded and xenophobic, as it is often portrayed through the urban lens (Hansen, 2018).

Often, many of the roles that religious organisations carry out are complementary to, or even help to provide, public services which are usually seen as within the competency of the State (Arora-Jonsson, 2017; Elander and Fridolfsson, 2012). In that regard, religious organisations in Swedish rural areas might have a strong involvement in the local community insofar they are providing public services which have otherwise been relocated to urban nuclei. Perhaps because of this, 'religious communities remain a potentially critical source of social support for individuals' (Halseth, 1999 in Andrews, 2011, p. 539), as they keep on being 'institutional bases of community' (Andrews, 2011). In researching the relationship between religious communities and social cohesion in English rural areas, Andrews (2011) found that Protestant denominations were more closely associated with cohesive communities. Research carried out in the United States points to the role of Protestant denomination in rural areas, in terms of integrating immigrants (Andrews, 2011). These communities organise activities or provide support for the needy.

This is an effective way to develop bridging social capital (Andrews, 2011).

More recently, the link between migration, aid and development has been on the agenda in international forums. There is also a focus on the possibilities of strengthening the cooperation between civil society, the private sector and the diaspora via development cooperation in the country of origin. This has been addressed in both Denmark and Norway. How such cooperation between civil society and immigrant groups and the private sector and the authorities can be designed to increase immigrants' role in development aid and long-term development remains to be seen and studied.

Svenska kyrkan and other religious (Muslim) communities have also played a role in many smaller communities in Sweden, as has *Stiftelsen Kirkens Bymisjon* in Aust Agder, and Vestfold and Rogaland in Norway. Anisa Abeytia's study "Active and Passive Integration in Two Norwegian communities, Mapping Syrian Refugees' Access to Socio-Spatiality" (2019) which followed Syrian refugees throughout Europe ending up in rural communities in Norway (Mandal and Asker). It turns out that refugees felt intimidated by having to report to the local Protestant church. It was not felt to be a safe place. Abeytia's conclusion is that places where civil society encounters refugees and seek to promote social integration

should think about moving away from places with religious doctrinal association to more neutral places such as the swimming pool or the library (Abeytia, 2019)³. This underpins the notion that places seen as protective spaces matter in terms of successful integration. For refugees it was real world interaction between locals, refugees, NGOs and Norwegian Institutions (NI) that provided opportunities for upward mobility, by expanding refugee socio-spatiality to promote integration through the establishment of networks outside immigrant communities (ibid).

How well-suited religious leaders are in integration can be questioned, too. Many Muslim immigrant families in Finland trust the local Imam most when it comes to the challenges and problems they face in daily life. For the children, and especially daughters, this may mean that they are trying to be Finnish all the week and then at weekends they turn into Muslim daughters. If there are problems, parents will always turn to the Imam for advice, but the Imam may not always be the best person because he may not know much about the local society. This increases the risk of isolation instead of integration and pulls families into a danger zone of toxic nostalgia. It may even reinforce parents in maintaining harmful habits and traditions that prevent a sense of belonging (Abdillahi, 2019).

³ She uses the term 'secondspace', which relates to Lefebvre's (1991) concept of perceived, conceived and lived spaces, and Sojas (1996), relational concepts that he labels firstspace, secondspace and thirdspace. This involves a perspective on understanding the relations that exist between these spaces that takes into account how elements from various epistemological perspectives contribute to the broadening of our spatial consciousness (Salili and Hoosain, 2014).



The role of aid organisations

Actors from local authorities and governmental institutions have an obligation to provide immigrants and other inhabitants with centralised public services. What else is offered, especially for immigrants in promoting their integration process, will differ between areas, however. In all the Nordic countries, civil society organisations such as the **Red Cross** play an important role, to varying degrees, in the integration process, and provide opportunities for participation in the local community (Harbo et al., 2017). From several sources we have seen it stated that if it was not for committed civil society organisations such as the Red Cross, Refugee Councils, local congregations and sports clubs, inclusion of newcomers would simply not happen.

In Iceland, Denmark and Finland the Red Cross has been pivotal in enabling refugees to broaden networks and to establish contacts with local people through different friendship and mentoring programmes. In Iceland, quota refugees arriving in different municipalities are met by participants from the *"Leiðsögumenn flóttafólks"* (refugee guides) programme. They have the role of getting acquainted with the refugees, assisting them, and becoming friends so that they can practice English, talk about Icelandic culture – even practice Icelandic and learn to solve practical issues. There are numerous cases

where this encounter and involvement has created life-long friendship relationships, and where families feel so attached that they call each other 'family' after the formal programme ends (Nesfréttir, 2019).

There are a number of civil society organisations supporting integration of immigrants in Denmark which have been running for several years. The Danish Red Cross has a number of voluntary initiatives, such as being representatives for unaccompanied minors, helping with homework, plus the operation of asylum centres, sports events and different kinds of recreational activity. Other organisations have been active for longer periods, such as the Danish Youth Council, Danish Refugee Council, the *Nydansker* association, and more (European Commission – Denmark, 2016). In Denmark, for example, Friends Show the Way – something which is further described on page 31-33.

One of the largest civic organisations in Finland involved in integration efforts is the Finnish Red Cross (FRC), which among other tasks supports the authorities in the reception of refugees and maintains asylum centres in different parts of Finland. However, FRC help is not limited to initial assistance. There is also an emphasis on activities aiming to bring people from different groups together. This

voluntary work may, for example, include language and homework clubs or orientation services. The Finnish Refugee Council is another large civic organisation working with refugees and asylum seekers. It enlists tens of thousands of people to carry out a variety of activities; informational, educational and practical. The Council's support is for both the newly arrived and for those who have been residing in the country for a longer time. The work aims to provide support in everyday issues, but also to help with how to establish and run an association (European Commission – Finland, 2016).

By providing and organising different kinds of activities (such as language practice, mentorship programmes, language cafés and so on), it is not that the authorities can claim to solve all the needs related to holistic inclusion themselves. However, more public support for civil society organisations and their integration efforts could be a vital for these organisations to be able to continue their valuable work. Since everything outside work has great influence if people want to reside somewhere, involvement in local networks supports more formal public roles, such as finding employment (Harbo et al., 2017).



PHOTO: SCANPIX.DK

Sports clubs and integration

Physical activity and other social activities are one way that sport has proven suitable for integration. It helps immigrants to develop relationships with others in the society through interaction, and to establish social networks in the host community. Sports clubs are social arenas where people enjoy their leisure time, make friends, exercise and engage in several other related social activities (van der Roest, van der Werff, and Elmoose-Østerlund, 2017). These aspects of social interaction are key to understanding how sports clubs can be spaces for promoting social integration, understood as 'the (un)equal representation of various social groups in sports clubs' (Elmoose-Østerlund, Ibsen, Nagel, and Scheerder, 2017). Social integration can be broadly divided into three dimensions: structural integration, which focuses on the representation of social groups compared with the population; sociocultural integration, aiming at integrating and creating a multicultural environment through values and norms within sports clubs; and socio-affective integration, which deals with participation and the interaction of sports clubs members (Elmoose-Østerlund and Ibsen, 2016).

The role of sports clubs in social integration has been regarded as important because of the significant share of the population attending them, and

also the social reciprocity and obligations developed through them (Seippel, 2005). Moreover, sports clubs are also spaces where fundamental aspects of socio-affective integration (Elmoose-Østerlund et al, 2017), such as democratic participation, social participation, or emotional commitment, can take place (van der Roest et al., 2017).

Participating in sport does not require language skills to the same extent as many other interactions. As set out by the human right organisation, the Council of Europe, it can play an important role *"...in helping both host societies and new arrivals in a community to come together to build new social connections. Common interests and values can be shared through sport, bringing people together to promote intercultural dialogue, to overcome differences and to reduce intolerance."* (Council of Europe, n.d.).

