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Nordic Council  
of Ministers

## Language Training Services for Adult Immigrants in the Nordic Countries



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# Executive summary

This report presents the results of a comparative study of language training for adult immigrants in the Nordic countries. The study was commissioned by the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Norwegian Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion and has been conducted by Oxford Research throughout 2022. The purpose of the study has been to compare and analyse similarities and differences across Nordic countries and immigrant sub-groups when it comes to eligibility to participate in language training services, motivation and goals, as well as barriers to participation. We have also analysed how three main stakeholder groups perceive the barriers, quality, and benefits of training: participants in language training, providers of language training, and employers.

The study differentiates between two overall types of language training. Formal language training, which is characterised by being a part of the integration process for many immigrants, as well as being regulated, funded, and delivered through the public sector. Non-formal language training, on the other hand, which encompasses a wide range of services provided by commercial or civil-society actors, either as non-formal traditional language courses or as activities focused on social integration. We have conducted the study using a combination of methodologies: desk research and document studies, interviews, focus groups, surveys, and analysis of publicly available quantitative data.

## Systems for language training are similar across the Nordic countries

Overall, the study has found that the Nordic countries are largely similar when it comes to both the formal and non-formal language training services that are offered to adult immigrants. The ability to communicate in the national language is widely recognised as being a prerequisite for immigrants to integrate. Our main findings show that:

- Formal language training services are provided and funded in similar ways across all Nordic countries, where integration policies determine how they are organised, the contents of training, and the qualifications required to deliver training.

- The main goal of both formal and non-formal language training services is integration, both labour market and social. To facilitate this, formal training services are increasingly being combined with other types of training, such as VET, as well as both primary and secondary education.
- One of the main differences between formal language training services in the Nordic countries is eligibility to participate free of charge. In Denmark and Sweden, all immigrants are eligible to participate. In Finland, formal training is only available to unemployed immigrants, whereas in Norway, it is available to refugees and their family members, family members of Nordic citizens and labour migrants and their family members from outside the EU/EEA.
- Non-formal language training services provide a myriad of offers in all countries. The study has not identified any differences between countries in terms of how non-formal services are organised, funded, and provided. For these services, the main differences are between the different types of services offered.
- Results of language training relating to proficiency are only measured in relation to formal language training services, whereas non-formal services rarely monitor results. While pass rates are high among exam participants, they do not account for factors such as drop-out rates, which may affect the general results.

## **Stakeholders have similar perceptions of what constitutes the main barriers, qualities, and benefits of language training**

The study has found few differences in how participants and providers perceive the quality and benefits of training. While conditions vary between immigrant sub-groups in terms of eligibility for formal language training, their perceived goals, obstacles, and quality factors are largely similar across both countries and immigrant sub-groups. The main differences are instead related to the extent to which a certain goal or obstacle is particularly important. Overall, in terms of stakeholders' perceived goals, barriers, quality, and benefits, we have found that:

- The primary reason for participation in language training relates to labour market integration, both in terms of gaining employment and functioning in the workplace. All stakeholders highlight how language skills are necessary to function in the workplace, as well as to integrate socially.

- The main barrier to *participating* in language training is lack of time, particularly among labour migrants. Barriers to *learning*, on the other hand, are primarily a lack of social network and opportunities to practice, as well as educational pre-requisites which affect immigrants' abilities to learn and gain proficiency in a new language. An unevenness in the quality of delivered services, which is particularly prevalent in Sweden, also affects learning.
- The factors that are considered important to ensuring high-quality language training concern the regulation, organisation, and delivery of language training services. These quality factors relate to compensation models and procurement systems, teacher qualifications, didactic methods, composition of learning groups, and that training is considered meaningful and relevant.
- There are considerable synergies between formal and non-formal language training services, where the latter fulfil an important function in complementing the former. Non-formal services fill the gaps left by formal services due to lack of eligibility or low quality. They can also be effective in that they help immigrants overcome barriers by being offered at suitable times and creating social connections.
- Ensuring that formal language training services collaborate with the labour market is highly beneficial. Collaboration allows participants to become familiar with the labour market and potentially develop relevant vocational skills, but also develop the more profession-specific set of language skills which is often requested by employers.

Based on the characteristics for each Nordic country, Table 1 provides an illustration of the characteristics of the language training systems in the Nordic countries.

**Table 1. Characteristics of language training in the Nordic countries**

	DK	FI	NO	SE
Municipalities are responsible for providing training	✓		✓	✓
Private providers play an important role in delivering formal training	✓	✓		✓
Private providers are primarily procured through competitive bidding	✓	✓		(✓)
Compensation models and procurement systems affect quality in a positive way	(✓)	✓	✓	(✓)
All immigrants are eligible to participate in formal training	✓			✓
Training must be completed within set time frame	✓	✓	✓	
Teaching qualifications are legally required to deliver training	✓		✓	
Funding is based on participants completing courses	✓	✓		✓
Labour market integration is a long-term goal	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participants are required to meet an individual goal on CEFR scale to complete training		✓	✓	
Training is considered to be high-quality and equal across providers	✓	✓	✓	
Non-formal services effectively fill the gaps in formal services	✓	✓	✓	(✓)
There is close collaboration with the labour market	✓	✓	✓	✓

## Best practices in language training

We have identified seven different areas that constitute best practices when it comes to language training services for adult immigrants. This list is not necessarily exhaustive but serves to highlight the issues that have been highlighted as particularly important by the key stakeholders who have contributed to this study, namely participants, providers, and employers.

### A language training service is particularly successful when...

1. ... it is widely available to immigrants regardless of their reason for being in a Nordic country
2. ... it is meaningful, based on didactic methods, and provided by competent teachers or volunteers
3. ... funding is available and organised in a way that incentivises quality
4. ... it provides ample opportunity to practice the language in real-life settings
5. ... it is accessible even when participants have limited time
6. ... it provides supportive and fun environments where participants feel comfortable challenging themselves
7. ... it involves employers and is relevant to the labour market

## Suggestions for how to organise language training

Based on the study's findings, we provide five overall suggestions to how language training could be organised to ensure quality and benefits for immigrants, the labour market, and society as a whole. The suggestions differ in relevance between countries, depending on how the system is organised, eligibility, and perceived quality.

### Ensure inclusivity in formal training for all immigrants.

Currently, language training is offered free of charge to all immigrants in Denmark and Sweden whereas in Finland and Norway, many labour migrants are not eligible to participate free of charge. However, in the long-term, there is a socio-economic advantage for immigrants to be able to speak the national language and become



active participants in society. We therefore suggest reviewing the costs it would entail to allow all immigrants to be eligible for formal language training services, or other ways, such as subsidies, that could enable more immigrants to partake in language training.

**Particularly relevant for:** Finland and Norway, Denmark to a lesser extent

### **Structure the synergies between formal language training and non-formal digital services**

Being eligible to participate in formal language training does not necessarily mean that all immigrants have equal access. With time as their main constraint, services that can overcome that obstacle are particularly relevant. Technological developments mean that almost all adults own a smartphone, which gives them access to a wealth of non-formal language training services. We thus suggest that formal language training services be encouraged to further integrate existing non-formal language training services into formal training. One way to do this could be by including collaboration as quality criteria in procurement processes. To increase knowledge and awareness of available tools, national-level stakeholders could consider compiling databases of tools that are considered to be beneficial and complementary to language training.

**Particularly relevant for:** All countries

### **Increase the awareness and prestige of working with language training**

Formal language training for adult immigrants is a niche area, and awareness of what the job entails is limited outside "language training circles". A shortage of qualified teachers could be one of the explanations for the uneven quality of Sweden's formal language training system, but there are also recruitment challenges in Finland and Denmark. We thus suggest that initiatives are taken to both increase awareness of the profession and to increase its attractiveness.

**Particularly relevant for:** Sweden and Denmark, Finland to a lesser extent

### **Increase structured collaboration between formal and non-formal language training services**

Structured collaboration between formal and non-formal language training services is a cost-efficient way to overcome one of the main obstacles for participants, namely lack of opportunities to practice speaking and lack of a social network in a Nordic country. By bringing volunteers into formal language training settings, immigrants are provided with a direct opportunity to practice the language, facilitating their social integration. Other ways to encourage collaboration could be through providing public funding to initiatives that explore and test innovative ways to collaborate.

**Particularly relevant for:** All countries

## **Continue to strengthen the role of the labour market and employers in ensuring the relevance of training**

Given that one of the main goals for language training is that participants find work, the connection between the labour market and language training services could be strengthened even further. This could involve 1) furthering the use of training plans and tools for immigrants to learn the terminology associated with particular occupations, 2) placing a larger responsibility on employers to bear the costs of language training for labour migrants that they have employed to fill a competence gap, 3) scaling up the use of language training collaborating with VET, which has proven to be a successful way of making training more meaningful for participants, facilitating results for both proficiency and employment.

**Particularly relevant for:** Finland and Denmark, Norway and Sweden to a lesser extent.

# 1. Introduction

This report presents the results from a comparative study on language training services in the Nordic countries. The study was commissioned by the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Norwegian Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion to increase the knowledge on language training services for adult immigrants across Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden and give insights into the qualities and benefits of these services.

The report focuses on four main areas. First, it compares and analyses similarities and differences across the Nordic countries and immigrant sub-groups when it comes to eligibility to participate in language training services, motivation, and goals, as well as barriers to participation. Second, it provides an analysis of how three main stakeholder groups perceive the barriers, quality, and benefits of training: participants in language training, providers of language training, employers. Third, it attempts to determine criteria for best practices in language training services that can apply to both formal and non-formal services. Finally, based on the study's findings, it provides suggestions for how the Nordic countries could organise language training in the future, to enhance its quality and benefits for immigrants.

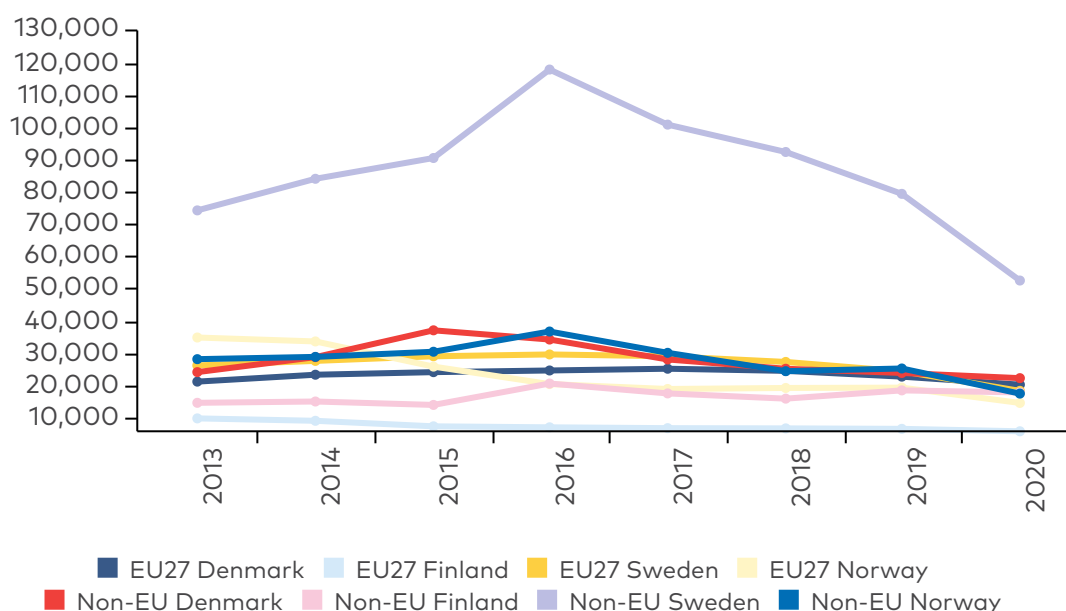
The report is structured in the following way:

- **Chapter 1** introduces the study, key terminology and the methods used to conduct the study. It also presents a brief overview of immigration to the Nordic countries.
- **Chapter 2** provides an overview of the systems for language training in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. This includes how training is regulated, organised, and funded, as well as eligibility, goals, and results for both formal and non-formal language training services.
- **Chapter 3** analyses how participants, providers and employers perceive the quality, benefits, and obstacles to participating in available language training services.
- **Chapter 4** presents a summary of the study's main observations, including conclusions related to what characterises successful language training, criteria for best practices, and suggestions for how to organise language training, considering quality, benefits, and costs.

## 1.1 Immigration to the Nordic countries necessitates language training

People migrate for a variety of reasons: work, family, studies and to seek refuge. Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden have all experienced a steadily increasing positive net migration throughout the past decade. Immigration to the Nordic countries has increased steadily over the past ten years. This can partly be explained by the enlargement of the EU and the freedom of movement that EU membership brought about, partly by an increase in the number of refugees who have come to the region. In recent years, humanitarian migration has increased in significance – particularly during 2014–2015 when large numbers of displaced persons sought refuge in Europe. In all countries, immigration from non-EU countries has declined since its peak in 2015/2016.

There are, however, considerable differences between the Nordic countries when it comes to migration patterns as well as the proportion of the population that is foreign-born. While the Nordic countries have received a similar number of immigrants from EU countries, Sweden has received a substantially greater number of immigrants from non-EU countries (Figure 1). Relative to its population, Sweden has the highest proportion of foreign-born inhabitants, while Finland has the lowest (Table 2).



**Figure 1. Immigration to the Nordic countries, by origin (EU27, non-EU27). 2013–2020.** *Source: Eurostat (2022)*

**Table 2. Foreign-born people residing in the Nordic countries per 1/1/2022.***Sources: OECD International Migration Database (2022)*

	<b>DK</b>	<b>FI</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>SE</b>
<b>Total number of foreign-born people residing in the country</b>	618,000	421,000	878,000	2,047,000
<b>Foreign born population as a percentage of the entire population</b>	11	8	16	20
<b>Total population</b>	5,840,045	5,533,793	5,391,369	10,379,295

The roles of immigration and labour market integration in the long-term sustainability of the Nordic welfare systems are highly topical political issues. With language skills linked to employment and educational opportunities as well as facilitating everyday life, learning the national language is important to both the immigrants themselves and the societies in which they reside. A myriad of language training services are thus available to adult immigrants in the Nordic countries. These comprise both formal, and sometimes statutory language education and training, and non-formal language training services. The plurality of services and structures in these Nordic countries has resulted in a language training landscape that varies both in content and formal competence requirements for the provider.

## 1.2 Key terminology

The study makes two key distinctions that inform our analysis: between different types of language training and between different immigrant sub-groups. When it comes to different types of language training, we differentiate between formal and non-formal language training services using the following definitions:

- **Formal language training services** refer to language training that is funded and delivered through public sector actors or procured commercial providers. This type of training is subject to regulations concerning the curriculum, teacher qualifications, which immigrant sub-groups are eligible, how much time immigrants have to complete training, and examinations. Participation in formal language training can also be a prerequisite for residence permits and long-term citizenship.
- **Non-formal language training services** is not regulated in terms of curriculum, exam requirements, and requirements for teaching qualifications. It encompasses a wide range of services provided by commercial or civil-society actors, either as non-formal traditional language courses or as activities focused on social integration. Activities can be both in-person and digital. Non-formal traditional language courses may be similar to formal language training but are not subject to the same regulatory requirements and are often specifically adapted to participant needs. Social language training services typically involve activities where informal learning takes place and where the purpose is to practice the language in a social setting.

Insofar as it is possible, the study differentiates between the following four target groups for language training:

- Refugees and their reunited family members
- Family members of Nordic citizens arriving through family reunification
- Labour migrants from EU/EEA countries
- Labour migrants from outside the EU/EEA

These groups are based on a Norwegian classification, which determines which immigrant sub-groups are entitled to which language training services. While similar distinctions are made in the other Nordic countries, they do not align completely. The main difference is that Norway is the only country that distinguishes between labour migrants from the EU/EEA and those from outside the EU/EEA when it comes to eligibility. As such, for the purpose of comparison and analysis, the group "labour migrants" is largely referred to as a single group.

## 1.3 Methods of data collection

The study has combined qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection and analysis. Data collection was conducted by Oxford Research's consultants in their respective native language using templates with data collection instructions, research questions, and interview guides. It was organised in three distinct phases: a contextual mapping of the language training systems, a survey with participants and providers, and case studies of services considered to be examples of best practices.

The purpose of the **contextual mapping of language training systems** was to gain an overview of the language training systems in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, mapping and identifying both formal and non-formal training and how they relate to different sub-categories of immigrants. The mapping was based on desk research of available reports, studies, websites, legal documents etcetera, at national and Nordic levels. In addition, we conducted interviews with ministries and authorities, subject matter experts, employer and employee organisations, and providers of formal and non-formal training in the studied countries (see Table 3 for breakdown). We also collated quantitative data concerning participation in language training and results of formal language training services. Public data was, however, only available for Norway and Sweden. For Denmark, the cost of purchasing data was considered to be too high and for Finland no national-level data was available.

Based on findings from the contextual mapping, we conducted a **survey with participants and providers**. The survey focused on how providers and participants perceive the quality and benefits of the language training offered on a wider scale. The survey was sent to selected providers of formal and non-formal language training services, who were asked to distribute it to current and former participants in their services. In total, 98 participants and 77 providers responded to the survey. <sup>[1]</sup>However, the response rate to the survey was uneven, particularly at participant-level. Participants from Norway were underrepresented, whilst participants from Sweden were overrepresented. More than twice as many women as men responded. In addition, the level of education among the respondents was high, with 67 percent of respondents having completed more than 12 years of education. The survey was distributed in Danish, Finnish, Norwegian, Swedish, and English. This meant that the respondents were required to have adequate literacy, and either a basic understanding of their new language or sufficient proficiency in English to be able to respond. Altogether, this means that the sample of

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1. See Annex C for a detailed breakdown of participants and providers who responded to the survey categorised by country.

participants cannot be considered representative of immigrants in the Nordic countries. To validate the results, we complemented the findings with interviews with participants, providers, and experts. The responses from providers were more balanced. Nevertheless, Denmark stood out as having a high proportion of responses, whereas Sweden's was low.

Based on an analysis of the findings from the contextual mapping and survey, we determined a list of tentative quality criteria. The criteria were used to select two language training services per country for **case studies** to gain a deeper understanding of best practices and what seems to make particular types of language training successful for particular immigrant sub-groups. The case studies explored the short- and long-term results of the selected training services, how the processes work and why they seem to be successful, challenges for the providers and participants, success factors, and which learnings could be disseminated to other providers. Data collection was conducted in different ways depending on the case. It included studies of documentation, interviews with providers, participants, and (where relevant), employers, as well as site visits. The case studies are summarised in Annex A.

**Table 3. Interviews conducted according to interviewee category and country**

	DK	FI	NO	SE	TOTAL
<b>National ministries and authorities</b>	1	3	4	2	10
<b>Regional ministries and authorities</b>	2	4	1	1	8
<b>Trade unions and employer organisations</b>	2	2	2	2	8
<b>Subject-matter experts</b>	2	1	0	3	6
<b>Providers of formal training</b>	3	3	1	2	9
<b>Providers of non-formal training</b>	4	4	4	5	17
<b>Participants</b>	4	2	5	2	13
<b>Total</b>	18	19	17	17	71



## 2. Overview of the systems for language training in the Nordic countries

The purpose of this chapter is to give a comparative overview of the various systems for language training in the Nordic countries. We describe the systems for formal and non-formal language training in each country, comparing how training is organised, responsible actors, eligibility, requirements for teaching qualifications, funding models and costs, as well as the goals and results of language training. In addition, the chapter provides a brief presentation of how EU/EEA regulations influence language training in the Nordic countries.

### 2.1 Summary of findings

Overall, we have found that the **Nordic countries are largely similar when it comes to both the formal and non-formal language training services that are offered to adult immigrants**. Speaking the national language is widely recognised as being a prerequisite for immigrants to integrate. As such, language training is a key element of integration policies in all Nordic countries, which provide formal language training services to some or all immigrants to facilitate the integration process. Non-formal language training services, a significant variation of which are found in all countries, provide an important complement to formal services. As well as offering training to immigrants who may not be eligible to participate in formal language training services, they facilitate social integration and provide arenas for immigrants to practice their language skills – both through digital tools and physical meetings.

Unsurprisingly, given the priority of language training at policy-level, **services are, to a considerable extent, publicly funded**. For formal language training services, the exact system of redistribution, as well as tariffs and costs differ between countries, as does the administrative level responsible for funding the training. For non-formal services, public funding also constitutes an important revenue stream, even though user fees, donations and volunteer work are often important sources of funding.

**The main long-term goal of both formal and non-formal language training services is to facilitate integration, both into the labour market and socially**. With labour market integration being the main goal of all Nordic integration policies, formal

language training in all countries has developed in recent years as this focus has increased. All countries provide the opportunity to combine language training with either vocational training or primary or secondary education. While the goals of non-formal language training services are often vaguer than for formal services, labour market integration often constitutes one of the main goals. For services that offer CV-workshops or courses tailored to a specific profession, this goal is explicit, whereas for services with a more social focus, social integration and building a social network is prioritised. In the shorter term, the goal of both formal and non-formal language training is for participants to achieve proficiency in a Nordic language. Such results are, however, only measured nationally in relation to formal services, with factors such as education-level correlating with better results and higher proficiency in all countries.

