

## FOR-IN: FOSTERING REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

### Project report summary on the implemented activities January 2022-March 2024

**Stakeholder's kick-off online event:** Nordic-Baltic Project "Fostering refugee and immigrant integration at the local level by creating country-specific intersectional cooperation models and regional networks of practitioners"

**When:** 28 January 2022

**Where:** Online

Number of participants (Online): 45

*About the Kick off for the stakeholders*

Topics of the meeting were:

- Setting the scene: refugee and immigrant integration in the Nordic and Baltic Countries within the context of the latest legislative and institutional developments
- Overview of project's implementation framework: The content, risks and timeline
- Overview of project's implementation framework: Coordination, management and communication
- Overview of project's implementation framework: Finances and co-funding

#### **Kick-off FOR-IN Conference**

**When:** 2-3 May 2022

**Where:** Town Hall, Vilnius

**Number of participants (F2F):** 111

**Number of participants (Online):** 889

**In Total:** 1000

#### FACEBOOK:

DAY 1 | PART 1 | <https://fb.watch/cO9Bf1E3x9/>

DAY 1 | PART 2 | <https://fb.watch/cO9zOiOgTW/>

DAY 2 | <https://fb.watch/cO9wSp7oxL/>

#### YOUTUBE:

DAY 1 | PART 1 | <https://youtu.be/7i-YTm1pplg>

DAY 1 | PART 2 | [https://youtu.be/MBOuwsI\\_D3s](https://youtu.be/MBOuwsI_D3s)

DAY 2 | <https://youtu.be/R4aBjzIjiFA> -

*About the conference*

Addressing current emergencies: community mobilization and psychosocial support to refugees, immigrants, their children, and unaccompanied minors in the context of rapidly increased arrivals.



In June and July 2021, Lithuania and Latvia saw a sudden influx of people crossing the border from Belarus, while since late February 2022, the Nordic-Baltic region has faced rapidly increased arrivals from Ukraine due to the devastating conflict. Considering challenges and lessons learnt during the situation in 2015-2016, a kick-off FOR-IN conference gave an opportunity for a cross national exchange of practices and experiences of providing assistance to immigrants and refugees in the context of rapidly increased arrivals, and focused on the following dimensions: (i) Community support, mobilization, and engagement of municipalities during arrival and early integration phase; (ii) psychosocial support for traumatized refugees, immigrants, and their children as well as work with unaccompanied minors.

### **Study visit: local level integration planning coordination and partnership**

**When:** 5-9 December 2022

**Where:** Denmark (Copenhagen, municipalities of Roskilde and Gentofte) and Sweden (Eslöv, Malmö, and Lund)

The **aim of study visit** was to acquire the knowledge about local integration policies and cooperation with NGOs in order to reinforce the local level reception / integration capacities and development of more welcoming local level integration action planning in the Baltic municipalities.

A total of 20 representatives of national and local authorities from Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia met representatives of more than 15 different organisations and institutions based in Copenhagen, municipalities of Roskilde and Gentofte (Denmark), as well as in Skåne region (Eslöv, Malmö, and Lund).

The Lithuanian delegation included representatives from administrations of city municipalities of Vilnius, Klaipėda, and Šiauliai, also Akmenė district. The delegation was also joined by a representative of the Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labour and the local coordinating partner Diversity Development Group.

During the visits the participants got acquainted with the local level integration ecosystem, including linkages to national level policies and municipal programmes, learnt about the cooperation with civil society organisations and NGOs, visited places where integration services are provided, upskilling and language schools, community houses, temporary residences for refugees, local NGOs as well private companies.

### **Country specific seminar after the study visit**

**When:** 14 December 2022

**Where:** online

**Number of participants:** 45

The **aim of country specific seminar** was to share experiences gained during the study visit and to discuss how some policies could be implemented in practice in the municipalities that attended the study visit, as well as to share what are the opportunities and biggest concerns the municipalities have.

The seminar was attended by the representatives of the municipalities who participated in the study visit, as well as by representatives of other municipalities who are interested on the topic. The representative of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour also joined the meeting and the discussion.

The seminar was divided into three parts – first of all, a brief presentation about the FOR-IN project and study visit was introduced, then participants of the study visit were asked to share their experiences, finally a discussion in the smaller groups and then back with all participants of the seminar was initiated. The aim of this discussion was to talk about the challenges and opportunities of the municipalities' engagement into integration process.