Competitive sport is a global phenomenon and is therefore widely regarded as a tool for the integration of new arrivals. Where sports are practiced, meeting-places appear in which people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds can get to know and understand one another through their common interest (Peterson, 2008; Hertting and Karlefors, 2017). The Danish DGI sports association has for decades proved crucial in social integration

(European Commission, 2016). In Reykjanæsbær, in Iceland, where the tradition of sports is strong, it caught the local authorities' attention and raised concerns that immigrants were not using the incentive payments made available (by the municipality) for children's sports, recreation and art activities to the same extent as native born people (Stjernberg et al., 2020). This chimes with qualitative research from Sweden, which concludes that greater inclusion of immigrants revitalises sports clubs. However, the study report also mentions that it can prove difficult to come into contact with the children through their parents due to a variety of reasons, such as language, difficult working hours and the lack of understanding of sport club activities (Hertting and Karlefors, 2017). Also, from Norway: *"Besides the focus on attracting workers, the in-migration project also supports a holistic inclusion of those migrants already arrived in Nordland County. This includes supporting civil society organisations working on integration in the municipalities. It has become clear that everything happening outside work is of high importance for people wanting to reside on a long-term basis. By being included in the local community through engagement, the sports association gives a sense of belonging in a different way than having a regular work, for example."* (Official from NAV Nordland, Norway)

Hertting and Karlefors studied ten sports association in Sweden, and it turned out that three of them had as the main reason for their existence to work for the integration of migrants – and to introduce them to the Swedish sports culture, language and society, and then enable them to become more traditional football clubs. In Nordregio's research on migration, sports emerged as an important element in integration. In the Danish case from Frederikshavn, the local sports club was very active in attracting newcomers to their activities. The municipal actors provided support by assisting with information and setting up meeting places, as well as engaging in other efforts for the sport club to reach new migrants (Harbo et al., 2017).

In addition, the degree of urbanisation where sports clubs are located turns out to be a relevant aspect of

social integration. Research shows that sports clubs in small communities are more strongly connected to the local community and therefore help to integrate marginalised social groups (Elmose-Østerlund et al., 2017). In researching the Swedish case, Stenling and Fahlen (2016) created a typology of sports clubs' organisational identities, among which we find 'the village preservation club'. The authors described these sport clubs as working towards "the survival and prosperity of the village" where they are located (Stenling and Fahlén, 2016, p8). In contrast to other (urban) types of clubs, 'village preservation clubs' are targeted towards all villagers. They do not provide a particular sport, but rather include non-sporting activities, and their core identity relies on being community-focused, self-sufficient and run with a strong volunteer commitment (Stenling and Fahlén, 2016).

In the Finnish case in Punkalaidun, the local community engaged with newcomers in different welcoming activities such as skiing, barn dances, homework assistance and football coaching. Prior to the emergence of municipal integration projects, many refugees placed in Punkalaidun and its asylum centre moved away from the rural area towards larger cities after gaining asylum. This contributed to more newcomers staying in the municipality, because it also offered employment opportunities and services. The 'Punkalaidun approach' has received awards for integration, including the ETNO award from the Finnish Ministry of Justice for the advancement of good ethnic relations in Finland. While Punkalaidun's integration project lasted, it became widely recognised across Finland and an inspiration to other regions and municipalities in search of good integration practices – notably in the aftermath of record-high refugee volumes in 2015/2016 (Harbo et al., 2017). However, like many other integration projects, even when proving efficient at meeting their aims, their lifetime is often short and dependent on short-term funding. This means that while Punkalaidun is an inspiring story, its real spirit, the entrepreneur behind it, Maarit Tiittanen, has been adapting it to Kaarku since 2018, with support from the Evangelic Institute, where the emphasis is on

integration through participation in everyday life (Landsbygden, n.d.)

"Nordland county (Norway) sports association, meanwhile, has had a funding programme whereby local sports associations can apply for financial support to create sporting activities specifically aimed at integrating newly arrived migrants. An introduction to sports associations and leisure time activities in Norway is also part of the introductory programme for refugees." (Official from NAV Nordland, Norway). Since 2018, Jomala IK in Åland has been inviting newcomers and immigrants, with their children, to meet people and play football (Fagerholm et al., 2019).

Much of the evidence points towards how sports practice can positively promote the integration of immigrants. It is also interesting to look at how reciprocal this can be, as integration is indeed supposed to be. One example from the Hettering and Karlefor research (2017) also casts light on how one football club in the countryside was about to close down due to a lack of participants. But because

of young people from the local school and asylum centre being willing to participate, the shutdown was avoided.

'Hej främling', or 'Hi Stranger' is a health promoting inclusion activity which started up in Östersund, Sweden. Beginning by teaching refugees winter sports such as cross-country skiing, it works through cost-free inclusion efforts focusing on health promotion activities like sporting activity, cultural activity and outdoor recreational events. The ideology is that everybody is welcome. Participation is what really matters, rather than achievements. Origins, shoe size, age or body form are not what counts here. The word about this club's success has spread widely since the beginning in 2013. It is now extending to seven regional jurisdictions from Kiruna to Malmö. People from other municipalities have now been in contact to get support in starting up similar initiatives, both in the metropolitan region and in communities across the countryside (Hej Främling, 2019). What participation in sports can provide to the integration processes, beyond other forms of activity, is promoting a sense of pride and a unity of purpose



which is independent of cultural values, religious backgrounds or national identities.

A discussion is emerging across some of the Nordic countries in relation to "föreningskultur" – those material obstacles which lead many immigrant parents to stop their children fully taking part in sports clubs. To a significant extent, municipalities are now considering and implementing the provision of funds to children under 16 to help offset this. The practice is already well known in Iceland, and in some Norwegian municipalities such as Narvik (Lillefloth, 2019). The discussion about this is lively in Sweden, for example in Södertälje and Märsta. It seems to be an effective preventive policy that may help to arrest a more deep-seated development of segregation in the future.

POP-UP ACTIVISM AND MENTORSHIP

Since the large wave of refugees arriving in 2015, civil society has been organising itself in new ways. 'Pop-up activism' is one of these forms. This can be defined in terms of a specific form of mobilisation based on types of "social media driven voluntarism and pop-up voluntarism which are more network based, personally conveyed, and non-bureaucratic activities." Their aim is not primarily to create political change, but to be able to react promptly to developments via social media (Lundsfryd et al., 2017). These are the kinds and types of network which have evolved in recent years in the Nordic countries. *Venligboerne* offers one example of pop-up activism which is still active. It provides personal contacts which evolve into handling more practical matters, as distinct from the approach of more traditional organisations. Massive budget cuts in Denmark have produced a situation where many local caseworkers involved with formal integration processes are less and less able to provide one-on-one help to refugees. This makes volunteer work vitally important. (European Commission – Denmark, 2016) *Venligboerne* is one notable pop-up activism initiative which started out with a Facebook group in the small town of Hjørring, in Denmark, in 2012. It has now spread throughout the country. The goal is to involve local people in day-to-day

encounters with refugees. It is a dynamic community initiative which operates primarily through social networks like Facebook. Here is a platform where refugees can both ask questions and seek company. But it has also expanded into different activities, such as creating meeting places and helping people adapt to their new surroundings. The *Venligboerne* network has far more active members than more traditional networks in Denmark. This could possibly be because of its much looser organisational and operational structure; something that makes it easier for new members to get involved. It includes 45 local divisions covering the whole of Denmark, and it is a public movement that has now also spread to South Sweden (Venligboerne, 2019). Those who are not involved any more can also unregister easily (European Commission – Denmark, 2016).

Mentorship is another form of assistance that has a long tradition in the Nordic region. Here organisations engage in providing guidance in relation to a range of activities. One of the earlier forms of mentoring in the Nordic countries developed around an identified mismatch between immigrants' qualifications and skills, and their actual possibility of recruitment within the labour market. Highly educated medical surgeons had ended up as taxi drivers, and nurses were helping to stock consumer items on the supermarket shelves in those places where they had relocated all around the industrial world. This seemed a great waste. Today many integration efforts focused either on everyday integration or on social integration are handled through organised mentorships.

