

GUIDE FOR MUNICIPALITIES: MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE AND CROSS- SECTORAL COOPERATION TO PROMOTE INTEGRATION AND GOOD RELATIONS



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GUIDE FOR MUNICIPALITIES: MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE AND CROSS- SECTORAL COOPERATION TO PROMOTE INTEGRATION AND GOOD RELATIONS

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Tiivistelmä (in Finnish)

Tämä monitasoisen hallinnon ja monialaisen yhteistyön opas kunnille antaa näkökulmia ja välineitä suunnitella kotoutumista ja hyviä väestösuhteita edistävää politiikkaa, rakenteita, palveluja ja käytäntöjä kansallisten toimintaohjelmien puitteissa.

Oppaassa on kolme osiota. Ensimmäisessä käydään läpi monitasoisen hallinnon periaatteita ja sekä kansainvälistä että kansallista kontekstia. Toisessa käydään läpi kansallinen monitasoisen hallinnon kokonaiskuva ja kolmannessa osiossa siirrytään käsittelemään kunnallisen tason monitasoista ja -alaista hallintoa.

Johdannossa liikkeelle lähdetään sanasta "governance" ja verrataan sitä suomenkieliseen vastineeseen "hallinto". "Governance" voidaan hallinnon lisäksi kääntää myös johtamiseksi, johdoksi tai hallitsemiseksi, mutta se on käsitteenä monimerkityksinen. Sillä tarkoitetaan paitsi "hallintoa", myös hallinnon, hallitsemisen tai johtamisen prosesseja, rakenteita, lakeja, sääntöjä ja normeja. Näiden lisäksi otetaan huomioon systeemit, eli vuorovaikutus- ja valtasuhteet, sekä ne ihmiset jotka ovat osallisia ja eri asemissa suhteessa hallinnolliseen elimeen tai rakenteeseen. Nämä ihmiset ja suhteet vaikuttavat siihen, millaisia resursseja saadaan käyttöön ja millaiset suuntaviivat kehittämisellä on, lähteekö se esimerkiksi aidosti kohderyhmän tarpeista. Sisäänrakennettuna periaatteena on paikallisten tarpeiden kuuleminen ja huomioiminen vaikuttavamman politiikan ja tarpeidenmukaisten toimien aikaansaamiseksi ja keskeistä monitasoisen hallinnon toteuttamisessa (kuten myös hyvien väestösuhteiden edistämiseksi) on yhteistyö, vuorovaikutus ja osallisuus.

Monitasoisen hallinnon periaatteiden soveltaminen auttaa tunnistamaan ja osallistamaan kaikki kotoutumiseen ja väestösuhteiden edistämiseen liittyvät toimijat (ja potentiaaliset toimijat) eri tasoilla, tunnistamaan heidän väliset suhteensa (tai puuttuvat suhteet) ja valtasuhteet sekä eri toimialojen väliset synergiat ja hyödyntää niitä, rakentaa hallintomalliin sisään kuulemisen mekanismeja ja koordinoita ja johtaa tuota kokonaisuutta.

Ensimmäisessä osiossa esitellään perusteluja sille, miksi monitasoisen hallinnon kehittäminen kannattaa ja laadun kannalta keskeiset, oppaan pohjana olevat

Euroopan neuvoston monitasoisen hallinnon periaatteet ja Suomelle laaditut suositukset interkulttuurisen integraation ja hyvien väestösuhteiden edistämisestä. Kuntien toiminnan kannalta keskeisiä monitasoisen hallinnon elementtejä ovat mm. poikkihallinnollisen ja monialaisen yhteistyön koordinointi myös alue- ja kuntatasolla, ruohonjuuritason kuuleminen ja konsultointi ja suunnittelu paikallisista tarpeista käsin, säännölliset tapaamiset, kestävän ja reilun rahoituksen turvaaminen, sitoutumus viestiä visiosta, jossa osallisuus ja hyvät väestösuhteet ovat keskiössä ja tulosten seuranta ja arviointi kaikilla tasoilla.

Osiossa esitellään myös uuden kotoutumislain vaatimukset ja perustelut monitasoiselle hallinnolle. Kotoutumislain uudistuksen yksi tavoite oli monialaisen yhteistyön vahvistaminen. Uuden lain myötä esimerkiksi kotoutumisohjelmassa on kuvattava paitsi kotoutumisen alkuvaiheen palvelut ja niistä vastaavat toimijat, myös yhteistyö muiden palveluihin liittyvien toimijoiden kanssa. Myös kotoutumisen edistämisen suunnittelu- ja kehittämistyön osalta kunnan on määriteltävä paitsi kotoutumisen edistämiseen liittyvät tavoitteet, toimet ja vastuutahot, myös heidän välinen yhteistyönsä. Monitasoisen- ja alaisen yhteistyön varmistamiseksi kunta asettaa maahanmuuton ja kotoutumisen sekä hyvien väestösuhteiden edistämistä varten paikallistason monialaisen yhteistyöryhmän tai on mukana ELY-keskuksen asettamassa alueellisessa yhteistyöryhmässä. Lisäksi kunnan pitää myös varmistaa, että erityisesti järjestöt ja kunnan alueella asuvat maahanmuuttajat voivat osallistua kotoutumisen edistämisen ja väestösuhteita edistävän toiminnan suunnitteluun.