The participants of the study visit emphasized that the study trip was very useful and broaden their knowledge about the local integration policies and good practices that could be also applied in their municipalities. The representatives of municipalities emphasized that in Lithuanian case it would be important to provide more capabilities for municipalities, however it should be followed by the national strategy, knowledge-based guidelines, and interinstitutional cooperation. Participants also mentioned the importance of intersecting of migrants' and refugees' rights and their responsibilities. From the point of view of representatives of municipalities, in the case of Lithuania it is especially important to strengthen mental health care services.

During the discussion such practical questions, as how local level integration should be implemented and who could be responsible actors, financial matters, as well as the greatest concerns that municipalities have were raised.

The discussion showed that such seminars are very important both for municipal and national level institutions.

### **FOR-IN Mapping**

**When:** January - February 2023

Mapping of existing (in)formal immigrant and refugees' communities, organizations/associations as well as leaders to be done by partner organizations. Methodology for mapping prepared by DDG and Providus.

LITHUANIA: Overall, 19 migrant-led or migrant-represented organizations based in Lithuania were mapped within this exercise.

### **Study visit (II): Sustainable and democratic cities: engaging local immigrant and refugee communities, creating inclusive cities for all residents**

**When:** 27 - 30 March 2023

**Where:** Finland (municipalities of Helsinki and Vantaa City)

**Number of participants:** 22

Representatives of immigrant and refugee communities (their organizations), immigrant and refugee activists as well as NGOs and CSOs from the Baltic Countries were provided with an opportunity to visit Helsinki and Vantaa city of one of the Nordic countries successfully engaging their local immigrant and refugee communities in both planning and providing integration-related services, as well as ensuring their representation in municipal structures and consulting processes in other spheres of city governance. During the visit, delegates from the Baltic Countries were introduced to what it takes to improve and maintain participation of immigrants and refugees within the structures of local governments, both from the perspective of municipality representatives as well as immigrants and refugees themselves.

A total of 22 representatives of national and local authorities from Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia met representatives of more than 15 different organisations and institutions based in Helsinki and Vantaa cities.

The Lithuanian delegation included representatives from NGOs organisations such as Artscape (1), Lithuanian Refugee Council (2), Lithuanian Red Cross (1). The delegation was also joined by a representative of the Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labour (1), Nordic Council of Ministers Office in Lithuania (1) and the local coordinating partner Diversity Development Group (1).



During the visits the participants got acquainted with the local level integration ecosystem, including linkages to national level policies and municipal programmes, learnt about the cooperation with civil society organisations and NGOs, had meetings at places, where integration services are provided, upskilling and language schools, community houses, temporary residences for refugees, local NGOs as well private initiatives.

	Organisation	Country
1	Diversity Development Group	LT
2	Artscape	LT
4	Lithuanian Refugee Council	LT
5	Lithuanian Refugee Council	LT
6	Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania	LT
7	Nordic Council of Ministers Office in Lithuania	LT/SE

#### **Country specific seminar II (after the study visit II)**

**When:** 6 April 2023,

**Where:** NGO „ArtScape“, Vytenio g. 22, Vilnius

**Country:** Lithuania

**Number of participants:** 12

Country Specific seminars were organised in each partner country as a follow up of the study visit in Finland. Based on the knowledge gained through study visit, representatives of NGOs and municipalities, immigrant and refugee communities were asked to co-organize seminars with the purpose to initiate sustainable and regular dialogue between local authorities and immigrant/refugee representatives to promote participation of immigrants and refugees in co-design and co-implementation of integration programmes and services. Topics of workshops were tailored according to country-specific needs.

The **aim of country specific seminar** was to share experiences gained during the study visit and to discuss how some policies could be implemented in practice in the municipalities that attended the study visit, as well as to share what are the opportunities and biggest concerns the municipalities and NGOs and immigrant / refugee led organisations have.

The seminar was divided into three parts – first of all, a brief presentation about the FOR-IN project and study visit was introduced, then participants of the study visit were asked to share their experiences, finally a discussion in the smaller groups and then back with all participants of the seminar was initiated. The aim of this discussion was to talk about the challenges and opportunities of the NGOs, refugees led organisations and municipalities' engagement into integration process.

The participants from Lithuania shared that they were impressed on such close collaboration among different stakeholders including NGOs, municipalities and national institutions. Especially a lot of attention received the work that ETNO Advisory Board does by uniting number of multicultural organisations, immigrants and refugees. The participants emphasised the importance of immigrants and refugees' self-representation and discussed in more details about the idea to establish the unit that unites all organisations that work in Baltic countries in the field of migration and integration. The representatives of municipalities



assured that such unit would be useful in cooperation with municipalities and getting attention to the issues related to migration and integration.