An analysis from the European Commission identified other examples of voluntary initiatives towards integration on a smaller scale in Finland. One of these concerns a group of older people who volunteer as foster grandparents for immigrant children that do not have any grandparents of their own in Finland. Another is a network offering free literacy and Finnish language classes. Yet another, known as iCount, was created to improve the dialogue between immigrants, the authorities and political parties in Finland, and also to increase the

knowledge of the country's political system. The aim here was to encourage the participation of immigrants in decision-making. A further example worth mentioning is an initiative whereby people learned to get to know each other through fishing in Joensuu, Eastern Finland. This was based on the local fishing club offering asylum seekers the opportunity to go fishing with club members, as well as providing them with the necessary equipment (European Commission – Finland, 2016).

Analysis from the European Commission concludes that despite a more critical political atmosphere which emerged after the refugee crisis in 2015, there remains a strong public willingness to help, and initiatives like this are a welcome addition to what can be provided by the authorities. Many of the initiatives explored here were, in one way or another, enabled through the Internet, social media and the wider digital environment (European Commission – Finland, 2016).

Even where collective mobilisation can be sparked into life through social media and the digital environ-

ments, it needs to be repeatedly stressed that someone still has to be in charge of mobilising and maintaining things so that they proceed smoothly. Taking on an integration coordinator has proved crucial in some cases. The coordinator behind the Punkalaidun project is one example. She became involved in the lives of refugees, and she is also well connected in the local community. Such an approach towards integration in Finland and beyond has become known for visibly making a difference, and has also been seen as an opportunity to further rural development. However, this particular example was also heavily dependent upon the personnel involved and upon the individual efforts of the integration coordinator. It came to an end as a result of the impact of short-term project budgets.

Mentorship programmes can have different aims and specific target groups for everyday social integration. Here are a few examples worth highlighting: A focus on apprenticeship was tried in Östersund, in a situation where previous difficulties with a particular version of such an arrangement first had to be tackled. Part of the region's strategy towards both



integration and the increase in population was to share knowledge and change attitudes. This included seeing it as a positive to be a mentor for interns at the workplace. For that to happen it was recognised as crucial not to impose an extra workload on the employee involved, and therefore to redistribute some of his/her tasks to other people. Mentorship courses were also provided, and together those enabling factors helped changing attitude in a more positive direction. In order to offer leadership and a good example, politicians themselves arranged apprenticeships in the public sector (Harbo et al., 2017).

Since 2002, a mentor programme in the long-standing KVINFO-network across Denmark has been running for women with backgrounds other than Danish ones. This programme seeks to create synergies between the women in KVINFO and women from ethnic minorities, so that the latter can access support which enables them to integrate better within Danish society. That includes help in navigating opportunities in the labour market, creating social networks, and assistance with Danish rules and regulations. This mentoring programme has received widespread attention across Europe, and an honourable mention by the OECD in 2007 (European Commission – Denmark, 2016). It is still ongoing.

“One local initiative was setting up a mentoring programme with a focus on women. Here Norwegian and migrant women are partnered together in order to support each other in small and large matters in life, and to enhance the social networks of people in the same village.”

“One lesson learned in Nordland county is that if migrants don't come into contact with Norwegian society much, they will not become integrated, even though they have a job.” (Integration coordinator in Herøy municipality, Norway.)

Rotary clubs, Lions and other civil society organisations which devote efforts to philanthropic support of different kinds may also be able to play a larger role in rural areas than in cities. Rotary Sweden, for example, is active in integration efforts in the Kalmar region, in Skellefteå, and in other places through its Yrkesmentorerna programme. The main aim of this programme is for members to help share knowledge about Swedish society, how to navigate the job market, and ultimately how to get a job (<http://rotarymentorerna.se/>). This is similar to the Rotary club in Lemvig, Denmark (Rotary DK, 2018). In Norway, the Rotary organisation also makes a difference. They use a meeting space at the library every Thursday. This is where much of the planning for their activities takes place. A couple of books have resulted from this work, including interviews with refugees who have come to Lillehammer. The question for them is not what they have moved away from, but rather what reception looked like for them when they came to Norway. The Rotarians have started a range of mentoring activities, from accompanying someone at a football match to going with them to driving school. They offer companionship, run daily errands and help with the new language at one and the same time (Rotary Distriktskonferens, 2018). Another example is Lions in Karlskrona providing bicycles and maintenance tools to young refugees in the district (Blekinge Läns Tidning, 2017).



PHOTO: SCANPIX.DK

Coordination and partnership between municipalities and CSOs

Collaboration between different professions and public sector organisations is one form of cooperation which has become more common in recent decades (Axelsson and Axelsson, 2013). Such collaboration has also become something of a trend in the governance of integration policy, too. In this section we take a closer look at the development of municipal and civil society organisations in Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Iceland, as well as in Åland. We ask: What are the main characteristics, possibilities and challenges of the current forms of cooperation and coordination between municipalities, regions and civil society organisations? Overall, each and every one of the Nordic countries have become more aware of the importance of creating arenas for meeting and working together with involvement of CSOs. This happens to a different extent in different countries. Some lay emphasis upon the active involvement of immigrants and refugees in CSOs. Others stress the importance of voluntary CSO engagement in smoothing the integration process overall, and in preventing social isolation. Understanding the different ways in which municipalities, regional authorities and CSOs engage can with one another in integration efforts – an arena where ideological conflicts over the interpretation of immigration, integration, segregation and marginalisation may arise – is therefore highly relevant.

NORWAY

The Norwegian authorities have been criticised for the modest impact of their integration programmes (Djuve and Kavli, 2019). However, the Norwegian government has clearly expressed its support for voluntary organisations through appropriate framework conditions, and through a wide range of non-bureaucratic support mechanisms for voluntary initiatives, organised sport and self-generated activities. Activities for children and young people have been given special priority. The government has announced reforms to simplify the voluntary sector, which will be approved through the state's policy on voluntary organisations in parliament (Kunskapsdepartementet, 2018).

For quite a while the municipalities have involved civil society organisations in programmes and efforts aimed at contributing to the development of better local communities (Schou and Indset, 2015). Concurrently, incremental changes in the disciplinary elements of these programme have resulted in a regime of much more active control. In Norway all integration projects driven by civil society organisations need to come about through bidding and procurement processes guided by the public law of procurement. A major driver behind the intensification of disciplinary provisions in these has been the

assumption that participants often lack the motivation to integrate into the labour market. Djuve and Kavli (2019) say that this assumption presents an obstacle to policy learning with regard to programme quality. In terms of implementation, policy ideas seem to function simultaneously as path-reinforcing cognitive locks and as drivers for political change.

In accordance with a report produced for *kommunal sammenslutningen*, Norway, in 2016 (looking at how municipalities handle the integration of unaccompanied minors who are refugees) the following findings were highlighted. Municipalities must focus on integration as part of their duty of care. This includes:

- Cooperation with voluntary organisations and sports clubs, to ensure active participation.
- Cooperation with the business community, to establish internships and part-time jobs.
- Municipalities should also focus on internal internships (KS/Fou, 2016).

Norway has a valid strategy that should provide guidance on this. The emphasis of the Norwegian integration strategy (2019-2022) in relation to the role of civil society organisations in the integration process sets out both aims and motivations as to why civil society organisations are key to integration.

"Norway's strategy on integration includes increased efforts to prevent segregation and exclusion. The Norwegian government wants to promote participation and community. It is small, close communities which prove crucial in sustaining a good life. It is especially important that children and young people from immigrant backgrounds can participate in activities and social spaces in an equal way to other children. Voluntary organisations, sport and cultural life are central features which the government wants to work with in order to promote success in everyday integration." (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2018).

Current funding arrangements have been criticised by those active in the voluntary sector in Norway.

Their concern is that voluntary organisations need to rely on short-term project funding. This limits the continuity of the good work which has been achieved so far. There is now a call for broader funding arrangements, without too many defined restrictions, to help change this. Otherwise voluntary organisations will lose the freedom and capacity to find positive solutions. An example would be when language and finance are thresholds that limit the ability of some people to participate in voluntary organisations. This is particularly important for work with children and young people (Øvstegård in frivillig Norge, 2019).