Oppaan toisessa osassa esitetään kansallinen monitasoisen hallinnon kokonaiskuva suhteessa kotoutumisen ja hyvien väestösuhteiden edistämiseen. Noudattaen edellä mainittua kokonaisvaltaista "governancen" määritelmää, ensiksi esitellään kotoutumisen ja hyvien väestösuhteiden edistämiseen liittyvät eri tasojen (valtakunnallinen, alueellinen, paikallinen) toimijat, politiikkaohjelmat ja osallisuusrakenteet. Mukana on laaja skaala toimijoita, joiden politiikkaohjelmat tuottavat synergiaa. Kunta voi näinollen tarkistaa, onko väestösuhteiden edistämiseksi mukana esimerkiksi perinteisen kotoutumista edistävän työn ja yhdenvertaisuussuunnittelun lisäksi

mukana myös esimerkiksi osallisuustyön, romani-politiikan ja sisäisen turvallisuuden näkökulmat.

Toimijoiden suhteiden hahmottamiseksi esitellään kuvio, jossa huomioidaan myös fasilitoitu tiedonkulku. Vaikka vuorovaikutuskanavia ja osallisuusrakenteita on olemassa, suhteiden ja fasilitoidun vuorovaikutuksen merkitystä on hyödyllistä korostaa entisestään. Ymmärrys ei lisäännä ilman merkityksellistä vuorovaikutusta ja tämän takia olennaista on paitsi se, mitä tehdään, myös se, miten tehdään. Vuorovaikutuksen merkitystä avataan tunnistamisen ja tunnustamisen elementin kautta, jolle pitäisi olla paitsi rakenne, myös mindset, mielentila politiikkatoimintojen suunnittelu-prosessissa. Sitä konkretisoidaan Beqirin mallin avulla, jonka Nexhat Beqiri kehitti osana valtakunnallisen rasisminvastaisen ja hyviä väestösuhteita edistävän toimintaohjelman paikallisten toimien suunnittelua.

Kolmannessa osiossa siirrytään kunnallistasolle ja konkreettisiin toimintaohjeisiin monialaisen yhteistyön, kotoutumisen ja hyvien väestösuhteiden edistämiseen. Kaikki alkaa tilannekuvan luomisesta. Aluksi esitellään pyramidimalli, jossa esitellään väestösuhdepolitiikan kolme tasoa: valtavirtaistaminen yleisiin palveluihin, rakenteisiin ja

käytäntöihin, ryhmäkohtaisten yhdenvertaisuutta ja osallisuutta edistävien toimien taso sekä vuorovaikutukseen vaikuttavat rakenteet, palvelut ja käytännöt. Pyramidikuva auttaa kuntaa luomaan kokonaiskuvan tarvittavista toimista eri tasoilla. Tämän jälkeen annetaan kunnalle näkökulmia osallisuuden muodoista ja mittaamisesta, sekä siitä, mitä merkityksellisen osallisuuden toteutuminen vaatii ja esitellään kaksi osallisuusrakennetta: erityisryhmien neuvosto (ja sen laadukkaan toteuttamisen muistilista) ja co-design eli yhteissuunnittelu. Ihan lopuksi esitellään dialogi osallisuutta tuottavana menetelmänä ja toimintana ja suomalainen kansallisten dialogien malli, jossa paikallisdialogien keskeiset sisällöt välitetään monitasoisen hallinnon periaatteiden mukaisesti kansalliseen päätöksentekoon.

Yhteenvetona: hyviä väestösuhteita ei voi kukaan rakentaa yksin. Monitasoisen hallinnon toteuttamisessa yhtä tärkeää on se, mitä tehdään, sekä se, miten tehdään ja kuinka ja kuka pääsee mukaan tekemään. Rakenteiden lisäksi huomioita on siis hyvä kiinnittää suhteisiin, vuorovaikutuksen laatuun ja kuulemiseen, sillä niiden kautta mahdollistuu merkityksellinen osallisuus.

Summary (in English)

This guide to multi-level governance and cross-sectoral cooperation gives municipalities perspectives and tools to plan policies, structures, services and practices that promote integration and good relations within the framework of national action programmes. It has been developed within the framework of the European Union / Council of Europe Joint Project “Building an Inclusive Integration Approach in Finland”.¹

The guide has three sections. In the first one, we review the principles of multi-level governance and both the international and national context. In the second one, we give a national overview of multi-level governance, and in the third section, we move on to the municipal level and present a model to design a multi-level and a cross-sectoral approach for inclusive intercultural integration and good relations.

In the introduction, we start by comparing the word “governance” with the Finnish equivalent “hallinto”, which refers more directly to the English word “administration”. The translation into Finnish of the word “governance” could also be management, leadership or control. We review the meanings of the word: it does not only mean “administration”, but also the processes, structures, laws, rules and norms of administration, and the management. In addition to these, it takes into account the systems, i.e. the interaction and power relations, as well as the people who are involved and in different positions in relation to the administrative body or structure. These people and relationships affect what kind of resources are made available and what kind of guidelines the development has, for example, whether it genuinely starts from the needs of the target group. The built-in principle is to listen to and take into account local needs in order to achieve more effective policies and needs-based actions. Cooperation, interaction and engagement are central elements as well as to the implementation of multi-level governance, also to promote inclusive intercultural integration and good relations.