## 2.2 Formal language training services

Formal language training services are services that are offered through public actors. Typically, unemployed immigrants are required to participate in formal training as part of their integration process. Formal services are regulated in terms of their organisation, contents, eligibility, and requirements to participate. They are publicly funded, albeit commercial and non-profit providers are often procured to deliver the services.

Table 4 presents an overview of the formal language training systems in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden regarding responsible actors, types of training and levels, main providers, eligibility criteria, requirements related to teaching qualifications, funding models, costs, and goals. While the systems are complex and organised in somewhat different ways, there are also many similarities. The main similarities relate to the role of procured commercial and non-profit providers, which play an important role in delivering training, that training is arranged in "tracks", based on determined prerequisites and abilities of participants, that training must be completed within a set time frame (except in Sweden), and how funding for providers is primarily based on participants completing the course (except in Norway). The key differences, on the other hand, relate to which immigrants are eligible to participate free of charge, the requirements for teacher qualifications, the regulation of training content through set curriculum and course plans, and costs per participant.

**Table 4. Overview of formal language training systems in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden**

	DK	FI	NO	SE
<b>Responsible actors</b>	Municipalities	Regional development centres (ELY centres)	Local municipalities	Municipalities
<b>Types of training offered</b>	Danish education ( <i>DU</i> )  Preparatory adult education ( <i>FVU</i> ), Basic Integration Education ( <i>IGU</i> )	Integration training, basic education, liberal education	Norwegian training for adult immigrants	Swedish for immigrants ( <i>SFI</i> )  Primary municipal adult education ( <i>komvux</i> ), upper secondary municipal adult education
<b>Main providers of language training</b>	25 percent public providers, 75 percent procured private and non-profit providers in 2016. <sup>[2]</sup> Likely to have increased	All training provided by procured private and non-profit providers	Vast majority provided by public providers, but municipalities may procure private, and non-profit providers	Approximately 50 percent public providers, 50 percent procured private and non-profit providers <sup>[3]</sup>
<b>Main procurement processes</b>	Competitive bidding	Competitive bidding	Authorised providers	Competitive bidding and authorised providers (differs between municipalities)
<b>Eligibility</b>	All immigrants with a residence permit, regardless of sub-group	Unemployed immigrants with a residence permit	All immigrants with a residence permit except EU/EEA labour migrants	All immigrants with a residence permit regardless of sub-group

2. Deloitte (2016)  
3. Skolverket (2022)

	<b>DK</b>	<b>FI</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>SE</b>
<b>Length of training</b>	Up to 5 years to complete the equivalent of 1.2 years of full-time language training	3 years from the start of the integration plan	18 months to 3 years, depending on individual plan	No limit
<b>Teaching qualifications</b>	30 ECTS in Danish as a foreign language required to teach	Not required by law, but typically considered when services are procured	30 ECTS in Norwegian as a foreign language required to teach	30 ECTS in Swedish as a second language to grade participants, no requirements to teach
<b>Funding model</b>	Funded by municipalities with state support, determined through a reimbursement scheme	Integration training funding distributed from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment to the regional ELY centres	State responsible for funding. Municipalities redistribute to providers	State responsible for funding. Municipalities redistribute to providers
<b>Timing of compensation</b>	30 percent at the start of a module, 70 percent at completion	Providers compensated when participants complete their course/module	Compensation paid out quarterly and retroactively at a predetermined date, based on the training provided	Providers compensated when participants complete their course/module
<b>Costs (2016 baseline)</b>	DKK 1.8 bn	EUR 60 mill (budget)	NOK 1.99 bn	SEK 3.07 bn
<b>Long term goals</b>	Labour market integration	Labour market integration	Labour market integration	Labour market integration
<b>Language proficiency goals</b>	Proficiency required to gain employment	B1 level	A2-B2 depending on individual integration or language plan	Proficiency required to gain employment

## Integration policies determine the organisation and contents of language training

The design of immigration policies and regulations at national level has a major impact on the composition and volume of immigration, as well as support for labour market integration, including access to language training. All four Nordic countries have comprehensive laws that regulate the organisation, funding, eligibility related to language training for adult immigrants. In Finland<sup>[4]</sup> and Norway,<sup>[5]</sup> the legislation that regulates language training is an integral part of broader integration legislation. In Denmark<sup>[6]</sup> and Sweden,<sup>[7]</sup> the integration laws are complemented by laws specifically concerned with access to adult education.

The contents of formal language training are regulated in all countries, both through laws that determine the extent to which social and labour market orientation must be included and through national curricula that determine the contents of the language training. **In recent years, the emphasis on social and labour market integration as a part of language training has increased in all Nordic countries.** In addition to the language learning curricula, courses in social orientation and knowledge of the labour market typically complement language training, either as a mandatory requirement for all participants, or as a part of an individual's integration or establishment plan. Both Denmark and Norway place a particular focus on courses in social orientation, which are legally mandated. In Finland and Sweden on the other hand, such courses may form a part of an individual immigrant's integration or establishment plan based on their needs and prerequisites.

Municipalities are key actors in the organisation of formal language training services, being responsible for either procuring or providing the services in all countries but Finland, where the responsibility instead lies with regional development centres, so-called ELY centres.

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4. Finland's Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1386/2010) is currently being amended to ensure that it is compatible with forthcoming changes to health and social care legislation.
  5. Norway's Integration Act (*Lov om integrering gjennom oppl ring, utdanning og arbeid (integreringsloven)*) replaced the previous Introduction Act (*Lov om introduksjonsordning og norskoppl ring for nyankomne innvandrere (introduksjonsloven)*) in 2021. The Introduction Act still applies to immigrants who received their residence permit prior to 1.1.2021. The main difference in the Integration law is an increased focus on formal training and qualifications, as well as combining language training with work experience.
  6. Access and responsibility to participate in language training is regulated partly through the Integration Act (*Integrationsloven*), whereas its organisation is detailed in the Law on Danish Education for Adult Immigrants (*Lov om danskuddannelse til voksne udl ndinge m.fl.*). The latter was implemented in 2017, providing a comprehensive reform of the Danish education area for adult migrants with more labour-oriented language training, to ensure stronger labour market integration for migrants.
  7. In Sweden, the organisation of language training is specified in the School Law (*Skollagen*) and the Adult Education Regulation (*F rordning (2011:1108) om vuxenutbildning*).

## Language training is offered with different speed and intensity depending on participant prerequisites

Formal language training in the Nordic countries is organised in largely similar ways, that allow participants to be allocated to “tracks”, aligned with their educational backgrounds and other needs and prerequisites:

- **Denmark.** Danish education (*Danskuddannelse, DU*) is offered in tracks 1-3 depending on participant prerequisites.
- **Finland.** Integration training is provided according to individual integration and offered with a slower path, basic path, and fast path.
- **Norway.** Individual integration or language learning plans determine the intensity, speed, and contents of provided language training (*norskopplæring*).
- **Sweden.** Swedish for immigrants (*Svenska för invandrare, SFI*) is offered in tracks 1–3 depending on participant prerequisites.

In all countries, the training offered is adapted to the educational background of the participants, which determines which track an immigrant is placed within, based on expectations as to how quickly they will be able to progress. Based on how familiar the participant is with the language they are learning; all countries offer different starting points within the tracks. Depending on the track, the speed, intensity, and focus varies, as does expected progression and the CEFR-level that participants are expected to achieve.

In all countries, integration or language plans state what type of language training – or other education – participants are obligated to partake in. **In addition to language training, immigrants in in all four Nordic countries may be required to participate in the equivalent of primary level education to strengthen basic skills and their opportunities to gain employment.** Immigrants to Finland participate in so-called basic education, whereas immigrants to Sweden may have a “duty of education” to participate in primary municipal adult education (*komvux*). In Norway, a key objective of the Integration Act is that refugees participate in formal education parallel to their language studies, particularly at upper secondary level.

## Eligibility for formal language training a main difference between the Nordic countries

One of the areas in which the Nordic countries differ when it comes to formal language training eligibility. **The main national difference in eligibility is whether labour market immigrants have access to formal language training and how their participation is funded.** A residence permit is a prerequisite to be eligible to participate in regular formal training in all countries. As the only country, Norway also provides and requires asylum seekers in asylum centres to participate in language training, albeit this is organised in a different way to the formal language training provided to immigrants who have received their residence permit.

**Table 5. Eligibility to participate in formal language training in the Nordic countries**

	Refugees and their reunited family members	Family members of Nordic citizens	Labour migrants from EU/EEA	Labour migrants from outside EU/EEA
<b>Denmark</b>	Eligible and required to participate free of charge for up to 15 hours a week on average for a maximum period of 5 years.	Eligible to participate free of charge in 3.5 years of training throughout a 5-year period. Participants pay a DKK 2000 fee to enrol in a module, which is refunded upon completion of the module. <sup>[8]</sup>	Eligible <sup>[9]</sup> to participate free of charge in 3.5 years of training throughout a 5-year period. Participants pay a DKK 2000 fee to enrol in a module, which is refunded upon completion of the module.	
<b>Finland</b>	Eligible and required to participate free of charge during a three-year integration plan.	Eligible to participate free of charge.	Not eligible to participate. <sup>[10]</sup>	

8. From 2017 to 2022, labour migrants and their spouses, family members of Nordic citizens, students and au-pairs were subject to a voucher system (*Klippekortsordningen*). The system encompassed six "vouchers" – one for each module – that expired after a certain time, to ensure that participants completed their language training within the mandated five years. The system was phased out in July 2022.

9. Includes immigrants with a residence permit based on employment, studies, arriving as an au pair or through reunification with a Danish spouse.

10. Employed immigrants, regardless of reason for residence permit.

	<b>Refugees and their reunited family members</b>	<b>Family members of Nordic citizens</b>	<b>Labour migrants from EU/EEA</b>	<b>Labour migrants from outside EU/EEA</b>
<b>Norway</b>	Eligible and required to participate free of charge until proficiency goal in the introduction plan is achieved. Typically, within 18 months to 3 years.	Eligible to participate free of charge through language training plan.	Not eligible to participate. <sup>[11]</sup>	Eligible and required to participate, but at self-cost (immigrant or employer). The requirement ceases when proficiency level is met, or 300 hours of training have been completed.
<b>Sweden</b>	Eligible to participate free of charge for an unlimited period of time. Required to participate for the duration of their establishment plan.	Eligible to participate free of charge for an unlimited period of time, required to participate for the duration of their establishment plan.	Eligible to participate free of charge for an unlimited period of time.	

### **Tariffs and costs differ both within and between countries**

The Nordic countries differ when it comes to how the tariffs for language training courses are determined. In Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, the tariffs differ between municipalities, whereas in Finland, tariffs depend on the type of language training offered. In Denmark and Sweden, this is primarily due to the way training is procured through competitive bidding processes. This also applies to Finland when it comes to Integration training. In Denmark, competitive bidding has resulted in a wide range of tariffs.<sup>[12]</sup> In Norway, on the other hand, all municipalities are given a grant to cover the cost of language training, calculated according to the number of immigrants in the target group. In addition, municipalities receive an integration subsidy to help cover the costs of immigrants who participate in language training through their introduction programme. In practice, however, the costs of language training often exceed the received funding.<sup>[13]</sup>

11. A voucher-based system (*Tilskudd til norskopplæring*) was implemented by the Directorate of Integration and Diversity in 2021. The system allows providers of formal language training to apply for a grant to offer non-formal training free of charge to immigrants, regardless of their sub-group.

12. Udlændinge- og Integrationsministeriet (2020a)

13. IMDi (2020)



**Table 6. Costs of formal language training in the Nordic countries in 2016.**

Sources: Skolverket, Statistisk sentralbyrå, Finnish Government Budget, Det nationale integrationsbarometer

	DK	FI	NO	SE
<b>Types of training</b>	Danish education	Integration training	Norwegian education and social orientation	Swedish for immigrants
<b>Year of measurement</b>	2016	2016 (budget)	2016	2016
<b>Local currency</b>	DKK 1.8 bn	EUR 60 mill	NOK 1.99 bn	SEK 3.07 bn
<b>EUR (2016 conversion)</b>	242 million	60 million	219 million	314 million
<b>Number of participants</b>	57,014	Data missing	41,552	150,142
<b>Average spending per participant (EUR)</b>	4,245	Data missing	5,277	2,093

Costs differ substantially between countries, both in terms of total costs as well as average spending per participant. Table 6 shows the costs of training in 2016 for all countries, as well as the number of immigrants who participated in training. Based on this data, we have calculated the average cost per participant, showing that in 2016, **Norway had the highest level of spending per participant in formal language training, whereas Sweden spent the least.**

While Sweden's average cost per participant have increased in recent years and Norway's has decreased, the overall difference still applies (Table 7). While we have been unable to collate data on more recent costs in Denmark, a study shows that the costs of training have decreased significantly since 2016.<sup>[14]</sup> This is attributed to a strengthening of oversight of municipalities to procure training through competitive bidding in 2017. Data for Finland on the number of participants in integration training is unavailable at national level.

14. Udlændinge- og Integrationsministeriet (2020)

**Table 7. Costs of formal language training in the Nordic countries in 2021/2022.**

Sources: Skolverket, Statistisk sentralbyrå, Finnish Government Budget, Det nationale integrationsbarometer

	FI	NO	SE
<b>Types of training</b>	Integration training	Norwegian education and social orientation	Swedish for immigrants
<b>Year of measurement</b>	2022 (budget)	2021	2021
<b>Local currency</b>	EUR 53 mill	NOK 1.06 bn	SEK 3.53 bn
<b>EUR (2022 conversion)</b>	53 million	105 million	329 million
<b>Number of participants</b>	Data missing	22,199	133,000
<b>Average spending per participant (EUR)</b>	Data missing	4,748	2,474

### EU/EEA regulations have limited influence on language training in all countries

EU/EEA regulations have very little influence on language training in all Nordic countries. The main area where regulations affect language training is the procurement of language training, which takes place to varying extents in all countries and thus affects them all. Procurement is affected in that it must be based on EU principles for competitive procurement.

Other EU principles have affected national policies related to lifelong learning. For example, the European Qualification Framework for Lifelong learning affected the National Qualification Framework that was implemented by law in Norway in 2017, six years after its first implementation. In Sweden, the EU's eight principles on key competences<sup>[15]</sup> are considered when education policy is developed. However, neither of these have any direct influence on the organisation and delivery formal language training.

15. Literary competence; multilingual competence; mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering; digital competence; personal, social and learning to learn competence; citizenship competence; entrepreneurship competence; cultural awareness and expression competence.

## The main goals of language training are language proficiency and potential for labour market integration

**The main goal of language training in all countries is labour market integration, meaning that participants must develop sufficient language skills to either attain employment or to be able to participate in further education.** To reach this goal, language training in all countries is combined with both social orientation and training that strengthens participants' knowledge of the labour market and culture. In addition to employment and labour market integration, there are also goals related to language proficiency. While this is found in all the Nordic countries, it is more formalised in Finland and Norway, where participants goals set according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) scale.<sup>[16]</sup> Goals are individual and depend on the participant's individual integration or language learning plans. On average, most participants are expected to achieve a proficiency level of B1. In Norway, the proficiency goal can also differ in relation to different aspects of language learning, such as reading, writing, understanding, and speaking.

## Pass rates are high among exam participants, but proficiency levels are lower than desired

Whilst the long-term goal of language training is labour market integration, there is limited data that links the elements in a national language training system to employment. The results of language training are thus mainly measured in relation to the proficiency that participants achieve. While methods of measurement differ somewhat between countries, absence rates, pass rates and grades when completing courses or exams are typically monitored. All countries have final tests and exams at the completion of courses, equivalent to a level on the CEFR scale, albeit Finland and Norway place a heavier emphasis on the scale.

**In all countries, a higher level of education correlates with both pass rates and achieved grades .** While there is little differentiation between sub-groups, some patterns are visible. In both Denmark and Sweden, pass rates for labour migrants are lower than for other groups, albeit their grades are higher. <sup>[17]</sup>In Denmark, refugees on average receive the lowest grades in their exams compared to other sub-groups. <sup>[18]</sup> **Other factors that seem to correlate with exam grades and pass rates are age, time spent in the Nordic country, and how teaching is delivered .** In all countries, younger age groups achieve better

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16. The CEFR scale is an international scale for describing language ability on a six-point scale: Basic user (A1, A2), independent user (B1, B2), and proficient user (C1, C2).

17. VIVE (2019); Statistiska Centralbyrån (2020)

18. Udlændinge- og Integrationsministeriet (2020c)

results.<sup>[19]</sup> Data from Finland show that those who have lived there longer also achieve better results. Results from Denmark show that in-person learning affects grades positively, compared to self-study.<sup>[20]</sup>

Results are measured in different ways in different countries. As such, Sweden and Denmark are comparable, whereas Finland and Norway are comparable. Data for Denmark and Sweden show that pass rates are generally high, but higher in Denmark for exams at B1 and B2 level compared to A2. The opposite is the case in Sweden, where pass rates are the highest for exams at A1/A2 level (Table 8). It should however be noted that in Sweden, dropout rates among participants are high, with almost 50 percent interrupting their courses in 2020, which is likely to affect the pass rates.<sup>[21]</sup>

**Table 8. Pass rates among immigrants who have participated in exams at different proficiency levels in Denmark and Sweden.**

*Sources: Udlændinge- og integrationsministeriet, Skolverket*

Country	Type of exam	Pass rate (percent)
<b>Denmark (2020)</b>	Danish Education 1 exam (A2)	82.6
	Danish Education 2 exam (B1)	91.4
	Danish Education 3 exam (B2)	91.5
<b>Sweden (2019)</b>	Swedish for Immigrants, national examination B (A1/A2)	92
	Swedish for Immigrants, national examination C (A2/A2+)	85
	Swedish for Immigrants, national examination D (B1/B1+)	85
	Swedish as a second language, national examination 1 (B1+/B2)	77
	Swedish as a second language, national examination 3 (C1)	88

19. VTV (2018); Statistiska Centralbyrån (2020); Nordic Council of Ministers (2019)

20. Udlændinge- og Integrationsministeriet (2020c)

21. Skolverket (2020)

Data from Finland and Norway compares the distribution of language proficiency levels among participants who have completed final examinations (Table 9). Here, Norway stands out as having a higher proportion of participants who achieve both the lowest result (A1) and the highest result (B2) in the final proficiency exam compared to Finland. In Norway, results have improved in recent years, with more participants achieving a B1 or B2 level in proficiency exams in 2021 compared to previous years.<sup>[22]</sup>

**Table 9. Results in final exams for formal language training in Finland and Norway.**

Sources: VTV, SSB

Country	Type of exam	Percentage of participants
<b>Finland (2018)</b>	Results A1 achieved at end of integration programme	12
	Results A2 achieved at end of integration programme	50
	Results B1 achieved at end of integration programme	35
	Results B2 or higher achieved at end of integration programme	3
<b>Norway (2021)</b>	Average A1 or lower in final proficiency exam	16
	Average A2 in final proficiency exam	39
	Average B1 in final proficiency exam	33
	Average B2 in final proficiency exam	12

## Language training is combined with vocational training

All Nordic countries offer language training that can be combined with vocational education and training (VET). Structures for this kind of combined training vary between countries, but courses tend to offer workplace-based training within

22. Statistisk sentralbyrå (2021b)

occupations with local or regional demands for labour. Generally, courses combine classroom-based language training with theoretical and practical VET. In Norway and Sweden immigrants typically apply to predetermined courses, whereas in Denmark and Finland, this type of training takes a more individualised approach (Table 10). Studies from Norway show that **this type of training is a beneficial way of ensuring that immigrants learn relevant vocational skills in conjunction with language training.**<sup>[23]</sup> An evaluation of Denmark’s Basic Integration Education also shows that this type of training is considered to improve the participants’ opportunities for employment and continued education.<sup>[24]</sup>

**Table 10. Examples of language training that combines formal language training with vocational training in the Nordic countries**

	DK	FI	NO	SE
<b>Examples of training</b>	Basic Integration Education ( <i>Integrationsgrunduddannelsen, IGU</i> )	Integration plan	Labour market training ( <i>Arbeidsmarkedsopplæring, AMO</i> ), other types of combined training offered within introduction plan	Swedish for Immigrants with VET ( <i>Yrkes-SFI</i> ), Komvux with VET ( <i>Vuxenutbildning med integrerad språkträning</i> )
<b>Target group</b>	Refugees and their family members, aged 18–40	Unemployed immigrants who have resided in Finland for less than 3 years	Immigrants who are not eligible to participate in formal language training, immigrants with introduction plan in need of upskilling	Unemployed immigrants
<b>Providers</b>	Municipalities and companies	Employment and Economic Development (TE) Offices	Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), municipalities	Municipalities

23. Oxford Research (2017); Ideas2evidence (2020); By- og regionsforskningsinstituttet NIBR (2019); NORCE (2022)  
24. Rambøll (2018)

## 2.3 Non-formal language training services

In this study, we have defined non-formal language training services as services that are typically not subject to regulations concerning eligibility, funding, procurement, organisation, and contents. They encompass a wide variety of services, comprising everything from traditional classroom-based language learning to social initiatives such as language buddies and sports to digital services where learning is gamified. All types of non-formal services are found across the Nordic countries. Non-formal language training services are provided by a broad variety of actors in all countries. The providers encompass both private actors that offer language training as a commercial product and non-profit providers such as civil society organisations and foundations.<sup>[25]</sup> In all countries, non-formal training is also offered by universities and colleges, to e.g., exchange students.

