

AMONG US

Combating racism and discrimination
among migrants and refugees



Erasmus+



Handbook

**“Combating racism and discrimination
among migrants and refugees”**

Impressum

“Among us” is a European project carried out by the following organizations:

- Copenhagen Youth Network – Denmark
- Gemeinsam Leben & Lernen in Europa – Germany
- Mirsal ry – Finland

Authors: Perdita Wingerter, Raisa Quiroz, Zainab Yousofi, Heresh Halmat Faraidon, Sandra Tutah

Layout: Raisa Quiroz, Larissa Schillai, Zainab Yousofi, Marco A. León Badillo

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution–NonCommercial–ShareAlike 4.0 International License \(CC BY-NC-SA 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

© 2025, *Among Us Project – Erasmus+ Programme*



Co-funded by
the European Union



Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1 Research | 5 |
| 1.1 National Report for Germany and Passau | 6 |
| 1.1.1 Basic Facts on national level | 6 |
| 1.1.2 Basic Facts on local level | 9 |
| 1.2 National report for Denmark and Copenhagen | 12 |
| 1.2.1 Basic Facts on national level | 12 |
| 1.2.2 Basic Facts on local level | 13 |
| 1.3 National report for Finland, Helsinki and Espoo | 17 |
| 1.3.1 Basic Facts on national level | 17 |
| 1.3.2 Basic Facts on local level | 18 |
| 1.4 Field research report for all countries | 21 |
| 1.4.1 About this field research | 21 |
| 2 Building Networks | 26 |
| 2.1 Why is networking important for migrants and refugees? | 26 |
| 2.2 Understanding Networking for Migrants and Refugees | 27 |
| 2.3 How to initiate a network | 29 |
| 2.4 Challenges when building a network | 30 |
| 2.5 Practical Networking Strategies | 31 |
| 2.6 Conclusion | 33 |
| 3 Organizing local events and activities to bring migrant and refugee communities together | 35 |
| 3.1 The cultural event approach by Copenhagen Youth Network, Denmark | 36 |
| 3.2 Contributions to Community Building by Mirsal, Finland | 39 |
| 3.3 Contributions to Community Building and supporting social and emotional integration by Gemeinsam leben & lernen in Europa, Germany | 41 |
| 3.4 Conclusion | 43 |
| 4 Recommendations for Staff & Volunteers working with migrants and refugees + Among Us Training | 45 |
| 4.1 Intercultural event in Denmark | 45 |
| 4.2 Intercultural event in Finland | 48 |
| 4.3 Intercultural event in Germany | 52 |
| 5 Among us - Training Curriculum | 56 |
| 6 Final Conclusion | 57 |
| 6.1 A Chapter-by-Chapter Reflection | 57 |
| 6.2 What we learnt from each other | 58 |
| 7 About us - the partner organisations of the project "Among us" | 59 |
| 7.1 About Copenhagen Youth Network | 59 |
| 7.2 About Mirsal | 59 |
| 7.3 About Gemeinsam leben & lernen in Europa | 61 |



1

Research

1 Research

Prejudices, biases, and discrimination persist not only against migrants and refugees but also within these groups. This overlooked issue requires closer examination to develop solutions that foster harmony and mutual respect among migrants and refugees in their new host countries.

Three organizations, Gemeinsam leben und lernen in Europa (Germany), Mirsal (Finland), and Copenhagen Youth Network, (Denmark) collaboratively established the small-scale partnership "Among us – Combating racism and discrimination among migrants and refugees" under the Erasmus+ program. This partnership seeks to address racism within these communities, identify common ground and values, and ultimately define a shared vision for a peaceful community. The project aims to offer practical examples to create a sense of community and counteract racist and discriminatory attitudes among migrants and refugees.

To gain a better understanding of the situation of migrants and refugees in our local communities, the partner organisations collected quantitative and qualitative data about the situation in Germany, Finland, and Denmark, as well as in the local communities of Passau, Helsinki, and Copenhagen. Partners conducted quality interviews with migrants, refugees, professionals and volunteers working with refugees and migrants. These professionals included teachers, counsellors, and staff in refugee reception centres, Intercultural centres, and doctors. Partners interviewed migrants and refugees from diverse backgrounds to gain insights into their perspectives based on factors such as origin, ethnicity, age, gender, religion, education, profession, and culture. The aim was to better understand their needs

and challenges.

Equally important was the understanding of their values, ideas, and visions for building a peaceful community. This exploration aims to uncover shared values among different groups facilitating the definition of a collective vision accepted by the majority. Additionally, the partners were investigating good practices in their local community that promote tolerance, inclusion, understanding, and solidarity among different groups.

The report's findings will aid in the adaptation of local programs for migrants and refugees, as well as in the efforts to combat racism and discrimination among them. It is hoped that this insight and know-how will benefit your services and activities for and with migrants and refugees.

About the methodology of this research

To describe the situation of migrants and refugees at the national and local level, we conducted a desk research based on a joint research template. A questionnaire was developed for interviewing refugees and migrants from diverse backgrounds. Each partner conducted at least 10 in-depth interviews following guidelines and including a diversity check.

Group 1: Migration for Non-Humanitarian Reasons: MAX 5 people and at least one person from at least three of following:

1. Study.
2. Work.
3. Marriage.
4. Economic Opportunities.

Group 2: Migration for Humanitarian Reasons: MAX 5 people and at least one person from at least three of the following:

1. Asylum-Seekers.
2. Refugees.
3. Victims of Trafficking or Violence.

4. Humanitarian Aid Recipients

Other considerations were:

- Interview at least 5 women.
- Interview at least three people from each of the following age group:
 1. 18 - 30 years
 2. 31 - 59 years
 3. 60 years and above

Interview 5 different nationalities and at least three language groups, where at least one of the following groups must be represented (Arabic, Ukrainian, African, Kurdish).

Additionally, 5 professional staff and volunteers, working directly with migrants and refugees were interviewed as well, were interviewed in each country.

1.1 National Report for Germany and Passau

1.1.1 Basic Facts on national level

Who is allowed to live in our country? About the different legal statuses.

As EU citizen: EU citizens residing and working in Germany have the freedom of movement, which allows their spouses and children to live and work inside of the country. The requirement for a temporary residence permit depends on the nationality of the family members. If your spouse is an EU or EEA national, they can easily join you in Germany and live and work here without restrictions. No special residence permit is required.



If you are a citizen of an EU or EEA member state and your spouse is not, they must apply for a visa to join you. However, if your spouse already holds a residence title for another EU state, they do not need a visa to enter Germany under Section 2(4) of the Freedom of Movement Act/EU [FreizügG/EU].

If you or your spouse are entitled to reside in Germany, your children under the age of 18 are also entitled to a temporary or permanent residence permit.

If your children are citizens of an EU or EEA member state, they can enter Germany without a visa and live and work there without any restrictions.

If your children are non-EU or non-EEA citizens, they require a visa to enter

Germany. Children under 16 of parents holding temporary resident permits for Germany will also receive temporary resident permits to join them (according to Section 32 of the Residence Act [AufenthG]). Single parents can apply for a visa for their children, but they need consent from the other parent with custody.

To obtain a visa to join you, your children must meet the following criteria: they must be unmarried and under 18 years of age. If you have a valid residence title in Germany when your child is born, your child will be granted a residence permit under Section 33 of the Residence Act (AufenthG).

German citizenship is obtained by parentage. If one parent is a German citizen, the child automatically becomes a German citizen at birth. Children may also acquire German nationality at birth alongside their parents' nationality.

The EU Blue Card is a residence title for foreign academics and qualified individuals who want to work in Germany. It is governed by Section 18g of the Residence Act. If you completed vocational training or a course of study outside Germany, you may qualify for a residence permit under Section 18a or Section 18b of the Residence Act (AufenthG) to work as a skilled worker in Germany.

Experienced professionals can pursue career opportunities in Germany in non-regulated professions without formal qualification recognition. They can obtain a residence permit under Section 19c (2) of the Residence Act [AufenthG] in conjunction with Section 6 of the Ordinance on the Employment of Foreigners (BeschV).

You have signed an agreement with your future employer stating that you will have the opportunity to complete the recognition procedure as part of your employment relationship. This may also

be included in your employment contract.

Proof of Language Proficiency: The applicant must have German language skills at level A2 or above of the Common European Framework of reference for Languages (CEFR). Certain professions may require a higher level of German in Germany.

To be suitable for a recognition partnership, the employer needs to have experience in vocational training or post-qualification skills development. The employer's suitability will be evaluated by the competent authority during the visa process. As the skilled worker, you do not need to take any action.

Visa for professionally experienced workers: you can work as an IT specialist in Germany even if you do not have a formal vocational qualification or university degree, as long as you can prove that you have work experience in the IT sector. For more information about this type of visa, refer to the "Visa for professionally experienced workers" section.

As a refugee:

The Geneva Convention of 1951 offers protection from state political persecution. Asylum is not granted to those who entered Germany through safe countries like EU member states, Norway, and Switzerland. If asylum is granted, individuals receive immediate working permission, social aid, and integration measures.

Asylum typically lasts three years, with a chance to obtain a residence permit thereafter.

Refugee protection:

Refugees entering through a safe third country can receive protection from political persecution by the state. This protection grants immediate working permission, social aid, and integration measures for a period of three years.

After this period, there is an opportunity to obtain a residence permit.

Subsidiary protection:

If asylum or refugee protection is not possible, subsidiary protection may be an option. This protection is granted when an asylum seeker is at risk of torture, inhumane treatment, or the death penalty in their home country.

Subsidiary protection includes a one-year work permit and social benefits, which can be extended for two years. If a person remains eligible for subsidiary protection after seven years, they may be eligible for a residence permit.

Tolerance status ("Duldung"):

Temporary exemption from deportation is applicable to individuals who cannot legally or effectively leave Germany.

However, it does not grant a residence permit as the obligation to leave Germany remains. If deportation is suspended for over 18 months or voluntary departure from Germany is not foreseeable, a residence permit cannot be granted. Consequences include granting subordinate working permission after 9 months and provision of social benefits, excluding integration measures.

How many migrants and refugees live in our country? How many people live in our country in total? How many of them have a migrant or refugee background?

Germany has a population of 83,8 Million. 23,9 Million people in Germany have a migrant background, 13,9 Million are foreigners, 186.000 got the German passport.

After World War II, migrants from guest worker countries settled in Germany and later brought their families. Ethnic German repatriates from Romania, Poland, and the former Soviet Union also moved to Germany after reunification. In the early

1990s, refugees from the Balkans sought asylum. Since the EU enlargements in 2004, migrants from Eastern European EU countries have come to Germany. Asylum applications have been on the rise since 2011, particularly from refugees originating from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea, Somalia, Iran, Pakistan, and the successor states of Yugoslavia.

In 2013 and beyond, the main reasons for immigration were flight, employment, and family reunification. The percentage of men with an immigration history was slightly higher at 24.8% compared to 23.8% for women. Individuals with an immigration history are those who immigrated to Germany since 1950 (first generation) or are direct descendants (second generation), as defined by the "Fachkommission Integrationsfähigkeit". This definition does not consider subjective evaluations unless specified.

Refugees in Germany

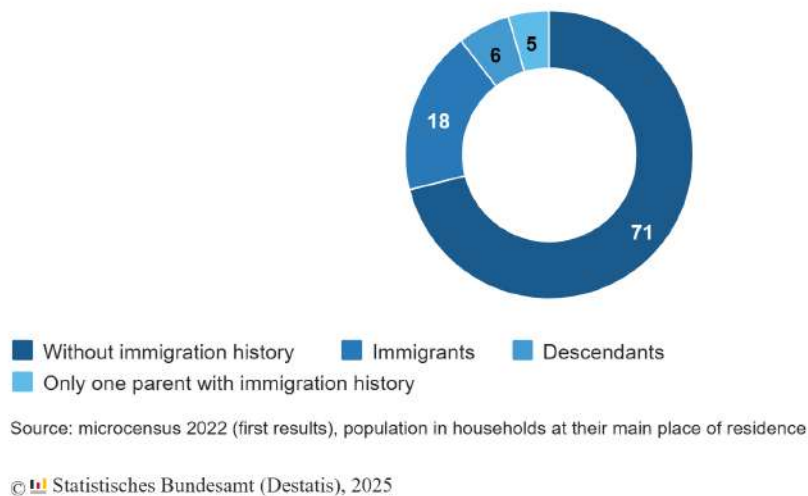
According to the Federal Ministry of the Interior, around 1,57 million individuals currently enjoy protection and reside in Germany as of June 30, 2023. Among them, 31 percent are minors, and 67 percent have been in Germany for over six years.

Among them are:

- 44.455 Persons entitled to asylum
- 755.626 Refugees
- 307.471 beneficiaries of subsidiary protection
- 178.845 Individuals to whom a deportation ban is applicable
- 1.156.694 refugees from Ukraine

Population by immigration history, 2022

Percent, total of 83.1 million



Another 292.000 people have been granted protection due to various circumstances:

- For instance, individuals may be pursuing a profession or may be protected from deportation due to humanitarian reasons.
- Furthermore, there are roughly 276.512 asylum seekers with pending protection status and approximately 169.907 individuals who are obligated to leave the country due to a rejected
- Additionally, as of June 30, 2023, the Central Register of Foreigners has registered approximately one million refugees from Ukraine, with 80% of them possessing a residence permit (Bundestagsdrucksache 20/8182, p. 21).

1.1.2 Basic Facts on local level

How many people live in our city/district in total? How many of them have a migrant or refugee background?

The figures show that the city and district of Passau have 223.870 inhabitants in total. The number of inhabitants in the city alone comes to 53.907. The number of foreigners is 10.845 which is 20.1 percent of the total population. The district of Passau has a population of 196.963, of which 20.594 have a migrant background, which is 10,5 percent.

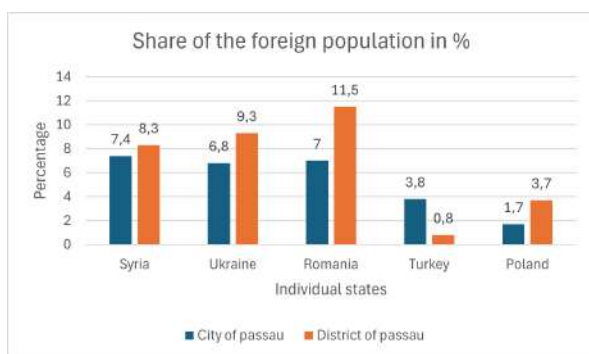
What are the main countries of origin?