The application of the principles of multi-level governance helps to identify and involve all the actors (and potential actors) related to intercultural inclusive integration and the promotion of good relations at different levels, to identify their relationships (or missing relationships) and power relations, as well as synergies between different policy areas and make use of them. Also it helps to build consultation mechanisms into the governance model and to coordinate and lead the entity.

The first section presents reasons why the development of multi-level governance is worthwhile. We present the principles of multi-level governance, developed by the Council of Europe, with also the recommendations made for Finland, for multilevel governance in promoting inclusive intercultural integration and good relations. For municipalities, the key elements of multi-level governance are e.g. coordination of cross-sectoral and multidisciplinary cooperation at the regional and municipal level, grassroots consultation and planning and planning based on local needs, regular meetings, securing sustainable and fair funding, commitment to communicate a vision where engagement, inclusive intercultural integration and good relations are at the center and monitoring and evaluation of results at all levels.

The section also presents the requirements of the new Integration Act on multi-level governance. One goal of the reform of the Integration Act was to strengthen multidisciplinary cooperation. With the new law, for example, the integration program must describe not only the services of the initial phase of integration and the actors responsible for them, but also the ways of cooperation with other actors related to the services. Also with regard to the planning and development work for the promotion of integration, the municipality must define not only the goals, actions and responsible parties related to the promotion of integration, but also the ways of cooperation between them. To ensure multi-level and multidisciplinary cooperation, the municipality sets up a multi-disciplinary cooperation group at the local level for the promotion of immigration and integration and good population relations, or participates in a regional cooperation group set up by the ELY Center. In addition, the municipality must also ensure that non-governmental organisations and

1. The European Union / Council of Europe Joint Project “Building an Inclusive Integration Approach in Finland” is co-funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument and the Council of Europe and implemented by the Council of Europe in co-operation with the European Commission.

immigrants living in the municipality can participate in the planning of activities that promote integration and good relations.

The second part of the guide presents a national overview of multi-level governance in relation to the promotion of inclusive intercultural integration and good relations. Following the comprehensive definition of “governance” mentioned above, the actors, policy programs and participation structures at different levels (national, regional, local) are first introduced. There is a wide range of actors involved, whose policy programs produce synergy. The municipality can therefore check whether, in addition to traditional work promoting integration and equality planning, for example aspects of the work on equality planning, Roma policy and internal security are included in the promotion of inclusive intercultural integration and good relations.

In order to visualise the relationships between actors, we present a blueprint, which also takes into account the facilitation mechanism and interaction. Although interaction channels and participation structures exist, it is useful to further emphasize the importance of relationships and facilitated interaction. A common understanding does not increase without meaningful interaction, and because of this, it is essential to reflect not only on what is done, but also how it is done. The meaning of interaction is opened up through the elements of identification and recognition. With them, we refer not only to a structure, but to a mindset, to a commitment to engage, hear and recognise the needs of the “grassroot level”, in the planning process of policies and activities. This is concretised with the help of the Beqiri model, which was developed by Nexhat Beqiri as part of the planning of the local actions of the national programme for anti-racism and good relations.

In the third section, we move on to the municipal level and concrete guidelines for multilevel governance in promoting inclusive intercultural integration and good relations. It all starts with creating an understanding of the state of things. With the pyramid diagram, we present the three levels of policies at which the promotion of inclusive intercultural integration and good relations are done: the level of mainstreaming diversity into general services, structures and practices, the level of group-specific actions promoting equality and inclusion, and the structures, services and practices that affect interaction. The pyramid diagram helps the municipality to create an overall picture of the necessary actions at different levels. After this, the municipality will be given perspectives on the forms and on measuring of inclusion, as well as what is required to the real conditions of meaningful participation. We introduce two participation structures as examples: the council of special groups, such as immigration councils (and a checklist for its high-quality implementation) and co-design. At the very end, we present dialogue as a method and activity that produces inclusion, and conditions for a rightly timed dialogue. At the end we also present the Finnish model of national dialogues, where the central contents of local dialogues are conveyed to national decision-making in accordance with the principles of multi-level governance.

In summary: no one can promote inclusive intercultural integration and build good relations alone. In the implementation of multi-level governance, what is done is equally important, as how it is done, and how and who gets involved in doing it. In addition to structures, it is therefore good to pay attention to relationships, the quality of interaction and consultation, because they enable meaningful participation.

Introduction

You are holding in your hands the Council of Europe's guide to multi-level governance for municipalities to promote integration and good relations. According to the Council of Europe, the promotion of good relations requires not only legislation and policies that promote equality, but also structures for interaction, understanding and inclusion at the grassroots level. The former are the responsibility of national authorities, while the latter are promoted at city level. Building good relations therefore requires coordinated cooperation between these levels. This guide provides municipal authorities with tools to plan strategies to promote integration and good relations through multilevel and cross-sectoral cooperation.

The multilevel governance model and the other tools in this guide will help to create an overview of governance, and to select and implement strategically relevant priorities in the work of municipalities to promote integration and good relations.