**The main differences between non-formal language training services are found at service-level rather than between countries or immigrant sub-groups.** While there are few substantial differences between the Nordic countries when it comes to which types of services are delivered in which way, non-formal language training services seem to be especially important to the broader language training systems in Finland and Norway, possibly owing to substantial groups of immigrants not being eligible to participate in formal language training.

As a part of this study, we have conducted eight case studies of initiatives that offer language training services. Six of these services offer non-formal training. A comparison of the services based on the type of service they provide, their modes of delivery, target groups providers, funding goals, and results is presented in Table 11.<sup>[26]</sup>

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25. See Annex A, Table 16 for examples of commercial and non-profit providers in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. See Annex A, Table 16 for examples of commercial and non-profit providers in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden.

26. Detailed descriptions of the studied language training services can be found in Annex A.

**Table 11. Comparative overview of six non-formal language training services**

	<b>Sprogland</b>	<b>Gimara – Brighter Future</b>	<b>YLE Language school</b>	<b>Folke- universitet</b>	<b>MiR</b>	<b>Lingio</b>
<b>Country</b>	Denmark	Finland	Finland	Norway	Norway	Sweden
<b>Type of training</b>	Social language training	Non-formal traditional language course	Non-formal traditional language training	Non-formal traditional language course	Social language training	Non-formal traditional language course
<b>Mode of delivery</b>	Digital	In-person	Digital	In-person	In-person	Digital
<b>Target group</b>	All immigrants	Potential labour migrants from Myanmar	All immigrants	All immigrants, particularly labour migrants not eligible for formal training	All immigrants, particularly those far from the labour market with limited knowledge of Norwegian	Employed immigrants who lack specific language skills for their profession
<b>Name of provider</b>	Red Cross Denmark	Gimara	YLE and Språkkraft	Folke- universitetet	MiR	Lingio
<b>Type of provider</b>	Non-profit	Commercial/ Non-profit	Commercial/ Non-profit	Non-profit	Non-profit	Commercial
<b>Funding</b>	Publicly funded	Privately funded	Publicly funded	Privately and publicly funded	Privately and publicly funded	Privately funded
<b>Short term- goal</b>	Language proficiency (general)	Language proficiency (general and professional)	Language proficiency (general)	Language proficiency (general and professional)	Language proficiency (general)	Language proficiency (professional)
<b>Long-term goal</b>	Social integration	Labour- market integration	Social and cultural integration	Social and labour- market integration	Social and labour- market integration	Labour- market integration



## Non-formal language training covers both traditional language sources and social language training

Findings from this study suggest that non-formal language training services can be divided into two broad categories: non-formal traditional language courses and social language training. Non-formal traditional language courses encompass teacher-led training, either classroom or online-based, that exist outside of the formal language training system. Providers can be both commercial actors and non-profits, but commercial actors that offer training through private language schools are a typical example. Unlike formal language training, courses do not necessarily have a set curriculum, but the contents, duration and intensity of training can be adapted to the needs of the learners. Among the participants surveyed for this study, participation in traditional non-formal training is high, with almost 60 percent of respondents having participated in either language courses at their workplace, language courses they paid for themselves, and/or free language courses delivered through apps such as Duolingo or YouTube.

Social language training encompasses a service that combines a social aspect with the possibility to practice a language. Examples of such services are language cafés, where a group meets to practice the language, or a language buddy system, where two individuals are in contact for the purposes of practicing a language. Social language training services can also comprise non-language related activities such as sports, cooking classes and nature walks, where the primary goal is to practice the language in a social setting, promoting social integration as well as language learning. Social language training is primarily offered by non-profits, ranging from large actors such as the Red Cross to small organisations. Services typically rely on volunteers. Among respondents surveyed, approximately 40 percent have participated in social language training activities, such as language cafés or language buddies or other social activities such as friendship-building activities, cooking classes or sports.

## Services delivered through digital services are increasingly popular

Non-formal language training services can be delivered through both in-person learning and meetings as well as digital services. **While in-person meetings were long considered the norm in language learning, interviewed experts and providers ascertain that the Covid-19 pandemic has contributed to an increased demand in online tools and technologies** (something that is also the case in formal language training). Platforms that were launched during the Covid-19 pandemic, such as the Red Cross's digital meeting platform *Sprogländ* thus expect to continue beyond the pandemic. Interviewed providers also highlight that digital apps such as Sweden's

*Lingio* or Finland's *YLE Language School* can provide a gamified way to enhance language learning. The platforms typically offer a high degree of flexibility to language learners, who can participate in language training on their own terms and at suitable times.

### **No overall eligibility criteria to participate in non-formal language training**

Given the heterogeneity of available non-formal language training services, any eligibility criteria depend on the individual service. Many non-formal services are, however, targeted at specific immigrant sub-groups. According to interviewed providers in Sweden, it is, for example, common for social language training services to focus specifically on immigrants who lack opportunities for social integration, such as women with little education and caregiver responsibilities, who often have a refugee background. But initiatives such as language cafés and language buddies are generally open to everyone. In Denmark, Finland, and Sweden, civil society organisations are the only actors that offer language training to asylum seekers, who are not eligible to participate in formal language training in these countries.

**Since not all immigrants are eligible for formal language training in Finland and Norway, non-formal traditional services seemingly play a larger role in complementing formal services than they do in Denmark and Sweden.** In Finland, so-called liberal adult education institutions<sup>[27]</sup> offer non-formal training to immigrants who are not eligible or able to participate in formal language training such as stay-at-home mothers, immigrants who have lived in Finland for more than three years and employed immigrants. Training is often flexible, taking place on evenings and weekends, and can be combined with e.g., childcare. In Norway, on the other hand, a subsidy was introduced in 2021 (*Tilskudd til norskopplæringsordning*), aimed at strengthening the Norwegian skills of immigrants who have either completed the formal language training that they were eligible to participate in, or who have never been eligible to participate. The system allows commercial and non-profit providers that have been certified by the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills or by municipalities to apply for funding to provide non-formal language training that is innovative and based on participant needs.<sup>[28]</sup>

### **Non-formal providers are funded in a variety of ways, but public funding is important**

Non-formal language training services are funded in a variety of ways. Commercial providers are typically self-funded, but depending on the specific services that they

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27. E.g., adult education centres, folk high schools, learning centres, sports training centres, summer universities.  
28. IMDi (2022a)

deliver, they can also apply for public funding. According to an interviewed commercial provider in Denmark, costs depend on the duration and intensity of the course and the size of the groups but are also adjusted to make language training accessible to as many as possible. A representative from Folkeuniversitetet, a non-profit actor in Norway that provides an array of traditional non-formal traditional language courses, explains they adjust the duration of their courses to what participants and/or their employers are able or willing to pay, which limits the proficiency that participants can achieve.

Non-profit providers are mainly funded through a combination of public grants, grants from foundations, project funding, and donations from companies and individuals. Non-profit providers also mainly rely on volunteers to deliver their services. According to interviewed non-profit providers in Norway and Denmark, the process of applying for public grants is often time-consuming and requires that the providers have in-house knowledge of how the system works.

### **Goals vary according to type of service, but integration is key**

The goals of non-formal language training services differ, corresponding to the type of training offered. Broadly speaking, **non-formal language services facilitate language learning in informal contexts, helping immigrants to improve their language skills, build social networks and enter the labour market.** According to interviewed providers from Denmark and Norway, non-formal traditional courses aim to teach immigrants a Nordic language as fast and efficiently as possible, by creating learning groups that are homogenous in terms of educational backgrounds and offering a high degree of flexibility. Social language training services, on the other hand, have less specified goals, but according to a Swedish provider, initiatives such as language cafés and language buddies aim to improve conversational skills by expanding vocabulary and increasing confidence. The services also facilitate social integration by increasing participants' understanding of society, allowing them to become a part of their local community, build networks, and become better equipped to deal with services such as healthcare and schools.

### **Non-formal services rarely monitor results**

The results of non-formal language training are not monitored or measured in the same way as formal language training services. Non-formal traditional language courses typically follow up the results of training using testing and certificates to gauge the proficiency that the participant has achieved.

Social language training services on the other hand, focus on the delivery of a high-quality service, with interviewees in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden highlighting this as being a prerequisite for any results among participating immigrants.

Moreover, services that are open to all participants and flexible in terms of participation and duration are unable to measure progress over time. Nevertheless, respondents to this study's survey are generally satisfied with their participation in non-formal language training services. <sup>[29]</sup> Providers from Denmark and Sweden consider high-quality non-formal language training services to be a complement to formal language training by offering opportunities to practice the language.

## Key takeaways

- Formal language training services are provided and funded in largely similar ways across all Nordic countries, where integration policies determine how they are organised, the contents of training, and the qualifications required to deliver training.
- The main goal of both formal and non-formal language training services is integration, both labour market and social. To facilitate this, formal training services are increasingly being combined with other types of training, such as VET, as well as both primary and secondary education.
- One of the main differences between countries in formal language training services is who is eligible to participate. In Denmark and Sweden, all immigrants are eligible to participate. In Finland, formal training is only available to unemployed immigrants, whereas in Norway, it is available to refugees and their family members, family members of Nordic citizens and labour migrants and their family members from outside the EU/EEA.
- Non-formal language training services provide a myriad of activities in all countries. The study has not identified any differences between countries in terms of how non-formal services are organised, funded, and provided. For these services, the main differences are between the different types of services offered.
- Results of language training relating to proficiency are only measured in relation to formal language training services, whereas non-formal services rarely monitor results. While pass rates are high among exam participants, they do not account for factors such as drop-out rates, which may affect the general results.

# 3. Perceived quality and benefits of language training services

The purpose of this chapter is to present an analysis of our empirical findings concerning how three groups of stakeholders – participants in language training, providers of language training, and employers – perceive the quality and benefits of the language training services available in the Nordics. The chapter considers the differences and complementary nature between formal and non-formal services. It also compares perceptions between countries and, where applicable, sub-groups of immigrants. The empirical findings presented in this chapter are based on the results from the surveys conducted with participants and providers, desk research, interviews with providers and employer and employee representatives, as well as findings from the case studies.<sup>[30]</sup>

## 3.1 Summary of findings

**Overall, we have found few differences in how different sub-groups of immigrants and providers across the Nordic countries perceive quality and benefits of training.**

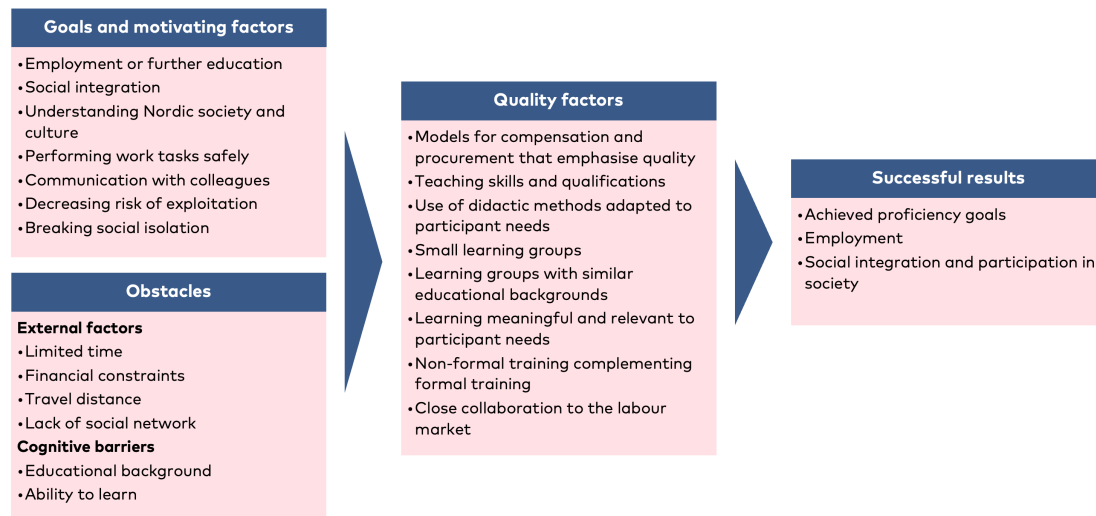
While conditions, as previously described, vary between sub-groups in terms of eligibility for formal language training, their perceived goals, obstacles, and quality factors are largely similar. The main differences are instead related to the extent to which a certain goal or obstacle is particularly important. For example, labour migrants find lack of time a larger obstacle than other sub-groups. Otherwise, individual circumstances and backgrounds seem to be more important. There are also surprisingly few differences between the Nordic countries in terms of motivations, obstacles, and quality factors. The main identified difference is the extent to which formal language training is considered high-quality, where stakeholders from Sweden ascertain that the Swedish system has a lower quality than the systems in Denmark, Finland, and Norway.

Perceived quality in language training is a complex issue, that can be understood in many ways . **For the purpose of this study, we find it useful to understand quality as the way in which an initiative or service must be delivered in order to achieve success. As such, we consider quality to be when a language training service is delivered in a way that enables participants to be successful in achieving both their**

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30. Please see section 1.3 for a discussion of how bias affects the results of the survey.

**own and society's goals for language training by increasing their motivation and helping them to overcome barriers** . As illustrated in Figure 2, this means that the service must be organised in a way that enhances learning and motivation by being meaningful as well as making it possible to overcome barriers related to both external conditions (e.g. lack of time, travel distance, financial constraints, trauma or a lack of social network) and cognitive barriers (e.g. educational background, ability to learn). But also contributes to participants achieving their ultimate goals.



**Figure 2. Illustration of factors that affect the benefits and successful results of language training**

## 3.2 Why do immigrants participate in language training?

There are many reasons why immigrants participate in language training. The obvious ones are related to regulations; for unemployed immigrants in all countries, participation in language training is often a requirement to receive financial support. But this is far from the whole picture. Motivations to participate in language training are related to both personal circumstances and ambitions, as well as a wish to participate in Nordic society. While social integration as well as understanding the new society and culture are important results of language training, **the primary reason for participation in language training identified in this study is labour market integration, both in terms of gaining employment and functioning in the workplace.** This is in line with political priorities in all the Nordic countries, where integration policies highlight language training as a key to integration, with policies and integration programmes being designed accordingly.

**The motivations to participate in language training are remarkably similar across immigrant sub-groups.** The main difference lies in the differences between labour migrants who are already employed, and immigrants who are unemployed, regardless of their background. Where employers, providers, and participants across all countries agree that gaining employment or achieving the proficiency required for further education is the primary aim of language training among unemployed immigrants, for labour migrants or other immigrants who have gained employment, the reasons are more complex. Here, the primary reasons are being able to perform the tasks of a job in a safe manner, mitigating the risk of exploitation, and improving social integration.

Participating in language training solely for the goal of social integration is unusual<sup>[31]</sup> and seems to occur primarily among immigrants who are very far from the labour market, often low-skilled women with little education. For this group, language training serves as a tool to break social isolation.

### Language skills are key to gaining employment

Overall, there is widespread agreement among stakeholders that the aim of language training should be to facilitate labour market integration among unemployed immigrants. As well as being the explicit aim of formal language training services for adult immigrants in all the Nordic countries, the goal is echoed both among the participants themselves, as well as employer representatives in all countries. The latter consider language training a crucial element in being able to meet their demands for labour. **Among surveyed participants, entering the labour market is considered the most important reason to learn a Nordic language among immigrants to all countries**<sup>[32]</sup>. Entering the labour market can take place in

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31. Please note that this could be due to selection bias among survey respondents and interviewees.

32. Annex B: Figure B 1



different ways, however. For example, interviewed authorities in Norway and Denmark point out how language training can result in the ability to participate in primary, upper secondary or higher education, instead of directly to employment.

On the other hand, the focus on labour market participation as the goal of language training also means that employment may be prioritised over language learning. While employment can be highly beneficial to the development of language skills, providers and employee representatives in Denmark and Sweden also point out that it is not uncommon for immigrants to stop participating in formal language training services once they gain employment, regardless of their proficiency (or lack thereof). The interviewees consider this to be detrimental to the immigrants' continued language development, particularly if the job does not give opportunities to practice their language skills. This was the experience of an interviewed immigrant to Norway who explained how leaving language training to work and care for his family meant that he failed to develop written Norwegian skills, despite having lived in Norway for over a decade.

### **Language skills are necessary for workplace integration and safety among employed immigrants**

Finding a job is, however, only one part of how language training is important to labour market integration. Both participants and employer representatives highlight **social integration as an important aspect of employee retention, particularly among labour migrants**. An interviewed high-skilled labour migrant in Norway whose working language is English explains how learning Norwegian is a way for them to improve their social integration, as they plan to remain in Norway long-term. This point is reinforced by survey results, which show that understanding Nordic culture and society is another key reason that immigrants participate in language training.<sup>[33]</sup>

For most immigrants, **sufficient language skills are also necessary to be able to function in a workplace, performing tasks with necessary safety precautions and communicating with colleagues**. As highlighted by an interviewed Swedish employee representative, employees who do not have sufficient language skills can pose a risk to the organisation. For example, within the healthcare sector, there are substantial risks to patients if communication is not clear. Employees must be able to understand and adhere to safety regulations, communicate any issues at hand, and avoid misunderstandings insofar as possible. While this applies to all sectors, the interviewee maintains that it is particularly important in sectors that employ many immigrants, such as healthcare, industry, and construction among others. In addition, according to an interviewed representative from an employee organisation in Finland, the ability to speak and understand the national language is an important aspect of employee rights. Without this ability, immigrants have an

increased risk of exploitation.

While language training enhances the social integration of labour migrants, there is little data available concerning the extent to which employers actually provide language training to employees who are not eligible to participate in formal language training services. There does, however, seem to be a difference between countries in terms of the extent to which employers take on these responsibilities, with Norway standing out as having a heavier focus on employer responsibilities. Nevertheless, as per an employee organisation in Finland, employers do provide language training for labour migrants to a certain extent. This is, however, not a widespread practice and particularly unusual for labour migrants in low-skilled occupations. In Norway, on the other hand, employers seem to take a larger role in providing training to labour migrants. According to interviewed employer representatives and providers, this language training typically takes the form of short, targeted courses offered by non-formal commercial providers in a traditional learning setting. While employers are often happy to offer short courses that are quick and efficient and provide basic skills, employees find that language learning requires both effort and time to process and practice what they learn. Data from Denmark and Sweden on this subject is limited. Given that all immigrants have access to formal training, the need is for such services targeted at labour migrants and immigrant employees is less substantial.

### **Language skills contribute to social integration**

While employment may be the ultimate goal and purpose of language training services, social integration is another important aspect. **Labour market integration and social integration go hand-in-hand, but for immigrants who have limited possibilities of joining the labour market in the short term due to lack of skills or family commitments, social integration can be the most important goal.** While individual circumstances affect this, these obstacles are particularly prevalent among refugees and their family members.<sup>[34]</sup> According to an interviewed provider in Sweden which provides formal language training to low-skilled women who are very far from the labour market, language training enables them to break their social isolation, both through their actual participation as well as through the skills they learn.

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34. Nordiska Ministerrådet (2021)

### 3.3 What prevents immigrants from achieving their goals with language training?

The main obstacles that prevent immigrants from either participating in language training or achieving their goals that have been identified in this study, affect all immigrant sub-groups – if in different ways and to varying extents. Barriers related to eligibility are difficult to overcome without changes in regulations. However, even for sub-groups that are ineligible to participate in formal language training, there are non-formal language training services available. This section thus explores the obstacles and barriers to participation on a more general level.

Challenges such as limited time to participate, lack of social networks, financial constraints, and missing educational prerequisites are not limited to any specific immigrant sub-group. **The main obstacles to language learning primarily seem to come down to individual circumstances, with factors such as previous educational levels and family commitments affecting participation and ability to learn.** A lack of social network or environment to practice the Nordic language is also considered a challenge across sub-groups and countries but can play out in different ways. For example, high-skilled labour migrants often work in English and socialise in English-speaking, international communities. Whereas for low-skilled refugees, the lack of social networks could rather be due to factors such as housing segregation, providing limited opportunities to meet native speakers in their daily lives. Based on this study's findings, Figure 3 presents the main identified barriers in relation to how likely we consider that they will constitute a significant barrier to participation and goal achievement for different sub-groups.

Regardless of immigrant background, obstacles clearly can and do prevent immigrants from achieving their goals with language training. Whether the obstacles are due to external factors in immigrants' lives or their innate cognitive abilities, they still constitute barriers that must be overcome. While an obstacle such as an uneven quality in the services delivered does not necessarily present a barrier to participation, it can affect the participants' chances of achieving results, and could also be linked to high dropout rates.<sup>[35]</sup> As such, we also consider this to be a factor that can prevent immigrants from achieving their goals.

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35. Skolinspektionen (2021).