The main countries from which refugees come from are

- Romania
- Syria
- Ukraine
- Turkey
- Poland

What are the main countries of origin?

In the city and district of Passau, most immigrants come from Turkey, Ukraine, Syria, Romania and Poland. In the following table you can see the numbers and percentages of immigrants in these two locations.



What is the demographic numbers (age group)?

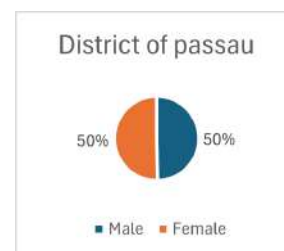
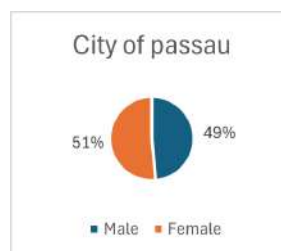
Most People who live in Passau are between the ages of 15 and 64 and the fewest under the age of six.

| | Age group | Number | Percentages |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------|-------------|
| City of Passau | Under 6 years old | 770 | 5,5% |
| | 6-14 years old | 1100 | 7,8% |
| | 15-64 years old | 11245 | 80,1% |
| | 65 y-o. and above | 930 | 6,6% |
| District of Passau | Under 6 years old | 1570 | 6,9% |
| | 6-14 years old | 2210 | 9,7% |
| | 15-64 years old | 17205 | 75,6% |
| | 65 y-o. and above | 1780 | 7,80% |

What is the gender structure? Rate of man and women

Of the total population of the city of Passau, 26.167 men, 5 615, are male refugees and 27.740 women, 5.230, are female refugees.

In the district of Passau, 97.778 men and 11.018 of the population are male refugees and 99.185 women and 9.576 of the population are female refugees.



Access to education

There are many opportunities to have access to education in Passau. These include Nursery schools, kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, vocational schools, special schools, the University of Passau, the Passau Adult Education Center, the education portal of the city of Passau and the training fair of the city of Passau.

University of Passau

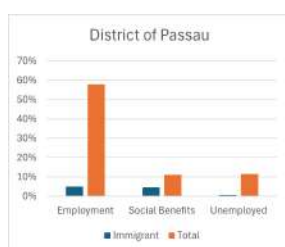
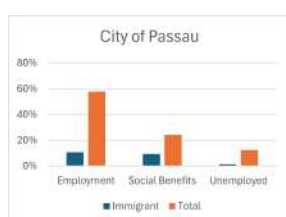
There are 10.879 students studying at the university of Passau. 1.695 of them are international students (15.58%) from e.g. Austria (144), India (112), Iran (94), Turkey (92), Tunisia (91), Russian Federation (75), China PRC (70), Pakistan (59), Italy (48), Hungary (48), Ukraine (42), France (41), Syria (32), Spain (31), Egypt (28), Albania (27), Czech Republic (27), Nigeria (26), Argentina (24), Azerbaijan (24), Ghana (23), Croatia (23), Colombia (22), Kosovo (22), Morocco (22), Bangladesh (21), Brazil (21), Vietnam (18), Poland (17), Afghanistan (16), Algeria (16), United States (16), Romania (14), Bulgaria (13), Kazakhstan (12), Indonesia (11), Lebanon (11) and Palestine (11). They are studying in different faculties such as Law, Business, Economics and Information system, social and Educational Humanities and Cultural Studies and Computer Science and Mathematics.

[Uni-Passau](#)

Employment, pension, or living on social/work benefits

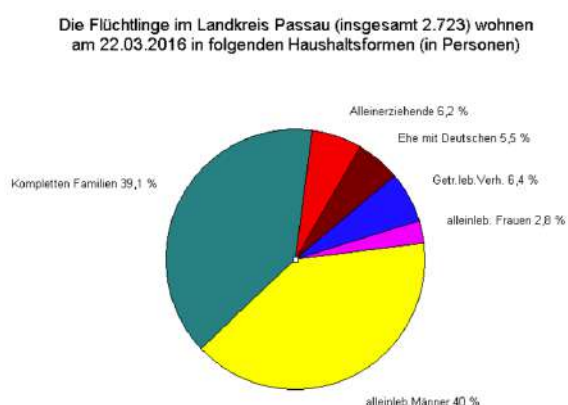
In the city of Passau, 58,7% of the population is employed, 5.072 immigrants are gainfully employed, 4.510 immigrants receive social benefits and 535 are unemployed.

In the district of Passau there is a total of 59,1% gainfully employed and 8.534 gainfully employed immigrants, 7.870 immigrants receive social benefits and 1.004 are unemployed.



Family status

The data is from 22.03.2016 and it shows that approximately 40% of the refugees live either as single men or in complete families (with mother, father and children). Only 6% live in single-parent households (see also the chart below).



Housing situation

Passau has a vibrant private housing market. The average rent is about €400 a month for one bedroom. Landlords usually require a two- or three-month

deposit when you move in, which will be returned to you at the end of the rental period, assuming you leave your room in good condition. As soon as you have been granted a residence permit, you will be requested by the Government of Lower Bavaria to move out of the shared accommodation. This is not an option: you are obligated to move out. From this point on you will no longer receive your benefits from the Social Welfare Office, but from the responsible job center. The job center also pays the rent. The rent is capped, so you have to pay attention to the prize of your apartment. The job center can give you further information about this.

Accommodation listing:

- [WG-gesucht](#)
- [Immobilien Scout24](#)
- [PNP classified ads](#)
- [Null Provision](#)
- [Immonet](#)
- [Immo-suche](#)
- [Ebay Local Ads](#)

Support structure for migrants and refugees on local level (e.g. counselling services, support groups, cultural groups, religious groups, education providers ...)

There are a number of offices and organizations in Passau that offer advice and support in various areas for the people of Passau, such as : Diakonisches Werk Passau e.V. , Asylsozialberatung Pocking, Migration counselling, Caritas Association Passau, Asylum counselling, Arbeitsagentur und das Jobcenter Passau (Land), Bayerisches Rotes Kreuz Passau, Gemeinsam leben & lernen in Europa, Handwerkskammer Niederbayern, IHK Niederbayern, Integrationshilfe Passau - miteinander füreinander, Integrationslotsung und Ehrenamtskoordinierung Passauer Land,

Jugendmigrationsdienst, Katholisches Erwachsenenbildungswerk in Stadt und Landkreis Passau, Kinderschutzbund Passau, Malteser Passau, Medhilfe Passau, MigraNet: „Tür an Tür“ Integrationsprojekte gGmbH, and "Passau verbindet" - Refugee Support Network.

In Passau, there are many state-funded vocational integration courses and counselling services. In addition, there are many voluntary services that help immigrants with orientation and integration.

The integration course is not only aimed at people with a residence permit in Germany, but also at asylum seekers, some of whom are even obliged to attend a course. In the city of Passau, several courses offer integration or language courses at Volkshochschule Passau, BAP - Berufsakademie Passau, Deutsche Angestellten Akademie GmbH Passau, ebiz gmbh (youth and adult education center).

For more information on how these organisations can help you, please visit this website www.fluechtlingshilfe-in-passau.de

1.2 National report for Denmark and Copenhagen

1.2.1 Basic Facts on national level

Who is allowed to live in our country? About different legal statuses.

Denmark offers a plethora of residency options for individuals seeking to take residence within its borders. Depending on their citizenship and specific category, a residency permit may be required to be eligible. Options include work, family reunification, study, and humanitarian purposes, among other.

About the different legal statuses

Following are the different types of residence permits in Denmark:

- Convention status, protection status and temporary protection status.
- Quota refugees (resettled refugees).
- Family reunification.
- Employment (includes specialists, researchers and other knowledge workers, green cards).
- Residence on humanitarian grounds.
- Residence permits to rejected asylum seekers in certain situations.
- Unaccompanied minors (special reasons).
- Students.
- Au pairs.
- EU/EEA permits (includes the European Union, the EEA countries and Switzerland).
- Others (former Danish nationals, religious preachers etc.).
- Brexit, Afghanistan and Ukraine. (Special act on temporary residence permit for persons who have assisted Danish authorities etc. in Afghanistan and on temporary residence permit for displaced persons from Ukraine).

Source: integrationsbarometer.dk

Figure 1 shows number of persons

granted refugee or other status in Denmark, 2017-2023.

Table 2.2: Number of persons granted refugee or other status in Denmark, 2017-2023*

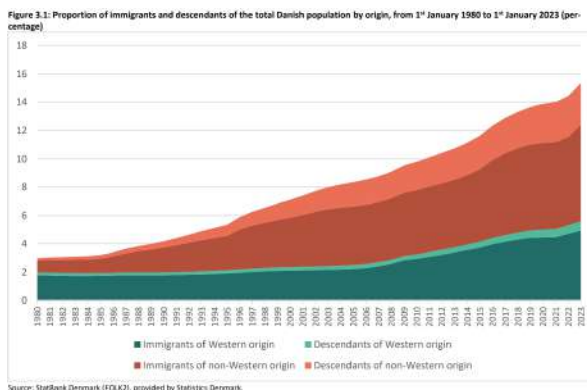
| Category | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023* |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|--------------|--------------|------------|
| Refugee status (A) | 2,706 | 1,621 | 1,737 | 577 | 1,097 | 795 | 897 |
| - Protection status | 1,525 | 8,028 | 770 | 325 | 466 | 509 | 834 |
| - B-status/ de facto status | 392 | 187 | 658 | 101 | 283 | 71 | 21 |
| - Temporary protected status | 789 | 406 | 309 | 120 | 151 | 50 | 41 |
| - Quota refugees | 0 | 0 | 0 | 31 | 197 | 165 | 1 |
| - Applications lodged abroad ** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other status (B) | 44 | 31 | 46 | 24 | 265 | 608 | 21 |
| - Humanitarian residence permit | 3 | 8 | 18 | 15 | 6 | 2 | 2 |
| - Exceptional reasons | 41 | 23 | 28 | 9 | 3 | 13 | 14 |
| - of which return not possible | 0 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 7 |
| - Afghanistans (the special act)*** | - | - | - | - | 256 | 593 | 5 |
| Total (A+B) | 2,750 | 1,652 | 1,783 | 601 | 1,362 | 1,403 | 918 |

*1 January - 31 August 2023

** General Convention status or de facto status permits granted to asylum seekers applying for asylum at the Danish diplomatic missions. Since 1st of July 2020, it is no longer possible to seek asylum in Denmark from outside the country's borders via a Danish diplomatic mission (embassy or consulate-general).

Source: The Danish Immigration Service.

Figure 1: Number of persons granted refugee or other status in Denmark, 2017-2023. (Source, page 10)



Source: StatBank Denmark (FOU2), provided by Statistics Denmark.

Figure 2: Increase from 1980-2023 (Source, page 19)

How many migrants and refugees live in our country?

In 2023, Denmark had 910.898 inhabitants, who are immigrants and descendants, which corresponds to 15, 4% of the total population. The total population in Denmark is 5.962.302.

As figure 2 shows; from 1980 to 2023, the total number of immigrants and descendants has increased with 758.000 persons. This accounts for an increase of more than 10% within the total population, from 3% in 1980 to 15, 4% in 2023.

Which are the main countries of origin?

Within the total group of all immigrants and descendants living in Denmark, 66.217 persons are of Turkish origin, which is the largest group. Secondly, people of Polish origin contribute with 55.873 persons. The third largest group is immigrants of Romanian origin (45.400).

Immigrants and descendants by country of origin, at 1st July 2023 can be seen on figure 3.

Within the non-western countries, Turkey is still the largest population group. Syria is the second largest group with 44.534 persons and Ukraine the third largest group with 42.468 persons.

The 10 largest countries by origin among non-western immigrants and descendants, at 1 January 2023.

1.2.2 Basic Facts on local level

How many people live in our region in total?

The Regional Capital (Greater Copenhagen) is where Copenhagen Youth Network is located. This area consists of Copenhagen and the surrounded capital municipalities. The Regional Capital has 1.891.871 inhabitants in 2023. 416.750 of them are migrants and descendants, which corresponds to 22% within the total population in the region. 7,7% of them are from western countries. 14,4% of them are from non-western countries.

Copenhagen has 660.842 citizens. 27,4% of them are immigrants. 11,2% are from western countries and 16,2% of them are from non-western countries.

Immigrants in Denmark are not evenly spread all over the country, they are more likely to live in the larger cities.

Table 3.2: Immigrants and descendants by country of origin, at 1st July 2023 (persons, percentage)

| | Immigrants | | | Descendants | | | Total | |
|----------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---|
| | Men | Women | Total | Men | Women | Total | Total | Proportion of all immigrants and descendants in Denmark |
| Türkiye | 17,911 | 16,512 | 34,423 | 16,233 | 15,621 | 31,854 | 66,277 | 7% |
| Poland | 25,380 | 22,429 | 47,809 | 4,169 | 3,895 | 8,064 | 55,873 | 6% |
| Romania | 22,886 | 16,253 | 39,139 | 3,203 | 3,058 | 6,261 | 45,400 | 5% |
| Syria | 19,412 | 15,502 | 34,914 | 5,079 | 4,802 | 9,881 | 44,795 | 5% |
| Ukraine | 15,851 | 24,152 | 40,003 | 1,979 | 1,903 | 3,882 | 43,885 | 5% |
| Germany | 17,054 | 18,450 | 35,504 | 2,123 | 2,175 | 4,298 | 39,802 | 4% |
| Iraq | 11,953 | 10,041 | 21,994 | 6,533 | 6,114 | 12,647 | 34,641 | 4% |
| Lebanon | 7,197 | 6,181 | 13,378 | 7,642 | 7,147 | 14,789 | 28,167 | 3% |
| Pakistan | 7,724 | 7,160 | 14,884 | 6,075 | 5,919 | 11,994 | 26,878 | 3% |
| Iran | 10,992 | 8,849 | 19,841 | 2,635 | 2,403 | 5,038 | 24,879 | 3% |
| Bosnia & Herzegovina | 8,061 | 8,241 | 16,302 | 3,649 | 3,322 | 6,971 | 23,273 | 3% |
| Afghanistan | 8,004 | 6,731 | 14,735 | 3,457 | 3,272 | 6,729 | 21,464 | 2% |
| Somalia | 5,645 | 5,383 | 11,028 | 5,264 | 5,096 | 10,360 | 21,388 | 2% |
| India | 9,362 | 7,513 | 16,875 | 1,665 | 1,456 | 3,121 | 19,996 | 2% |
| United Kingdom | 10,585 | 5,693 | 16,278 | 893 | 927 | 1,820 | 18,098 | 2% |
| Other countries | 152,337 | 179,204 | 331,541 | 39,826 | 38,240 | 78,066 | 409,607 | 44% |
| Total | 350,354 | 358,294 | 708,648 | 110,425 | 105,350 | 215,775 | 924,423 | 100% |

Note: The 15 countries with the highest number of immigrants and descendants are included.