The first part of the guide examines the international basis for multilevel governance and the related Council of Europe recommendations, as well as the national arguments for developing multilevel governance. Multi-level governance is strongly linked to the objectives and obligations of the new Integration Act (Kotoutumislaki 681/2023).

The second part presents a national overview of integration and good relations policy actors, policy programmes and participatory structures, as well as the national coordination of multilevel governance, highlighting the facilitated flow of information between

different levels of government and stakeholders through the Beqiri model. The Beqiri model was developed in the context of a pilot project on good relations which was used to implement a national anti-racism and good relations programme at a local level. The idea was to proceed locally according to the needs and priorities of each locality, in line with national priorities. The first step was to gather information on local needs in relation to the programme guidelines, and then to plan regional activities based on those local needs. A national overview helps municipalities to identify their position and the actors at other levels, as well as the potential benefits that increased cooperation can bring.

The third part moves to the municipal level and discusses the process that municipalities can use to strategically plan actions to promote integration and good relations. The tools and examples in this guide support local authorities in creating initiatives to enhance good relations and integration, focusing on building a situational overview, developing inclusive methods, and encouraging co-design.

This guide has been produced within the framework of the Council of Europe-led project "Promoting inclusive intercultural integration in Finland", based on the work of the Intercultural Cities network. In addition to this guide, Finland's multilevel governance is discussed in the Council of Europe's publications "Current practices in multilevel governance in Finland" (2024) and "A blueprint of a coordination mechanism on integration policies in Finland" (forthcoming 2025).

PART I

Principles of multilevel governance

Multilevel governance refers to a model in which policy objectives and measures are planned, promoted and evaluated by the national central government, regional government (in Finland, the wellbeing services counties and the administrative regions of the ELY Centres and Regional Administrative Agencies, regional councils) and local government (municipalities), as well as civil society, businesses and other actors. In addition to being multilevel, governance is also multi-sectoral, i.e. involving and making use of synergies across regions and policy programmes. In an ideal situation, a multilevel governance model enables local grassroots information to be transmitted "upwards" for decision-making (bottom up) and involves participatory processes, co-design, cooperation and coordination between public sector administrations and other relevant stakeholders and at all levels.

The English term "multilevel governance" does not translate into Finnish in the exact sense. "Multilevel" refers vertically to the involvement of all levels. In Finland, this concept is not widely used in work related to integration and good relations. In law and in practice, there has been more talk of cross-sectoral or cross-governmental cooperation, which refers to horizontal relations, although multilevel cooperation has long been a legal requirement.

The term "governance" has a broader meaning than the word "administration". "Governance" can also be translated as management, leadership or control, but it is a concept with many meanings. It refers not only to "administration", but also to the processes, structures, laws, rules and norms of administration, management or leadership. In addition to these, it takes into account the systems, i.e. the interaction and power relations, as well as the people who are involved and in different positions in relation to the administrative body or structure. These people and relations affect what kind of resources are made

available and what kind of guidelines the development has, for example, whether it genuinely starts from the needs of the target group.

The key is to identify and involve all actors (and potential actors) involved in promoting integration and good relations at different levels, to identify and utilise their relationships (or lack thereof) and power relations, as well as synergies between different policy areas, and to coordinate and manage the overall entity. Cooperation, interaction and inclusion are key to the implementation of multilevel governance (as well as to the promotion of good relations).

When considering ways to increase inclusion, the ambiguous definition of "governance" challenges us to consider where inclusion is attached to power, i.e. what power, and what form of inclusion, is allocated to different levels, sectors and stakeholders in each system when talking about integration and good relations. For genuine multilevel governance, it is essential that the various participatory structures are anchored in decision-making processes and thus in genuine opportunities for influence.

Council of Europe recommendations for multilevel governance to promote intercultural integration and good relations

The principle of multilevel governance has been developed within the Council of Europe in particular. It was first highlighted in the Council of Europe's Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance in 2008. Since then, the principles of multilevel governance have been developed in various Council of Europe policy areas. The Council of Europe also has a separate expert body that provides recommendations and support to member countries for the development of multilevel governance. (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/centre-of-expertise-for-multilevel-governance/12-principles>)

Within the Council of Europe, the principles of multilevel governance have also been examined within the field of intercultural integration. The underlying idea is that increasing the inclusion of immigrants in the development of integration services leads to more effective and personalised solutions while also fostering inclusion and good relations among Council of Europe member states.

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe recommended a multilevel governance model for member states to promote intercultural integration in 2022. [CM/Rec\(2022\)10 \(coe.int\)](#). The Ministerial Committee’s recommendations to member states concerned legislative and other measures to help apply and implement the intercultural integration approach at different levels of government, to ensure that all relevant information reaches the relevant institutions at national, regional and local levels, and to increase the capacity of institutions and civil society to develop, implement and evaluate the intercultural integration approach.