	Refugees and their reunited family members	Family members of Nordic citizens arriving through family reunification	Labour migrants from EU/EEA countries	Labour migrants from outside the EU/EEA
Limited time	Less likely	Less likely	More likely	More likely
Financial constraints	Less likely	Less likely	More likely (FI & NO)	More likely (FI & NO)
Lack of social network	More likely	More likely	More likely	More likely
Cognitive barriers (low education, ability to learn)	More likely	Less likely	Less likely	Less likely

**Figure 3. Barriers to participation according to their severity for different immigrant sub-groups**

### Participants have other commitments, limiting time for language training

A key challenge for adult immigrants to participate in both formal and non-formal language training activities is finding the time to do so. Among survey respondents, **lack of time is the most significant obstacle to participating in language training, particularly among labour migrants.**<sup>[36]</sup> Interviewed providers in Denmark and Sweden also point out that language training is rarely the main priority for participants who often have families and jobs that must come first, limiting their time to participate. They maintain that there needs to be an understanding of how adult responsibilities may limit participants' opportunities to focus on language learning and an increased awareness among providers that they are dealing with adults, something the interviewees find is often lacking.

### Financial constraints may affect participation, but to a limited extent

While studies and experts agree that financial constraints can be an obstacle to participating in formal language training, neither the participants nor the providers surveyed in this study consider this to be a substantial obstacle to participation.<sup>[37]</sup> This could be because the respondents consider other obstacles, such as lack of time, to matter *more* than financial constraints, findings that are in line with

36. Annex B: Figure B 3

37. Annex B: Figure B3; Annex B: Figure B7

previous studies.<sup>[38]</sup> But it could also be because Norway, being the only country in this study where specific immigrant sub-groups must pay to participate in formal training, is underrepresented in the survey.<sup>[39]</sup> In addition, there is evidence from Denmark, that introducing fees for labour migrants impacts the number of participants to a considerable extent – when the fees were later removed, participation of labour migrants increased by 78 percent.<sup>[40]</sup>

Findings from interviews also show that financial constraints can present an obstacle to immigrants who are eligible to participate in formal language training at no cost. For example, a Swedish provider mentions how participants are unable to purchase the required course literature, affecting both the delivery of the service and the participants' possibility to absorb what is being taught.

### **Immigrants lack social networks and opportunities to practice the language**

Another factor that affects immigrants in their goal of learning a Nordic language is their lack of social network and relations to native speakers. Both providers and participants point out **how immigrants of all backgrounds often have little opportunity to practice speaking in their daily lives**. For refugees and their family members, the lack of contact with native speakers is often due to segregation. An interviewed provider in Sweden explains how it is difficult for these immigrants to find an environment where they can use what they are learning. A Swedish teacher mentions how their students sometimes call customer service numbers just to practice the Swedish they have learnt through training.

Interviewed labour migrants from Norway, Denmark, and Finland who speak and work in English also point out that the high levels of English in the Nordic countries mean that the Nordic language is rarely needed to communicate at work or in social settings, which primarily take place in international communities. They find that this slows their progress and makes it difficult to achieve fluency, despite considering themselves to have the abilities to succeed.

### **Educational prerequisites affect participants' ability to learn**

As well as the previously discussed external factors, immigrants' learning is also affected by their cognitive abilities. These include both innate abilities to learn a new language, but also factors such as how many other languages they speak and their educational backgrounds. Research shows **that educational background**

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38. Rambøll (2021)

39. Approximately 10 percent of participants in Norwegian training in 2021 were labour migrants from outside the EU/EEA, who are obliged to participate (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2021).

40. Udlændinge- og integrationsministeriet (2021)

**affects the ability to learn a new language**.<sup>[41]</sup> This is confirmed by interviewed providers in all countries, who point out how immigrants with higher educational backgrounds to a much higher extent than those with little or no education have the tools to facilitate their own language training, such as better literacy, study techniques, and an understanding of what learning a new language entails. While formal language training in all countries aims to overcome this barrier by providing different learning tracks based on abilities and educational backgrounds, immigrants with lower educational backgrounds, particularly if they are illiterate, face significant hurdles in learning a Nordic language. **These groups are more likely to be found among refugees** and their family members who, as a provider from Denmark points out, often have struggles related to their children, financial worries, war-torn home countries and daily concern for friends and relatives who have remained in their native country – none of which are beneficial to language learning.

A lack of education can also mean that immigrants have less access to non-formal services, particularly non-formal traditional courses at private language schools. For example, an interviewed commercial language provider in Denmark points out that they require participants to have completed at least 12 years of education to participate in their language courses, since the learning speed is fast. There are, however, also a wide variety of services targeted toward this group, particularly social language services.<sup>[42]</sup>

## Unevenness in the quality of delivered services

The obstacles to achieving the goals of language learning can also be related to the quality of the services provided. While the surveyed participants generally consider the standard of language training in all Nordic countries to be high, there are some exceptions. Sweden particularly stands out as having a formal language training system which participants and employers describe as "uneven". An interviewed employer organisation in Sweden ascertains that an employee having passed a course does not necessarily guarantee that they have the expected proficiency. According to the interviewee, the quality of the students' Swedish levels can differ enormously between schools. They also see a pattern of students passing courses too easily. This means that Swedish employers are often obliged to test potential employees' Swedish skills and offer complementary training. Both employer organisations and non-formal providers in Sweden put the uneven quality down to a lack of qualified teachers, combined with providers letting participants pass their courses too easily. While interviewed experts in Denmark have also pointed out that

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41. AlHammadi (2016)

42. Nordiska Ministerrådet (2021)

the quality among providers can be uneven, these concerns are less prevalent than among the Swedish stakeholders. We have not identified these issues in Finland or Norway. However, an interviewed employer organisation in Denmark does highlight that the contents of language training are often very general. For labour migrants or other immigrants who have found employment, the training can be too general and far removed from the more specific and industry-oriented training that could benefit them.

### 3.4 Which factors are important to ensuring high quality language training?

A wide range of factors are important to how stakeholders perceive the quality and benefits of language training. The key factors we have identified in this study are:

The organisation of compensation models and procurement systems

- Skilled or qualified teachers using didactic methods adapted to the needs of participants
- Group composition and learning environments
- Relevant and meaningful training
- Non-formal language training services that fill the gaps left by formal services
- Close collaboration with the labour market

These factors concern the regulation, organisation, and delivery of training, as well as the prioritisation of how synergies between both formal and non-formal language training and language training and the labour market. While all stakeholders seem to consider these factors important, which quality factors that are considered especially important depend on the stakeholder perspectives. For example, **providers are more concerned with how compensation models and procurements systems affect the quality of training, whereas participants are more concerned with how training is organised and delivered.**

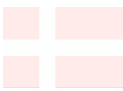
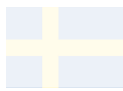

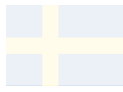





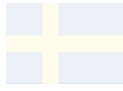
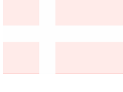





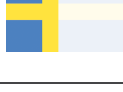




While the study has found some minor differences between immigrant sub-groups when it comes to motivations for participation and barriers to achieving goals, differences when it comes to how quality is perceived are less prevalent. While individual circumstances influence the degree to which immigrants can participate in and make use of different types of services, all immigrants are affected by factors such as teaching skills, didactic methods adapted to their needs, group composition and learning environments and the extent to which training is

meaningful. However, immigrants with resources such as time, study techniques and a high level of education are more likely to achieve their goals, even if the language training they participate in lacks quality, compared to groups with fewer resources. As such, **a lack of quality in language training seems more likely to affect low-skilled immigrants negatively.**

The identified quality factors are found to varying extents in the Nordic language training systems. Based on our findings in this study, Table 12 illustrates our assessment of how successful the Nordic countries are in delivering training that adheres to the quality factors. While Norway appears to have the most consistent quality in delivered training, Sweden seems to have the most challenges. The regulation and organisation of formal language training services, coupled with strategically organised funding for non-formal language training services, can be one explanation. It is also interesting to note that Norway is the country that has the highest average spending per participant in formal language training services, whilst Sweden has the lowest. Albeit spending is influenced by many factors not necessarily related to quality, this connection would be interesting to explore further.



**Table 12. Assessment of the extent to which Nordic countries have achieved identified quality factors**

	DK	FI	NO	SE
Compensation models and procurement systems affect quality in a positive way				
Teachers are skilled and qualified				
Didactic methods are adapted to the needs of participants				
Learning groups have similar educational backgrounds				
Learning groups are small enough to facilitate learning				
Training is meaningful and relevant for participants				
Non-formal services effectively fill the gaps in formal services				
There is close collaboration with the labour market				

### Compensation models and procurement systems affect the delivery of formal training both positively and negatively

While funding models for formal training differ between Nordic countries, the organisation of funding is perceived to affect the delivery and quality of training in two main ways. First, in relation to how language training services are compensated. Second, in relation to how language training services are procured. The extent to which funding models are considered to affect the quality of training do, however, differ between the Nordics.

As described in chapter 2.2, compensation models for providers in all Nordic countries but Norway are primarily based on participants completing the courses. Providers in both Finland and Norway consider their compensation models to have limited influence on the quality of formal training. Providers and employer

organisations in Denmark and Sweden, however, point out that the compensation model based on course completion creates an incentive to prioritise costs over quality. In Denmark, where standardised testing is the norm, providers, teachers, and experts claim that classes have become more test oriented, meaning that teaching focuses more on the skills needed to pass the exams, rather than ensuring long-term language learning. In Sweden, the consequences are somewhat different. Here, participants and employers find that providers instead more likely to give participants a passing grade on a course, regardless of whether they have achieved the required proficiency goals.

The perception of the extent to which procurement models affect the quality of training also varies between the Nordics. In both Denmark and Sweden, where formal language training services are mainly procured through competitive bidding processes, municipalities are incentivised to choose providers which offer to deliver courses at the lowest cost. In Sweden, experts point out that this system may play a role in the uneven quality of services delivered. Denmark provides a more mixed picture. On the one hand, surveyed and interviewed providers in Denmark are critical to the current procurement processes, claiming that competitive bidding has pressured providers to cut prices by reducing the number of teaching hours for participants, increasing class sizes, and downgrading facilities, all of which have made it more difficult to recruit qualified teachers. On the other hand, a representative from a large municipality in Denmark maintains that evaluations show that competitive bidding has improved the quality and results of language training and increased its cost-efficiency.

Providers and stakeholders in Finland, largely consider the procurement process to be positive. They highlight that the process emphasises quality and while competition is stiff, it also ensures effectiveness. Nevertheless, providers also point out that there is a lack of funding in the system. This leads to teachers being underpaid and teaching facilities not being up to par. It also affects the possibilities to recruit new teachers.

Both Norway and some municipalities in Sweden use so-called authorisation systems to procure providers of formal training. Typically, these systems enable all providers which fulfil a set of criteria to provide training. In Norway, the system has limited the number of providers, ensuring that they adhere to high quality standards. In Sweden, the municipalities that use this system have instead found that it increases the number of providers, which affects quality both positively and negatively. Positively, since competition has forced providers to provide more topical and high-quality teaching. Negatively, since it makes long-term planning difficult when participants can switch providers at will. The increased number of providers has also made it more difficult for municipalities to monitor the quality of training.

## Teaching skills and didactic methods adapted to the needs of participants

Two main factors related to teaching stand out as being particularly important for the perception of quality in language training among all stakeholders. The first concerns the skills and qualifications of the teachers who deliver the training. Qualified teachers can deliver higher quality teaching based on their training, experience, and pedagogical toolbox, compared to unqualified teachers. The second factor concerns didactical tools which can enhance the quality of training, particularly so-called authentic learning, and native-language teaching. Both teacher qualifications and didactical methods are particularly important to the quality of formal language training services, albeit they are also highly relevant to the non-formal traditional language training courses that many labour migrants participate in.

**Surveyed participants consider teachers who adapt their teaching to the learning group or classroom situation, as well as enhancing participants' understanding, to be the most quality important factors. The ability to make language learning sessions fun, creative, and engaging is also important.**<sup>[43]</sup> Surveyed providers across all Nordic countries also agree that qualified teachers are an important determination of the quality of formal language training. Surveyed providers across all Nordic countries also agree that qualified teachers are an important determination of the quality of formal language training.<sup>[44]</sup> Teachers being qualified primarily affects the quality of training in terms of which pedagogical tools they have at their disposal and their ability to adapt teaching to the needs of the group or situation. An interviewed provider in Denmark points out that qualified teachers are often more confident in their roles. They have the tools and experience necessary to "see" the individual students as well as the capacity to plan effective and enjoyable lessons. Access to qualified teachers differs between countries, with Sweden standing out as having a lower proportion. Sweden also differs from the other countries in that teachers without qualifications are permitted to deliver training, which is likely to affect perceived quality. Interviewed and surveyed providers in all countries emphasise that a key to improving quality is to invest in teaching programmes in order to generate more qualified teachers.

Teaching qualifications are, however, not the only teaching-related factor that affects the quality of delivered training. The study shows that didactical methods also play an important role. Two methods stand out as being particularly important in language training for adult immigrants. First, **experts and providers across the**

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43. Annex B: Figure B 4

44. Annex B: Figure B 9

**Nordics have highlighted the importance of promoting so-called authentic learning –teaching that is based on real-life situations that participants may encounter .**

While interviewed participants in all countries also appreciate teaching that places less emphasis on traditional classroom learning and more emphasis on how to use the language in their daily lives, this has especially been highlighted by interviewed participants in Finland and Norway. This is in line with survey findings, which show that participants consider “practicing conversation” to be an indicator of quality in both formal and non-formal language training,<sup>[45]</sup> albeit a balance between different skills is highlighted as important by interviewed participants in Denmark.

Second, **native language teaching is increasingly being recognised as an effective way to teach new languages.** This entails teachers or teaching assistants basing the training on the participant’s native language(s), rather than, e.g., English. Interviewed and surveyed participants in both this and previous studies<sup>[46]</sup> have pointed out that receiving support and guidance in their native language is helpful and aids their understanding and leaning of the Nordic language.

### **Group composition and learning environments affect delivery**

The organisation of language training affects the perceptions of quality in both formal and non-formal training. The main organisational aspects concern the composition of learning groups – particularly in formal training – and the learning environments.

When it comes to the composition of learning groups or classes, **surveyed and interviewed providers maintain that learning groups that are heterogeneous in terms of language skills and educational background, make it difficult to deliver high-quality language training.**<sup>[47]</sup> Surveyed participants agree with this, highlighting that differences in educational backgrounds and learning abilities affect the delivery of training. While the formal language training systems in all countries are organised to allow training to take place at different levels or tracks based on participant prerequisites or abilities, providers in Denmark and Sweden point out that this differentiation is not always made in practice. In Denmark, providers ascertain that budget constraints sometimes oblige language centres to mix participants from different tracks (Danish education 1, 2 or 3) in the same classes. Likewise, providers in Sweden assert that participants’ levels of Swedish and educational backgrounds can vary within a class. The providers find that too heterogeneous classes make it more difficult to ensure a consistent level of teaching that is adapted to participant needs, thus making it less beneficial for participants. The issue seems to be less prevalent in Finland and Norway.

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45. Annex B: Figure B 4

46. Rambøll (2021)

47. Annex B: Figure B 10

Unlike educational levels, heterogeneity in terms of native languages is not considered to be as considerable a challenge. Interviewed providers point out that there can be both advantages and disadvantages to teaching groups that are homogenous in terms of their native language. The positive aspects are that it makes it easier to compare grammar and syntax between their native language and the Nordic language. It also enables native language learning to a higher extent. However, providers also point out that groups that are too homogenous in terms of native languages risk falling back on their native languages to communicate between themselves, giving them less incentive to practice the Nordic language together.

Surveyed and interviewed providers and participants also consider **large learning groups to have a negative effect on quality, since it makes it more difficult to give all participants an adequate level of attention.**<sup>[48]</sup> In both Finland and Norway, interviewed providers particularly highlight the importance of smaller groups for increasing quality, pointing out that smaller groups are more likely to be engaged with each other, which increases motivation.

When it comes to learning environments, interviewed providers in all countries highlight that a successful environment is where participants trust, support, and encourage each other within the group, and where the climate is open and accepting of mistakes. The survey also shows that **providers across all countries consider a safe learning environment to be a necessary precondition for successful language learning.**<sup>[49]</sup> In Finland, teachers often teach small groups that they build rapport with, which providers claim help them to create a safe learning environment where participants are seen, heard, and met with dignity.

### **Training is considered meaningful and relevant**

Research shows that language training is most beneficial when participants consider it to be meaningful.<sup>[50]</sup> Meaning is key to motivation. It concerns both the way language training is delivered –that it is fun, useful, and relevant –and the goals of language training –employment, an increased understanding of Nordic society and culture, and increased social networks. In line with this, interviewed providers point out that for language training to be beneficial, **participants must feel that what they are learning is useful and relevant to their everyday lives .** Providers maintain that **this meaningfulness is more likely to lead to progression in language learning, compared to the pressure of passing standardised tests .** They also find that when teaching is fun and meaningful, immigrants are more likely to

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48. Annex B: Figure B 11  
49. Annex B: Figure B 12  
50. Pedersen, M. S. (2018)

participate in (non-mandatory) training and prioritise it despite time constraints.

One previously mentioned way to achieve meaningfulness in the delivery of language training services is authentic learning. Providers in all countries find it advantageous to connect teaching to society through projects and field trips, which helps participants experience the language and increase their understanding of its relevance to their daily lives. Providers from Norway and Finland point out that formal language training focuses too much on learning grammar through traditional classroom methods. They ascertain that it would be more beneficial to focus on subjects and themes that are important to participants, which could increase meaningfulness and further motivation. Providers in Denmark and Sweden also highlight the importance of basing teaching and discussions on concrete situations experienced by the participants, conversations about events in the Nordic country and native countries and specific challenges the participants may be facing. They also find that creative and physical activities can facilitate learning.

### **Non-formal language training services fill the gaps left by formal services**

Different types of non-formal language training provide an important complement to formal language training services across the Nordics. As described in Chapter 2.3, broad variations in non-formal services mean that these services complement formal services in different ways. Across all countries and sub-groups of immigrants, non-formal language services are used to complement learning from formal language training, predominantly by providing opportunities for participants to practice the Nordic language and build networks. **Non-formal language services also play a role in providing language training to immigrants who would otherwise be ineligible to participate**, which is especially relevant in Finland, Norway, and to a lesser extent, Denmark. In Sweden, stakeholders consider non-formal services a crucial complement to a formal language training system where quality is uneven, filling the gaps where formal training has been unsuccessful.

74 percent of this study's survey respondents have participated in non-formal language training services. <sup>[51]</sup>The respondents participate in non-formal language training to understand society and culture as well as to practice what they have learnt through formal training. <sup>[52]</sup>Another key reason is to increase their chances of employment by furthering their language skills. Interviewed participants in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden highlight that they find it easier to master the language when they can practice it properly outside the classroom, for example through language buddies or other volunteer-based language training services, or technical tools such as apps. At the same time, respondents find limited arenas to

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51. Annex B: Figure B2

52. Annex B: Figure B2

practice and speak a Nordic language to be a considerable barrier to achieving proficiency.

**According to providers, non-formal services – especially those run by civil society actors – provide safe environments focused on building networks and increasing social integration rather than language learning.** This is particularly beneficial for refugees and their family members, who are far from the labour market to a greater extent than other sub-groups of immigrants. A provider in Denmark explains how their meeting platform creates a network between participants, bringing them out of the isolation which often characterises immigrants who are far from the labour market. Through this, they can also help participants gain an understanding of the importance of learning Danish and encourage them to prioritise their participation in formal language training services. Another example from Denmark is *Vestegnens Sprogcenter*, a language centre that primarily offers formal language training services. Formal services are complemented by collaborating with volunteers, who help participants practice through a language café-like setting at the same location. Non-formal services can thus be important, not only in helping participants to learn and train the language, but also to understand their new country and facilitate their social integration.

A second way in which non-formal language training services complement formal language training services are by offering training to immigrants who are not eligible to participate in formal training. For immigrants who have never been eligible for formal training, specifically labour migrants in Finland and labour migrants from the EU/EEA in Norway, non-formal traditional language courses are one way of learning the language. Often, either participants or their employers must pay for these courses, which can be inhibiting. Typically, the teaching also encompasses substantially fewer hours than formal training.

Non-formal traditional courses can also be beneficial for immigrants who have previously been eligible for formal language training but have completed this without achieving adequate proficiency. A situation regularly found in Denmark, Finland, and Norway. Here, Norway's previously mentioned subsidy for Norwegian education could be beneficial in ensuring that these immigrants can benefit from additional training. Other tools, such as the Lingio app can be used to strengthen language skills required for specific occupations. The app has been a useful tool to improve language proficiency among immigrants who have not achieved this through their formal language training in Sweden. Another example of such upskilling initiatives is the non-profit organisation MiR in Norway, which runs courses to improve the language proficiency of this specific target group (see Table 11).

A situation that seems to be exclusive to Sweden is that non-formal language

training services are used to complement formal language training services which do not provide services of a high enough quality. According to interviewed non-formal providers and employer representatives, there is an ongoing debate as to the degree of responsibility that the non-formal sector should have in relation to the services offered. The interviewees are particularly adamant that non-formal services should not become a replacement for formal services, fearing that too much reliance is placed on them to fill the gap left by uneven quality in the formal language training system.