Source: StatBank Denmark (FOLK1C), managed by Statistics Denmark.

Figure 3: Number of persons granted refugee or other status in Denmark, 2017-2023
(Source, page 17)

What are the main countries of origin?

Copenhagen

Regional Capital

| Country | Population (in thousands) |
|---------|---------------------------|
| Turkey | 17.413 |
| India | 11.207 |
| Ukraine | 10.333 |

Table 1: Largest population within the non-western countries

| Country | Population (in thousands) |
|---------|---------------------------|
| Turkey | 17.413 |
| Norway | 13.903 |
| Sweden | 12.454 |

Table 2: Within the total group of all immigrants in the Regional Capital

| Country | Population (in thousands) |
|---------|---------------------------|
| India | 4.037 |
| Ukraine | 3.652 |
| Turkey | 3.532 |

Table 3: Largest population within the non-western countries

| Country | Population (in thousands) |
|---------|---------------------------|
| Italy | 7.945 |
| Germany | 6.743 |
| Sweden | 6.289 |

Table 4: Within the total group of all immigrants in Copenhagen

Table 3.4: Age distribution by population category and origin, at 1st July 2023 (percentage)

| | 0-15 years | 16-24 years | 25-39 years | 40-64 years | 65+ years |
|---------------------------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Non-Western origin | | | | | |
| Immigrants | 8% | 8% | 32% | 43% | 9% |
| Descendants | 44% | 25% | 25% | 5% | 0% |
| Total | 19% | 13% | 30% | 32% | 6% |
| Western origin | | | | | |
| Immigrants | 5% | 11% | 38% | 34% | 12% |
| Descendants | 65% | 9% | 11% | 10% | 4% |
| Total | 12% | 11% | 35% | 31% | 11% |
| All immigrants and descendants | 16% | 12% | 32% | 31% | 8% |
| Danish origin | 17% | 11% | 17% | 32% | 23% |
| Total population | 17% | 11% | 20% | 32% | 21% |

Source: The Immigration Database of The Ministry of Immigration and Integration (IMBEF02A), managed by Statistics Denmark.

Activate Window

Figure 4: Age distribution by population category and origin, at 1st July 2023 (percentage) (Source, page 19)

What is the demographic numbers (age group)?

In 2022, Denmark had a total of 358 minor unaccompanied asylum seekers, where the majority came from Afghanistan, Syria and Morocco, respectively.

- 25 children under the age of 11.
- 87 children from the age 12-14.
- 246 children over the age of 15.

What is the gender structure? Rate of man and women

In terms of the 358 minor unaccompanied asylum seekers, who went to Denmark in 2022, 324 of them were boys and just 34 of them were girls.

What is the educational background?

Immigrants with a residence permit based on asylum and family reunification are low represented, when it comes to having a long cycle education. In the total group of 25-64 years old, only 10% of immigrants with an asylum residence permit and 7% of the family reunified immigrants had a long cycle education (2022). By comparison, immigrants from European countries had a higher share, 27% of them

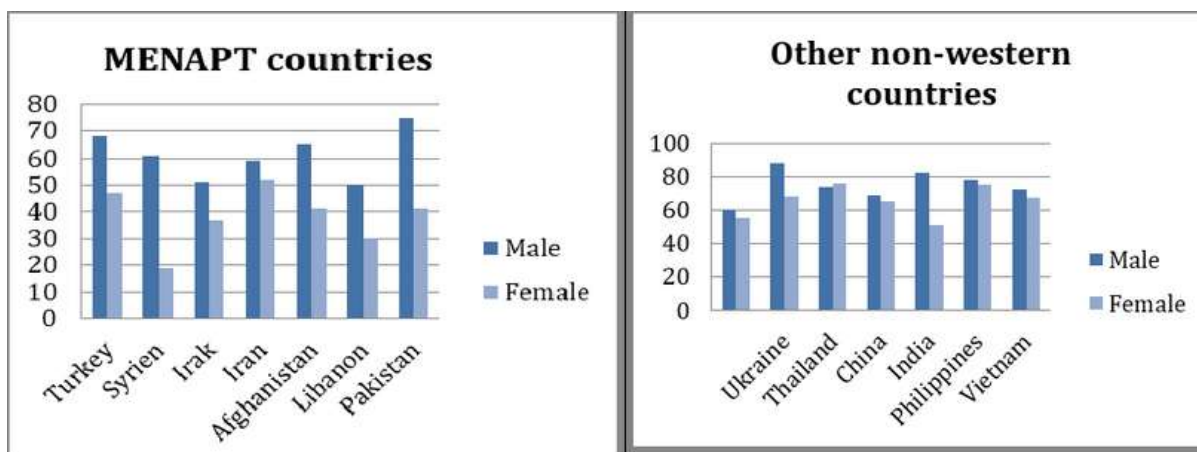
had completed a long cycle education (2022).

46% of the 25-64 years old immigrants with an asylum residence permit, have primary school as their highest completed education. This goes for 36% of the immigrants, who lives in Denmark due to family reunification (2022).

Access to education

In 2023, 50.366 immigrants had a residence permit for studying. 31.100 of them were EU citizens and 19.300 were non-EU citizens. EU-citizens can get State Educational Grant, (a financial aid called SU), on equal terms as Danish students, which is approximately 915 euros a month gross, when working a minimum of 10-12 hours a week alongside studies.

Children in Denmark have access to tuition free primary school until the age of 16. Parents are free to choose private schools for their children. If their need is from a religious perspective, they will have the option to choose a Jewish, Christian or Muslim private school. Private schools include tuition fees and are still required to follow the national governments requirements for primary schools.



The education system in Denmark is free of charge. This applies to primary school, second education, universities that grants bachelors, masters' and PhD degrees, university colleges and academies etc.

1 out of 3 Danish adults in the age of 25-64 are taking an additional education course during their time at labor market. Often, the workplace is paying for the employees' education with the aim to enhance their qualifications and skills.

Employment, pension, or living on social/work benefits

In the total group of non-western immigrants in the working age, 8% of them receive cash benefits from the Municipality. This goes for 2% of people of Danish origin in the working age (2022). The greatest difference is to be found among the women. In 2022, every 11. Immigrant woman with a non-western background did receive cash benefits. The same applied to only every 50. Danish woman.

Family status

Within the total group of immigrants from non-western countries who are family reunified, 49% are from Turkey, which is the largest group. Secondly, Syria contributes with 34% and hereafter is Pakistan with 26% within the total group (2023).

The total fertility rate for immigrants from non-western countries has decreased dramatically over the last 30 years. More precisely, it has fallen by 58% (2022). By way of comparison, the total fertility rate for women of Danish origin has declined by 5% (2022).

In the period 2018-2022, immigrants from Syria had the highest fertility rate in Denmark with 2.901 children. Immigrants from Ukraine had the lowest fertility with 1.574 and Danish women's fertility rate was in the same period 1.722.

Housing situation

When an immigrant has been granted a residence permit, it is the Danish Immigration Service, who decides which municipality, the newcomers must live in. They will make that decision based on quotations and the immigrant's opportunities to get into work in the municipality. Furthermore, they will be looking at circumstances, where the immigrant might have family in the country or special needs, that must be taken into consideration. Afterwards, it's the chosen municipality, that is required to find housing for the immigrants. If it's refugees who are allocated housing, they will then receive an amount of money from the Municipality to go buy furniture and items needed for a household.

Support structure for migrants and refugees on local level (e.g. counselling services, support groups, cultural groups, religious groups, education providers)

The municipalities that are receiving newly arrived immigrants, are required to offer immigrants aged 18 and over, a Danish language education, called Danskuddannelse. On this education, they can learn the Danish language, gain knowledge about Danish culture and society etc. Each immigrant will have a meeting with a socialworker at the local Job Centre. The social worker's job is first and foremost to inform immigrants about their rights, rules according to the Integration Act and conditions for receiving cash benefit from the Municipality. The socialworker works as a rope fender and if he/she is not able to answer questions, they might have, she is required to forward them to proper place.

There are several places in Copenhagen, where immigrants can get counselling for free and with a translator; Danish Refugee Council, Refugees Welcome, Trampoline House, Danish Red Cross etc. Additionally, there are lot more places, who offers free legal counselling, but without a translator.

Copenhagen has several organizations aimed at women with roots in other countries. These organizations are mainly run by volunteers. Their purpose is among other things; bridge building to the local community and the healthcare system, creating social communities, and relations, fighting loneliness and violence, counselling, co-sitting and to form mothersgroups.

These are some of the organizations in Copenhagen; Blossom, Red Center, Kurdish Women's Association, Neighbourhood Mothers, Red Cross, Q-net, Sisters against violence and control etc.

1.3 National report for Finland, Helsinki and Espoo

1.3.1 Basic Facts on national level

Who is allowed to live in our country?

Finland offers a plethora of residency options for individuals seeking to take up residence within its borders. Depending on their citizenship and specific category, a residency permit may be required to be eligible. Options include work, family reunification, study, and humanitarian purposes, among others.

About the different legal statuses

Legal statuses include residents, temporary residents, asylum seekers, and refugees. Finland is an active participant in developing shared European Union policies concerning migration and asylum, supporting the EU's migration management efforts. (MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR, 2023).

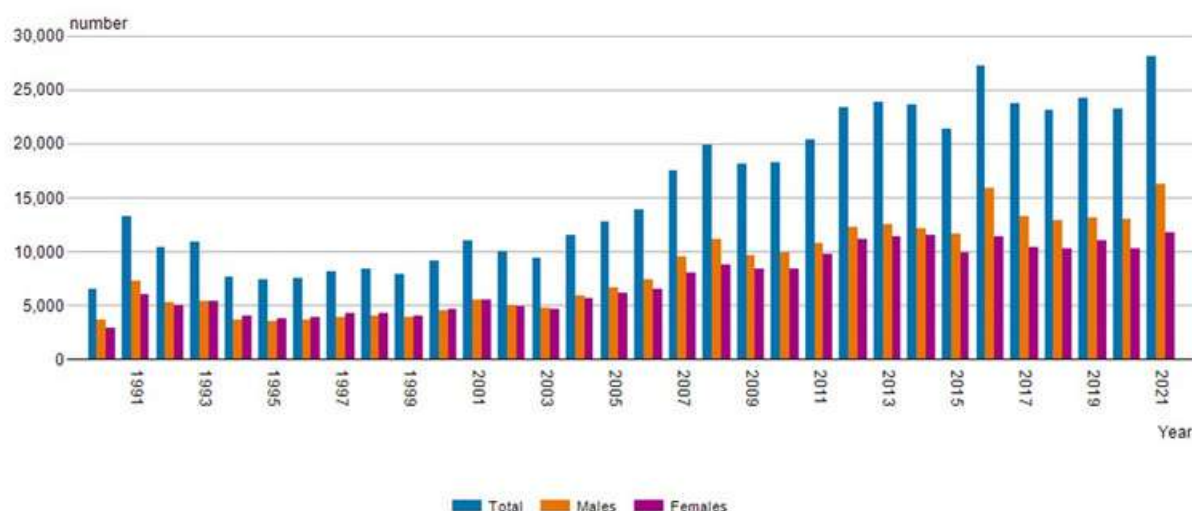
Finland is an attractive destination for work, education, and family reunification. Despite initial disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the situation has improved, and residence permit numbers are rapidly increasing.

In 2022, Finland issued a total of 51,300 permits, with most being for work. The number of applications received throughout the year remained high (Finland, 2023).

How many migrants and refugees live in our country? How many people live in our country in total? How many of them have a migrant or refugee background?

Following figure explains the migration of foreign citizens to Finland from 1990 to 2021. In addition to the total number of the migrants, the graph shows how many males and females per year.

As of November 2023, Finland's total population is 5.6 Million inhabitants split

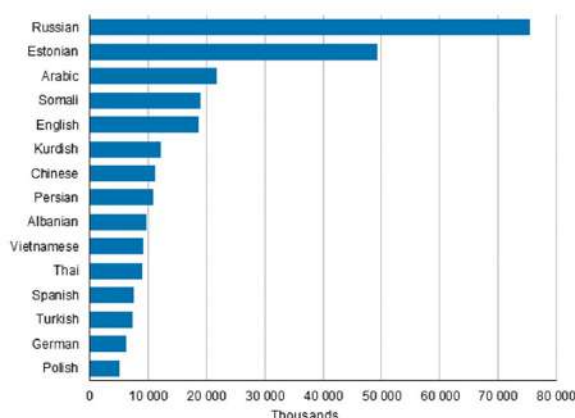


into almost 2.77 Million males and 2.83 Million females. (Finland S. , 2023)

In the previous year, 8.3% of the population in Finland spoke languages other than Finnish, Swedish, or Sami as their first language. Russian (1.6%) and Estonian (0.9%) were the most commonly spoken foreign languages. (Finland S. , 2023). Locating current statistics on individuals with migrant or refugee backgrounds in Finland can be accomplished via sources such as Statistics Finland or the Finnish Immigration Service.

Notably, the data amalgamates all immigrant groups into one entity and only reflects individuals who have acquired Finnish citizenship.

Which are the main countries of origin?



The main countries of origin of migrants and refugees in Finland are from the Middle East, Asia, and Europe. According to population statistics from (Finland S., 2023), in 2016, there were 353,993 people in Finland whose mother tongue was a foreign language. Arabic became the third largest foreign language group in Finland in 2016, with 21,783 people speaking Arabic as their mother tongue, surpassing Somali and English.

1.3.2 Basic Facts on local level

How many people live in our local area in total? How many of them have a migrant or refugee background?

The local level for Mirsal includes Helsinki metropolitan area which consists of three cities, Helsinki, Vantaa and Espoo. The total population of Helsinki Metropolitan Area is almost 1.2 million inhabitants. (Finland S., 2023)

What are the main countries of origin?