The Council of Europe’s Intercultural Cities network serves as an international platform for sharing and evaluating experiences and practices at a local level. To give concrete expression to the recommendations, the Council of Europe has listed elements of good multilevel governance for intercultural integration, such as:

- 1. A national, independent expert body that leads the design, implementation and monitoring of the national integration and good relations policy programme and builds cross-governmental links with other policy programmes
- 2. Coordination of cross-governmental and cross-sectoral cooperation, including at regional and municipal levels**

- 3. Grassroots consultation and consultation and planning based on local needs, regular meetings**
- 4. Ensuring sustainable and fair funding**
- 5. Commitment to communicate a vision with inclusion and good relations at its core**
- 6. Monitoring and evaluation of results at all levels**

At the municipal level, it is essential to take into account elements 2 to 6. This guide provides perspectives and tools for coordinating cross-governmental and cross-sectoral cooperation, grassroots consultation, planning based on local needs and, to some extent, monitoring and evaluating results.

Securing sustainable and fair funding is strongly linked to participatory practices in this context. This is why it is important that inclusive practices are supported by an actor with budgetary authority and who can communicate through the organisation. A communicative commitment makes the municipality more accessible to people from different population groups, and increases trust. However, inclusion does not happen through communication alone, without resources. It is important to secure resources for inclusion, consultation and co-design, as well as for regular meetings, and also for any changes identified in the consultation processes (see for example the section on co-design).

The Council of Europe’s report [Review of current practices in multi-level governance in Finland](#) (2024) also makes recommendations to ensure good multilevel governance in Finland that is representative of integration and good relations (see table below).

Table 1: Recommendations for strengthening multilevel governance in the field of integration and good relations policy (Artemjeff, Attias, Wilson 2024)
1. National, regional and local decision-makers should take into account the elements of multilevel governance in the promotion of integration and good relations.
2. Policy design involves vertical and horizontal cooperation between national, regional and local actors, and this participatory structure should be taken into account and used to draw up concrete local action plans for national programmes.
3. The role of a working group on discrimination monitoring could be further developed in the preparation of subsequent national action programmes. The role of the working group could include the provision of evidence-based information for policymaking, analysis and recommendations for policy, and consulting at different levels to improve data collection.
4. Synergies between different policy programmes and strategies should be identified and strengthened by establishing vertical and horizontal governance structures that play a key role in achieving the convergent objectives of the different action plans.

5. The frequency of meetings should be determined based on specific needs, and meeting cycles should take into account how objectives and actions are synchronised and their synergy across different sectors and levels of policy implementation.
6. New channels of cooperation and interaction between the public, private and third sectors must be created. A requirement for cross-sectoral cooperation could be added to the conditions for public funding.
7. The participatory elements of the action plan must take into account the elements of co-creation. The actions planned must be considered and developed together with civil society. Participatory structures must take into account civil society, co-creation, coordination and cooperation.
8. The pilot project on good relations has brought together regional networks and drawn up regional action plans linked to national priorities, with regionally specific objectives and activities. These networks and plans could serve as a starting point for further developing local and regional perspectives.
9. The evaluation of action plans should combine data from different levels and sectors. In addition to in-house monitoring, the implementation of measures in future action plans should be monitored by an independent external monitoring mechanism. For example, the equitability of funding could be a topic that can be assessed as part of an external evaluation.

The most relevant recommendations for municipalities are 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

With regard to recommendations 1, 2 and 4, the second part of this guide provides a national overview in which a municipality can position itself and check whether its own strategic planning for the promotion of integration and good relations takes into account all possible actors and synergetic programmes at different levels. The third part provides the structure, perspectives and tools for horizontal, cross-sectoral and synergetic cooperation at local level. Recommendation 5 calls for regular but appropriate meetings, which should also be strategically planned according to the cycles in different sectors. Council-led planning provides a structure for this, but there should be enough meetings to allow for monitoring and evaluation. The implementation of Recommendation 6 at a local level keeps cooperation concrete and, taking into account local specificities and economic structure, it is possible to make cooperation effective by establishing and maintaining social relations.

For Recommendation 7, this guide describes the conditions and process of co-design, and provides tools and good practice for other areas of meaningful inclusion.

Requirements for multilevel governance under the new Integration Act

In Finland, the objectives of integration policy are defined in the Integration Act. The Act has been regularly amended over the past decades, but it has always included objectives and obligations related to multilevel governance and inclusion. A multilevel

governance model to promote integration (intercultural integration) and good relations was already outlined in the 2012 Government Integration Programme. The programme described a cross-governmental policy to promote integration and good relations which required broader partnerships and the creation of participatory structures.

In 2021, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment launched a partnership programme to support the effectiveness of integration and social inclusion work by bringing actors together and increasing cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder cooperation. The programme has been implemented through two-year action plans and has sought to build partnerships, in particular to promote the capacity and participation of civil society actors and the receptiveness of society.

The Integration Act was partially reformed in 2023, when the wellbeing services counties became operational and took over responsibility for social and health services. A comprehensive reform of the Integration Act will enter into force in 2025, together with a reform of employment services, which will transfer the tasks of employment services to municipalities.

The aim of the reform of the Integration Act (KOTO24) is, among other things, to:

- ▶ promote the integration, employment, wellbeing and inclusion of immigrants in society, and promote equality, equity and good relations
- ▶ strengthen outreach and integration of immigrants outside the labour force
- ▶ **strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation and cooperation with NGOs and employers, and clarify the responsibilities of the different actors.**

Cross-sectoral cooperation is at the heart of the reform, to ensure that the division of labour and cooperation practices between the different actors are clear. Services are provided by the municipality, the wellbeing services county, other authorities, the third sector and educational institutions, and the municipality's role is to coordinate this cross-sectoral cooperation.