"When the task of municipalities with regard to integration increases, the effective functioning of coordination between municipalities and voluntary organisations will be decisive for how we as a society manage to make use of the possibilities involved, and how we solve problems as part of this task. When organisations like LIN (likestilling, inkludering, nettverk/equality, inclusion, network) get the contract and manage well for many years, this reaps positive results." (translated from Stian Slotterøy Johnsen, Arendalsuka – debatt om integration 2019).

Even where cooperation in partnership between municipalities and civil society organisations is promising, the head of Frivillig Norge stresses the fact that more diversity is needed in organisational communities:

"There are many good collaborative partnerships out there in Norway, where the organisations and municipalities involved are doing something positive together. But our members say that there is much more potential in thinking more broadly about the relationship between partnership and voluntarism. The volunteer ethos and approach is an unbelievably important area, almost independently of the activities involved. Whether it is sport, culture, language training, or seeking a better life, or seeking better access to the labour market – this factor not taken into account as much as we may wish. The municipalities (only 15%) need to figure out, alongside voluntary organisations, how we can improve our partnerships. (Stian Slotterøy Johnsen, Oral communication, 2019)

SWEDEN

According to a review conducted by the Swedish National Audit Office (Riksrevisionen) in 2014, civil society organisations were rarely providers of integration services in Sweden. However, actors in civil society were found to have a growing role in complementing public services. In recent years, the Swedish government has demonstrated an ambition to involve civil society in integration work, and in helping to speed up the integration process (European Commission – Sweden, 2016). Even though the Swedish authorities have been generous in their policies towards minority organisation (as we have highlighted), their integration policies and the implementation of these has still been more centralised in the past than in neighbouring Nordic countries. Swedish integration policy is now less centralised, however, and municipalities have gained an increasing role in integration efforts. The conventional mindset is that the authorities should take care of everything involved in integration efforts. But this is now changing somewhat. Numerous initiatives are now taking shape in Sweden, and it remains to be seen what they mean for garnering success and strengthening learning processes within the framework of cooperation (samverkan).

What the Swedes called IOP (Idéburen offentlig partnerskap/samverkan) is what might be referred to as 'civil society public partnership', a model of collaboration between the public sector and the civil society sector (sometimes called the third sector). Forum, an organisation well known to many involved in social innovation in Sweden, is a civil society organisation which developed this model in 2010 in order to enable problem-solving between the sectors, in the direction of a sustainable society. The IOP has been used, among other things, to combat male violence against women, to reduce the vulnerability of EU migrants, and to establish work with newcomers in relation to labour market integration. (Forum, 2019, Andersson and Sandberg, 2018) IOP is legally possible and permissible where there is no market competition in contract bidding. This applies in many instances to smaller communities and to rural areas, where fewer actors in civil society

have capacity, where competition in the NGO field is absent. A public authority is not obliged to procure all the activities it carries out through external parties. According to the EU Commission's lawyers and the Swedish government, each regional / local authority must determine an appropriate financing tool based on the purpose of the business and the needs of the users. Entering an ideas-based public partnership is therefore fully possible, in legal terms (Andersson and Sandberg, 2018; Andersson and Sandberg, 2018a).

As far back as 2015, in Jämtland, the Swedish Migration Agency and other public organisations were explicit about the importance of civil society in helping to achieve integration. In its report, the Public Employment Agency mentions that they experienced difficulties with the formalisation of these activities, but they nevertheless stressed the importance of the activities involved and the need for engagement from the voluntary sector in society (Swedish Public Employment Agency, 2015). Civil society is now responsible for plenty of activities which create a welcoming atmosphere, and through them newly-arrived people get to know people from the region they are settling in.

Refugee guides in Eskilstuna are an example of how authorities and volunteers can combine their resources effectively. Their effort focusses on helping immigrants with their daily lives, on language skills, and on understanding the codes of local culture. This is done on a voluntary basis, and the municipality has matched hundreds of individuals to this end since 2006. Eskilstuna municipality has also introduced this programme across Sweden, where over 80 municipalities have joined the movement. In the Skåne region, the network for voluntary associations of this kind has become part of the regional introduction programme for newcomers. The project aims to develop collaboration between public and non-profit organisations in order to better use voluntary sector capacities in the reception of refugees. Volunteer work involves improving social contacts for the newly arrived, and promoting their participation in society (European Commission – Sweden, 2016).

A relatively new initiative is the partnership between Bilda (an educational institution) and Örebro municipality, involving civil society organisations and the Örebro sports club (idrottsförbund). This is a partnership which has sparked numerous initiatives to improve integration efforts in areas which were both vulnerable and facing a clear risk of serious segregation. This approach to partnership is inspiring, because it brings actual human beings to the forefront, and then develops actions around specific initiatives in an adaptive way. The coordination team works with a problem-solving spirit, seeking to do new things that work instead of sticking to existing frameworks which have been shown not to work (Bark and Stålbelt, 2019). This raises the hope that these partnerships are evolving to be more adaptive, and to deploy tools and methods that work professionally, in combination with a commitment to deep engagement and fostering a humanitarian spirit.

According to the European Commission's website on integration (2016), Sweden's most successful activities involving civil society organisations seemed to be ones focusing on non-employment activities. They are, however, harder to evaluate. However, success can be recognised in the expanding number of volunteers and their ability to reach their target groups (European Commission – Sweden, 2016).

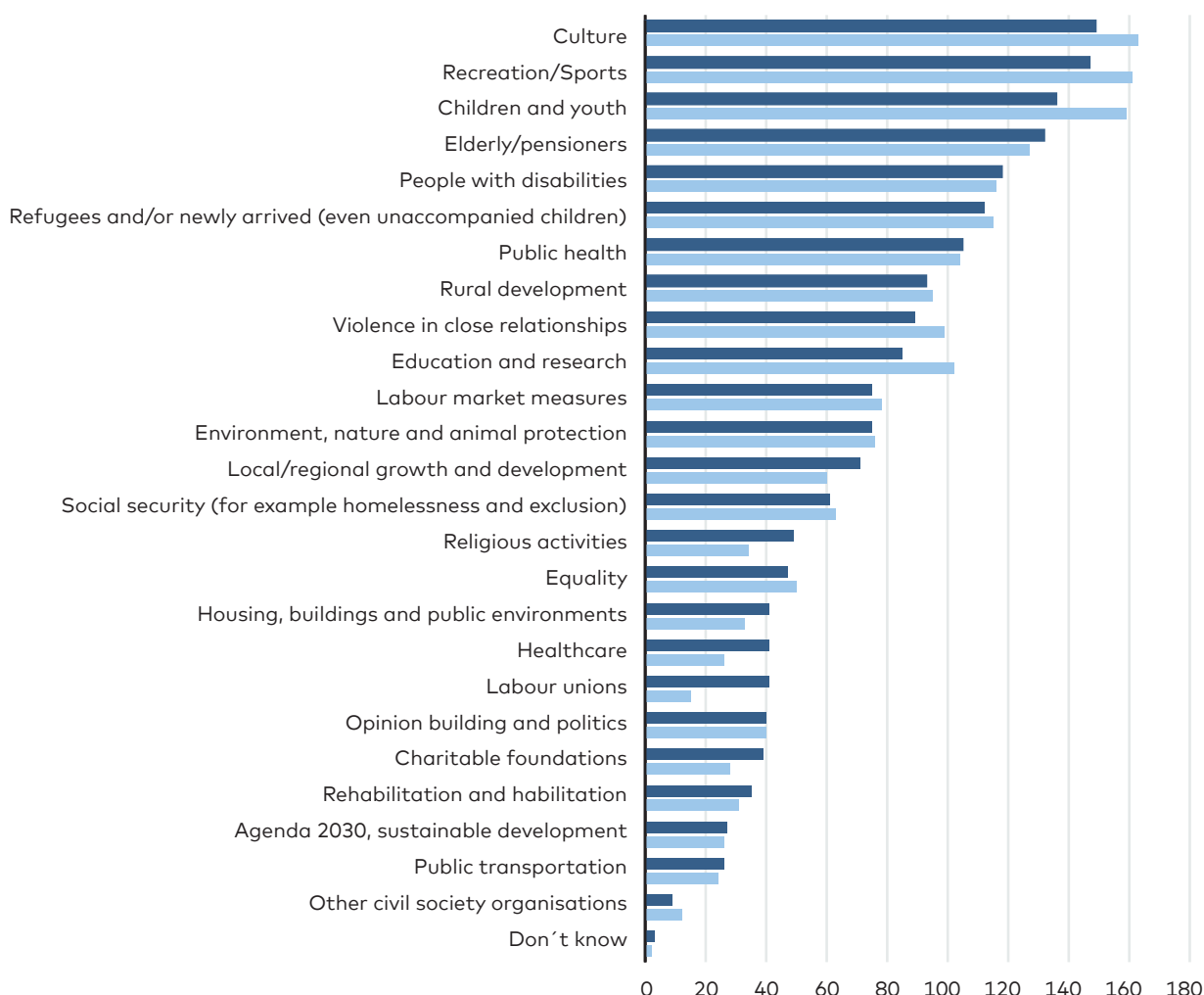
According to a 2018 survey conducted among the municipalities in Sweden, as well as among regional authorities, there are signs that both municipalities and regional authorities (Landsting and regions) are organising for long-term coordination and cooperation with civil society organisations (Hemström, 2018). As has already been identified by the authority responsible for youth and civil society questions (MUCF), structural and practical difficulties were often experienced by civil society organisations. Despite expressing general satisfaction with the public sector's efforts, MUCF research highlighted a lack of understanding about the role of civil society, and its need for long-term economic support to develop the organisation and operating capacity of its institutions. The issues included obstacles regarding bureaucracy, and the existing procurement regulations.