The central countries of origin can differ by region. Local statistics or municipal reports can provide this information. The largest immigrant groups in Finland are from Russia, Estonia, Sweden, Somalia, the former Yugoslavia, Iraq, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, and

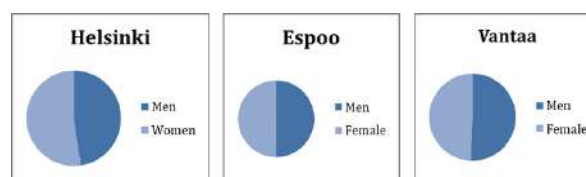
| Year | 2021 | | | 2022 | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------|----------|--------|-------|----------|--------|
| City | Espoo | Helsinki | Vantaa | Espoo | Helsinki | Vantaa |
| Increase of population, % | 1.5 | 0.2 | 0.8 | 2.7 | 0.8 | 1.5 |
| Share of persons aged under 15, % | 18.4 | 14.3 | 16.9 | 18.1 | 14.2 | 16.6 |
| Share of persons aged 15 to 64, % | 66.4 | 68.1 | 67.4 | 66.8 | 68.1 | 67.7 |
| Share of persons aged 65 or over, % | 15.2 | 17.6 | 15.7 | 15.1 | 17.6 | 15.7 |
| Average age, men | 37.7 | 39.6 | 38.4 | 37.8 | 39.7 | 38.6 |
| Average age, women | 40.3 | 42.4 | 40.8 | 40.3 | 42.4 | 40.9 |
| Share of Finnish speakers, % | 73.2 | 77.1 | 74.7 | 71.5 | 76.1 | 72.9 |
| Share of Swedish speakers, % | 6.7 | 5.6 | 2.3 | 6.6 | 5.5 | 2.2 |
| Share of foreign-language speakers, % | 20.1 | 17.3 | 23.0 | 21.9 | 18.3 | 24.8 |
| Share of foreign citizens, % | 13.0 | 10.3 | 14.3 | 14.4 | 11.0 | 15.6 |
| Population density | 951.3 | 3074.2 | 1003.5 | 977.3 | 3096.9 | 1018.6 |

Figure 5: Demographic numbers

Vietnam. Russians, Estonians, Americans, and British are voluntary immigrants while others from Bosnia Herzegovina, Iraq, Somalia, and Vietnam came as refugees. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iraq, and Somalia arrived in the 1990s, while Vietnamese immigrants have been established since the 1970s and 1980s (Heikkilä and Peltonen 2002).

What is the gender structure? Rate of man and women

The following table is indicating the distribution of genders in different cities in Helsinki metropolitan area within the year 2022.



What is the demographic numbers (age group)?

A comparison was made between the demographic data of Espoo, Helsinki, and another city for the years 2021 and 2022. The percentage increase in Espoo's population is shown in the table below. Helsinki has a lower percentage of people aged 15 and under but a higher percentage of people aged 65 and over, indicating an ageing population. For further demographic information, please refer to figure 5 on the next page.

What is the educational background?

Finland is well known for the reputation of its education system. However, in the following table the distribution of the educational background for people aged 15 or older as of the year of 2022 is shown.

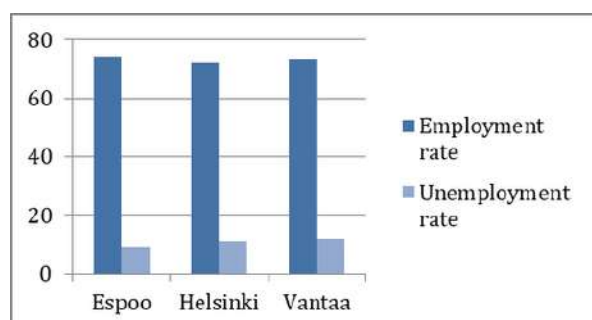
| | Total | Bachelor's or equivalent level | Master's or equivalent level | Doctoral or equivalent level | Basic education |
|----------|---------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Espoo | 250,038 | 38,595 | 53,529 | 6366 | 62,016 |
| Helsinki | 569,443 | 88,884 | 116,742 | 13,767 | 133,734 |
| Vantaa | 202,411 | 27,181 | 19,845 | 1741 | 62,853 |

Access to education

The Finnish education system offers equal opportunities at different levels: early childhood education and care, pre-primary education, primary and lower secondary education, upper secondary education, and higher education. Finnish teachers are highly qualified and dedicated. Early childhood education and care (ECEC) promotes children's development, health, and well-being. Pre-primary education is compulsory and free for all children in Finland since 2015. The National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education guides ECEC. Compulsory education begins with comprehensive school and ends at 18 years old or after completing upper secondary education. Primary and lower secondary education are provided by local authorities and other education providers.

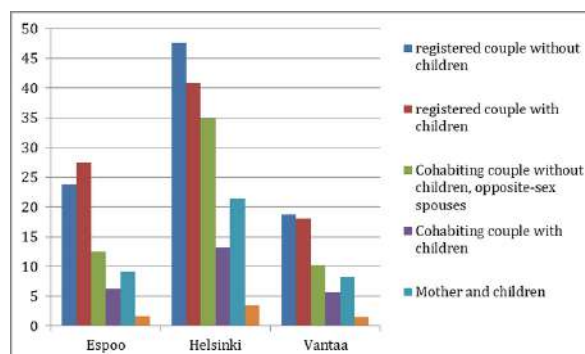
Employment, pension, or living on social/work benefits

The following table is showing the employment and unemployment percentage rates for Helsinki Metropolitan area for persons aged between 18 and 64 years old.



Family status

Statistics Finland is providing valuable information for the the family structures and statues at Helsinki Metropolitan area for the year 2022.



Housing situation

The average Rent in Helsinki is 500€ a month. Landlords usually require a two or three month deposit when you move in. If you don't have income from work or something you are entitled to a social benefit, regulated on constitutional level, and the specified into normal legislation. The benefit consists of a limited housing expense benefit (not full rent, usually not even near to the full rent) and a social benefit that is either an unemployment benefit or a social welfare benefit (depends a bit on the exact situation). When you are searching for an apartment SATO comes highest in the search because it is a company that actually owns flats and they have paid for adds, the Vuokaovi, Etuovi.fi and Oikotie are just online platforms where ppl or companies can advert apartments for rents themselves for some fee. Oikotie.fi and Etuovi.fi the most common platforms for finding apartments.

Support structure for migrants and refugees on local level (e.g. counselling services, support groups, cultural groups, religious groups, education providers)

Local governments and NGOs often provide support services for migrants and refugees, including counselling services, cultural groups, and education providers.

1.4 Field research report for all countries

1.4.1 About this field research

This research is based on interviews with 38 immigrants residing in Germany (47%), Denmark (26%), and Finland (26%), aimed at exploring their backgrounds and experiences. Most participants were aged 31 to 59, with 11 women and 8 men. All represented a variety of nationalities and religious affiliations, with more than half identifying as Muslim, alongside Christians, atheists, and others. Over half of the participants had lived in their respective countries for more than a decade, with some even born there. The interviews included general questions about gender, age, religion, and nationality, as well as activities designed to understand their views on daily life, offering valuable insights into how immigrants see and interact with their surroundings in these countries.

Insight based on Gender:

1. We asked participants what brought them to their host country, exploring how they view the country around them. Here are the results:

- *General:* The most popular reason for migrants to move onto a different country was love and family. On the other hand, none of them chose persecution as a reason to migrate.
- *Specific:* The most popular reason for females to move onto a different country was love and family. Whereas the most popular reason for males to move onto a different country was war conflict, studies and work.

2. We showed participants pictures of eight doctors and asked them to

choose one as their personal doctor, exploring what makes people trust others and the biases that influence their decision. Here are the results:

- *General:* Most migrants tend to choose doctors based on a mix of personal and practical factors. They value experience, kindness, and professionalism, along with modern knowledge. Language skills and cultural understanding are important for effective communication and comfort. Preferences vary, with some focusing on personal connection and others on practical attributes and competence. This reflects a difference in priorities, with women valuing a personal connection and men focusing on practical and intellectual attributes.
- *Specific:* In general, women chose doctors based on their experience, kindness, and trustworthiness. They valued professionalism, modern knowledge, and preferred female doctors. Language skills, cultural background, and maturity also influenced their choices. Whereas men chose doctors because of their youth, motivation, and cultural background. They liked those who spoke their language, were friendly, and seemed to understand their culture. Intelligence and confidence were also important factors.

3. We asked participants how many of their 10 closest friends are from different ethnic backgrounds or countries, and which countries they come from, to understand how these friendships were formed. Here are the results:

- *General:* Most of the migrants stated that out of ten closest friends

all come from an international background and most of those friendships were formed through school/university and work.

- *Specific:* Most of the females mentioned that out of ten closest friends all come from an international background and most of those friendships were formed through school/university and language classes. Whereas most of the males mentioned that out of ten closest friends all come from an international background and most of those friendships were formed through work and language classes.
4. We asked participants if there are any countries or ethnic groups they dislike, and if so, which ones and why, to explore what they don't like about certain countries or ethnic groups. Here are the results:
- *General:* The most popular opinion about ethnic groups you dislike was that we like all the same.
 - *Specific:* For female, the most popular opinion about ethnic groups you dislike were disrespectful/ aggressive behaviour and all like the same. Whilst the most popular opinion about ethnic groups for men were all like the same.
5. We asked participants to identify the three biggest challenges they currently face living in their new host country. Here are the results:
- *General:* Most of the migrants stated that language is the biggest challenge when living in another country. Followed by, finding friends/getting in contact with locals and finding a job. They also

mentioned that weather was also a problem.

- *Specific:* Females seem to consider language as their biggest challenge, followed by finding a job and finding friends/ getting in contact with locals. They also mentioned the weather a lot. Whilst males affirmed that finding friends/ getting contact with locals is their biggest challenge, followed by the language. They also mentioned finding a job and racism/discrimination.

Insight based on Age:

1. We asked participants if they believe it's insulting to ask non-whites "where they really come from," exploring perceptions of the question. Here are the results:
 - *General:* Most migrants did not find it insulting to ask this questions, viewing it as a normal question if asked politely and with good intention. However, some did find it offensive, particularly when it's based on assumptions and reinforces of exclusion. Context and intention were key factors for both sides.
 - *Specific:* The assumptions mentioned include hinking non-whites must be from another country, implying they don't belong, and unfairly asking only non-whites, which reinforces the idea that they are "outsiders."
2. We showed participants pictures of potential team members and asked them to rank their preferences, with No. 1 being their favourite and the higher numbers indicating less preference. They were also asked to choose three people they wouldn't want as a team partner and explain their reasoning. Here are the results:

- *General:* Regardless of the age, people still judge the book by its cover. In other words, migrants are more inclined to work with people that look happy, young, approachable, friendly and open to talk with. Whereas they tend to avoid working with people that look difficult to deal with, uneducated or with a bad mood.
 - *Specific:* Younger migrants prefer friendly and relatable teammates, while older groups avoid those seen as uneducated or difficult to work with.
3. We showed participants pictures of potential roommates and asked them to select three they would prefer and three they would not want at all. Here are the results:
- *General:* Regardless of the age, number two was the favourite for her calm, reasonable, and culturally compatible appearance, suggesting an easy and harmonious living arrangement. Whereas number 4 is the least favourite due to his perceived strict religiosity, which could lead to lifestyle conflicts.
 - *Specific:* Migrants aged 18-30 prefer roommates who match their cultural and personal values, while avoiding those with different lifestyles. Older migrants focus on cultural fit and communication ease, favouring kindness and avoiding significant lifestyle differences.
4. We asked participants if they believe it's insulting to ask non-whites "where they really come from," exploring perceptions of the question. Here are the results:
- *General:* Most of the migrants
- stated that language is the biggest challenge when living in another country. Followed by, finding friends/getting in contact with locals and finding a job. They also mentioned that weather was also a problem.
- *Specific:* Regardless of age, all migrants face significant challenges with language and social integration. Younger and middle-aged migrants often struggle more with finding employment, while older migrants experience greater isolation. This highlights the importance of language skills for effective communication and job acquisition. Addressing language barriers, providing employment support, and fostering social connections are crucial for successful migrant adaptation.
- Insight based on Religion:**
1. We asked participants what brought them to their host country, exploring how they view the country around them. Here are the results:
- *General:* Regardless of the religion, love and family was mentioned by all religions as a reason to migrate.
 - *Specific:* Muslims often migrate due to political instability and conflicts, while Christians decided to migrate due to educational opportunities.
2. We showed participants pictures of eight doctors and asked them to choose one as their personal doctor, exploring what makes people trust others and the biases that influence their decision. Here are the results:
- *General:* Regardless of religion, cultural and personal connection

often outweighs expertise in choosing doctors.

- *Specific:* Muslims, Christians, and Bahá'í individuals often prefer healthcare providers who share their language, culture, or gender because this familiarity helps them feel more comfortable and trusting in their care.

3. We asked participants if there are any countries or ethnic groups they dislike, and if so, which ones and why, to explore what they don't like about certain countries or ethnic groups. Here are the results:

- *General:* The responses reveal biases and stereotypes, such as negative traits being generalized to entire nationalities, like Russians or Middle Eastern men. These broad generalizations reflect personal biases and stereotypes rather than recognizing individual differences.
- *Specific:* Some migrants expressed that their biases stem from negative personal experiences or interactions with individuals from certain nationalities, which then generalized to the entire group. Additionally, geopolitical conflicts or political tensions in their countries of origin can influence these perceptions, reinforcing stereotypes and biases.

Overall, our research shows that women migrate mainly for love and family, prefer personal connections in doctors, and struggle with language and social integration. Men migrate due to war, work, or studies, prioritize practical attributes in healthcare providers, and face challenges with finding friends and encountering racism. Age affects preferences in team and roommate selection, with younger people valuing friendliness and older individuals prioritizing cultural

compatibility. Across religions, migration is driven by love and family, and biases against ethnic groups often arise from personal experiences or geopolitical issues.

A photograph of three men sitting on wide stone steps in front of a building with large, fluted classical columns. The man on the left is wearing a colorful patterned short-sleeved shirt and light-colored trousers, leaning forward. The man in the middle has a beard and is wearing a dark blue polo shirt and light blue trousers, looking towards the man on the right. The man on the right is wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans, smiling. A dark blue banner is at the bottom of the image with the number '2' and the text 'Building Networks' in white.