Integration programmes and strategic planning and monitoring of integration

The new Integration Act requires municipalities to provide certain services to promote integration. These services are listed in the integration programme, which is a set of services organised by the municipality for the initial phase of integration. The services listed are targeted at immigrants and aim to promote immigrants' integration, employment or entrepreneurship, skills and employability. The integration programme also supports equality, inclusion and equity, as well as health and wellbeing. The services included in the integration programme support everyday civic skills and participation in associations and other social activities.

In summary, the "integration programme" is a document that describes:

- ▶ Services available in the early stages of integration
- ▶ The actors responsible for the services
- ▶ **Cooperation with other service providers.**

The Integration Act defines the minimum content of an integration programme. It must include at least:

- ▶ An assessment of integration service needs and skills, or an assessment of cross-sectoral integration service needs and skills
- ▶ An integration plan based on the above assessment (including a cross-sectoral version)
- ▶ Multilingual civic orientation
- ▶ Integration training and a final examination of language proficiency
- ▶ Other training and services that promote Finnish and Swedish language skills, literacy, social and working life skills, employment and entrepreneurship
- ▶ Guidance and counselling during the integration programme.

A website maintained by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment on the comprehensive reform of the Integration Act serves as an information and resource bank, where you can find up-to-date information on the requirements of the Act, including a checklist for drawing up a municipal integration programme:

[Checklist for drawing up a municipal integration programme | Integration](#)

The municipality is also responsible for the planning, development and monitoring of integration promotion – in cooperation with other actors where necessary. In line with the principle of multilevel governance, it must also coordinate its work with that of the wellbeing services county to support integration.

Planning and development work includes defining the objectives, actions and measures, responsible parties, **cooperation** and monitoring related to the promotion of integration. The indicators that will be used to measure progress towards the targets must also be mentioned. These can be compiled in a separate operational programme for integration or included in another municipal planning document.

Regardless of the way in which a municipality chooses to carry out its planning task, it must take into account integration clients and immigrants in its strategic plans, such as the municipal strategy, which may also include the above-mentioned planning document. The aim is to mainstream the promotion of integration into the planning and development of the municipality's different sectors.

In planning for integration, the municipality defines the objectives, measures, responsible parties, cooperation and monitoring for the following areas:

- ▶ Employment and education
- ▶ Wellbeing, health and housing
- ▶ Inclusion, equality and equity
- ▶ Opportunities to maintain one's own language and culture
- ▶ Promoting good relations.

The municipality can also set other objectives to promote integration. In its planning, the municipality should take into account the national objectives for promoting integration and employment for integrated clients and promoting the vitality of the municipality. Every two years, the municipality reports to the local ELY Centre on how the objectives have been achieved and the measures implemented. The report must also include information on equal access to services, the adequacy of financial resources and how effectiveness has been achieved..

Setting up a cross-sectoral cooperation group

In order to ensure multilevel and cross-sectoral cooperation, the municipality should set up a local cross-sectoral cooperation group to promote immigration, integration and good relations if the service needs of immigrants in the municipality require cross-sectoral cooperation. Cooperation can also take place in a regional cooperation group set up by an ELY Centre. There are many benefits to be gained from cooperation between municipalities

in the planning of integration promotion, which is why it is worthwhile to initiate regional cooperation.

The municipality should convene a cooperation group on its own initiative or on the initiative of another member of the cooperation group.

A cooperation group set up by a municipality or several municipalities may include:

- ▶ The municipality should convene a cooperation group on its own initiative or on the initiative of another member of the cooperation group.
- ▶ A cooperation group set up by a municipality or several municipalities may include.

The municipality must also ensure that particularly organisations and immigrants living in the municipality can participate in the planning of integration promotion.

More information:

[Planning of municipal integration promotion | Integration](#)

[Checklist for planning the promotion of municipal integration | Integration](#)

Broadening the target group

Under the new Integration Act, all immigrants must be provided with basic information about Finland, low-threshold guidance and general public services. The municipality must assess the needs for integration services and skills/competences and prepare an integration plan accordingly, not only for immigrants in

employment services, but also for those who received their first residence permit less than three years ago, those who receive non-temporary income support, those who receive home care support, those with refugee status, those who arrived unaccompanied as minors, those who are victims of human trafficking and others who are assessed as needing services.

In the future, integration services should therefore also be able to meet the needs of immigrants who are either living in Finland temporarily or have not decided to stay permanently. In order to serve new target groups, municipalities, and especially guidance services for immigrants, should review their working processes and plan how to reach new target groups in practice. **This requires cross-sectoral cooperation.**

Promoting good relations

Promoting good relations is one of the issues to be included in a municipality's strategic planning and monitoring document. The municipality must define objectives, measures, **responsible actors, cooperation** and monitoring to promote good relations – and it must also set up a local **cross-sectoral working group** to plan and implement the work.

[Principles of integration work | Integration](#)

The framework for a three-level approach to promoting cross-sectoral cooperation, integration and good relations, presented in the next chapter of this report, provides the basis for a holistic approach to promoting good relations at a local level.