The authors proposed reducing administrative requirements; offering more stable, long-term financial conditions; increasing knowledge and understanding of civil society's role within the public sector; improving the conditions for collaboration, and finding ways to promote spontaneous engagement outside of established organisations (MUCF, 2016). A recent (2018) mapping of how Swedish municipalities, landsting and regions cooperate with civil society organisations included a survey, the results of which emphasised the fact that civil society organisations most commonly supported initiatives aimed at culture, recreational activities and sports, children and young people, older people and pensioners, people with functional limitations (the disabled), refugees and/or newly arrive migrants, and public health (see graph below). Within those different fields of activity, the municipalities and regions perceived a greater need to develop cooperation over the next three years. Their plans for development focussed predominantly on strengthening contact with the civil society organisations and generating more partnerships. Overall, the survey offers a picture of a development whereby cooperation with civil society remains important, and where there is ongoing work to create the relevant structures for this within municipalities, landsting and regions (Hemström, 2018). The coalition of municipalities and regions (SKL – now SKR) has been supporting value-based organisations within the social field since 2008. From then through to 2016, the dialogue and partnership across administrative levels has, if anything, increased (Perols, 2019).

However, it varies as to how open the municipal administrations are to the involvement of CSOs. Some municipalities are sceptical, whereas others embrace the idea. There are already some inspiring models out there. The social innovations that the development of partnerships between civil society organisations and Swedish municipalities have created, remain to be seen in their fullest potential.

The main conclusion here is that in including civil society organisations more fully in integration work, the requirement for involvement and for the joint participation of civil society organisations in

Figure 2: Associations with focus on...



The distribution of Swedish municipalities' response on coordination with civil society organisations (dark blue), and economic support to civil society organisations (light blue). Source: Hemström, 2018.

political decision-making will increase, and that it will strengthen sustainable development. It is also important to stress that many established organisations may lose members as new organisational forms and activities evolve (SOU, 2016 in Hemström, 2018). There is therefore an emphasis on being open towards more loosely organised and informal groups. These are ones that can contribute invaluable to efforts in emergency situations, for example the reception of asylum seekers in 2015 (ibid).

In the course of work on this publication, the evidence we have received by talking to representatives of different municipalities in Sweden, and among different CSOs, is that the extent to which municipal administration are open minded towards the involvement of civil society organisations (and partnership with them in integration efforts) varies quite a bit. For example, a voluntary effort helping refugee

children with school homework, and a Red Cross initiative to establish more formal partnerships for this in a southern municipality in Småland, have not been positively received so far (late autumn 2019). On the other hand, another municipality with a dispersed population in the same region had actively been trying to increase motivation towards volunteer work for integration among its inhabitants. But this received zero response. In a survey conducted by Mistra Futures on how the Swedish municipalities, landsting and regions cooperate with the civil society organisations, a respondent from a smaller municipality expressed the view that the capacity of municipalities to absorb the efforts of CSOs would be key to dealing with welfare issues, a question of strategic survival in tomorrow's world.

"Vi tror att samverkan med civilsamhället är en strategisk överlevnadsfråga i (X) och små kommu-

ner som inte har ekonomiska muskler att utföra allt, framförallt välfärdsarbete som kommer att krävas i en framtid som inte ligger långt borta.” (Hemström, 2018)

Given their increased role in integration efforts, it is important for the municipalities, especially, that they coordinate and cooperate effectively with civil society organisations. This became evident in the open field responses to the 2018 survey: *“Overall, municipalities, county councils and regions also seem to see the need to develop collaboration in these areas, as well as in other spheres where collaborative relationships are being established. This was also expressed in the open comment field of the questionnaire. It showed that collaboration with civil society organisations is constantly in need of development, and that there is always development potential in all the activities this involves.” (Hemström, 2018)*

According to the Swedish national government, the implementation of its integration policy requires efforts in many political areas, and through the involvement of a large number of actors, including those in civil society. Establishment and integration into society can be facilitated for the newcomer by participating in civil society activity. This allows newcomers to find the support, networks and contacts they need. The National Audit Office evaluation in 2014 found that civil society organisations had not been sufficiently involved in integration efforts through paid partnerships with municipalities. However, much has happened since then, as regards the state integration policy. Although some measures have been taken to create better conditions for actors in civil society to carry out assignments effectively, the Swedish National Audit office evaluation illustrated the fact that further measures are needed to achieve the desired diversity of businesses operating within the integration area. In summary, various studies have shown that it is difficult to

collaborate within and between organisations in the area of integration (Jedrzejewska and Spehar, 2019). For example, even where IOP is legally possible, there may still be some juridical uncertainties about IOP contracts. Education is needed about these possibilities among municipal workers in the field.