2

Building Networks

2 Building Networks

2.1 Why is networking important for migrants and refugees?

Networking among migrants and refugees in a new host society is crucial for several social, economic, and psychological reasons, including addressing issues of racism, stereotypes, and discrimination. It helps individuals build meaningful connections that make their journey easier and more fulfilling. In a new country, finding the right support can be daunting, but networking provides access to vital resources such as healthcare, legal assistance, and housing. It offers opportunities to meet new people, make friends, and combat isolation, especially when separated from familiar environments. Networking creates a space to share experiences with others who understand, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual support. It also opens doors to job opportunities, skills training, and entrepreneurship, enabling individuals to establish themselves and build a better life.

Beyond immediate practical benefits, networking plays a key role in helping migrants and refugees find their place within a new community where they feel heard, respected, and included. By connecting with others, they can overcome racism, stereotypes, and discriminatory behaviour through shared understanding and collective empowerment. Networking helps them identify common ground with others, bridging gaps between cultures and fostering unity. Importantly, it transforms their experience from mere survival into the active creation of a stable and hopeful future in the host society.



Purpose of the chapter

This chapter explores effective strategies for building networks within migrant and refugee communities in host countries. Highlighting best practices from Denmark (DE), Germany (DK), and Finland (FI), we provide practical advice that emphasizes collaboration, inclusivity, and sustainability.

Key Themes in the Networking Process

The networking process among migrants and refugees involves several key themes that align with the broader goals of building meaningful connections, fostering inclusion, and overcoming challenges in a new host society. These themes highlight the importance of collective efforts and innovative practices to enhance integration and mutual support.

Establish Partnerships within Migrant and Refugee Communities at the Local Level

Building partnerships within local communities creates a foundation for shared understanding and collective empowerment. These partnerships can foster trust, mutual support, and collaboration, which are essential for accessing resources and creating a sense of belonging.

Implement Regular Communication and Collaborative Projects

Regular communication and collaboration are vital for maintaining long-term partnerships. By working together on community-driven projects, migrants and refugees can strengthen their networks, address common challenges, and create sustainable solutions for shared growth.

Exchange Resources and Best Practices

Sharing resources and successful practices enhances the overall impact of networks. By learning from one another's experiences, migrants and refugees can better navigate challenges, access opportunities, and contribute to the collective development of their communities.

Inclusive Practices for Integration and Relationship Building

Using inclusive practices ensures that diverse voices and opinions are represented within the network. This inclusivity fosters mutual respect, reduces feelings of marginalization, and helps build sustainable relationships grounded in understanding and shared values.

Leverage Digital Technologies for Enhanced Connectivity

Digital platforms and communication tools play a critical role in modern networking processes. These technologies allow migrants and refugees to stay connected, exchange ideas, and share experiences across geographical boundaries. They also enable access to valuable resources and opportunities, promoting resilience and innovation.

2.2 Understanding Networking for Migrants and Refugees

Definition

The concept of “networking” refers to the process of building relationships with people, groups, or organizations who can offer support, resources, or opportunities. For migrants and refugees, this can mean connecting with other migrants, local residents, or community organizations to get information, access services, and find ways to adapt to their new environment. It's about creating a system of helpful connections to make life in a new country smoother and more manageable.

Key requirements of a good network

A good network facilitates access to education, employment, information, and community support, enabling migrants to thrive in their host countries:

- The exchange of support and resources within the network should be mutual, benefiting both migrants and the communities they engage with.
- There must be a balance of giving and receiving, where migrants contribute as much as they benefit from the network.
- Networking requires patience and respectful participation, as it is a voluntary process that also involves asking for support when needed.



- Building a reliable network takes time and trust, which is crucial for long-term success and integration.
- Migrants and refugees must be open to new ideas, cultural differences, and innovative approaches to building connections and adapting to their new environment.
- It's helpful to begin with simple, achievable actions that lead to quick results, while keeping long-term goals in mind for deeper integration.
- Networks should be approached critically, understanding that not all connections will be equally beneficial or reliable.
- **Building Genuine Relationships:** Establish mutual trust and support within the community.
- **Active Listening:** Understand others' needs by listening attentively and offering relevant help.
- **Offering Support:** Share resources and knowledge generously to build trust and collaboration.
- **Staying Connected:** Regularly maintain contact to nurture and strengthen relationships.
- **Facilitating Connections:** Help link people who could benefit from knowing each other.
- **Being Authentic:** Build trust by being honest, reliable, and consistent in interactions.
- **Proactive Engagement:** Seek out opportunities to meet new people and expand the network.
- **Continuous Learning:** Stay informed to provide valuable insights and adapt to new challenges.

Key qualities of a good networker

To build networks, you need to have good networkers. Look out for the right person within your organisation, who can take on this role. Being a good networker means building and maintaining meaningful connections across social and professional circles. It involves creating a supportive network that offers advice, opportunities, and shared resources. Key qualities include:



Determine goals, services, time horizon, and public appearance

- Agree on tasks, responsibilities, and rules for collaboration within the network.
- Build trust by consistently staying in touch and supporting each other.
- Ensure all partners are willing to cooperate, especially when working on projects or shared objectives.

2.3 How to initiate a network

If you want to set up a network among the migrant and refugee communities, the following steps are useful:

Define the objective or function of the network:

- Clearly identify what you want to achieve, such as gaining support for integration, accessing services, organising a joint intercultural event, lobbying for a certain cause, or connecting with other migrants and local communities.

Identify, address, and obtain network partners/members

- Who can help you achieve your goal (e.g., local organizations, fellow migrants, community leaders)?
- What might motivate others to join your network (e.g., mutual support, shared goals)?
- Where can you find potential partners (e.g., local events, online platforms, refugee support groups)?
- Who can you reach out to for introductions or advice?

Promote your network:

- Share information about your network through flyers, social media, NGOs or organisations working in the field of integration, schools, language classes, or community centers.
- Talk to others in your community and encourage them to join.
- Exchange contact details with people who may be interested in supporting or benefiting from the network.



Host your first network event:

- Offer something useful to participants, such as information on local services or job opportunities.
- Provide plenty of opportunities for people to introduce themselves, share experiences, and exchange useful contacts.
- Organize the event in a way that makes communication easy, considering any language or cultural differences.
- Set a date for the next meeting and decide who to invite.

Follow-up activities:

- Keep in touch with the contacts you've made and maintain positive relationships.
- Be ready to offer help and invest time in others, rather than just asking for favors.
- Set realistic expectations, knowing that building strong connections takes time and will benefit you in the future.

2.4 Challenges when building a network

Building a strong and effective network among migrants, refugees, and supporting organizations is essential, but it comes with several challenges. These obstacles can hinder collaboration, inclusivity, and the long-term success of networking efforts:

- **Lack of Awareness Among Similar Groups:** Many organizations, initiatives, and student groups working on migration and refugee issues are unaware of one another, leading to missed opportunities for partnership and shared impact.



- **Overburdened Social Sector Workers:** Social workers and support staff often face heavy workloads, making it difficult for them to prioritize or sustain networking activities.
- **Hesitancy to Engage Beyond Social Circles:** Some individuals may feel uncertain or reluctant to participate in events or activities outside their immediate social groups, limiting the reach and diversity of networks.
- **Ensuring Comfort and Inclusivity:** Creating an environment that is welcoming and inclusive for all, while addressing cultural sensitivities, can be a complex and ongoing challenge.

Overcoming these challenges is crucial to building networks that are effective, sustainable, and inclusive, allowing migrants and refugees to thrive in their new communities.

2.5 Practical Networking Strategies

In this chapter By integrating real-life examples from Mirsal, Copenhagen Youth Network, and Gemeinsam leben & lernen in Europa, the following strategies illustrate how targeted actions and collaborative efforts can foster impactful and inclusive networks, which are not only supporting the work of the involved organisations, but are beneficiary for the different migrant and refugee communities:

In-Person Approaches

Building Trust within the Community Establishing trust requires genuine engagement and transparent practices. Mirsal in Finland provides a strong example by actively listening to the Arabic-speaking community and addressing concerns about fairness and inclusion. Their strict accountability framework ensures that all community members feel valued, avoiding pitfalls like favoritism that can erode trust. Similarly, Gemeinsam leben & lernen in Europa (GLL) in Germany demonstrates trust-building by organizing needs-based networking meetings. During these sessions, participants collaboratively identify and prioritize shared challenges, creating solutions tailored to the community's needs.

Promoting Collaboration over Competition Collaboration strengthens networks by fostering shared growth and learning. Mirsal actively supports smaller NGOs, such as Roda ry, by sharing expertise on funding and organizational laws. They also spearheaded a gender equality declaration signed by several multicultural NGOs in Finland, demonstrating the impact of collective action. In Germany, GLL's "Bring a

Cake" event exemplifies collaborative networking by providing a casual platform for intercultural associations and student groups to exchange ideas and build partnerships.

Creating a Welcoming Environment A friendly and inclusive atmosphere can significantly increase participation. Mirsal focuses on creating environments where individuals feel respected, regardless of cultural differences, gender expression, or personal background. For instance, through events like their gardening project, "The Growing Plot," participants bond over shared activities like planting and cooking, fostering a sense of belonging. At Copenhagen Youth Network (CYN) in Denmark, inclusive physical activities like yoga and Zumba, offered in gender-segregated formats, ensure comfort for women from diverse cultural backgrounds, enhancing participation and building community.

Minimizing Conflict Factors To create neutral and inclusive spaces, it's crucial to focus on shared goals and activities rather than divisive topics. Mirsal exemplifies this approach through workshops and mental health discussions, where participants connect over common interests rather than personal differences. Similarly, CYN fosters cross-cultural dialogue through shared meals, where participants are seated in diverse groups to encourage interaction, promoting unity in a relaxed environment.

Word of Mouth and Community Events Harnessing organic outreach methods is key to expanding participation. Mirsal utilizes informal community gatherings, such as weddings, to distribute colorful flyers and promote their initiatives. This word-of-mouth approach is particularly effective in tight-knit migrant communities.

Digital Approaches

Utilizing Multiple Communication Channels A robust digital presence helps organizations connect with diverse audiences. For example, Mirsal in Finland uses WhatsApp for real-time engagement with over 250 members and leverages Facebook and Instagram to reach thousands more. This multiplatform approach fosters communication and builds a sense of community. Similarly, Gemeinsam leben & lernen in Europa (GLL)'s MigNet Passau platform centralizes resources for migrants, offering guidance on living, learning, and working in the region.

Leveraging Common Platforms for Promotion and Services Digital platforms can enhance visibility and accessibility. Mirsal uses Lähellä.fi and Kotoutumisenukuna.fi in Finland to promote activities and share resources. These platforms simplify access to services, supporting integration efforts for migrant communities.

Collaborative Projects

Quickly Gaining Credibility Visible, results-driven initiatives build trust. Mirsal established credibility within Finland's Arabic-speaking community by addressing pressing needs through tangible programs like "Father is Important," which empowers immigrant fathers to engage positively in their families and communities.

Effective Networking Strategies Collaboration is essential for expanding reach and visibility. Mirsal and CYN exemplify this by forming partnerships with grassroots NGOs and community leaders, co-hosting events to engage broader audiences. For example, CYN effectively uses food as a cultural bridge in their events, creating opportunities for

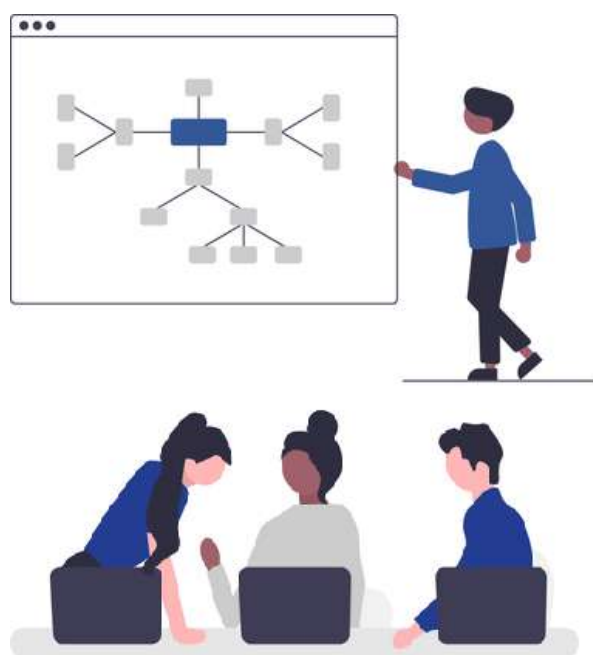
diverse groups to connect.

Leveraging Existing Community Structures Partnering with established organizations enhances outreach to specific demographics. Mirsal collaborates with community groups connected to older individuals, providing resources and building trust through these intermediaries. Similarly, GLL's focus on engaging intercultural associations fosters connections with hard-to-reach groups, promoting inclusivity and representation.

Strategic Partnerships with Umbrella Organizations Partnerships with larger networks amplify impact. For example, Mirsal collaborates with umbrella organisations for funding, guidance, training opportunities, and skill development opportunities. The following networks and organisations play a pivotal role in supporting integration, multicultural collaboration, and community well-being:

Moniheli is a multicultural network of over 100 member organizations in Finland, offering platforms for decision-making and representation in the country's diverse society. Fingo serves as an umbrella organization for approximately 260 Finnish civil society organizations (CSOs), focusing on global development and aligning efforts with broader international goals. **The Anna Lindh Foundation**, an inter-governmental institution, fosters collaboration among civil society actors in the Mediterranean region, promoting trust and mutual understanding. The national Finnish organisation **VeTo** creates networking opportunities for organizations working on integration and social inclusion, while **VOICIFY**, a European forum, amplifies the voices of young people with lived migration experiences, advocating for their rights and needs. Locally, **HyTe ry**, a network of welfare, social, and health

organizations in Uusimaa, enhances the well-being of individuals and communities by facilitating collaboration among its members. Together, these organizations provide essential support and platforms for the sustainable development, integration, and advocacy work of Mirsal. GLL otherwise has benefited from EU-funded initiatives like Erasmus+. They used project funding for working on the topic, but also improving their own services by learning from the different partners they work with. Also this partnership “Among us” was formed due to networking connection between the leaders, and we use the Small scale partnership programme of Erasmus+ to meet, to share experience, and develop this guideline together.



2.6 Conclusion

Building networks is essential for the successful integration and empowerment of migrants and refugees in their new host societies. By fostering meaningful connections, networks help individuals access resources, combat isolation, and overcome discrimination. Effective networking strategies, such as establishing local partnerships, ensuring inclusivity, leveraging technology, and sharing resources, are vital for creating supportive, sustainable communities.