PART II

National overview and coordination

Actors, policy programmes and participatory structures

As social integration, inclusion and good relations concern many areas of life, they are promoted by a wide range of sectors and actors. Multilevel governance and cross-sectoral cooperation require horizontal and vertical cooperation between different actors, whether at different levels of governance (local, regional, national, international cooperation) or across different sectors.

The table below shows the public authorities and policy programmes involved in integration and good relations, and the synergies between and among them. A wide range of actors, policy areas and structures are included that have an impact on good relations, but are not necessarily always involved in promoting integration and good relations at a local level.

This table allows the municipality to assess the coverage of its own policy programme and to identify actors, and possibly new actors, whose policy programmes provide synergies for integration and for building and maintaining good relations.

TABLE: Key actors, policy programmes and participatory structures at different levels

LEVEL	Authority	Legislation and policy programmes	Participatory structures
National	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment	Government Integration Programme	Interministerial Cooperation Group (KYHRY)
	Finnish Government Prime Minister's Office	Government communication on racism and equality	Partnership programme
	Ministry of Justice	Equality and non-discrimination legislation, guidance on equality planning	Prime Minister's roundtable on equality and non-discrimination
	Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, National Non-Discrimination and Equality Tribunal of Finland	Ethnic relations	Advisory Board for Non-Discrimination
	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	Civil society policy	Equality.fi website
	Occupational safety and health authorities	Finland's National Roma Policy (2023-2030)	Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations (ETNO)
	Ministry of the Interior	Monitoring non-discrimination in employment	Advisory Council on Civil Society Policy (KANE)
	Ministry of Education and Culture	Internal security strategy and national guidelines for local security planning	National Advisory Board on Romani Affairs
	Ministry of Finance	Primary education, youth and cultural services	Inter-ministerial steering group, TUOVI portal and network for internal security professionals
			Annual national security seminar
			National Dialogues

TABLE: Key actors, policy programmes and participatory structures at different levels

Regional	<p>Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centres) (15)</p> <p>Regional State Administrative Agencies (AVI) (6)</p> <p>Wellbeing services counties (21)</p> <p>Regional councils</p>	<p>Guidance and monitoring of municipal integration programmes</p> <p>Regional action plans to promote good relations (coordination, preparation, funding)</p> <p>Regional coordination, guidance and monitoring of Roma policy</p> <p>Supervision of occupational safety and health</p> <p>Social and health services</p> <p>Regional development, culture, internationalism, tourism</p>	<p>Regional integration cooperation groups</p> <p>Regional advisory boards on ethnic relations</p> <p>Regional advisory boards on Romani affairs</p> <p>County council</p> <p>The Regional Government, the Regional Council and the Regional Cooperation Group (MYR)</p>
Local	<p>Municipalities</p>	<p>Municipal integration programmes</p> <p>Inclusion and interaction programmes</p> <p>Local safety planning</p>	<p>Municipal board, council</p> <p>Integration cooperation group</p> <p>Inclusion and security cooperation groups</p> <p>Equality planning working groups</p>

In relation to integration, the Integration Act stipulates that the work of municipalities to promote integration and good relations is guided by the Government Integration Programme (VALKO). The Government decides on the priorities for promoting integration in each term of government. The Government Integration Programme contains objectives and measures to promote integration. The first Government Integration Programme was finalised in 2012. Even then, the programme included “a cross-governmental package of policies to promote integration and good relations”. The Government Integration Programme therefore guides the content of municipal integration programmes, and its role from the beginning has been to guide cross-sectoral cooperation.

The programme is prepared at a ministerial level by the Integration Cooperation Group (KYHRY), which works in cross-sectoral cooperation (to promote the flow of information and coordinate measures). Eight ministries are represented: The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, and the Ministry of Finance.

How is the Government Integration Programme implemented at a regional level?

There are three nationally led platforms for learning and collaboration between actors. The Ministry

of Economic Affairs and Employment’s Integration Partnership Programme supports local, regional and national actors working on integration and good relations by bringing them together and increasing cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder cooperation. This has been strengthened since 2018 by the biannual organisation of the Integration event (in 2018, 2020, 2022 and 2024), which is a major nationwide event for integration and refugee reception actors to share information and practices and build partnerships.

The first [national action programme](#) (Equal Finland Action Plan) to directly affect good relations was in force from 2021 to 2023. It was coordinated by the Ministry of Justice, but the preparatory working group (which also guided its implementation and evaluation) had a broad base, with representation from all ministries and the Prime Minister’s Office, the Association of Finnish Cities and Municipalities, the Sámi Parliament, the Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations, the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs, the Swedish Assembly of Finland, the Human Rights Centre and the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman. The action programme had eight key objectives. It was implemented in regions, including in connection with a pilot project on good relations, which succeeded in coordinating and facilitating multilevel vertical and horizontal cooperation on what is known as the Beqiri model. The model is presented in more detail in the next section.