### Close collaboration with the labour market

While language training is an essential part of the integration process, it is not always enough to ensure that immigrants are employable, which has been determined to be the most important goal of language training. Interviewed providers and employers ascertain that close collaboration with the labour market is important to ensure that language training does not take place in a vacuum. A labour market perspective can involve combining formal language training with VET that leads to qualifications in specific professions. It can also involve field trips, orientation courses, CV and job application workshops and other, less structured, connections to the labour market. Research from Norway shows how strengthening this connection can be an effective way to create meaning and motivation for language training, in that it can improve the participants' opportunities to achieve their own employment goals.<sup>[53]</sup>

Providers in Finland highlight how **combining language training with workplace-based experience can help enhance learning among those immigrants who learn better in practical environments than in classroom situations**. All countries provide different ways to combine language training with VET (see Chapter 2.2). Providers in Sweden and Norway point out that combining language training with VET can be particularly useful for low-skilled immigrants with little or no education who often find it difficult to learn a language solely through a school setting. By combining learning with more practical skills, they are deemed more likely to succeed, both in their language learning and employment goals.

An employer organisation in Denmark points out that this type of training can be useful for immigrants who have completed their formal language training, but who have not found employment. These immigrants comprise the target group for this type of training in Denmark and Norway. In Denmark, the Basic integration education service ( *IGU* ) is specifically targeted at refugees and their family members –typically the sub-group with the lowest employment rates. However, an



interviewed employer organisation in Sweden points out that combining language training and VET can be useful for all unemployed immigrants, regardless of their level of education. Jobs that require tertiary education often require a very high level of language proficiency for their employees, which may take several years to achieve. By learning a new occupation alongside language courses in Sweden, immigrants can enter the labour market, thus facilitating their integration and allowing them to develop their language skills in everyday situations, as well as allowing them to become self-sufficient.

## Key takeaways

- The primary reason for immigrants to participate in language training identified in this study is labour market integration, both in terms of gaining employment and functioning in the workplace. Language skills are considered necessary to function in the workplace, as well as integrate socially.
- The main barrier to *participating* in language training is lack of time, particularly among labour migrants. Barriers to *learning*, on the other hand, are primarily a lack of social network and opportunities to practice as well as educational pre-requisites which affect immigrants' abilities to learn and gain proficiency in a new language. An unevenness in the quality of delivered services also affects learning.
- The factors that are considered important to ensuring high-quality language training concern the regulation, organisation, and delivery of language training services. These quality factors encompass compensation models and procurement systems, teacher qualifications, didactic methods, composition of learning groups, and that training is considered meaningful and relevant.
- There are considerable synergies between formal and non-formal language training services, where the latter fill an important role in complementing the former. Non-formal services fill the gaps left by formal services due to lack of eligibility or low quality. They can also be beneficial in that they help immigrants to overcome barriers to language learning by being available at suitable times and creating social connections.
- Collaboration between formal language training services and the labour market is highly beneficial. Collaboration allows participants to become familiar with the labour market and potentially develop relevant vocational skills, but also to develop the more profession-specific set of language skills that is requested by employers.

## 4. Conclusions and potential solutions

In this chapter, we provide a summary and analysis of the key findings of this study. We present the study's conclusions concerning the main differences and similarities in the Nordic systems for language training and discuss how this affects quality. We also determine factors for best practices based on findings and, finally, provide suggestions for how successful language training services could be organised.

### 4.1 Summary of findings

This comparative study of language training services in Finland, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden has aimed to describe and analyse how selected language training services are organised and delivered. We have also explored how key stakeholders perceive that these services need to be delivered in order to help immigrants overcome barriers to participation, thus facilitating success for participants in terms of language proficiency, labour market integration, and active social participation. The study has shown that while there are differences in how the Nordic countries organise and deliver formal language training services, the systems are largely similar: municipalities play a key role in their organisation, there are standardised curricula, examinations, and goals, and training is publicly funded. This is not surprising. All the Nordics prioritise language training at policy-level. There is broad agreement across the political spectrum that being able to communicate in the national language is key to labour market and social integration. As such, language training services are an integral part of the adult education system. The key factors that characterise language training in the Nordic countries are summarised in Table 13.

While there are differences between sub-groups of immigrants when it comes to eligibility for formal training, the barriers to participation that immigrants otherwise face are largely similar. Needs and prerequisites differ mainly based on individual circumstances, but also, to some extent, immigrant sub-groups. Nevertheless, the study has identified few differences in how the quality and benefits of language training are perceived within different immigrant sub-groups.

**Table 13. Characterisations of formal language training services in the Nordic countries**

	DK	FI	NO	SE
Municipalities are responsible for formal language training services	✓		✓	✓
Private providers play an important role in delivering formal training	✓	✓		✓
Private providers are primarily procured through competitive bidding	✓	✓		✓
Compensation models and procurement systems affect quality in a positive way	(✓)	✓	✓	(✓)
All immigrants are eligible to participate	✓			✓
Training must be completed within a set time frame	✓	✓	✓	
Teaching qualifications are legally required to deliver training	✓		✓	
Funding is based on participants completing courses	✓	✓		✓
Labour market integration is a long-term goal	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participants are required to meet an individual goal on CEFR scale to complete training		✓	✓	
Training is considered to be high-quality	✓	✓	✓	
Non-formal services effectively fill the gaps in formal services	✓	✓	✓	(✓)
There is close collaboration with the labour market	✓	✓	✓	✓

### **Formal language training is delivered according to participants' prerequisites and needs**

The systems for formal training in all the Nordic countries recognise that immigrants have different educational prerequisites and cognitive abilities. Formal language training services are adapted accordingly, differentiating learning through

so-called tracks where learning takes place at different speeds based on ability. Countries differ in terms of which level of proficiency is expected at the completion of formal training. In Norway and Denmark participants have different goals depending on track. In Finland and Sweden, all immigrants are expected to achieve the same level of proficiency, if at different speeds. Our findings suggest, however, that some of these proficiency goals may be unrealistic to achieve for those immigrants who have lower educational backgrounds. Particularly Finland's goal of a B1 proficiency for all participants within a set time frame has not generated the desired results, with most participants achieving A2 at the end of training. Here, we consider Norway's proficiency goals that are developed based on individual circumstances, to be a more useful way to encourage realistic results.

Another aspect of delivering formal language training according to the needs of immigrants, is the combination of language training and vocational training. Such combinations are available varying extents in the Nordics. Our findings show that all countries are increasingly prioritising complementary tools that will increase immigrants' connections to the labour market, such as orientation courses, internships, and combined training. Denmark considers the combination of VET with formal language training to be especially useful for low-skilled immigrants – often refugees and their family members – thus targeting these initiatives at that immigrant sub-groups. In Norway, eligibility for language training combined with VET through the public employment system,<sup>[54]</sup> requires participants to have completed, or to be ineligible, for formal language training. In Finland combined training can be a part of an overall integration plan. Sweden is the only country that offers language training combined with VET to all immigrants who are unemployed regardless of immigrant sub-group. Given the demand for skilled labour in the Nordic countries, we consider it most beneficial to base eligibility for combined training on individual prerequisites, rather than sub-group of the participant. Language learning takes time, and immigrants may not achieve the proficiency required for a long period of time, meaning that a job in an occupation where there is a demand for labour can be a useful steppingstone.

## **Regulatory and organisational factors affect the quality of formal training**

The study has identified several regulatory factors that affect how the quality and benefits of language training are perceived among stakeholders. Our findings suggest that one key regulatory difference that affects the quality of language training, is teacher skills and qualifications. Teaching skills have been highlighted as by far the most important factor for quality by all stakeholders included in this

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54. Norwegian Labour and Welfare Organisation (NAV)

study: if the teaching is substandard, it will not be high-quality, regardless of how motivated the participants are. In formal training, teaching competencies are ensured by regulated qualification requirements for teachers. All countries but Sweden emphasise teaching qualifications as a precondition to teaching, either regulating them by law or as a criterion in the procurement process. Sweden differs from the other countries in that teachers without qualifications are permitted to deliver training, which also regularly happens. This is one aspect that could explain why the overall quality of formal language training in Sweden is, by all accounts, very uneven compared to Denmark, Finland, and Norway. While teaching skills affect all participants, our findings show that they are particularly important for immigrants with low educational backgrounds, most often refugees and their families, who are more likely to need substantial support in their learning.

Another regulatory factor that could explain differences in quality can be found in the average public spending per participant and quality. Sweden's expenditure is substantially lower than the other countries', particularly Norway's.<sup>[55]</sup> While many factors unrelated to quality are likely affect spending, our findings support the assumption that the difference in spending contributes to Norway's formal language training system delivering higher quality training than Sweden's. However, further study would be necessary to establish the extent of such a link and its implications.

### **Eligibility and accessibility affect participation**

The main difference we have identified between the Nordic countries when it comes to the organisation of formal language training services, is eligibility to participate free of charge. In Denmark and Sweden, all immigrants are eligible to participate, whereas Finland and Norway limit participation for (some) labour migrants. Previous experience from Denmark shows that labour migrants are much less likely to participate in training when they are required to pay for it themselves. This study's results also suggest that providing high quality language training could increase the likelihood of labour migrants remaining in the country and becoming active participants in society. Nevertheless, our results do not show that limiting eligibility has any effect on the quality of delivery. Factors such as teaching skills, effective didactical methods, and safe and engaging learning environments are important, regardless of who may participate in training.

When a proportion of immigrants are not eligible to participate in formal language training services, the non-formal language training system, which serves an important complementary role, is even more important. Our findings show that

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55. Please note that average spending per participant is not available for Finland.

Norway has initiatives to promote accessibility for immigrant sub-groups who are not otherwise eligible to participate in formal language training services. These include initiatives that enable certified providers to apply for funding to offer language training to these sub-groups of immigrants. While Finland offers training to employed immigrants through the liberal education system, services are not necessarily free of cost for the participants, making them less accessible. In all countries where immigrants have a limited time in which to participate in formal language training, it would be useful to promote similar initiatives for those who have yet to achieve adequate proficiency.

It is also important not to confuse eligibility and accessibility. Being eligible to participate in a service, does not mean that it is accessible. While both Sweden and Denmark offer training to all immigrants regardless of sub-group, findings from Denmark show that participants commonly drop out of training when they gain employment, which is likely to affect their overall language development and proficiency. While the study has found that time constraints, which affect labour migrants and employed immigrants to a larger extent than other sub-groups, are the main barrier to accessing language training, financial constraints, or issues such as travel distance may also play a role. As such, training that can help overcome these barriers seems to be particularly beneficial. Based on our findings, we consider services that offer formal or non-formal language training during, for example, evenings and weekends, or offer childcare in conjunction with training so that parents on maternity leave are able to participate, to be particularly helpful. But also, digital services, which are playing an increasingly important role in language learning. Both in terms of making it easier to practice the language in gamified ways through smartphone apps and using technology to connect with language buddies between other commitments.

### **Non-formal services complement formal language training services for all immigrant sub-groups**

Non-formal language training services play an important role in the broader language training systems in the Nordic countries. But no matter how high quality and useful these services can be in helping immigrants to practice the Nordic language and facilitate their social integration, non-formal services cannot replace formal language training services. Even if a formal language training system is not considered to have sufficient quality, as our findings indicate is the case in Sweden, the fragmented non-formal system cannot be expected to fill all the gaps.

Non-formal language training can, and does, however, fill the gaps in formal training in other ways, particularly when it comes to overcoming some of the study's identified barriers to language learning, such as a lack of social network and

opportunities to practice. The study has found that these barriers affect all immigrant sub-groups, if in different ways. While refugees and their family members are more prone to social isolation, high-skilled labour migrants instead find that they are unable to move beyond using English in social settings. Non-formal language training services provide arenas for participants to practice speaking and get to know native speakers in social settings, facilitating both their understanding of society and their participation in it. We have found particularly salient examples of when non-formal services have complemented formal services in useful ways, such as in Denmark, where a language school has placed a language café that promotes social interaction and language practice in the same building.

Altogether, our findings show that the training delivered to immigrants in the Nordic countries is appreciated and facilitates the desired results of language proficiency, labour market integration and social integration for immigrants across sub-groups and countries. Formal language training systems are perceived to vary in quality, with Sweden standing out as the most criticised. Non-formal language training services are fragmented in all countries but provide an important complement to formal language training services in meeting barriers related to eligibility and accessibility.

## **4.2 Determining best practices**

Based on learnings from this study we have determined seven criteria which constitute best practices in language training services for adult immigrants. The criteria concern the funding, regulation, and organisation of language training, as well as eligibility and accessibility for immigrants. The list is not exhaustive but serves to summarise the issues that have been highlighted as particularly important by the key stakeholders who have contributed to this study, namely participants, providers, and employers.

## **A language training service is particularly successful when...**

1. ... it is widely available to immigrants regardless of their reason for being in a Nordic country.
2. ... it is meaningful, based on didactic methods, and provided by competent teachers or volunteers.
3. ... funding is available and organised in a way that incentivises quality.
4. ... it provides ample opportunity to practice the language in real-life settings.
5. ... it is accessible even when participants have limited time.
6. ... it provides supportive and fun learning environments where participants feel comfortable challenging themselves.
7. ... it involves employers and is relevant to the needs and requirements of the labour market.

Given the variation in services across the Nordics, all criteria do not necessarily apply to every service. Some of the criteria for best practices are systemic, such as who is eligible for (formal) training and how training is funded. Other criteria relate to how training is organised in practice – e.g., through in-person or physical meetings – and how it helps immigrants overcome barriers to participation. Yet other criteria relate to the content of training and the training environments.

The case studies of specific services conducted for the purpose of this study each fulfil some of the criteria for best practices, as summarised in Table 14. Here we illustrate which aspects of best practices that we have identified in the studied services. A longer summary of each studied language training service can be found in Annex A.



**Table 14. Best practices criteria identified and applied to case studies**

<b>Name of service</b>	<b>Type of training</b>	<b>Widely available</b>	<b>Funding structure</b>	<b>Teaching competency</b>	<b>Language practice</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<b>Supportive and fun</b>	<b>Labour market involvement</b>
Vestegnens Sprogcenter (DK)	Formal	✓		✓	✓		✓	
Sprogland (DK)	Non-formal	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Gimara (FI)	Non-formal		✓	✓			✓	✓
YLE Language training (FI)	Non-formal	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Folkeuniversitetet (NO)	Non-formal	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
MiR (NO)	Non-formal	✓	✓		✓		✓	
Lingio (SE)	Non-formal	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Härryda vuxenutbildning med integrerad språkträning (SE)	Formal	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓

## **Language training services are widely available to immigrants, regardless of their reason for being in a Nordic country**

Learning the language of their new country is key for integration into a new society for all immigrants, regardless of background, education, or immigrant status. This study has shown that eligibility and access are pivotal to ensuring that as many immigrants as possible learn a Nordic language. Being eligible to participate in free formal language training also increases the likelihood for participation. As evidence from Denmark shows, self-payment for labour migrants affects participation in formal language training services in a negative manner. Accordingly, it seems probable that labour migrants in Finland and Norway who are not eligible for free formal language training have limited participation in other types of (paid) language training, affecting their long-term possibilities of integration.

## **Language training is meaningful, based on didactic methods, and provided by competent teachers or volunteers**

That teachers are competent and – where relevant – qualified is one of the most important factors to delivering high quality training. Qualified teachers are more likely to be able to use efficient didactic methods that facilitate learning. These methods include authentic learning, where learning is related to participants' real-life experiences and how they would use the language in practice, making training more meaningful. Qualified teachers are also more likely to be skilled at facilitating a learning atmosphere that is supportive, comfortable, and fun. Teachers with experience and competence often have a deep knowledge of the target group for language training services – a group which differs from others within the education system in that learners are adults whose main occupation is seldom language learning, thus requiring a different approach to other types of education.

## **Funding is available and organised in a way that incentivises quality**

Two funding-related aspects are important to ensuring quality in training. First, adequate funding needs to be available. Both formal and non-formal language training services rely on public funding, whereas non-formal services also depend on donations, volunteers and self-payment depending on the type of service. For non-formal language training services, funding with a long-term perspective and flexibility in terms of how it is used would improve providers ability to plan and deliver more consistent and high-quality training. One indication of how the amount of funding may affect quality is when comparing Norway and Sweden. In Norway, average public spending per participant in formal training is more than twice as high as in Sweden. At the same time, the Norwegian formal language training system is considered high quality to a higher extent than the Swedish system.

Second, funding must be organised in a way that incentivises quality. This means that a cost-efficient language training service may not necessarily be the one that delivers the service at the lowest cost, but rather that achieves its goals in terms of delivering high-quality language training. As such, procurement systems should emphasise quality and funding should be allocated in a way that ensures that participants receive the language training that they are entitled to.

### **Language training provides ample opportunity to practice the Nordic language in real-life settings**

Language training is beneficial when it makes it possible for participants to practice the Nordic language in real life settings. This type of learning helps immigrants to overcome the substantial barriers of not having the opportunities to practice and use the language as well as enhancing their often-limited social networks in a Nordic country. It is particularly beneficial when formal and non-formal language training services provide opportunities for participants to meet native speakers and practice the language in informal settings. Such services can either have the main purpose of connecting native speakers to immigrants for conversations that involve learning about society, customs, and culture. They can also be a complementary component with a strong connection to formal language training services. This can both include formal language training services partnering with local civil society organisations and recruiting volunteers allows students to have real conversations and engage with Nordic-speakers in supportive environments, and the increased use of digital tools and apps to strengthen language learning.

### **Language training is accessible even when participants have limited time**

While eligibility is pivotal to ensuring broad participation in language training, it is not enough to ensure participation. Training must also be accessible. This means that training must be adjusted to meet the main challenges and barriers that adult immigrants experience when it comes to participating. Namely, lack of time due to family and work responsibilities and – albeit to a lesser extent – financial constraints, trauma, and long travel times.

In practice, accessibility can be increased through both adjustments in the delivery of training that takes place in person, or through the use of increasingly popular online learning platforms and digital language training services. For training that takes place in a physical location, accessibility means taking place at a time when most participants are available. It also means being low-cost in terms of how much participants must pay to participate (if at all). Online learning platforms and digital language training services offer an accessibility that enables participants to

participate in training flexibly according to their own schedules. While this requires participants that are motivated, and –at least for some services –have a basic command of the language in question, the gamified approach also encourages constant practice which is beneficial to language learning.

### **Language training is provided in supportive and fun environments where participants feel comfortable challenging themselves**

Learning is facilitated when training is fun and relevant for participants. The same applies to language training. Both the way the training is delivered, and the learning environment affect motivation to participate. Training that is delivered in an engaging way and has a clear connection to the participants' daily lives and needs, is also more likely to be considered meaningful. In addition, learning environments where participants support each other and feel comfortable challenging themselves and making mistakes facilitate learning. For many social non-formal language training services, training can be delivered in relaxed settings, often in combination with activities such as cooking, hiking, sports, or cultural activities. Providing safe and comfortable physical spaces where participants are welcome for support and conversations also facilitate learning and social integration.

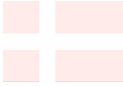







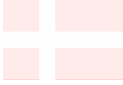











### **Language training involves employers and is relevant to the needs and requirements of the labour market**

Language training that has a connection to the labour market or involves employers contributes to the two main goals of language training, namely improved language proficiency and employment. From an employer perspective, language training combined with VET can contribute to meeting local labour demands. From a participant perspective, combined training can enable them to gain marketable skills and achieve employment at a faster pace than what might otherwise have been possible. Language training combined with VET could also enhance learning for low-skilled immigrants by increasing the relevance of their language learning through contextualising it. For labour migrants or other sub-groups who have found work, there is also a value in facilitating continued language development for employees according to their needs. Either through non-formal traditional language courses, apps that enable occupation-specific training, or collaboration with social language training services. As well as providing competence development which facilitates employees' success in the workplace, it contributes to social integration, which is important for the long-term retention of labour migrant employees.

## 4.3 Suggestions for how to organise language training

Based on the comparative study's findings and conclusions, this section presents our suggestions for measures that could potentially improve the quality and benefits of language training in the Nordic countries. We shortly discuss which changes or initiatives would be required at policy-level to facilitate such improvements. Table 15 illustrates the suggestions, as well as the extent to which we perceive them to be important to consider in each country, based on the characteristics of the current national language training system.

**Table 15. Suggestions for how to organise language training according to relevance for the Nordic countries (brighter colours equals more relevance)**

	DK	FI	NO	SE
Ensure inclusivity in formal training for all immigrants				
Structure the synergies between formal language training and non-formal digital services				
Increase the awareness and prestige of working with language training				
Increase structured collaboration between formal and non-formal language training services				
Continue to strengthen the role of labour market and employers in ensuring the relevance of training				

### Ensure inclusivity in formal training for all immigrants

Currently, language training is offered free of charge to all labour migrants only in Denmark and Sweden whereas in Finland and Norway, labour migrants are not eligible for free formal language training. However, in the long-term, there is a socio-economic advantage for immigrants to be able to speak the national language and become active participants in society. For Finland and Norway, we therefore suggest looking over the costs it would entail to allow all immigrants to

be eligible for formal language training services. We also suggest that initiatives such as Norway's subsidy for Norwegian education, which provides access to high quality language training for immigrants who are not eligible for formal language training and encourages innovative methods and collaboration between formal and non-formal providers, be implemented in more countries. This initiative could be especially useful in Finland and Denmark, where eligibility for language training is limited to a certain period of time.