Key practices for successful networking include setting clear objectives, collaborating with a diverse range of partners, and maintaining open communication. Additionally, the challenges of limited awareness, overburdened workers, and reluctance to engage outside social circles can be addressed through strategic, inclusive, and community-driven efforts.

Real-life examples from organizations like Mirsal, Gemeinsam leben & lernen in Europa, and Copenhagen Youth Network demonstrate the power of both in-person and digital approaches to building trust, promoting collaboration, and enhancing visibility. These networks not only support the immediate needs of migrants and refugees but also contribute to long-term social cohesion and mutual understanding in host societies.

Ultimately, by embracing inclusive practices, adapting to new technologies, and forming strategic partnerships, migrants and refugees can transform their journey from survival to active participation, paving the way for a stable, hopeful, and integrated future within their new communities.



3

Organizing local events and activities to bring migrant and refugee communities together

3 Organizing local events and activities to bring migrant and refugee communities together

Chapter 3 examines how local events and activities can foster community engagement and promote the social integration of migrants and refugees. These initiatives are powerful tools for building connections, breaking down stereotypes, and creating inclusive spaces where individuals from diverse backgrounds can interact meaningfully.

Why local events and activities are important?

Organizing local events and activities is crucial for overcoming stereotypes and racism among migrants and refugees because these initiatives provide opportunities for interaction, understanding, and shared experiences. These events help break down misconceptions by allowing people from different backgrounds to engage directly with one another, fostering empathy and reducing prejudices.

By participating in cultural exchanges, workshops, and community-building activities, migrants and refugees can showcase their diverse traditions, skills, and values, humanizing their experiences and dispelling harmful stereotypes. These events also create a platform for dialogue, enabling both migrants and the host society to address misconceptions, confront biases, and work together to build a more inclusive community.

Furthermore, local events provide a space for solidarity, where migrants and refugees can connect with others who share similar challenges, making them feel less isolated. They can also create opportunities for collaboration between



local organizations, residents, and migrants, helping to establish long-term networks of support that foster mutual respect and integration.

In essence, these events are vital tools for building trust, dismantling discriminatory attitudes, and creating a more welcoming environment for all members of society.

In the following, we will present some good practices and shared experiences from our three organizations, the Copenhagen Youth Network, Mirsal, and Gemeinsam leben & lernen in Europa, which have successfully used local events to break down barriers, promote inclusion, and foster positive relationships between migrants, refugees, and their host communities. Each organization provides insights into their strategies for organizing local events, promoting inclusive participation, through innovative and sustainable practices.



3.1 The cultural event approach by Copenhagen Youth Network, Denmark

CYN has many years of experience in organizing festivals that celebrate diversity and promote social integration through a variety of cultural expressions, including culinary traditions and dance across different communities. These events serve as platforms for fostering mutual understanding and appreciation among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Since the founding of Copenhagen Youth Network (CYN) in 2012, we have consistently arranged festivals, social gatherings, and cultural events not only to attract a wide range of participants but also to expand our network. Initially, our activities were centered around sports events, but as our organization grew, we found ourselves frequently engaging in conversations around integration, employment, prejudice, and discrimination. Unfortunately, these discussions often led to debates about politics and religion, which frequently created tension, division, and occasionally, even conflict.

In 2013, however, we had an interesting experience that shifted our perspective. By chance, we participated in a joint booth with several minority associations during the International Workers' Day

celebration on May 1st in Copenhagen's central park (Fælledparken). At our booth, we offered Middle Eastern culinary experiences, where people could try their hand at baking traditional dishes with the guidance of us/the hosts. The interaction was unlike anything we had experienced before.

Soon after, we participated in Copenhagen's Cultural Night (kulturnatten), which was a larger event that included not only food but also folk dancing. Both visitors and hosts enjoyed a day filled with joy, creating lasting memories. It was during these events that we realized the unifying power of food and dance. Instead of focusing on the topics that divide us, like politics and religion, we saw how food and dance could bring people together, regardless of their cultural or religious backgrounds. We realise food attracts and dance makes people happy.

Since then, CYN has regularly organized both large and small gatherings that use food and dance as central themes to attract diverse groups. These events have proven to foster healthy social interactions, break down feelings of loneliness, facilitate networking, and create moments of shared happiness that counteract polarization and xenophobia.

Drawing on these experiences, CYN is now working to inspire our partners,



Mirsal and Gemeinsam, to organize similar initiatives that aim to build closer ties between locals with contrasting cultural backgrounds. We will also celebrate the Kurdish-Persian New Year ceremony, Nowruz, together.

Joint international event

Building on this legacy, in the spring of 2025, CYN invites our partners from Finland and Germany to join us in Denmark for a significant cultural celebration—the Kurdish-Persian New Year ceremony, Nowruz. Recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, Nowruz is a time-honored tradition observed by millions worldwide, symbolizing renewal, harmony, and the start of spring.

The event includes the Haft-Seen table, traditional music, and dances like the Kurdish Govend and Halparke and Persian Bandari, and provide an interactive space for cross-cultural dialogue. The festival aligns with the commitment to creating inclusive spaces where cultural exchange fosters deeper connections and strengthens social cohesion. Moreover, the festival aims to encourage active participation from the local community in Denmark, inviting them to immerse themselves in the rich tapestry of Kurdish and Persian heritage. The goal with

the festival in this project is to inspire dialogue about shared human values and traditions, transcending geographic and cultural boundaries.

Conclusion & Reflection

At CYN, we've learned that the key to overcoming division is not to avoid sensitive topics but to create environments where people can connect through shared, positive experiences. In addition to food and dance, we've expanded our events to include interactive workshops where participants collaborate on projects like cooking traditional dishes or learning cultural dances together. This approach creates a lively and enjoyable atmosphere but also encourages participants to engage with one another on a deeper level, sharing stories, traditions, and perspectives that foster mutual understanding.

We believe that Mirsal and Gemeinsam can use our experiences in their own communities. By hosting culturally rich events that emphasize joy, collaboration, and creativity, it can cultivate the same sense of unity that we have experienced in Copenhagen. With a focus on inclusivity and celebrating diversity, these events can help create lasting bonds between individuals who may otherwise have few opportunities to interact. The aim is not just to bridge cultural divides, but to create a framework for ongoing dialogue and collaboration that strengthens community cohesion over time.

In doing so, Mirsal and Gemeinsam will have the opportunity to combat isolation, promote social integration, and contribute to a more harmonious and interconnected society, just as we have strived to do at CYN. Through the power of shared experiences, they can inspire their participants to see the beauty in diversity and to find common ground through what brings us together, rather



than what separates us.

Sport has played a central role in shaping the identity of Copenhagen Youth Network (CYN) since its establishment in 2012. Our founding vision was rooted in personal experiences of how sport, particularly football, can be a powerful tool for combating racism and breaking down prejudices. All three founders grew up in the social world of sports clubs, where friendships and social bonds flourished across religious, cultural, and ethnic divides—normalizing diversity and fostering mutual respect. This shared history inspired us to create an organization that leverages the unifying power of sport to build inclusive and harmonious communities.

When people come together through sport, their shared passion becomes the primary focus. Sport demands both physical and mental energy, leaving little room for engaging in polarizing or prejudiced discussions. Moreover, its collaborative and competitive nature encourages teamwork, mutual understanding, and respect—values that



counteract the fragmentation of society.

An exemplary illustration of this principle comes from Hans Storgaard one of the three founders of CYN, Senior Humanitarian Advisor at the Danish Red Cross. Drawing on his involvement with CYN, Hans applied these principles during his mission to Lesbos from 2015 to 2017. There, he organized football activities that brought together individuals from 75 different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds, many of whom had histories of not good relations marked by deep-seated prejudice and mistrust. Through the unifying framework of football, Hans witnessed firsthand how these individuals were able to build bridges, foster understanding, and actively combat racism.

3.2 Contributions to Community Building by Mirsal, Finland



Mirsal Activities: Cultivating Community and Sustaining Engagement

Mirsal's activities are meticulously designed to foster a deep sense of belonging, encourage cultural exchange, and promote long-term engagement among individuals from diverse backgrounds. These activities serve as a dynamic platform for participants to connect through shared experiences, thereby contributing to both personal development and community cohesion. Our programming emphasizes cultural celebration, wellbeing, and skill development, ensuring that participants not only feel welcomed but also find meaningful and sustained involvement.

Cultural Activities: Celebrating Heritage and Building Connections

Cultural engagement forms the foundation of Mirsal's strategy for building an inclusive community. By organizing events that celebrate the rich

traditions of our participants, such as the Traditional Cloth Day and Arabic Book Exhibitions, Mirsal creates opportunities for individuals to both showcase their heritage and interact with others from different cultural backgrounds. These events transcend linguistic and cultural barriers, providing a space for the community to come together and celebrate shared histories and identities.

For example, the Arabic Book Exhibition is more than a mere display of literature; it transforms into a space for intellectual exchange. Participants engage in discussions about the significance of the books presented, share literary recommendations, and participate in collaborative workshops on storytelling and writing. Such activities foster an ongoing dialogue among attendees, allowing them to contribute to a cultural narrative that values diverse perspectives.

These events serve not only as a celebration of heritage but also as an avenue for continuous interaction and relationship-building within the community.

Wellbeing and Engagement: Tailored Support and Empowerment

Mirsal recognizes the importance of addressing the holistic needs of its participants, particularly those related to personal wellbeing and social engagement. Through targeted wellbeing workshops, we aim to support participants in their personal growth while encouraging community connections. The workshops are structured to be interactive and participant-centered, fostering an environment where individuals feel comfortable expressing their needs and concerns.

Rather than employing the traditional seminar-style approach, Mirsal's workshops encourage active participation and dialogue. Topics such as mental

health, self-care, and community-building are explored in a supportive and inclusive environment, allowing participants to voice their experiences and seek advice. By creating a space where participants feel heard and respected, Mirsal fosters a sense of ownership and agency among attendees. This participant-driven approach leads to sustained involvement, as individuals are more likely to return to activities where their needs are met and their voices are valued.

The Power of Food and Shared Experiences: Connecting Through Culinary Workshops

Mirsal frequently uses food as a medium to connect people across cultural and social divides. Communal meals and cooking workshops, such as the Build Your Pizza, Build Your Career event, exemplify how food can act as a universal language that brings people together. These events are not just about the act of cooking or eating; they serve as a platform for meaningful dialogue and skill-building, enabling participants to forge connections and learn in a relaxed and enjoyable setting.



At the Build Your Pizza, Build Your Career workshop, over 15 participants from diverse nationalities, including those from Palestine, Egypt, Syria, Estonia, Finland, Poland, and Iraq, gathered to create personalized pizzas. While they enjoyed the collaborative cooking process, they also engaged in discussions centered on career development, digital literacy, and personal branding. Participants were introduced to tools such as LinkedIn and digital resume creation, gaining practical skills that enhance their employment prospects. This fusion of cultural enjoyment and practical training is a hallmark of Mirsal's programming, demonstrating our commitment to empowering individuals through multifaceted community engagement.

Reflection & Conclusion: Mirsal's Thriving Community Network

Mirsal's activities exemplify a successful model for cultivating a thriving community network, where individuals from varied backgrounds feel included and empowered. By emphasizing cultural celebration, personal wellbeing, and skill development, Mirsal creates a supportive environment that encourages sustained engagement and long-term personal growth. Our programs continue to attract participants who appreciate the opportunities for cultural exchange and practical learning, reflecting the strength

of the community Mirsal has built. As we continue to expand our range of activities, our commitment to fostering an inclusive and thriving community remains unwavering. Through these efforts, Mirsal ensures that every participant has the opportunity to connect, grow, and thrive.

3.3 Contributions to Community Building and supporting social and emotional integration by Gemeinsam leben & lernen in Europa, Germany



Good Practice 1: Solidarity Bread

There are not many common spaces or events where people of various backgrounds meet. It's difficult to find common interests and activities. Baking bread can be such an activity. Bread is enjoyed in its various forms all around the world. The activity is not limited to gender, age, profession or ethnic heritage, thus uniting young and adult, rich and poor, strangers and friends. It is a simple way of promoting contact between different classes, institutions and companies and at the same time doing something good for disadvantaged people. This way, intercultural happenings, baking fun and social engagement are combined.

Solidarity bread is a simple concept: people of various backgrounds meet and bake bread together. The baked goods are given to people in need (e.g. local food bank). Optionally, rolls, pretzels or something similar can be baked and tasted together. Solidarity bread can take place regularly or as a one-time event.

The idea of solidarity bread originated from the Bread Houses

Network. On the initiative's website (<https://www.breadhousesnetwork.org/>), you can find several other community baking actions that bring people together, such as the bread therapy method, theatre of crumbs or a board game.

Good Practice 2: "Gemeinschaftsraum" (Gathering space) - Creating an intercultural and intergenerational community center

There are many people, groups or organizations with great ideas for social projects. To realize these ideas the problem is often not "who?", "what?" or "how?". The problem is "where?"

The solution for this problem is our "Gemeinschaftsraum", translated "Gathering space or Community Hub". The "Gemeinschaftsraum" is a physical place for voluntary activities that enable encounters and interaction between people of different origins, ages and backgrounds. Everyone can actively participate, initiate opportunities to meet, share their knowledge and skills with others and learn from each other. Through concrete encounters and joint activities, prejudices are broken down and voluntary work is encouraged.

The practice has created a place for positive and respectful encounters between a wide variety of people of different origins. The positive feedback from visitors shows that everyone feels welcome. Many new visitors come because the community centre has been recommended to them. Especially people who have not been in the city for long appreciate the opportunity to get to know people in an uncomplicated way. Some of the visitors become active volunteers themselves.

In 2023, the community room had over 1800 visitors, 48% of whom had a migration background. All age groups are represented as well as several minorities

(e.g. people with disabilities). Over the course of the years, more than 20 different event formats were organised. In addition to regular monthly events, there have been numerous individual events such as workshops, exhibitions or neighbourhood parties.

Good Practice 3: Organising low-threshold activities to connect people

We organize low-threshold activities such as game nights, opportunities for connection like "How the world dances, sings, and tastes," creative workshops, or cultural evenings.

Among the most popular events in our community room are our game nights. We have a collection of board and card games that can be enjoyed by both small and large groups. Uno is particularly popular because it's an easy game that everyone knows, no matter where they come from. Game nights provide a great opportunity to meet new people in a relaxed environment and to practice German if it's not your native language.