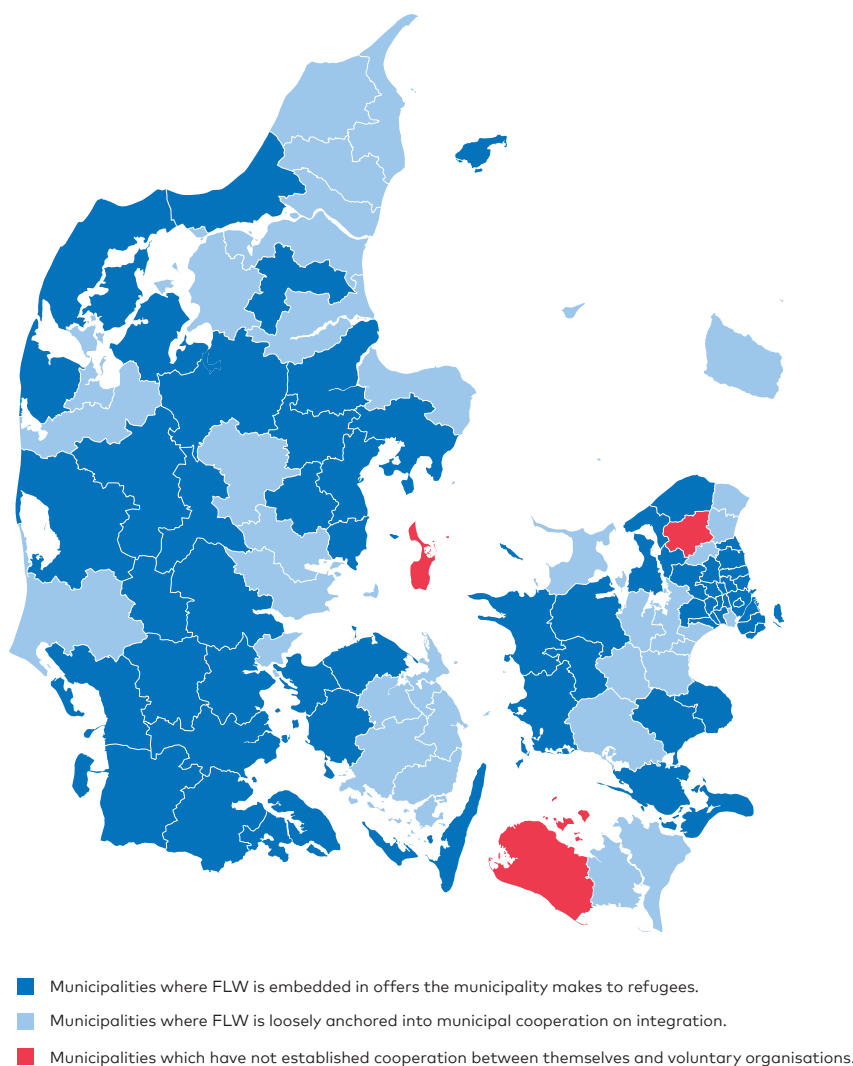
DENMARK

At the annual meeting of the Danish Red Cross in 2014 the *Friends Show the Way* project (*Venner viser Vej*) was introduced, and was then enshrined in a resolution supported by the Danish state (udlændinge og integrationsministeriet). It evolved in cooperation with the two well-established voluntary aid organisations in Denmark: The Red Cross and Danish Refugee Help (hereafter Dansk flygtningehjælp). With four years' worth of experience behind them, and with the first two to three years being quite busy, the project was evaluated by the consultancy company LG-Insight (LG-insight, 2019).

Beginning in 2015, many volunteers were mobilised through media images of refugees filling motorways on their way up to Denmark in the autumn. Even the Prime Minister appeared in public to campaign for more volunteers, and for more civil society engagement.

In 2018 the situation is different, however. There are fewer refugees in each municipality, as a result both of stricter border controls and of stricter immigration policies. This has lessened interest among the public over volunteering. The target group (newly arrived immigrants and refugees) has changed, and their needs have changed too. The main policies on labour market integration, and on upskilling through education, are making those responsible for the programme look at how they can better target their key goals of employment on the one hand, and improved conditions for education among their clients on the other (LG-Insight, 2019).

Figure 3: Distribution of Friends Show the Way (FLW) partnerships with Danish municipalities, late 2018.



Source: Red Cross Denmark

"De frivillige er der 24/7, hvad enten det er lørdag formiddag eller søndag eftermiddag. Det skaber jo en helt anden integration." Bjarne Nørgaard Jensen, Ikast-Brande Kommune

The majority of municipalities in Denmark perceive that volunteer contact people have improved networks for refugees and have increased their knowledge of Danish culture. But the lack of helping hands meant that in the initial years after it was established in 2015, refugees were on a waiting list for the popular Venner viser Vej programme initiated and coordinated with Danish municipalities by the Red Cross and Dansk flygtningehjælp. More than 7,100 refugees have been visited by volunteer friends as part of the project. Indeed, 95 out of 98 municipa-

lities across Denmark are now involved in the project (see map above). Some 91% of the municipalities report that a refugee with a volunteer friend strengthens his/her social network significantly. The experience of 86% of municipalities is that a volunteer friend provides support mainly through practical help in everyday planning for work and family. Again, 85% of the municipalities estimate that refugees with a volunteer friend gain better insight into the Danish culture, including an understanding of democracy. Finally, 79% of municipalities recognise that refugees with a volunteer friend gain an increased feeling of belonging to the society, for example by being active in voluntary associations (föreningsliv) and by participating in meetings for parents at their children's school (Evaluering af Venner viser vej projektet, LG-Insight 2019).

By the end of 2018, municipalities had a signed contract securing partnership with this project. Even with decreased need due to far fewer newly arrived refugees, 96% of the municipalities saw a continued need for the programme as a galvanising partner in social integration, and in helping to be prepared in case existing policies changed with a new government. The particular strength of the project is that it is learning-driven, and to a large extent it adapts to local conditions. There is no manual or strict concept about the 'right' model of cooperation. However, close conversation with local actors through dialogue meetings involving municipalities and volunteer organisations, as well as the regional consultant's advice and experience, have contributed to promoting positive experiences through local cooperation.

"Now that I have contact with the volunteer, it is much easier for me to understand and act as part of Danish society. Without her and her family things would be so much more complicated. I am glad I got to know the, it helps me understand the Danes and Danish society." (Interview with a refugee in Denmark.)

The volunteers highlight the importance of their involvement in the integration process as being crucial in achieving beneficial social effects, in enabling refugees to navigate everyday life, and in adjusting to new conditions, new social settings, new norms and new values. They stress this aspect of integration more than its impact on employability, or recruitment to employment, which they rate as secondary to enabling achievements in adapting to Danish society, as outlined above.

This partnership cooperation clearly works differently in smaller communities, and in rural and intermediate regions, in contrast to larger cities. The difference lies in those informal ties that enable conditions to be establishing for being prepared for life in a new society. As an example, when this project came about (following a public meeting in Ikast-Brande municipality) it relied on an activity leader simply walking up to the office of the local mayor and presenting the strategy output from the meeting. In this meeting local citizens had identified ways through which civil society could contribute to

the integration effort. Among the activities proposed were, for instance, mens' clubs, invitations to come and eat in a Danish home, and what they call 'fixed walk together arrangements' – promenading (LG Insight, 2019).

Another local community/municipality approach to cooperation with civil society is one that has taken place in Sønderborg municipality, Southern Jutland, in the rural communities of the municipality, or Landsbyforum. Local community boards (seven in the municipality), along with the municipal council, share the vision that communities should be living and attractive habitats with a high quality of life and a strong sense of coherence, all bounded by common activities and physical meeting places. Their approach, called the Sønderborg modellen, revolves around cooperation and local democracy (samskabelse og demokrati). It develops through mobilising existing inhabitants and immigrants (new inhabitants) in voluntary activities aimed at enhancing local development – whether that involves spring cleaning (forårsrengøring), sharing conversation at community flower-bulb planting events in autumn, or enjoying new meal experiences through the Sønderjysk 'food culture' events. Another initiative aiming to improve interaction between native locals and new locals is the 'Fremmed Art der rykker' project, which is about mobile sculptures. An example in Gammelgab features the sculpture of a mother in Uganda. The woman, Eva, is a representation of Ugandan people today. This is a population which wants to be in dialogue with other populations, based on openness and hospitality (Broager DK, 2019). The glint in Eva's eye is warm, and it expresses faith in future.

Civil society mobilisation in Sønderborg municipality, and its community boards, has encouraged a number of other initiatives – ones where the approach is that bringing diverse groups of inhabitants into volunteering for community development creates a positive opportunity to meet, and therefore social integration is more likely to happen (Nielsen and Skovbjerg, 2019).

According to Mai-Britt Haugaard (Chef for Bydelsmødre), the reform of government support for cooperation between municipalities and civil society organisations in the processes of integration has brought about another kind of change in Denmark. What she means is that while there are now large civil society organisations with strong finances who are able to flourish, small local organisations can only survive if the municipality gets involved and funds their initiatives. Then there are intermediate organisations, which are also struggling financially. So cooperation between municipalities and civic organisations means many different things across the country, depending on where you focus your attention. A better understanding of what vision the authorities have for this kind of voluntary work is sorely needed in Denmark.

In late autumn 2019, the Danish authorities provided ministerial encouragement to immigrants and their descendants, urging them to mobilise and participate to a greater degree in the organisational life of the country. This came as a response to evaluation and research work conducted by and for the Immigration and Integration Ministry. The first call built on an official notification about naturalisation and citizenship in 2019 – built around trust and organisational participation among new Danes, working with people from a Danish background (Notat nr.1. Tillid og foreningsdeltagelse blandt nydanskere og personer med dansk oprindelse). The second comprised the results of a citizens survey in 2019, conducted in six languages among both ethnic minorities and native Danes over 18 years of age. (This produced 2,658 responses.)