### **Structure the synergies between formal language training and non-formal digital services**

Being eligible to participate in formal language training does not necessarily mean that all immigrants have equal access. With time as their main constraint, services that can overcome that obstacle are particularly beneficial. Technological developments mean that almost all adults own a smartphone, which gives them access to a wealth of non-formal language training services. We thus suggest that formal language training services in all the Nordics be encouraged to further integrate existing non-formal language training services into formal training, by e.g. including this as a quality criteria in procurement processes. To increase knowledge and awareness of available tools, national-level stakeholders could consider compiling databases of tools that are considered to be beneficial and complementary to language training. This would both serve as a source of information and a method of quality assurance for teachers, enabling them to make informed decisions concerning which tools to include depending on their specific learning groups. Inspiration could be taken from the so-called competence packages (*Kompetansepakker*) which were developed by Norway's Directorate of Higher Education and Skills to aid teachers in implementing the new curriculum in 2021.

### **Increase the awareness and prestige of working with language training**

Formal language training for adult immigrants is a niche area, and awareness of what the job entails is limited outside "language training circles". A shortage of qualified teachers could be one of the explanations as to the uneven quality of Sweden's formal language training system, but there are also recruitment challenges in Finland and Denmark. We thus suggest that initiatives are taken to increase both the awareness of the profession its attractiveness. One way to increase awareness is through advertisement campaigns which could be aimed both at the general public and targeted specifically at student teachers. As well as awareness, an occupation's attractiveness is related to perceived working conditions. While we assume that working conditions are monitored by employers, it would be useful to map language teachers' perceptions of their situations at a national level to understand their key challenges, thereby identifying which changes and improvements could be feasible to implement on a wider scale.

## **Increase structured collaboration between formal and non-formal language services**

Structured collaboration between formal and non-formal language training services is a cost-efficient way to overcome one of the main obstacles for participants, namely their lack of opportunities to practice speaking and their lack of a social network in a Nordic country. By bringing volunteers into formal language training settings, immigrants are provided with direct access to practice the language, facilitating their social integration. Placing a service run by civil society actors such as a study centre, language café or meeting place for language buddies in a formal language training centre, also emphasises the important connection between formal and non-formal language training services. Such collaboration could be encouraged through updated curricula or including criteria for collaboration in procurement processes. Other ways to encourage collaboration could be through providing public funding to initiatives that explore and test innovative ways to collaborate.

## **Continue to strengthen the role of labour market and employers in ensuring the relevance of training**

Given that one of the main goals of language training is for participants to find work, the connection between the labour market and language training services could be strengthened even further. First, the quality of formal training must align with the demands of the labour market. This could involve furthering the use of training plans and tools for immigrants to learn the terminology associated with the occupations that they wish to enter by funding the expansion of existing courses or the development of new ones. Second, it could also involve placing a larger responsibility on employers to bear the costs of language training for labour migrants that they have employed to fill a competence gap. Currently, employers are not obligated to provide or fund language training for their employees, even in countries where labour migrants have limited access to formal language training services. Third, it could involve scaling up the use of language training combined with VET, which has proven to be a successful way of making training more meaningful for participants and facilitating results both in terms of proficiency and employment goals. Making these initiatives available to all unemployed immigrants could potentially improve their results.

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# Annex A. Examples and descriptions of language training services

## Non-formal language training service providers

**Table 16. Examples of private and non-profit providers of non-formal language training services**

	Type of provider	Examples of providers
<b>Denmark</b>	Private providers	Københavns Sprogskole, Dansk Bureauet, Studieskolen, Dynamisk Dansk, Sproggruppen
	Non-profit providers	Red Cross, Danish Refugee Council, Integrationshuset Kringlebakken, CLAVIS Sprog- og kompetencecenter,
<b>Finland</b>	Private providers	Axell, Staffpoint, TRYCamp
	Non-profit providers	Red Cross, Kulttuurikekus Gloria, Careeria, Sateenkaari Koto, Helmet, Integration Centre Monika
<b>Norway</b>	Private providers	Aftenskolen, Alfaskolen, Adoracion, Briga, Hero Kompetanse, InLearn Norway, Language Power International, Kompetansehuset NEO
	Non-profit providers	Red Cross, Norwegian People's Aid, Caritas, Norwegian Women's Public Health Association, Christian Intercultural Work, Norwegian Volunteer Services
<b>Sweden</b>	Private providers	GMS International, Upgrades, Acoload, Hermods, Lernia,
	Non-profit providers	Red Cross, Nya kompisbyrå, Medborgarskolan, ABF, Swedish Church, Folk high schools



## Descriptions of studied language training services

### Sweden: Vocational training in childcare with language support

Vocational training in childcare with language support was introduced in January 2021 in Härryda Municipality. The initiative was funded by the municipality in response to a demand on the labour market for childcare workers. The VET-related part of the training corresponds to upper secondary level education in childcare.<sup>[56]</sup> Participation in the course is free for participants, but the provider estimates that participants have additional pay SEK 1000–1500 per term for literature, photocopying, field trips, and other supplies. The training is 3.5 semesters (approximately two years of full-time studies) and includes a package of courses divided between the two main subjects: the Swedish language and childcare studies. Participants may study Swedish at two different levels, corresponding either to primary school or upper secondary school level. In addition, 1.5 hours a week are allocated to learning professional Swedish, meaning that the participants learn the specific language used in the childcare field. Throughout the duration of the training, participants carry out three internships, each lasting three weeks.

In terms of eligibility to participate, the only formal condition is to have passed the final course in Swedish for Immigrants, SFI D. Participants may not have completed Swedish language courses corresponding to primary school level. The service does not target specific sub-group of immigrants. So however, 100 percent of the participants have been women. The group is, however, diverse in terms of age, time in Sweden, country of origin, and educational background. Most students are from Afghanistan and Syria, but there are also participants from African and South American countries, as well as both Eastern and Western Europe.

The participant's prerequisites vary greatly. While some have had little or no education, others have completed studies at university level. Some participants have limited language skills due to recently having arrived in Sweden, whereas others have lived in Sweden for several years, but have had limited exposure to the Swedish language. Reasons for this include living in ethnically segregated areas, having been unemployed or on parental leave for long periods of time.

Learning the Swedish language poses many challenges to the participants. Their main challenge is that they find the language is difficult. The grammar in particular poses a challenge to almost anyone who is not a native speaker. Another, more practical challenge, is that the literature in childcare studies is written for upper secondary level education, whereas most participants only have a level of Swedish corresponding to primary level. This means that the course literature is often difficult to understand and use for the participants. The participants also face

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challenges related to language proficiency in their internships. The challenges both concern the use of professional terminology in appropriate contexts as well as dealing with social situations, such as lunchtime conversations, small talk with parents, or documenting issues related to the children.

The primary goal of the vocational training in childcare with child support is for the participants to learn Swedish and find work, but also to be able to act with confidence in the situations they will face upon entering the workforce. From the participants' perspective, the programme offers the opportunity to become more attractive on the labour market, increasing their chances of employment. In addition, the social context provided by the training is beneficial in terms of breaking social isolation and allowing the participants to make new friends.

The results of the training are primarily monitored through the grading system that applies to all types of secondary level VET in Sweden, meaning that the students must pass each individual course to complete the training. The school also conducts surveys at enrolment and six months after training has been completed to determine the extent to which training has facilitated employment. Short term results also include the participants being able to apply their acquired knowledge and skills both generally and specifically through their internships. Long term results refer to participants' labour market and social integration. The results vary between participants, but one clear trend is that immigrants with previous formal education (especially tertiary education) tend to possess study techniques, which leads to better results. Individual life-circumstances also impact participants' ability to achieve results. An interviewed representative for the training points out that the closer dialogue between the internship mentors and the school would be beneficial to the development of the participants. The mentors could provide more feedback on development points for the participants, which would also allow teachers to provide more individualised support.

The provider has identified several success factors:

- Combining different modes of learning such as lectures, smaller group discussions, writing tasks, and oral presentations offer the participants multiple ways to experience achievement in their learning process.
- Close collaboration between childcare teachers, language teachers and internship mentors affect the coherence of the training in a positive way.
- Promoting a safe and generous learning environment encourages a supportive culture which facilitates learning.
- Close collaboration between the student counsellor and student health to support participants who may be struggling in different ways.
- Teachers recognising and validating the participants generates motivation and trust. This is especially important for immigrants who, due to their backgrounds, have little trust in authorities.

In summary, the provider considers the combined training to be an effective way to improve the participants' employment prospects. The training provides the participants with a social context and several opportunities to apply the skills they acquire. In addition, participants also acquire skills not related to their profession or language proficiency, such as increased knowledge of gender equality, human rights, parenting, as well as more administrative life skills such as applying for student loans and computer skills.

## **Sweden: Lingio**

Lingio was established in 2015 in response to the large influx of refugees to Sweden. Its objective is to supplement the regular language training that immigrants receive through Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) courses with specialised language skills related to a particular occupation. The underlying concept is that while immigrants may be interested in obtaining employment in a specific sector, the professional Swedish language required for such employment differs considerably from the Swedish language skills taught in SFI. The tool focuses on profession-specific Swedish and was developed in collaboration with employers from specific sectors as well as teachers of Swedish as a foreign language. It enables immigrants to practice Swedish related to 25 distinct professions. Initially, the initiative had no funding. However, after some years, Lingio secured EU funding through Vinnova and is now self-sufficient.

Lingio can be categorised as a non-formal, traditional language course. Users participate in courses lasting six months, which include assignments they must complete three times a week. The service also provides a designated coach to support language learning. Participants have access to the service while taking part in SFI as an additional tool for learning, with their SFI teacher serving as their designated language coach. If the user is not enrolled in SFI, the service can also be purchased by employers who wish to provide their employees with additional language support. In these situations, the employer serves as the language coach.

In addition to being an app-based tool for learning, Lingio employs artificial intelligence to achieve better outcomes. The digital platform assists users by detecting opportunities for improving pronunciation, encouraging users to practice regularly, and allowing them to scan real-world sentences (such as signs or documents) for use and translation within the app.

The main target audience of Lingio are immigrants who face labour market challenges due to language barriers. Specifically, the sub-groups consist of individuals who match Lingio's selection of courses and have an interest in working in one of the represented professions. This group is highly diverse in terms of background, education level, professional experience, age, and other factors. Participants are invited to join the courses through Lingio's clients, who primarily include public or private sector employers. These clients include municipalities,

labour market coaches, educational organisations, unions such as the Municipal Workers' Union ( *Kommunal*) and the Transport Workers' Union ( *Transportarbejderforbundet*), as well as the private sector.

The participants' objectives in utilising the service differ, with some motivated by future labour market opportunities, while others consider language proficiency an essential necessity in their lives. From the employer's perspective, the operational aspect is critical. Miscommunication in certain industries can have disastrous consequences; therefore, it is vital to educate employees or require a minimum level of understanding. For example, knowing the safety rules at a construction site. Moreover, employers seek to retain their employees and provide them with opportunities to grow within their organisations. Many industries struggle to hire staff, making it imperative to provide education to existing or potential employees as a means of meeting staff shortages.

The service adheres to the CEFR, with different professions requiring varying proficiency levels in Lingio's courses. Participants receive a certificate upon completing a course. One possible improvement for Lingio could be to highlight the CEFR standard more clearly, such as on the certificates. Lingio's language training is considered to be highly successful among clients and users, with 9.4 out of 10 users recommending the app. The primary lesson learned is the significance of combining technical abilities with pedagogical skills to provide an engaging learning experience. Another lesson is the importance of coaches' involvement in the individual learning experience.

### **Denmark: Language training for adult immigrants at Vestegnens Sprog- og Kompetencecenter**

Vestegnens Sprog- og Kompetencecenter (VSK) is a municipal language centre that primarily provides language training for adult immigrants. VSK is an inter-municipal collaboration between 11 municipalities located just west of Copenhagen and operates three centres in Ballerup, Glostrup, and Amager. This case study focuses on the language centre in Glostrup.

The service was developed in response to the needs of immigrants who are required to learn Danish to receive Danish residency or citizenship. Upon arrival in Denmark, immigrants are subjected to the Integration Act, which entitles them to free Danish education from the municipality of residence. All immigrants are entitled to free Danish lessons from the day they receive their civil registration number and must complete the lessons within five years. However, immigrants who are classified as self-sufficient (e.g., as labour migrants, foreign students, au pairs, or spouses), must pay a deposit of DKK 2000, which is refunded upon course completion within the set timeframe.

VSK offers three distinct Danish language courses: D1 for immigrants with limited or no prior education, D2 for immigrants with 8–10 years of education in their country of origin, and D3 for immigrants with over 10 years of education and proficiency in a second language. Historically, VSK has had more participants in the so-called integration courses targeted at refugees and their family members. More recently, however, the self-sufficient participants have increased. The self-sufficient participants are mainly composed of EU immigrants from countries such as Germany, Bulgaria, or Italy. Additionally, there is a substantial group of students from Nepal, Pakistan, Korea, and India. Generally, 90 percent of VSK's students are already employed. VSK's target group is characterised by low academic levels but sufficient proficiency in English. They often come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and typically have a limited social network in Denmark.

The language service adopts a "reversed learning" approach, which requires students to conduct independent research and engage in everyday conversations to acquire authentic experiences. In addition to the curriculum, the service also features a "study centre" that provides various services to support the participants' learning. At the centre, students can receive assistance from teachers in independent study areas or when dealing with specific challenges. The study centre also provides an opportunity for students to converse with volunteers. This initiative is a collaboration between the service and civil society organisations such as the Danish Red Cross, where Danish speakers volunteer to engage in conversations with VSK students. The service is popular among students as it provides a platform for natural conversations that enables them to train their language skills in diverse contexts, including those pertinent to upcoming tests. Broadly speaking, the study centre at VSK is funded through the resources that the school receives from the Danish state, but it relies on volunteers to operate efficiently.

The primary challenge facing participants of the service is the difficult balance between attending classes and working full-time. Many of the participants work low-paying jobs with varying and irregular hours. This challenge is compounded by the fact that employers often do not consider Danish language training to be important. Another obstacle is that Danish is a difficult language to learn, particularly when it comes to pronunciation as the sounds do not always match the written words. Additionally, both participants and teachers at VSK have identified a lack of informal meetings and conversations with fluent Danish speakers as a barrier to language training.

The overarching goal of the service is for participants to be integrated into Danish society, meaning they have a job and the ability to communicate effectively with authorities and health services. The aim of the language training is also to help participants feel confident and at ease when communicating in Danish, allowing them to manage their everyday lives. While there are some variations in the goals of different immigrant sub-groups, it is important for teachers to tailor their

teaching to individual needs. Providers and participants alike have found the service to be highly beneficial.

Benchmark research conducted by Danish research company VIVE measures language schools in terms of student performance, absences, and other factors. Here, VSK falls in the middle of the rankings. While it is difficult to determine the long-term effects of the service, most participants achieve their short-term goal of learning Danish. Providers consider the language service to be successful because, upon graduation, participants are equipped to handle general and ordinary everyday life situations in Denmark. However, individual success always depends on the participant's prerequisites.

VSK representatives have suggested that changing the 5-year rule would benefit the service, as this rule can impede participants' ability to use the language services effectively. Another external change that could help participants learn would be greater support from employers. Internally, VSK could benefit from a more team-based culture in which teachers can learn from one another's methods. Participants credit the service's success to their hardworking teachers, the reversed learning method, and the emphasis on independence.

## **Denmark: Sprogland**

Sprogland (*Language land*) is a non-formal language training service provided by the Danish Red Cross to assist immigrants in Denmark with learning the Danish language. It was initially funded by the National Board of Social Services and was introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic in response to the challenge posed by restrictions leading to the closure of all language training services. The language training service has recently received a new donation from a foundation to develop the platform for the next two years. All initiatives related to immigration in the Danish Red Cross are also funded by the Danish Agency for International Recruitment and Integration.

The concept of Sprogland is rooted in the Danish Red Cross' online platform, SnakSammen (Speak together), which facilitates non-formal virtual meetings and conversations with volunteers that aim to support and assist individuals who might feel lonely, isolated, or simply wish to engage in conversation. During the pandemic, however, the Red Cross noted that many participants booked online meetings on SnakSammen to acquire language training, which prompted the establishment of the independent online language training service, Sprogland.

Sprogland is run by a team of approximately 70 volunteers who are responsible for providing language training and supervising the platform, which immigrants can use to book time slots. Around two thirds of the volunteers have a background in teaching Danish as a foreign language. Most participants have already completed formal Danish language training and use Sprogland as a means of practicing their

language skills in a social and safe learning environment. For many immigrants, finding a Danish social circle is a challenge, and working in jobs such as cleaning or warehousing offers few opportunities to practice language skills. Sprogland provides a valuable opportunity to both practice and connect with new people. The objective of Sprogland is to enhance immigrants' citizenship and individual prospects for a good life in Denmark. Through language training, the Danish Red Cross aims to give immigrants access to social networks and communities in Denmark, which is critical to their integration process.

Sprogland places emphasis on the development of practical Danish language skills. To achieve this, they strive to create a safe and enjoyable learning environment. However, the courses are conducted online due to the Covid-19 pandemic, presenting a challenge for maintaining an optimal learning environment. Nevertheless, the online format also offers greater flexibility and adaptability, which is beneficial for participants who are unable to attend non-formal language training services in person. Many participants have family and work obligations or already attend formal Danish education. Therefore, Sprogland's online format allows them to practice their Danish language skills more easily.

In terms of future development, a representative from Sprogland emphasises the value of collaborating with formal language training services and companies that offer language training services. Such collaboration could enable non-formal language training providers, like Sprogland, to understand and meet the needs of participants that are not covered by formal language training services. Therefore, cooperation between language training services could enhance the overall initiative and programme. The Danish Red Cross also intends to target Sprogland towards specific professions, such as the hotel and restaurant industry, given that many of the participants work in these fields.

### **Norway: Folkeuniversitetet**

Folkeuniversitetet (*The People's University*) in Norway is a non-profit association that provides vocational, linguistic, cultural, and leisure courses and studies for adults at various education levels. The primary target audience for their language training services are immigrants seeking to learn Norwegian who are ineligible for formal language training. As such, the majority of participants are labour migrants, whose courses are often purchased by employers to improve profession-specific Norwegian skills. Folkeuniversitetet collaborates with clients to structure courses that fit their time and resource constraints, including specific professional language training for various work fields. The standard 48-hour course costs around NOK 6200 per participant, with the Norwegian state paying 75 percent of the cost upon completion.

The course is available to all individuals regardless of their level of previous education, ranging from illiteracy to tertiary education. However, a participant's

level of education can impact their learning outcomes. It requires a significant amount of effort and time for participants to process and practice what they have learned. This is a challenge for almost everyone, but those with higher education may have better prerequisites to comprehend the process of learning a language. Individuals with little or no education often struggle to learn a language through formal schooling and instead benefit from more practical learning methods.

Folkeuniversitetet has developed a test to evaluate the proficiency of its participants, which is often requested by employers. This test serves as a means for participants to assess their readiness to progress to the next level. Nonetheless, the organisation lacks a comprehensive overview of the success rate of its participants. While it can be observed that participants make significant improvements in their Norwegian language skills, Folkeuniversitetet deems the high return rate of participants for further courses as the best indicator of the service's success.

While employers view this service as a valuable resource, Folkeuniversitetet prefers longer courses to increase the usefulness of the education. However, longer courses may be cost-prohibitive for many participants. Meeting the needs of clients and participants poses the primary challenge for Folkeuniversitetet's language training service.

Overall, Folkeuniversitetet has an efficient and high-quality system in place to provide courses. Their language services targeted at businesses balance the demand for quick solutions to production or safety issues with the goal of providing immigrants with better employment prospects.

### **Norway: MiR – Mangfold, Inkludering, Respekt**

MiR – Mangfold, Inkludering, Respekt (*Diversity, Inclusion, Respect*) was established in 2006. It is a non-profit organisation that aims to facilitate communication between parents and various national authorities, including the Norwegian school system and the Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV). MiR operates in three key areas: education, healthcare, and family life. The organisation is active at the local, national, and international levels and has an office in Oslo, where it undertakes several projects that focus on improving the lives of parents and children. One of MiR's main priorities is to enhance inclusivity by providing language training. The organisation offers free language training to its participants, which is particularly beneficial for labour migrants who are ineligible for free language courses in the Norwegian migration system.

MiR is a quintessential example of how non-formal language training is typically organised in Norway. Through a free open-access learning community, the organisation emphasises the practice of everyday language. Its approach is to empower people by fostering community-building and improving language skills. In this manner, language courses serve several purposes, including community building



and combating loneliness, empowering individuals, instilling confidence and self-sufficiency, preparing participants to navigate meetings with the school system, healthcare providers, and authorities, and enhancing employment prospects.

MiR also targets vulnerable immigrant groups, with specific courses for women and mothers who have primarily worked in the home. Mental health is also a focus of these courses, as women are more likely to be socially excluded compared to their male counterparts who often have more work-related social interactions. MiR also provides services for young people, including homework assistance in Norwegian and maths. The youth organisation, MiR Ung (*MiR Youth*), targets individuals aged 13–25. MiR's "Community and Mastering" project helps immigrants to form social networks and counteract loneliness. In the organisation's Norwegian courses, many participants are women, who discuss specific topics (e.g., the labour market) to improve their language skills while simultaneously learning about the topic. MiR also offers specific courses to learn professional Norwegian used in different fields of work.