The discussion showed that such seminars are very important for NGOs, municipal and national level institutions.

#### **FOR-IN training: methodology workshop / training in Riga**

**When:** 18 April 2023 (9:00 – 12:40)

**Where:** Providus office, Alberta street 13, 6th floor (the entrance is from Strēlnieku street), Riga

**Country:** Latvia

**Number of participants (F2F):** 12

The aim of the workshop / training “METHODODOLOGY FOR TRAINING REGARDING THE INVOLVEMENT OF IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN POLICY PLANNING, CO-DESIGN AND CO-IMPLEMENTATION” to prepare for the training of municipal representatives regarding the involvement of immigrants and refugees in policy planning. During the workshop the methodology, which aims to strengthen the capacities of the municipal authorities and local actors to involve immigrants and refugees in policy planning, co-design and co-implementation; as well as to strengthen the capacities of immigrants and refugees to develop community building and self-representation structures, will be presented.

During the workshop, Giedrė Blažytė (DDG) presented the presentation of the “Methodology for training regarding the involvement of immigrants and refugees in policy planning, co-design and co-implementation”. Interactive discussion was initiated after the presentation on the methodology application in practice in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (all workshop participants).

#### **FOR-IN training: training in municipalities**

**When:** 9 June and 19 September, 2023

**Where:** Šiauliai city municipality and Jonava district municipality

**Country:** Lithuania

**Number of participants (F2F):** 45

LITHUANIA:

DDG have concluded two training sessions for Jonava district municipality and Šiauliai city municipality. DDG provided two F2F trainings on 9 June and 19 September, 2023. Overall, 45 participants participated in these trainings.

#### **FOR-IN: Focus groups with immigrants and refugees**

**When:** 23 February 2023

**Where:** DDG office, Švitrigailos 11k-108, Vilnius.

**Country:** Lithuania

**Number of participants (F2F):** 5

The aim of focus group – to discuss the possible instruments how to engage immigrant and refugee communities (also, refugee and immigrant-led organizations) in the dialogue with local, regional and national governments as well as in the process of planning and providing integration-related services; how to improve and maintain participation of immigrants and refugees in existing platforms for dialogue at



various levels, both from the perspective of local, regional and national authorities, as well as immigrants and refugees themselves.

Target group of focus group: non-EU nationals who have a legal status in the country (migrants and beneficiaries of international protection) and representatives of civil society. The focus group should consist of 7-10 representatives of the target group.

The following questions were discussed during the focus group:

- How does the target group understand “participation” in the context of immigrants’ and refugees’ involvement in policy planning, co-design and co-implementation – what does it mean to them and what does it entail?
- What benefits of immigrants’ and refugees’ involvement in consultative processes the target group indicates both for themselves and for local government?
- Possible instruments of immigrants’ and refugees’ involvement in the dialogue as well as other forms of consultative process – what are opportunities and how this could be implemented in practice? [This question is a key question for the focus group in order to elaborate the best practices and to propose them for the municipalities to implement it in practice]
- What risks should be considered in the context of immigrants’ and refugees’ involvement and how they could be mitigated?

### **FOR-IN Pan Baltic initiative: Integration through education and engagement of local actors**

**When:** 23 October 2023

**Where:** Estonia Integration Foundation, Tallinn

**Number of participants (F2F):** 29

As the Baltic region has faced rapidly increased arrivals from Ukraine, there is a need for a platform which is dedicated to the exchange of experiences and good practices in order to foster cooperation between integration actors in the Baltic countries. This seminar is organized within the FOR-IN (Fostering Refugee and Immigrant Integration) project.

The aim of this seminar is to discuss future formats of cooperation and relevant topics that should be addressed, as well as exchange experiences and good practices in regard to reception and integration of Ukrainian refugees in the Baltic countries. The format of this seminar is intended to be interactive, so all participants of the seminar were welcome to share their experiences and thoughts about the themes addressed in this seminar. It consisted of a number of discussions and provided opportunities for networking with integration practitioners across the Baltic countries.

The Pan-Baltic exchange initiative in Tallinn was divided in 3 sessions, in order to address questions about the role of NGOs and municipalities in regard to reception of refugees, as Baltic States have faced unprecedented number of refugees and the overall tendency is to transfer the provision of integration services to the municipal level. The second session was dedicated to the question of whether there is a need of further Pan-Baltic cooperation and what could be the formats of the cooperation between integration practitioners between the Baltic States. The third session was dedicated to the main challenges of integration and inclusion in the areas of employment, language training, health care and education of Ukrainian refugees in Baltic municipalities.