Due to the event's popularity, we've come up with special activities to give our game nights a fresh twist. Sometimes, we host intergenerational game nights where people of all ages are invited to experience games from different generations. In the first hour, we play classic games like Mill, Canasta, and Name, Place, Animal, Thing.



In the second hour, we switch to modern games like Mario Kart, Just Dance, and new Uno variants. This way, both generations can learn from each other, have fun together, and engage in conversation.

Other options include an outdoor game night with games like Boules and Viking Chess, a Ludo tournament or table football tournament, a collaborative murder mystery dinner, or an international game night where participants share games from their home countries.

3.4 Conclusion

The efforts of CYN, Mirsal, and Gemeinsam demonstrate the power of inclusive events to foster community cohesion and social integration. By creating opportunities for shared experiences—whether through food, culture, or recreational activities—these organizations effectively challenge stereotypes, racism, and discriminatory

behaviors.

Such events humanize the experiences of migrants and refugees, showing them as individuals with unique stories, skills, and contributions. This humanization encourages empathy and dismantles prejudices that often stem from ignorance or fear. Moreover, these activities create platforms where host communities and newcomers can learn from one another, fostering mutual respect and collaboration.

Looking ahead to 2025, CYN's intercultural festival and its partnerships with Mirsal and Gemeinsam will further amplify these impacts. By showcasing the richness of diverse traditions and emphasizing common values, these initiatives demonstrate how shared experiences can bridge divides and build inclusive communities. Together, they highlight the transformative potential of collective action in creating societies that celebrate diversity and reject discrimination.



4

**Recommendations for Staff and
Volunteers working with migrants and
refugees + Among Us Training**

4 Recommendations for Staff & Volunteers working with migrants and refugees + Among Us Training

In this chapter, we share helpful tips and ideas for staff and volunteers who work with migrants and refugees. Our three partner organizations – Gemeinsam leben und lernen in Europa, MIRSAL, and Copenhagen Youth Network – each answer 10 questions about how to plan and run successful intercultural events. Their answers come from real experience and offer practical advice. We also introduce our special Among Us Training, where we explain how it works and share the tools and materials we created, so you can use them too.

4.1 Intercultural event in Denmark

Celebrating Nowruz with Copenhagen Youth Network

1. **How long did you need to prepare for these events? How many hours do you think someone needs to calculate for the preparation?**

The required preparation time depends on the nature and scale of the event. Smaller, local gatherings held in our own location require relatively little time. However, larger events—such as the Newroz celebration in Albertslund—necessitate considerably more planning. For such larger-scale events, we typically begin preparations at least six months in advance, starting with booking an external venue, which must be secured early to guarantee availability. Agreements with DJs or

musicians are often made several months ahead. Approximately three months before the event, we conduct a planning and brainstorming meeting, where we design the program, delegate responsibilities, and form a volunteer team. Although it is difficult to quantify the exact number of hours, detailed planning of logistics such as catering, sound, and decoration typically intensifies in the final four weeks leading up to the event.



2. **What kind of competencies do you need in the team to organise a smaller and a bigger event?**

It includes strong networking and intercultural communication skills, as well as adaptability, flexibility, and a general readiness for change. Just as importantly, team members must possess a genuine passion and motivation for creating inclusive, joyful events that bring people together. Emotional resilience is also essential, mainly when dealing with unexpected changes or challenges during the planning process.



3. What are the things you need to organise and prepare for these events?

Several core components must be in place, including:

- A structured program (with clear content and flow),
- A suitable venue,
- Logistics such as arranging chairs, tables, and sound systems,
- Agreements with musicians/DJs,
- A clear promotion strategy to attract attendees,
- A dedicated team of volunteers, and
- An effective cleanup and closing plan.

4. How many people are needed for the preparation and how many for the event itself? What kind of tasks do they have?

A typical event team consists of:

- 1 main coordinator,
- 3–4 mid-level coordinators responsible for areas such as venue, music, food, and promotion,
- 5–10 volunteers, who assist with setup, serving, welcoming guests, and post-event cleaning.

Some tasks include coordinating

with the venue, managing sound and music, overseeing snacks and beverages, supervising clean-up, and ensuring smooth on-site logistics. Volunteers must also be flexible and ready to step in where needed.

5. What kind of infrastructure (room, IT, etc.) and material is needed?

We require a venue suitable for social and festive events, equipped with tables, chairs, and a sound system. Additional materials include:

- Food and beverages,
- Practical items such as trash bins, cleaning supplies, cloths, and brooms,
- If applicable, decorations, microphones, or screens for presentations.

6. Whom did you invite for active participation (moderation, greeting, dancing, music, cooking)? How did you find them?

We recruit participants primarily from our internal networks and volunteer groups. We maintain separate WhatsApp groups for general volunteers and for core coordinators. Within these groups, individuals

take on specific roles—some are responsible for cooking, others for music, cleanup, or logistics. We also use visual materials from past events (e.g., photos and videos) to reach out and attract new participants.



responsibility, and leadership are perceived may create friction. For instance, older volunteers may find it challenging to be led by younger, more structured coordinators. These issues are best resolved through clear communication, mutual respect, patience, and flexibility. Ultimately, when key components—such as venue, food, and music—are in place, smaller issues can be overcome by accepting that perfection is not the goal. The primary aim is to ensure joy, inclusion, and a sense of value for all participants and volunteers.

7. Whom did you invite as visitors and how did you promote the event?

We invite a wide range of participants, including journalists, photographers, poets, collaborators, friends, and local partners. Promotion is done through both word of mouth and social media platforms, using engaging visual content from previous events to attract diverse audiences.

8. What are the challenges of organising such an event? What problems occur and how did you solve them?

A common challenge is that some individuals may not fulfill their responsibilities, making it essential to have a Plan B and a pool of backup volunteers.

Moreover, we work with participants across generations, and cultural differences in how time,



9. What are the success factors? What kind of recommendations can you give to people who want to copy such an event?

The most important success factor is that people involved are motivated by the right intentions. These events rely on volunteer spirit and commitment, not financial incentives. It is crucial to make volunteers feel appreciated and allow them to use their skills and lived experience. Begin with a meeting to align expectations, ensure everyone understands their role and the purpose of the event, and promote

patience and flexibility throughout. While the event may not be perfect, the focus should be on creating joy, shared experiences, and a safe, festive environment for networking and relaxation.

10. How did these events support overcoming racism, discrimination, and stereotyping among migrants and refugees?

Our approach is to use music, food, and dance as powerful tools for unity and joy, rather than focusing directly on political or religious discussions. These cultural expressions foster a sense of belonging and appreciation across differences. People are more likely to connect and empathise when they share food or learn traditional dances together. By creating an inclusive space and avoiding potentially divisive topics, we ensure that all attendees feel safe, welcome, and part of a shared celebration.

4.2 Intercultural event in Finland

A practice from Mirsal Festival Celebrating Diversity in Helsinki



1. How long did you need to prepare for these events? How many hours does someone need to calculate for the preparation?

We had two workers dedicated to this event—one responsible for planning the program and the other handling logistics. In total, we estimate that around 15 hours of preparation is needed, though this depends on the experience of the NGO. Our preparation involved meeting with partners twice to finalize details and co-create parts of the program. Additionally, time was needed for networking, inviting participants, marketing, securing a venue, and purchasing necessary items.

2. What kind of competencies do you need in the team to organise such an event?

- Knowledge of other NGOs and strong networking skills – Knowing what other organizations can offer and their flexibility to support each other made collaboration much easier.
- Budget management skills – Our venue was provided free of charge, allowing us to organize the festival on a minimal budget. Knowing how to find such opportunities is crucial.
- Marketing and outreach expertise – Promoting the event effectively was an essential part of our success.



3. What are the things you need to organize and prepare for these events?

The preparation involved:

- Coordinating with partners and stakeholders
- Planning the event schedule
- Organizing logistics (venue, materials, catering, etc.)
- Marketing and promoting the event
- Networking and inviting participants

4. How many people does it need for the preparation and the events? And what kind of tasks did they have?

- For preparation, two dedicated workers managed planning and logistics.
- For the event itself, multiple volunteers and partner organizations were involved, handling:
 - Welcoming guests and guiding them
 - Managing the program flow
 - Technical support (sound system, lighting, IT needs)
 - Assisting with food and refreshments
 - Social media coverage and documentation

5. What kind of infrastructure (room, IT ...) and material is needed?

- Venue – A spacious and accessible location
- IT equipment – Microphones, speakers, and projectors for presentations
- Promotional materials – Flyers, banners, and social media graphics
- Event essentials – Tables, chairs, refreshments, and decorations



6. Whom did you invite for active participation (moderation, greeting, dancing, music, cooking)? How did you find them?

Eight NGOs were involved as partners, making it easier to divide responsibilities. We invited:

- Discussion panelists
- Musicians and cultural performers
- Fashion models representing different cultures

These participants were found through our NGO network and partner organizations.

7. Whom did you invite as visitors, and how did you promote the event?

The event was open to the public, no specific type of participants was invited. Each NGO invited people from their own networks.



We promoted the event through:

- Our social media platforms
- Anna Lindh Foundation network (It is an inter-governmental institution bringing together civil society and citizens across the Mediterranean to build trust and improve mutual understanding. Read more on Anna Lindh Foundation.
- Partner NGOs and the venue's network

8. What are the challenges of organizing such an event? What problems occurred, and how did you solve them?

- Managing volunteers with a large audience – It was challenging to ensure consistent volunteer presence as visitors came and went. A structured shift system could have helped.
- Keeping the program on schedule – Flexibility was required as unexpected delays occurred.
- Event duration – The event lasted too long, which was tiring for both participants and volunteers. A more compact schedule would have been better.

9. What are the success factors? What kind of recommendations can you give people who want to copy such an event?

- Diversity in partnerships – We included a mix of small and large NGOs, both Finnish-based and migrant-led, representing African, Arab, Indian, and Eastern European communities.
- Collaboration – Bringing people together with shared efforts made the event stronger.
- Clear role distribution – Ensuring every partner had a defined role helped with smooth execution.

10. How did these events support overcoming racism, discrimination, and stereotyping among migrants and refugees?

We ensured representation from all genders and backgrounds. One LGBTQ+ participant, who was not initially part of the program, felt safe enough to perform a belly dance—something not widely accepted in some cultural communities. This moment became a learning experience for everyone, as we maintained a safe and inclusive environment.

The African dance and Dabke performances highlighted cultural diversity and created an atmosphere of mutual appreciation.



4.3 Intercultural event in Germany

Organising an intercultural film series

They cooperate with a local cinema and, in collaboration with the cultural associations and organizations, select films from their country where you can also learn something about the culture. They are present at each film as a contact person for the subsequent film discussion and answer questions about culture, events and general conditions in the country.

All organizations carry out joint press and public relations work, organize a joint opening of the film series and attend the film screenings via the other organizations. This brings the organizations together, they get to know each other, can promote their own organization and make new network contacts. In addition, a lot of knowledge is imparted through the films and the discussions, so that prejudices and stereotypes can be broken down.

In addition, the time and organizational effort for the participating organizations is manageable; at the same time, they can draw attention to their own organization and work.

1. How long did you need to prepare for these events? How many hours does someone need to calculate for the preparation?

This mainly depends on the cinema - how much time in advance they have to book the films and include them in their program. In our case, we started choosing the films 2 months in advance, precisely because some films may not be available to rent from the movie theater. It takes about 80 hours for the overall coordination and about 10 hours for the organization involved.



2. What kind of competencies do you need in the team to organise such an event?

Staff members need strong intercultural competencies, including cultural sensitivity, open-minded communication, and the ability to collaborate across diverse backgrounds. Additionally, they should have event coordination skills, teamwork abilities, and community outreach experience, marketing and PR, as well as knowledge of other NGOs in the region and strong networking skills to connect and cooperate effectively.

3. **What are the things you need to organise and prepare for these events?** The preparation involved:

- Contact and cooperation with the local movie theatre
- Contacting intercultural organisations and win them over as cooperation partners
- Choosing films and finding out, if they are still available for being shown in movie theatres
- Providing some recommendations on how to organise and moderate the subsequent film discussion
- Designing a joint leaflet
- Doing marketing and PR work, inviting local media for press conference and opening session
- Organising a joint press conference
- Networking and inviting participants

4. **How many people does it need for the preparation and the events? And what kind of tasks did they have?**

For preparation, one dedicated staff member or volunteer who is responsible for planning and logistics.

For the event itself, 4 staff members or volunteers (e.g., from partner organisations) were involved, handling:

- Welcoming guests and guiding them
- Managing the program flow
- Technical support (sound system, lighting, IT needs), handled by the movie theatre staff
- Social media coverage and documentation



5. **What kind of infrastructure (room, IT ...) and material is needed?**

- **Venue** – A movie theatre
- **IT equipment** – Microphones if the room in the movie theatre is too big

6. **Whom did you invite for active participation? How did you find them?**

We emailed to all intercultural NGOs in our city and invited them to participate, but gave a deadline. Additionally we also spoke directly to organisations we have worked with in the past. Over the years, we have built up a comprehensive address list of all the organizations and associations that we can draw on. At the same time, we always take a look at the city's website, because they also publish a directory of all the city's associations there. Also we had already some good connections due to joint activities in the past.

7. Whom did you invite as visitors, and how did you promote the event?

In principle, the entire public is responsible. However, as we want to specifically invite people with a migration and refugee background, we have used our existing address list to send out the invitation with information about the entire film series to them. A lot also goes by word of mouth. We also visit the German and integration courses in our city every month to draw attention to our offers. We also present the film series there. The film series is also mentioned in the regular cinema program, which also ensures a wider reach.



8. What are the challenges of organising such an event? What problems occurred, and how did you solve them?

At first it was difficult to find the clubs because many of them don't check their official emails regularly and don't reply immediately. That often happened, but when we spoke to people in person, everything went faster. Film distribution, so we had to find alternatives. For some countries, it's also difficult to find a movie from that country. Many are only produced for the domestic market or television, and many are not translated. So it is better to check this out first, and then show the NGOs the film, which is available, so that they don't get frustrated, if the film they chose can not be shown. Overall, it's difficult: in which language do you show the films? In the original with subtitles, in German ...?