FINLAND

In early 2016, the coalition of municipalities in Finland sent out letters to all of the municipalities, asking them to organise and be prepared for action on the basis of a strategy produced by a ministerial group on migration in late 2015. It had been foreseen that an increased number of immigrants would put a strain on the service system and the resources it usually provided. In the letter, the municipalities were required to develop their own programmes for

promoting integration, in order to be able to secure a financial transfer from the state (Kuntaliitto/Kommunförbundet, 2016). Up to now, this has led to a variety of responses from municipalities across Finland. This has included the mobilisation of civil society organisations and voluntary work (namely, involvement from the third sector – NGO's). An Act of Parliament from 2011 also required the authorities to develop multi-sectoral cooperation as a component of the integration process. A part of that is integration in everyday life situations and local communities (Ministry of Economic affairs and Employment in Finland, n.d.; Centre of Expertise in Immigrant integration n.d.).

One issue addressed was the challenge involved in welcoming and integrating refugees and immigrants – especially in terms of securing good relationships between different citizens and population groups, and in support a multicultural society at a local level. The Finns recognised that civil society organisations and their voluntary work were crucial factors in making that happen, and so the third sector's role in complementing what the municipalities and authorities could provide was acknowledged in this process (Kuntaliitto/Kommunförbundet, 2017).

"In a well-functioning, intergrated society, the immigrant should achieve an equal status with others in the population both in terms of rights and duties... Integration measures should, as a point of departure, evolve out of the needs emerging from immigrants themselves, and the requirement to provide knowledge about skills involved in everyday life." (Kuntaliitto/Kommunförbundet, 2017)

Voluntary effort was seen as particularly important in broadening the social networks of immigrants in the new host country, Finland. Immigrant associations also work to maintain their mother tongue and culture, which is also seen as crucial. Places to meet and so-called 'inhabitant living rooms' (Invånarträffar och invånarstugor) create a good way of immigrants and rest of the population meeting together. Additionally, financial support has been given to mentoring programmes and 'family friends'

arrangements. In 2016 and 2017, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment provided NGO grants for projects to coordinate volunteer activities, or to reinforce the expertise of local associations.

In Finland, the Centre of Expertise in Immigrant Integration and integration.fi (a website), which works under the ministry of Economic affairs and employment, has been the official authority supporting integration since 2014. The Ministry and the Centre gather information for a monitoring system – looking at the actors, participation, regional involvement and reciprocal integration (including ethnic relations). All the reviews and research publications so far are in Finnish, but an assessment of these efforts was expected later in 2019 (Ministry of Economic affairs and employment, n.d.). This work was delayed, but then became part of preparing the next government integration programme (Antti Niemela oral communication), and was combined with preparation of a report on integration which Parliament had requested. This two-fold work will therefore be prepared concomitantly, and will be published in 2020 (Kotouttaminen, 2019).

As in the case of Norway, some of the funding for initiatives involving cooperation and coordination between civil society actors and municipalities involve short-term funding. This has become the rule rather than exception, which means that good projects like the Punkalaidun project have had to discontinue.

According to Anne Alitolppa-Niitamo (integration.fi), this is the challenge that needs to be met:

“This short-term allocation of funding and the project focus accompanying it needs to be revised. There has been too much focus on development work, while funds and time cannot be granted for the projects that have already been established. In Finland we have a tool called the municipalities integration plan. In Finland it is the municipalities which receive the quota refugees, based on their four-year integration plans. Municipalities that develop these plans also involve the third sector.”

Generally, the CSOs are considered important sources of practical integration in Finland. However, current discussions are emphasising that those building a multicultural civil society in Finland need to be immigrant NGOs, and not just more dominant CSOs like the Red Cross. There are also many social innovation initiatives and organisations evolving and flourishing. This is seen most clearly in larger urban nuclei, such as Helsinki. The municipality of Helsinki gets numerous applications from new CSOs. On the other hand, voluntary efforts in smaller municipalities often have to be driven by individual entrepreneurs who are able to develop the partnership practically, for example in Vantaa. But in general, there is space for more initiatives. The development of web services, and tools for including low-threshold services into government procedures, as well as support for increasing partnerships concerned with integration, are now underway (Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment of Uusimaa, 2019).

ICELAND

How refugees are met in Iceland depends on whether they arrived in the country on their own and applied for asylum, or whether they arrived as quota refugees who were selected and invited to come. A one-year integration programme is only provided for the latter group, who are placed in a municipality which has volunteered to receive refugees. Iceland is distinct from other Nordic countries in this approach. The municipalities have a responsibility to provide access to housing, social services and financial assistance. A project manager from the municipality coordinates these different services, and works together with a project manager from the Icelandic Red Cross, which takes care of other needs. Meetings are held regularly to keep the flow of information going during the integration period.

The Red Cross collects clothing, furniture, electrical appliances and other things people might need. Last but not least, the Red Cross attends to the social needs of the newly arrived in a variety of ways. The most prominent aspect of this is searching for support families, to be both friends and to those

able to provide support for the different things one might need in a new country. Finding support families for groups of refugees arriving in Hvammstangi and Blönduós spring 2019 has proved particularly successful. In this case each refugee family has three support families. Normally it is two support families for each refugee family.

A project manager from the Icelandic Red Cross who has worked with four groups of quota refugees in 2018 and 2019, expressed the view that the smaller communities at least have the potential to be a great starting place for refugees needing to settle. In those communities, every single person seems to have a greater significance than they would in larger communities, where it can be easy to disappear into the crowd. In small towns, people begin to remember each other more easily, which can make it easier to establish trust between them. The experience of quota refugees also shows that having social interaction and friends is the most important factor for integration and well-being. The project manager from the Red Cross also makes sure that newly arrived persons are able to participate in social activities of different kinds, such as town festivals. Additionally, activities in 2019 have included a swimming club and a walking club for women, creating the possibility of a social life for them outside the home.

ÅLAND

En säker hamn projektet (the Safe Harbour project) is an EU project whose aim is to improve integration processes in Åland. The project includes continuing education and the development of routines for the improved integration of quota refugees in Åland. It will run for three years, between spring 2018 and Spring 2021, and it is funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).

Several CSOs are active in integration efforts for quota refugees in Åland, coordinated jointly with the municipalities (Fagerholm et al., 2019). Among them are the Red Cross and Emmaus Åland, both of which have long-term experience in integration efforts on the island. The Red Cross has built 16

departments, and each of them organises different activities. The Red Cross is therefore a key CSO in helping to coordinate with the municipalities that receive quota refugees, both in preparing for what it takes to receive them and in helping the newcomers to establish themselves. They then support them with friends, mentorships and families. Their main aim is to organise support, and to help refugees and other immigrants to gain social contacts so that they are better equipped to integrate and can enjoy a social life in Åland. Emmaus supports people with various activities to help them become employable, assists in work recruitment for a vulnerable population, and in this has achieved a 99.5 % success rate. On the other hand, the newer organisations active in integration measures, like 'Folkhälsan' and 'Rädda barnen', more specifically target women immigrants in a variety of cultural meeting places. They also help parents (often mothers) and children to break out of isolation. More often than not, the Red Cross is a co-organiser of these activities, along with the municipalities. Voluntary organisations are rigorous in Åland, and coordination efforts are impressive. But there is always the possibility for improvement in communicating information about options for immigrants, and in reaching out to them through new channels – like schools, and other places where newcomer families may meet. Also, there is a need to share information about the public transport system to newcomers. This is important for enabling effective commuting between home and workplace. It is felt to be something which could be improved (Fagerholm et al., 2019).



Discussion and Conclusion

In this publication we have attempted to shed light on what civil society engagement through religious communities and aid organisations, sport organisations and clubs, pop-up activism and mentorship programmes is achieving in terms of helping newcomers (migrants and refugees) to find their feet and navigate their new host society in the Nordic region. All the research points to the fact that civil society is of crucial importance – not first and foremost through a ‘civic turn’ directing policies of labour market integration, but as precondition for functioning optimally as a civilian in the surrounding society. Otherwise social cohesion cannot be achieved.