Although many participants attend municipal courses and use MiR's language training services as a supplement to their formal language training, some do not have the right to free language training and use the courses for free practice. MiR offers two different skill levels, one for those with no prior training and another for those who have already practiced some Norwegian.

A challenge for MiR is that some participants stop attending courses and activities due to violence at home, financial difficulties, or problems in their country of origin. The main obstacle for the service is its dependence on external funding. However, the organisation representative considers the service successful, as participants find the service and courses highly useful. An essential aspect of this is that the service is open to everyone, regardless of immigration status, prerequisites, and nationality. MiR's success is also evident from its growth and increased number of collaborators. The organisation has also received positive feedback from schools and regarding the way they work with health and mental health issues. One area of improvement that the organisation aims to pursue is developing a diploma for their courses, which participants can use as a reference.

### **Finland: Gimara – Brighter Future**

Gimara is an initiative designed to teach the Finnish language to a very specific target group, namely healthcare professionals in Myanmar. The background for this initiative is a severe shortage of labour in Finland's healthcare and social services sector, which has led to a strategy of exploring international recruitment opportunities. Gimara provides language training to individuals who are willing to work in Finland. The service was developed in response to the perception that traditional language training is often ineffective because it takes too long for participants to start using the language. Therefore, Gimara has developed learning

models and teaching materials that aim to encourage learners to use the language at an early stage, with less emphasis on grammar and more on authentic learning.

This project is conducted by two organisations. Gimara, a Finnish organisation that specialises in online language learning, provides the pedagogical material for language training, carries out language tests for participants, and supports language trainers. Brighter Future, one of the organisations that Gimara collaborates with, specialises in international recruitment. Since 2020, they have been recruiting and providing Finnish training to nurses in Myanmar with the goal of bringing them to work and live in Finland. They are responsible for both the recruitment and provision of language training. The employer requesting additional personnel is responsible for all the costs associated with the training of the nurses. The service's specific target group is potential labour migrants. To be eligible for this language service, participants must have a university degree in the field of healthcare meaning that higher education is a prerequisite for participation.

One significant contrast between Gimara/Brighter Future and other language training services is that it operates outside of the target country, Finland, instead being based in the home country of the potential labour migrants. The programme aims to bring participants up to the CEFR level of A2.1 by the end of their training. The course entails approximately 20 hours of training per week, conducted by a teacher who is fluent in both Finnish and Burmese, and who has experience working in Finland's healthcare sector. The language training is designed to include a lot of vital medical vocabulary.

In the short term, participants are expected to be able to speak and write Finnish at A2.1 level after six months of training. This level of proficiency allows them to move to Finland and work as assistants while undertaking an apprenticeship to become practical nurses. Over the long term, participants become registered practical nurses in Finland, thereby reducing labour shortages within the sector. One of the primary challenges facing this language service is finding companies willing to recruit personnel from abroad and commit to the process. The success of the programme is due in part to Burmese nurses teaching other Burmese nurses. They offer insights into the experience of moving from Myanmar to Finland. The pedagogical material provided by Gimara is also important in ensuring that the programme includes essential pedagogical components.

### **Finland: Yle Kielikoulu/Språkskolan**

Yle Kielikoulu/Språkskolan (*The Language School*) is a language technology tool introduced by the Finnish public broadcasting channel Yle in 2020. The service was developed to cater to the increasing immigrant population in Finland, with the belief that media plays an essential role in introducing immigrants to their new home country, thereby promoting integration and language learning. The service mirrors Yle's "play" service, providing users with access to most public

programming, including news, TV shows, and movies. However, it also offers an additional functionality of adding subtitles to regular programming, which users can interact with. For instance, users can choose to watch the Finnish news with Finnish subtitles and select individual words to have them translated into another language. At present, there are 14 available languages for Finnish programming and 26 for Swedish programming.

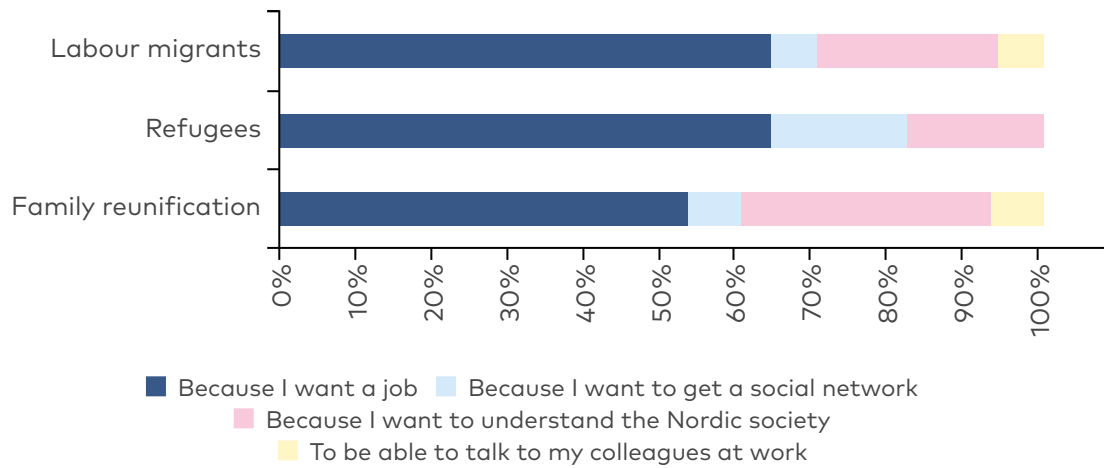
The non-profit organisation Språkkraft, which develops digital tools for language learning, created the tool and provides its services to both Yle and the Swedish public television SVT. The organisation is responsible for providing translations for the programmes and spreading awareness of the service to the target audience in collaboration with Yle. The primary target group for the service is immigrants. However, the service is also used as a supporting tool by teachers and native Finnish and Swedish speakers who wish to learn Finland's other official language. Therefore, the service is open to anyone. However, it is best suited for language learners who already have some knowledge of Finnish or Swedish. By using the service, users can click on unknown words and add them to their vocabulary. However, without any knowledge of the language, the service may prove overwhelming as all the words are new.

The aim of Kielikoulu/Språkskolan is to support language learning and reduce the barriers to accessing Finnish news, encouraging immigrants to learn more about the society, and participate in public debate. A significant challenge for the service is that participants tend to consume news and other media in their native language, which may impede their development of Finnish or Swedish language skills. This, in turn, may limit their knowledge of subjects in the public debate, affecting their integration into the society.

As the service is remote and available to anyone, measuring participants' language skills' improvement is challenging. However, Språkkraft measures the number of users, which indicates the service's usefulness. The fact that people continue to use the service suggests its success as a language learning tool. Anecdotal evidence from users also suggests that the service is greatly appreciated due to its accessibility. The most popular programming among users is the local news, which also keeps them updated on current affairs in the country they have moved to, another vital aspect of integration. Additionally, the project's costs are relatively low since Yle (and SVT) already provide subtitles for viewers with hearing loss or difficulties. The tool itself only provides an interface for clicking on words and providing translations in a given language. Therefore, it is easy to adapt the service to include new languages as necessary. For instance, Ukrainian was added to the service due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and increased influx of Ukrainian refugees.

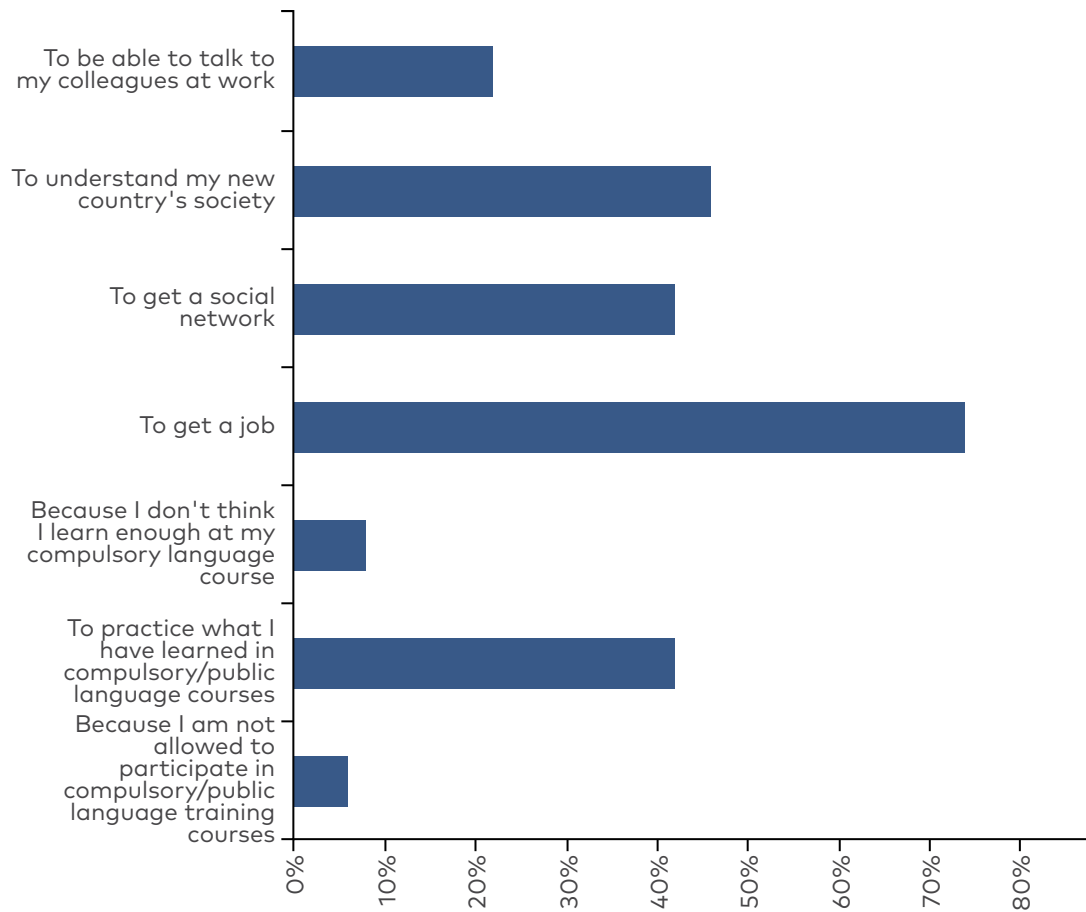
# Annex B: Survey figures

## Results of survey with participants



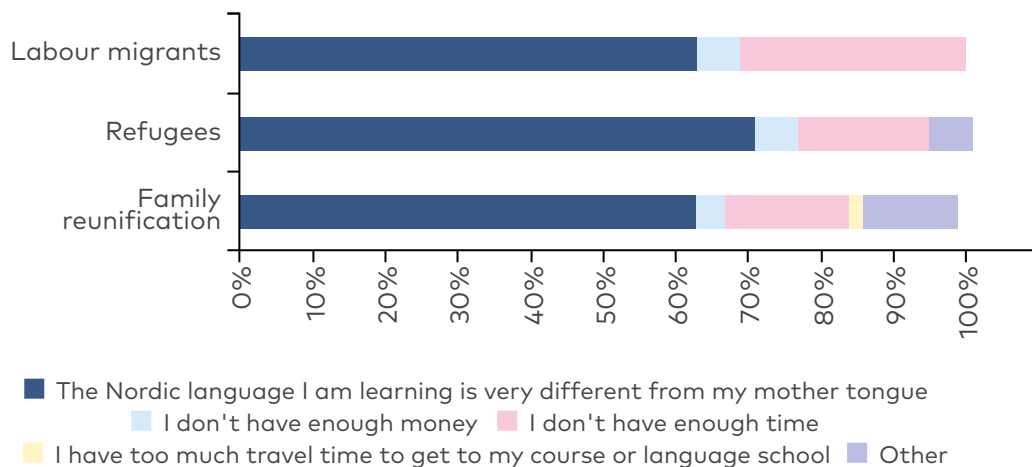
**Figure B 1. What is the most important reason for you to learn a Nordic language?**

*Source: Oxford Research survey with participants (n=80)*



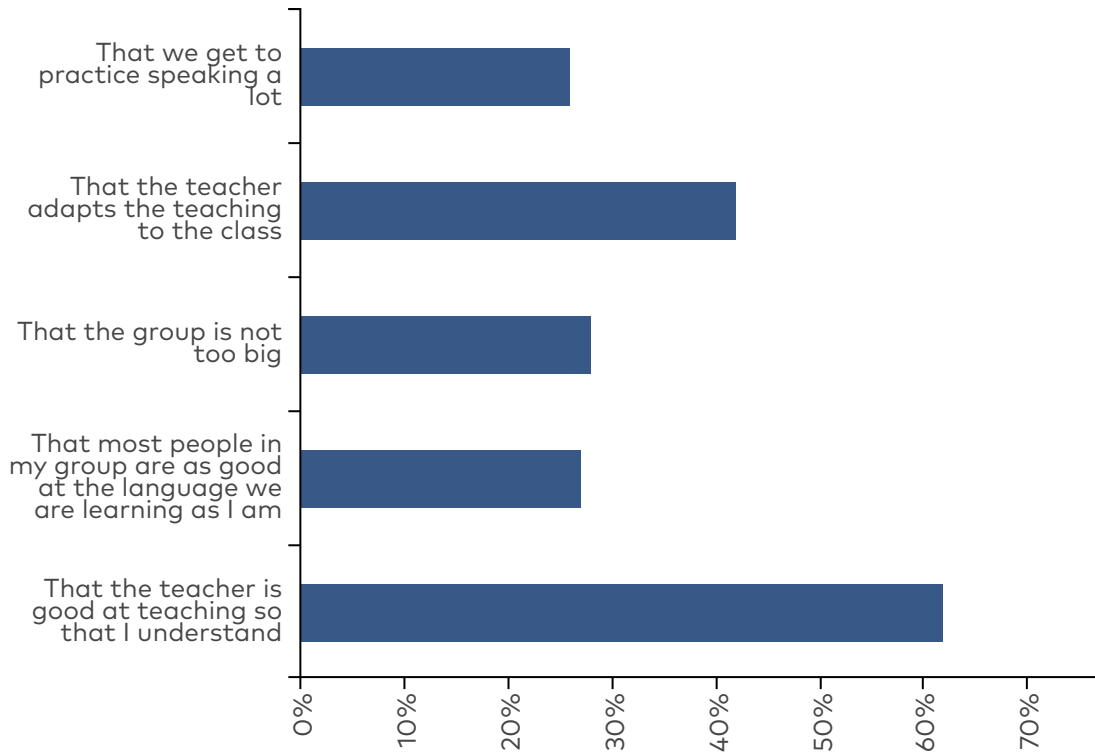
**Figure B 2. Why did you take part in non-formal language training activities?**

Source: Oxford Research survey with participants (n=50)



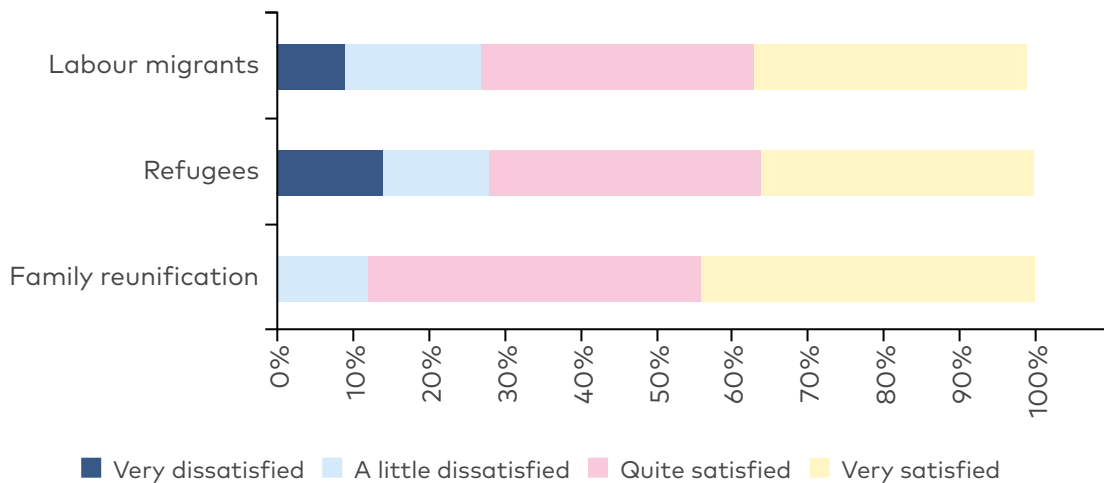
**Figure B 3. What are your main obstacles to learning a Nordic language?**

Source: Oxford Research survey with participants (n=80)



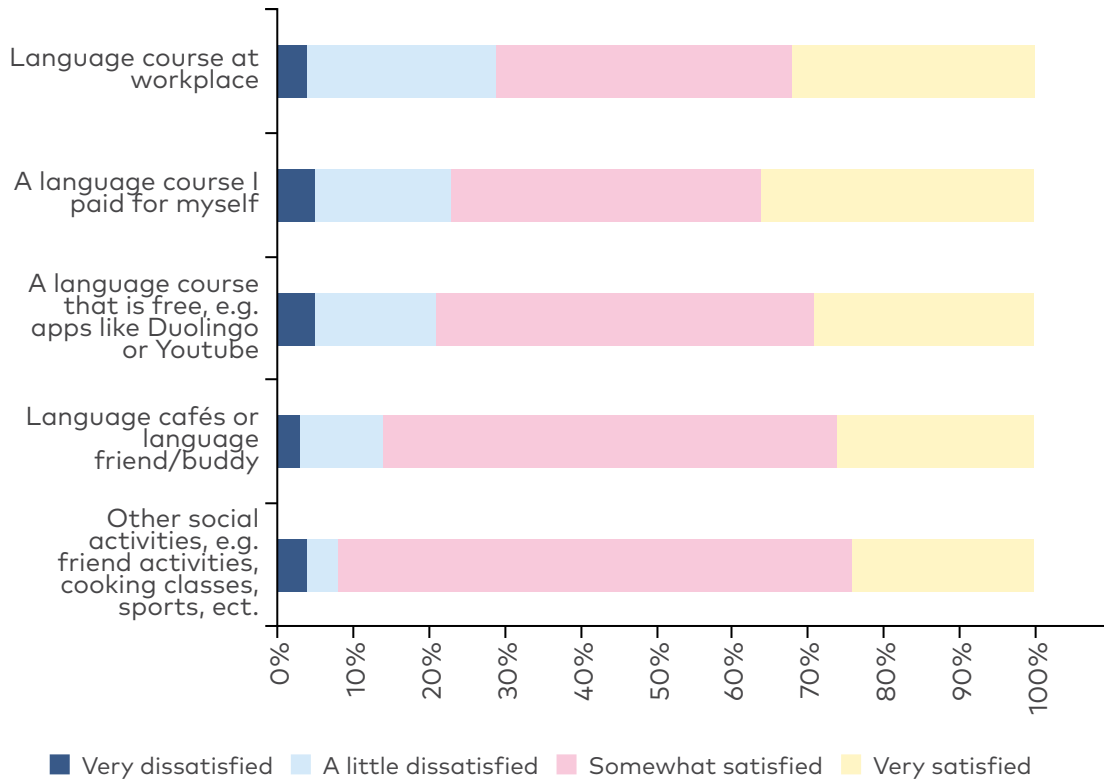
**Figure B 4. Which three things do you consider to be the most important for your language learning to be successful?**

Source: Oxford Research survey with participants (n=110)



**Figure B 5. How satisfied are you with your participation in formal language training services?**

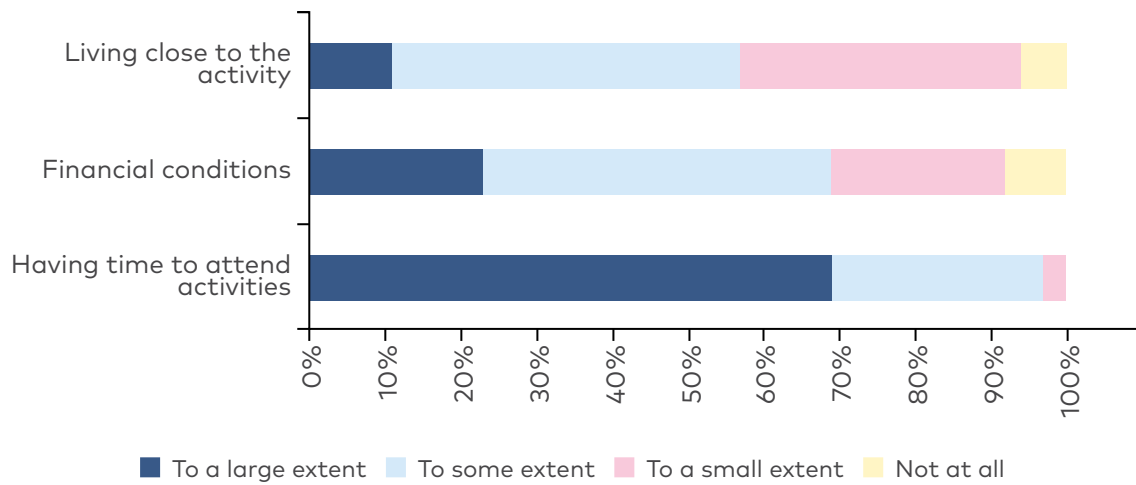
Source: Oxford Research survey with participants (n=124)