9. What are the success factors? What kind of recommendations can you give people who want to copy such an event?

- Network, network, network: go to events these organisations you want to work with, organise themselves. Because if you visit them, it might motivate them more to come to your event.
- Good relationship with the local movie theatre. In our case they are the founding members of our organisation.
- provide good information to your partners, what is their role and task, on the day, they are the film cooperation partners.
- Design a nice and inviting leaflet about the film serious, but also appealing posts for Social media
- Get the information published in local newspapers as this can attract bigger crowds.

10. How did these events support overcoming racism, discrimination, and stereotyping among migrants and refugees?

An intercultural film series supports overcoming racism, discrimination, and stereotyping by creating a space for shared experiences and open dialogue. It allows migrants, refugees, and local communities to connect through storytelling, fostering empathy and mutual understanding. Importantly, it offers an inclusive, low-barrier opportunity to do something together, without requiring participants to invest money or significant resources. This shared, accessible experience helps break down social barriers, challenge prejudices, and build a sense of community and belonging.

5 Among us - Training Curriculum

Our training program is designed to challenge stereotypes and question biases related to migrants and refugees. It is meant for anyone who works with these communities, such as teachers, trainers, volunteers, and staff members in organizations.

Training Structure:

This training is divided into two 3-hour sessions:

1. Session 1: Understanding Biases
In this session, we will learn what biases are and how they develop. We will reflect on our own biases and explore where they come from. The aim is to create a friendly, safe space where everyone can speak openly and honestly. By understanding our biases, we can start addressing them.
2. Session 2: Addressing Biases
In this session, we will learn how to handle our biases and how to teach others about them. We will also discuss what to do when we witness discrimination. The goal is to move from understanding biases to taking action against them.

Implementation:

This training was first tested at our transnational partner meeting in Copenhagen in March 2025, alongside our Finnish and Danish partners. The feedback was very positive, so we decided to expand it and share it with local communities. Each partner selected one institution to implement the training and adapt it to the specific needs of that community.

Key Takeaways:

The main goal of this training is to fight racism and discrimination against migrants and refugees. During the process, we also discovered that racism and discrimination can occur within these communities. This is an important topic that we address in the training.

Creating this training was a meaningful experience for us, as we put a lot of care and effort into developing it. We hope it will make a positive impact.

We invite you to bring this training to your community and make a difference!

Explore the Training:

The training materials and sessions are available on our website. Click the links below to get started:

- [Among Us - Session 1](#)
- [Among Us - Session 2](#)
- [Training Materials](#)

6 Final Conclusion

At the start of this project, we had one purpose: to talk openly about racism and discrimination among migrants and refugees, including the problems that can happen within their own communities, and not just from people outside their group.

People should care about fighting racism and discrimination among migrants and refugees because when we let hate, fear, or silence grow, it causes division. And that division hurts everyone. Whether it's small biases or open racism, it makes communities less connected, less safe, and less human.

In *Among Us*, we explored not just how discrimination comes from the outside, but also how it can quietly grow within migrant and refugee communities themselves. Across Denmark, Finland, and Germany, we asked tough questions, collected honest stories, and shared practical tools to help youth workers, educators, and community organizers build more inclusive spaces. But more than that, we learned – together.

Each chapter of this e-book shows real stories, real actions, and real ideas for making communities fairer and more welcoming – not just outside migrant groups, but also within them.

That's why this e-book – and the journey behind it – matters.

6.1 A Chapter-by-Chapter Reflection

Chapter 1: Learning About the Problem

Discrimination is not always where we expect it. In this chapter, we interviewed

migrants, refugees, and people who work with them in all three countries. We learned that discrimination doesn't only come from local people – it can also happen between migrants from different backgrounds.

Through interviews and stories, we saw how identity – gender, religion, age, background – affect how people are treated. We also saw that many people have hidden biases, even against others from similar migrant communities. This chapter reminded us that before bringing people together, we need to understand what keeps them apart. Real change begins with recognizing these hidden patterns.

Chapter 2: Building Strong Networks

From WhatsApp groups to neighborhood meetups, networks provide more than information – they create trust, support, and belonging. This chapter looked at how networks help people feel supported and included.

We learnt that a good network helps people feel seen and heard. We shared tips on how to start and grow these networks in ways that are welcoming, fair, and open to everyone.

We discovered how important it is to give leadership roles to migrants themselves. When people feel responsible and involved, they are more motivated to make their communities better.

Chapter 3: Bringing People Together Through Events

Simple things like cooking together, dancing, or watching a movie turned into powerful tools for inclusion. These events did not just showcase cultures – they built bridges.

These simple activities helped break down fears and stereotypes. Instead of only talking about differences, people laughed, cooked, danced, and connected.

They reminded us that joy, shared stories, and laughter are sometimes the best medicine for fear and prejudice.

Chapter 4: Tips for Staff and Volunteers + Our Training

This chapter shares practical tips for anyone who organizes activities for migrants and refugees. Each of our organizations answered questions about planning events: from how long it takes, to what kind of space is needed, and how to involve participants. These answers come from real experiences — and they can help others plan events that are inclusive and respectful.

We also presented our Among Us Training, a curriculum we created to help volunteers and staff understand and talk about bias and discrimination. The training has two parts: one for understanding personal biases, and another for learning how to take action against them. We tested this training in Copenhagen, and it was later adapted and shared locally in each country.

6.2 What we learnt from each other

Working across borders was not always easy. Our differences — in systems, language, and perspectives — made us reflect on our own blind spots. But it was also deeply rewarding. We grew more aware of our own cultures and more open to others. Whether in Denmark, Finland, or Germany, we realized that true inclusion begins when we stop assuming and start listening.

Each of us returns to our work on the ground with a deeper awareness, practical tools and renewed courage. We don't have all the answers - but we now know how to ask better questions.

Each partner brought something unique:

- Denmark: Inclusion begins with reflection. Before we ask others to change, we need to question ourselves.
- Finland: Empathy is our greatest strength. We didn't choose our origins - but we can choose connections.
- Germany: Real change doesn't have to start on a large scale. It can start right here among us.

7 About us - the partner organisations of the project “Among us”

7.1 About Copenhagen Youth Network

Copenhagen Youth Network (CYN) is a NGO founded in 2012 with a strong focus on supporting marginalized groups in Copenhagen. CYN is particularly dedicated to working with individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds and varied socio-economic circumstances. The organization seeks to bridge gaps in social inclusion and enhance the overall quality of life for these communities. By providing recreational and intercultural events, CYN fosters an environment where participants can form meaningful friendships, develop self-awareness, and build self-respect, regardless of their social or economic status.

CYN's initiatives are centered on the belief that inclusion through shared experiences can strengthen community bonds and promote individual empowerment. The organization's activities extend a wide range of recreational and cultural exchanges designed to break down social barriers and promote intercultural understanding. These efforts are aimed at improving the immediate well-being and encouraging long-term personal growth and community cohesion. To ensure the success and sustainability of its programs, CYN has formed valuable partnerships with key institutions such as the Municipality of Copenhagen, particularly its Department of Integration Recreation, as well as The Danish National Board of Health and Welfare. These collaborations allow CYN to effectively address the complex challenges facing marginalized groups, and to implement

evidence-based approaches that enhance both mental and physical health outcomes for the individuals involved.

Through its sustained efforts and innovative programming, offering marginalized communities opportunities for engagement, learning, and personal development. The organization's ongoing work highlights the importance of inclusion, cultural exchange, and recreational activities as tools for fostering social integration and improving life quality in a multicultural urban setting.

7.2 About Mirsal

Mirsal is a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Finland dedicated to supporting and empowering immigrant communities, especially Arabic and Kurdish speakers. Mirsal was founded in 2019 by members of the Arabic-speaking community in Finland who saw the need for a platform that could address the specific challenges faced by immigrants in their new homeland. The organization is based on the belief that everyone, regardless of their origin, should have equal opportunities for integration, social participation and personal development in Finland.

Our Mission and Values

Our primary mission at Mirsal is to help immigrants successfully integrate into Finnish society by providing a variety of services and programs that address their immediate needs, promote their personal development and support their long-term well-being. We believe that successful integration is not only about providing immigrants with practical tools and knowledge, but also about creating a welcoming and supportive environment where they can

feel empowered, respected and valued.

Our values are centered on:

- **Integration:** Supporting immigrants in becoming active and engaged members of Finnish society.
- **Gender Equality:** Ensuring that all individuals, regardless of gender, have access to the same opportunities for growth and development.
- **Education:** Providing immigrants with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to thrive in their new environment.
- **Youth Empowerment:** Offering young people the tools they need to build confidence, leadership skills, and a sense of belonging.
- **Community Engagement:** Building relationships between immigrant populations and the local Finnish community to foster understanding and unity.

Our Key Programs and Initiatives

Mirsal runs a range of programs and initiatives that cater to the diverse needs of immigrant communities, especially those who may face barriers in accessing resources or integrating into society. Some of our key programs include:

- **Cultural Walks:** This initiative brings together elderly Finnish citizens and immigrants to share experiences, learn from one another, and combat social isolation. Through intergenerational exchanges, we promote mutual understanding and connection between different cultural groups.
- **Father is Important:** This program engages immigrant fathers, helping them explore their roles in the family and society. By focusing on topics such

as positive parenting and community involvement, we aim to foster healthier family dynamics and encourage active fatherhood.

- **The Growing Plot:** Our urban gardening initiative provides immigrants with the opportunity to grow their own food. This program promotes self-sufficiency, encourages sustainable practices, and strengthens community bonds through shared activities and resources.
- **Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Programs:** Mirsal facilitates opportunities for young immigrants to participate in European exchange programs like Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps. These initiatives help them develop leadership skills, build confidence, and broaden their cultural horizons.

Community Engagement and Outreach

Community engagement is central to Mirsal's approach. We reach out to immigrant communities through local venues and collaborate with organizations like Moniheli and Fingo to enhance our services. Our efforts are aimed at creating a more inclusive society where immigrants can succeed and feel valued.

Partnerships and Collaborations

Mirsal's success is driven by its strong network of local and international partners, including Moniheli, Fingo, and the Anna Lindh Foundation. These collaborations enhance our outreach, improve programs, and expand our impact by providing critical resources and best practices. Additionally, Mirsal actively participates in advocacy efforts to influence policies and services for immigrants in Finland, ensuring their voices are heard at both national and local levels.

Looking Forward

As we look to the future, Mirsal is committed to continuing its work of supporting immigrant communities in Finland. We will keep expanding our programs, forging new partnerships, and responding to emerging needs within the communities we serve. By remaining adaptable, innovative, and responsive, Mirsal aims to make a lasting impact on the lives of immigrants, helping them not only integrate but also thrive in their new environment.

We invite you to join us in this mission of empowerment, community building, and social change. Together, we can contribute to a more inclusive and unified Finland, where everyone has the opportunity to succeed and feel at home.

7.3 About Gemeinsam leben & lernen in Europa

Gemeinsam leben & lernen in Europa (GLL) is a grassroots non-profit organization based in Passau, Germany, dedicated to fostering inclusion, diversity, and equality while promoting democracy and peace. Through innovative projects, training, and volunteer initiatives, GLL empowers vulnerable groups such as migrants, refugees, people with disabilities, economically disadvantaged individuals, and others, helping them access equal opportunities, intercultural understanding, and social participation. GLL's efforts aim to build a fair and inclusive society by strengthening community cohesion, advocating for human rights, and encouraging active citizenship.

Operating at local, national, and European levels, GLL addresses systemic issues such as discrimination, inequality, and exclusion. Its key target groups

include:

- **Children and Youth:** Focused on education, inclusion, and citizenship through intercultural skill development programs.
- **Migrants and Refugees:** Supporting integration via language mentoring, cultural exchange, and social resources.
- **People with Disabilities:** Advocating for accessibility and inclusion while offering community participation programs.
- **Women and Girls:** Empowering professional growth and leadership through gender-equality initiatives.
- **Elderly People:** Combating isolation with lifelong learning and intergenerational projects.
- **Unemployed and Economically Disadvantaged:** Enhancing employability through skill-building and mentorship.
- **General Public:** Promoting diversity, tolerance, and volunteerism to strengthen social cohesion.

Central to its mission, GLL operates an intercultural and intergenerational community center and an international women's club. It has developed several volunteer language mentoring programs supported by training schemes, handbooks, and learning materials. Other activities include youth engagement initiatives, intercultural workshops, film festivals, exhibitions, and intergenerational projects.

A notable aspect of GLL's work is its expertise in volunteer management. The organization runs an online volunteer platform, provides training and support for volunteers, and helps NGOs recruit and train new participants. GLL organizes an annual volunteer fair and develops

programs that engage diverse groups, including seniors, students, migrants, and individuals with disabilities. One flagship initiative is its professional volunteer training program, piloted across Germany and other European countries like the UK, Slovakia, Romania, and the Czech Republic (where it is nationally accredited).

The training program, adapted into easy-to-understand formats, includes a photobook and workshops on inclusive volunteering. Volunteers implement most of GLL's projects, including the creation of intercultural workshops for children, migrant-led training programs, and cultural events fostering integration and understanding.

GLL also plays a vital role in protecting democracy and advocating mutual respect across diverse communities. Its European partnerships span numerous Erasmus+ and Grundtvig learning projects on topics such as gender equality, migrant empowerment, and intergenerational learning. Local and European activities are interlinked, benefiting over 2,000 participants annually through the efforts of more than 100 volunteers and 250 community leaders.

To manage this broad scope of work, GLL has established a quality management system based on EFQM principles. This ensures effective project management, financial oversight, HR practices, data security, and PR strategies, enabling seamless coordination across its many initiatives.

The organization's impact has been widely recognized with numerous awards, such as:

- "Aktiv für Demokratie und Toleranz" Award for its podcast "WakeUP! Food for Brain" (2021)
- Deloitte Hidden Mover Award for the 10-10-10 project (2020)
- Jürgen Rembold Inclusion Award and Penny Promotion Basket (2019)
- European Award for Civic Engagement - Active Citizens' Initiative of the Year (2018)
- Citizens' Award of the Bavarian State Government, "Bavaria loves Europe" (2017)
- European Parliament "Citizens of Europe" Award (2015)

Other awards include several prizes for its integration efforts, volunteering campaigns and intercultural initiatives, reflecting its ongoing contribution to promoting integration and democratic values.

GLL's work demonstrates the power of grassroots organizations to transform society. By tackling systemic inequalities, empowering marginalized groups and creating platforms for cultural exchange and civic engagement, GLL remains at the forefront of building a cohesive, inclusive society in Europe.

- Bavarian Innovation Award for Volunteering (2022)