While we stress that this paper is not an attempt to evaluate the impact of projects or initiatives in everyday integration, we have tried to offer some insight into the rapidly evolving engagement of volunteers, and into the partnerships involving cooperation between municipalities and civil society organisations in each of the Nordic countries. There are numerous possibilities and challenges in all this. We hope we have managed to encapsulate and express some of them here. One shortcoming in trying to do that is that few of them have yet to be properly evaluated in terms of their effects (other than Venner viser Vej in Denmark). However, quite a bit of experience has been gained, and research

documentation is now needed. It is also important to note that both the regional authorities and the local authorities need to be involved, because the valuable asset represented by civil society organisations in processes of integration can get lost (or part of it can) when no one has the responsibility to organise it. So, an integration coordinator can be a vital agent in securing this, or alternatively another key person in a smaller community.

When some of the initiatives that have been mentioned here are eventually evaluated by researchers, and the effectiveness of their initiatives is weighed, it is important to understand the particular combination of professionals (who bring in skills, particular methods and tools) and engagement from volunteers and other partners who are primarily there because they want to work with people. This combination is needed to elevate these projects. In a published report on methodologies involved in building partnerships, the Swedish Forum (socialforum.se) has stressed that the key lies in adaptive and ongoing consultation as the projects evolve their partnership (Sandberg and Anderson, 2018 and 2018a). While Sweden is in learning mode around these private-civil-public partnerships, Norway has for some time been deeply engaged on many levels. But their expert (Stian Slotterøy Johnsen)

has addressed the particular need to diversify voluntary engagement culturally, and to broaden its scope. Denmark, on the other hand, needs a clearer signal from the public authorities as to what they really want in terms of social integration, in order for many kinds of civil society initiative to thrive in this field. Finland is faced with short-sightedness in funding, due to its project focus, and there is a need to pick that up for reconsideration. The work ahead (combining both the evaluation of efforts so far, and developing the national integration policy for 2020-2023) will hopefully provide more balance between worthwhile established actions, and those new and necessary initiatives involving cooperation between municipalities and CSOs. The implication overall is that there is an over-focus on development work through new initiatives, while fundraising for projects that have established and rooted themselves is harder than ever. This contradiction is identified elsewhere as well, for example in Sweden, Finland and in Norway.

Responding to the question about what makes a difference in the rural setting, rather than in the large cities, we have found several distinctive characteristics of civil society involvement and potential in smaller and rural communities. We have showcased various examples illustrating the strength of informal encounters, and an accompanying low threshold from the authorities in terms of getting something done that needs to be done. One excellent example was how the partnership in Ikast-Brande in Denmark came about. The communication channels from the civic engagement to the mayor's office were short enough not to lose the spirit on the way! Through studying social integration, or everyday integration, we also gained an understanding of the characteristics of voluntarism in each country. Voluntary organisations with embedded knowledge in the local area, information about the labour market, and an understanding of the housing possibilities (and so on) can help immigrants navigate effectively in their new society and community. Also, their role in identifying needs is both crucial and easier in a smaller community. So, we have highlighted examples of both needs-driven social integration (like pop-up

activism and mentoring programmes), and the particular involvement of sport clubs as we have described them. The strength of civil engagement is also manifested in the fact that it is a 24/7 action, and not from 9am to 5pm during workdays. In this way it touches upon the dimensions of life that happen outside working hours, during free time, in relation to families, and in leisure and social life. It is also this dimension of life that enables people to create meaningful meeting places where newcomers and established residents can gain trust in their social relations, and eventually with the broader society.

In addition, we have seen examples of where a new population of young people with a different background has made a real difference in terms of school survival (under the threat of closure), or where sport clubs that were in danger of closing down were revived through engagement from new young inhabitants in communities faced with ageing populations.

One crucial factor which may fall into the shadows in a very complex organisation is the value of people and their everyday ability both to get by and to thrive. We have highlighted examples where the main question leading to involvement with integration has been not only to ask what is working, but a focus on the people involved looking concretely at how refugees and immigrants are faring in the context of those initiatives. This became apparent in the Örebro partnership (Sweden), in Venner viser Vej (Denmark), in Kaarko (Finland), in the Red Cross mentorship programmes in Iceland, and more.

Earlier international studies have shown a negative correlation between ethnic segregation and trust (for which, see the chapter on trust). There is evidence from different Nordic countries that individuals belonging to minority groups often have no friends outside of the minority they belong to. This may lead to a less secular society, where communications across cultural differences are rarer, and where people do not meet with those with characteristics at variance with their own in terms of language, religion, culture and national background. More holistic approaches to integration therefore need to

be implemented in developing policies and practices – approaches in which everyday social aspects are taken into account. The municipalities alone may not be the most ideal actors in creating these policies. But in partnership with voluntary organisations and civil society groups, the required cross-sectional encounter is more likely to happen.

Securing sustainable and safe social spaces for all citizens, in ways that are not dependent on background or religion, is crucial. Everyday integration in NGOs/CSOs is also about providing immigrants a place of community where they can contribute on equal basis with others. Norway, Denmark and Finland stress that this must be the way forward. Sweden's national authorities, on the other hand, encourage civil society involvement in integration in general, and have been building on their generous legislation from 1975. But there is a struggle over the varied extent to which municipal and regional authorities actually embrace this in their practice.

By participating in democratic processes within organisations, we meet both different opinions and a

space for freedom of expression, disagreement, and finding good solutions. Democratic understanding is a basic value which it is important to maintain among the public, both towards each other and towards the authorities. While stressing the democratic aspect of integration efforts and impacts, this is also a preventive measure against segregation. So it is necessary to develop methods that can make a distinction between CSOs that are really working for democracy, and which operate in a democratic spirit, and those that are not and do not.

We cannot ignore that the financialisation of partnerships by municipalities with the CSOs is an important issue. Problems in the public sector (which applies especially to Denmark and Finland) mean that times call for slimmed-down budgets (*budgetsnåla tider*). This may make the municipalities more prone to focus only on 'necessary' measures, rather than attending to broader issues and more preventive measures, because there is not always the time or money available to support this kind of knowledge. Even though there are excellent examples here – for example from Småland (SE), where many activities



PHOTO: SCANPIX.DK

are organised into targets for people to meet – a type of holistic measure that, from the perspective and needs of individual solves many different kinds of question, needs to be related to social and economic inclusion. Mutual and equal premises for meeting each other is key. Also, approaches like 'innovativ upphandling' in Gävleborg region (Webinar Kansliet Bildningsalliansen, 2019). The municipalities need education as to how to feel safe about partnership contracts with NGOs and CSOs. We have identified that, in many cases, the municipalities alone cannot enhance the kind of integration efforts focussed on everyday integration. However, one problem is the coordination between the two, which is bound to a framework of law that the public authorities must follow, while the third sector does not have the same obligations. These two components of the partnership are driven by different aims and rationales. Denmark is an exception in this context, since majority of municipalities are involved in CSO activities with the Red Cross. At the same time, there is a need to get a firm response from the national authorities about what they wish to do in the future. The same applies to Iceland and Åland, where quota refugees are the main group that the public authorities have formal responsibility to take care of, and for whom they need to develop integration measures.

It remains to be seen if we are now facing a shift in focus, and working with a broader approach to integration. In 2019, the European Regional Committee launched an initiative called cities and regions for integration, where questions of municipal involvement through the European municipal and regional association (CEMR) are taken up. That is, it provides a political platform where municipalities and regions can develop and put forward suggestions for EU policies in the field, and where they can exchange experiences and learn through best practice, and so on (KI, 2019). The Nordic municipalities may indeed be able to learn from other European regions, and vice versa.

A number of questions remain unsolved, and are therefore still challenges. However, voluntary organisations contribute to a positive prospectus by gathering people into a stakeholder community. This is about connecting around what we have in common, instead of through what divides us. When the professionals or representatives from NGOs/CSOs jump out of their official role and make personal connections this makes a difference. It is more likely to sweep away frustrations among newcomers, and lack of motivation in getting to know Nordic cultures, adopting some of their qualities in the new host community.

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LEARNING TO LIVE IN A NEW COUNTRY – EVERYDAY SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Civil society and integration – Nordic rural perspective

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