**Figure B 6. How satisfied are you with your participation in different non-formal language training services?**

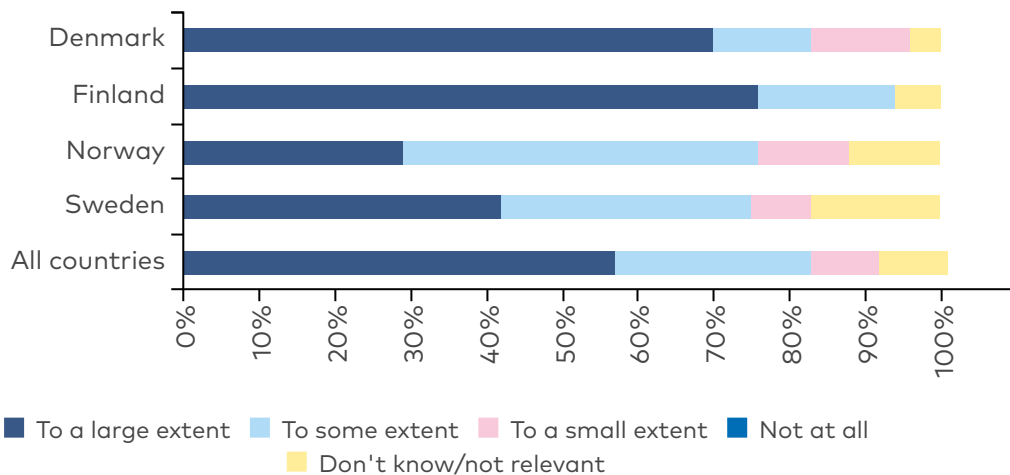
*Source: Oxford Research survey with participants (n=148)*

## Results of survey with providers



**Figure B 7. To what extent do the following factors influence participants' motivation and ability to participate in language training?**

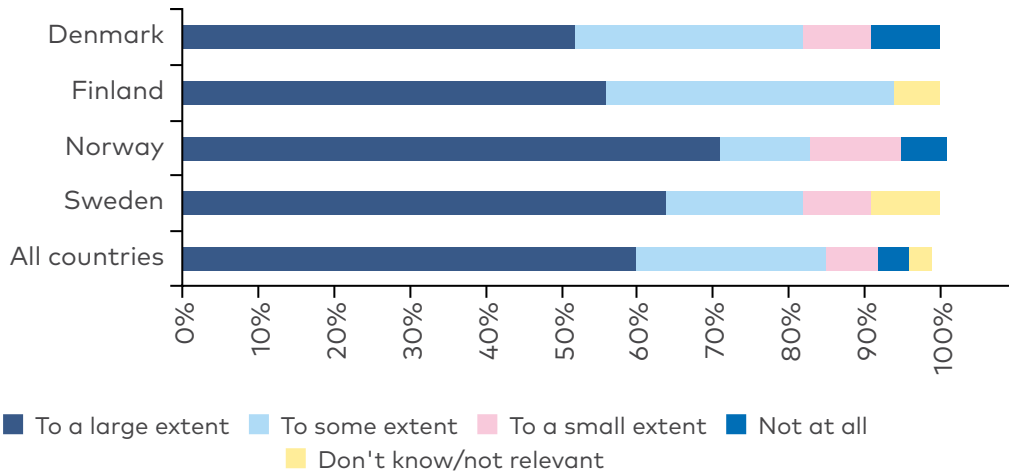
Source: Oxford Research survey with providers (n=71)



**Figure B 8. To what extent does the way language training services are funded affect the quality of their delivery?**

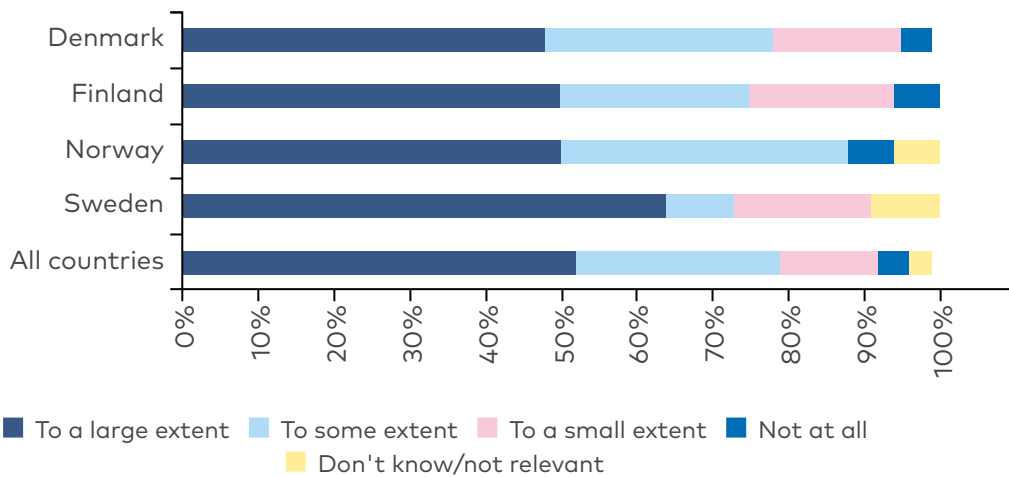
Source: Oxford Research survey with providers (n=106)





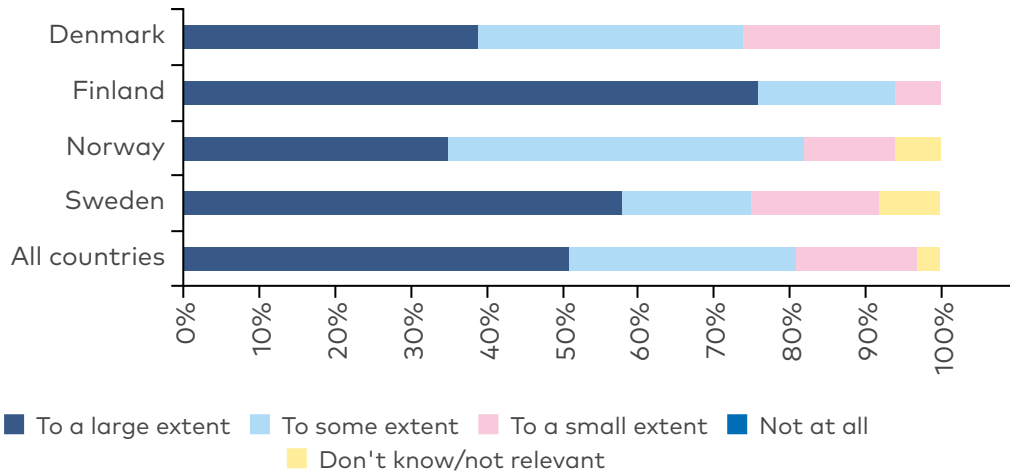
**Figure B 9. To what extent does teaching by qualified language teachers affect the quality of delivery of language training services?**

Source: Oxford Research survey with providers (n=68)



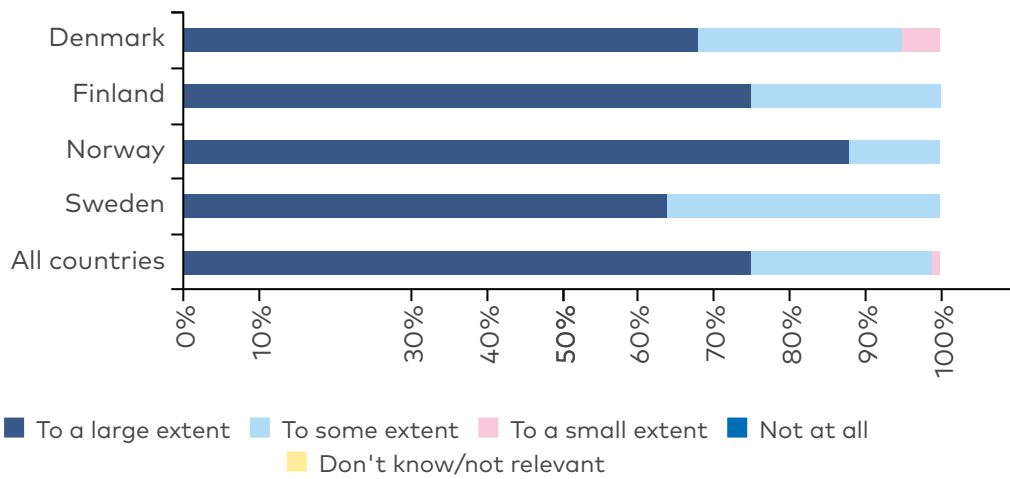
**Figure B 10. To what extent does the composition of a learning group, in terms of the participants' educational backgrounds and language skills affect quality?**

Source: Oxford Research survey with providers (n=67)



**Figure B 11. To what extent does the number of participants in a learning group affect the quality of language training?**

Source: Oxford Research survey with providers (n=70)



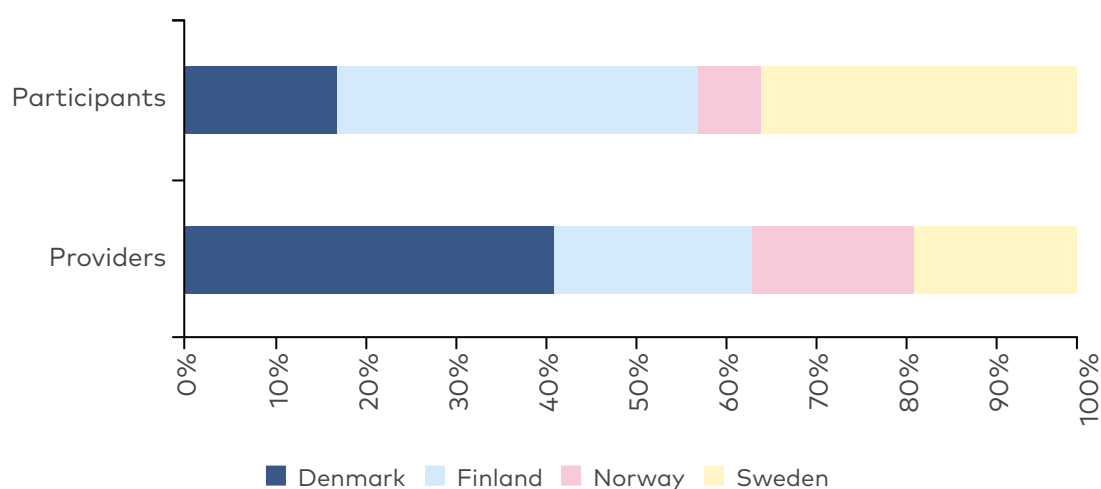
**Figure B 12. To what extent does a safe and pleasant learning environment affect the quality of training?**

Source: Oxford Research survey with providers (n=67)

# Annex C: Survey respondents

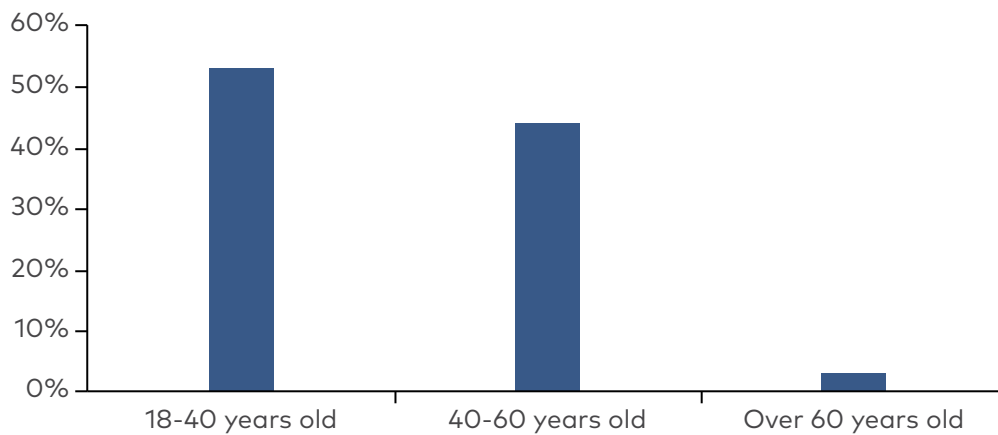
	DK	FI	NO	SE
Providers	28	18	18	13
Participants	19	32	8	39

**Table C 1. Number of participants and providers who responded to the distributed surveys according to Nordic country**



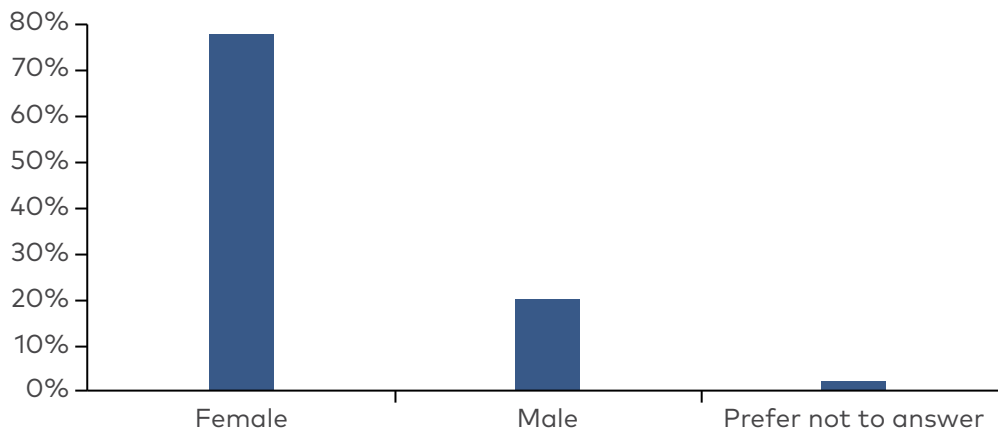
**Figure C 1. Share of participants and providers who responded to the distributed surveys per Nordic country**

## Participant backgrounds



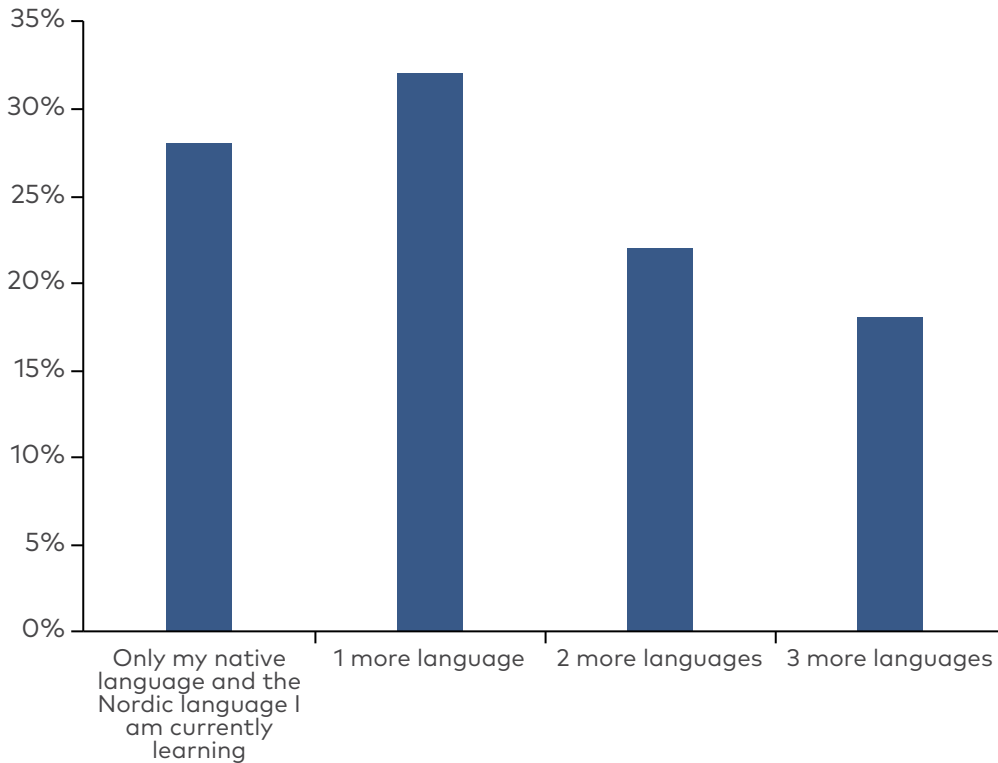
**Figure C 2. How old are you?**

Source: Oxford Research survey with participants (n=97)

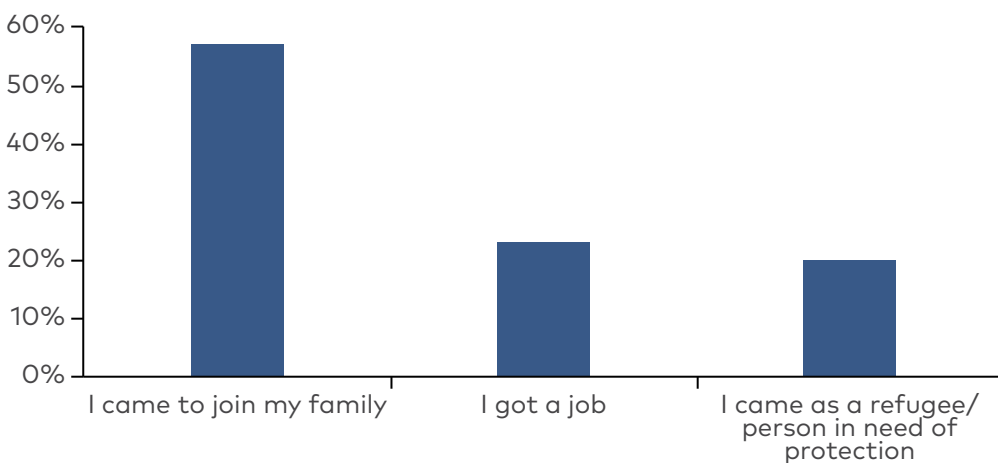


**Figure C 3. What is your gender?**

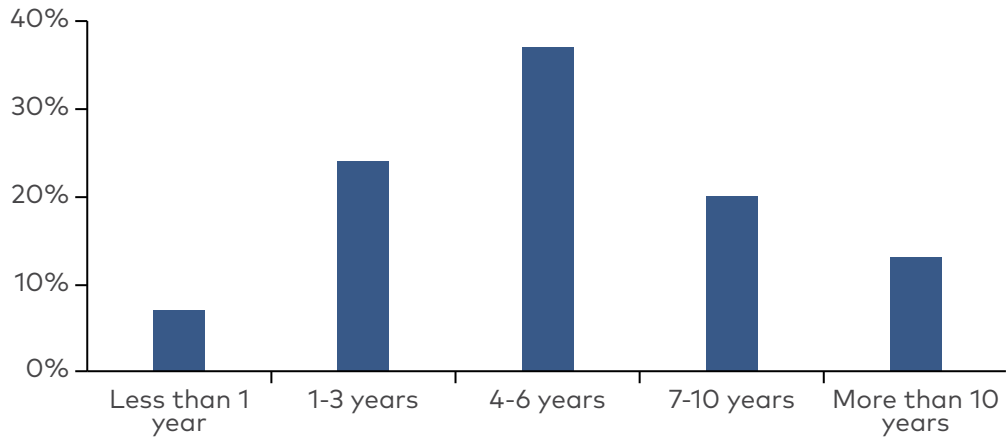
Source: Oxford Research survey with participants (n=98)



**Figure C 4. How many other languages do you speak besides your mother tongue and the Nordic language you are currently learning?** *Source: Oxford Research survey with participants (n=93)*

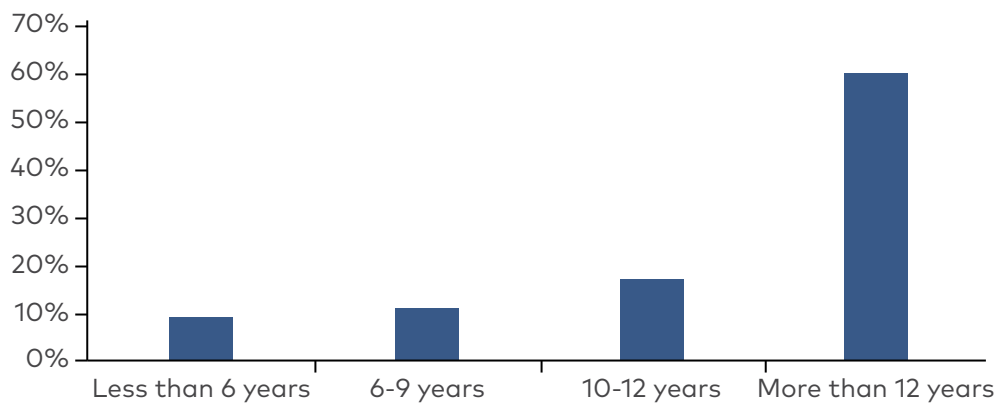


**Figure C 5. Why did you come to the Nordic country where you currently live?** *Source: Oxford Research survey with participants (n=88)*



**Figure C 6. How many years have you lived in your Nordic country?**

*Source: Oxford Research survey with participants (n=87)*



**Figure C 7. How many years of education do you have from your home country or from other countries where you have lived?**

*Source: Oxford Research survey with participants (n=87)*

# About this publication

## Language Training Services for Adult Immigrants in the Nordic Countries

### A comparative study

*Louise Fabricius, Thomas Westerberg*

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