The Pan-Baltic exchange seminar addressed many questions related to integration services. It was observed that the participants were interested to provide their input about the questions addressed during the



seminar. The on-site interactions and the data from post-event survey also indicates that the event was well received from participants. Overall, the aim to provide a platform for communication and interaction between different integration actors in the Baltics was achieved

**Twinning Cities initiatives on the development of local integration capacities and further cooperation**

**When:** 4-8 September 2023

**Where:** Dalarna County, Sweden

**When:** 21 - 25 August 2023

**Where:** Pietarsaari region, Finland

As the outcome of study visits and capacity building initiatives, the project facilitated bilateral communication and partnerships between selected Nordic and Baltic cities to work on specific integration areas, joint project proposals and other type of cooperation.

Akmene District Municipality (Lithuania) visited the Integration Services in the Pietarsaari region (Finland) and Dalarna County (Sweden).

UNHCR facilitated the study visit, NCM provided funding through civil servants' mobility program.

**Final FOR-IN Conference**

**When:** 20-21 February 2024

**Where:** Pirklių klubas, Gedimino pr. 35, Vilnius, Lithuania

**Number of participants (F2F):** 150

**Number of participants (Online):** 968

**In Total:** 1118

**Co-organisers:** Nordic Council of Ministers Office in Lithuania, The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), Diversity Development Group, Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania.

**About the conference: Socio-economic Inclusion on the Ground: From Myriad Contemporary Practices to a Future Systematic Approach**

During the past ten years, Baltic states have continuously improved integration policies by developing specific national level programmes and action plans as well as have started to capacitate local authorities with relevant knowledge and capacities. Ukraine's refugee situation response in these countries further consolidated relevant resources to build policies further; though, differences across municipalities remain in terms of capacities, knowledge and available tools.

Project FOR-IN has been built on wide regional and country-specific partnerships aiming to capitalize on existing initiatives in the Baltic countries and extensive experiences in the Nordic countries by further strengthening capacities of local authorities, civil society, refugee and immigrant communities and other integration actors.

The aim of the final FOR-IN conference is to exchange the knowledge relevant to ensure that holistic integration policies at the local level are in place. The conference is built on three thematic areas: a) local level integration planning coordination and partnership; b) involvement of immigrants and refugees in policy planning, co-design, and co-implementation; c) research and evidence-based policy making. It will



take stock of what has been achieved and will look into the near future in terms of upcoming priorities of national integration/local authorities: communication, mental health and psychosocial support, language programmes and the promotion of intercultural cities.

Conference programme: <https://bit.ly/3u9cFch>

### CONFERENCE VIDEO RECORDING:

In English:

- Day 1 (2024-02-20): <https://youtu.be/RUojJpV3Oy4>
- Day 2 (2024-02-21): <https://youtu.be/pVw1D-JVYYE>

In Lithuanian:

- Day 1 (2024-02-20): [https://youtu.be/-5aC\\_UiLvh4](https://youtu.be/-5aC_UiLvh4)
- Day 2 (2024-02-21): <https://youtu.be/onuSugL7DdM>

### PARTICIPANTS

26 speakers from 9 countries

## PARTICIPANTS: countries

#### IN PERSON:

##### **14 countries**

- Lithuania
- Switzerland
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Faroe Island
- Finland
- France
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Norway
- Sweden
- Spain
- Ukraine
- Czech Republic

#### ONLINE:

##### **16 countries**

- Lithuania
- Austria
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- Georgia
- Iceland
- Italy
- Latvia
- Moldova
- Nigeria
- Poland
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Ukraine
- United States

### Coordinators of the FOR-IN project activities:

#### Lithuania:

- Vida Gintautaitė, Adviser for Social and Health issues, Nordic Council of Ministers Office in Lithuania
- Lina Kisevičienė, Director, Diversity Development Group

#### Latvia:





- Daina Mežecka, Adviser on Social Welfare and Civil Society, Nordic Council of Ministers Office in Latvia
- Alda Sebre, Social Integration Foundation
- Ieva Raubisko, Providus

**Estonia:**

- Madis Kanarbik, Head of Nordic Council of Ministers Branch Office in Tartu
- Anne-Ly Reimaa, Head of International Relations on Integration Issues, Estonian Ministry of Culture
- Viivian Jõemets, Chief Expert, Estonian Ministry of Education and Research
- Janika Hango, CEO of Tartu Welcome Centre

**UNHCR Representation for the Nordic and Baltic countries**

- Karolis Zibas, Integration Officer