The promotion of good relations is a key objective of the work of the Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations (ETNO), coordinated by the Ministry of Justice. ETNO aims to promote dialogue between immigrants and ethnic minorities, public authorities, political parties and NGOs. It is a multilevel structure operating at both a national and regional level, at which it is divided into seven regional advisory boards for ethnic relations. ETNO promotes dialogue and cooperation between immigrants, ethnic, cultural and religious minorities, public authorities, political parties and NGOs, and brings together experts in the field of immigration at national, regional and local levels, along with public authorities and organisations. ETNO also acts as a network of experts in the fields of immigration, integration, equality and inter-group dialogue. An evaluation of its activities in 2024 identified a need for sharper focus and stronger guidance and coordination. Based on the evaluation, the relevance of ETNO's activities should be developed so that they do not overlap with those of other institutions, networks or public authorities. Good relations, dialogue between different actors and groups, and the promotion of the inclusion of different ethnic groups were among areas that ETNO was hoped to promote.

The Orpo Government's equality statement also included a new inclusive annual activity, the Prime Minister's roundtable on equality. The first Prime Minister's roundtable took place in March 2024. It brought together actors and employers' representatives working specifically on the employment of immigrants, with the aim of consulting them on the government's action plan to combat racism and promote equality. [A New Boost for Equality in Finland: Government action plan to combat racism and promote equality](#)

Roma issues have never been part of ETNOs' remit and have not always been taken into account in work to promote good population relations. However, when focusing on good relations, which refers to broader diversity than immigration, and which is closely linked to work on equality, cooperation on Roma policy issues brings more synergies to the field. In addition, the ongoing [Roma policy programme](#) includes objectives to promote good relations. Another policy area that is not regularly involved in the work on integration and good relations is the area of internal security. However, the Internal Security Strategy has included objectives related to the promotion of good relations.

National Dialogues is a national project coordinated by the Ministry of Finance and the Dialogue Academy, which can also provide synergies for promoting integration and good relations. It is presented in more detail in Part III.

At a regional level, the actors are the wellbeing services county, ELY centres and regional councils. In a

wellbeing services county, participatory structures include county councils, regional cooperation groups, advisory boards for ethnic relations and advisory boards on Romani affairs, and in regional councils, the inclusionary structures are the assembly, the council and the regional cooperation groups (MYR). At a regional level, it is essential not only to make use of cross-governmental synergies (e.g. the Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations and the National Advisory Board on Romani affairs, both of which have equality objectives), but also to bring local grassroots knowledge "upstream" and influence national policy programmes.

At a local level, in addition to the municipality or city, local organisations, associations, religious communities, language communities, businesses, educational institutions and neighbourhood actors are also involved. Interaction channels and participatory structures include local councils, roundtables and regional dialogues, multidisciplinary working groups, various steering groups and any local Roma working groups. At regional level, it is essential to ensure that citizens have genuine access to decision-making and evaluation of the services that affect them.

The good relations perspective broadens the traditional range of actors, policy programmes and participatory structures in comparison with the integration perspective, which focuses only on promoting the integration of recent immigrants. A multi-level governance and management structure has not yet been developed that identifies and involves all actors (and potential actors) involved in integration and good relations at different levels, identifies their relationships (or lack of relationships) and power relations, as well as synergies between different sectors, and then makes concrete use of them to promote, implement and evaluate integration and good relations programmes.

After identifying the actors, policy programmes and participatory structures, the next step is to consider the relations and synergies between them. The national multilevel governance model and the Beqiri model of facilitated information flow presented in the next section present a relational perspective.

Once the relations and synergies have been identified, there is one more aspect to consider: the participatory structures. These must take into account civil society, co-creation, coordination and cooperation (Recommendation 7 for Finland) and allow for grassroots consultation, consultation and planning based on local needs (Council of Europe element 3 of multilevel governance). Part III presents examples and perspectives on these. It is essential that inclusionary structures are incorporated into decision-making structures to ensure real opportunities for influence. .

A national model of multilevel governance and facilitated information flow to promote integration and good relations

A key objective of the multilevel governance model is to create effective links between and within the different levels of government. The levels and key actors of the national governance model for integration and good relations policy are described in Figure x. It aims to provide an overview of the multilevel governance model in the work on integration and good relations. In addition to describing the actors at different levels (national, regional and local), it also includes channels of interaction and participatory structures. In addition to these, an element of identification and recognition, which is essential for inclusion, has been added at each level, and should form the basis for policy design (i.e. action). The elements of identification and recognition and the related action refer to the ways, structures and interactions that enable the bottom-up principle (that the rationale for action takes account of local needs) to be implemented and synergies between policy programmes to be identified.

Identification refers to the process of starting any process by gathering the knowledge, experiences and views of stakeholders on the issue to be developed. This is done through a wide range of means such as questionnaires and discussions, to ensure that everyone's views are heard. In the context of promoting integration and good relations, it is particularly important to pay attention to equality in participation channels and to ensuring an open and safe atmosphere.

Recognition refers to the process of working together on the perspectives, experiences and feedback that emerged during the identification phase. To create a common vision, everyone must be guaranteed the opportunity to participate. At this stage, it is important that people and stakeholders with different experiences feel heard and that different views are given space and recognition, even if they do not immediately emerge as priorities for development. What matters is that they have been identified and acknowledged in a joint communication process. The joint discussion creates a common understanding of the key areas for improvement.

Action refers to the fact that meaningful inclusion requires that stakeholders who have invested time in participatory structures have a real opportunity

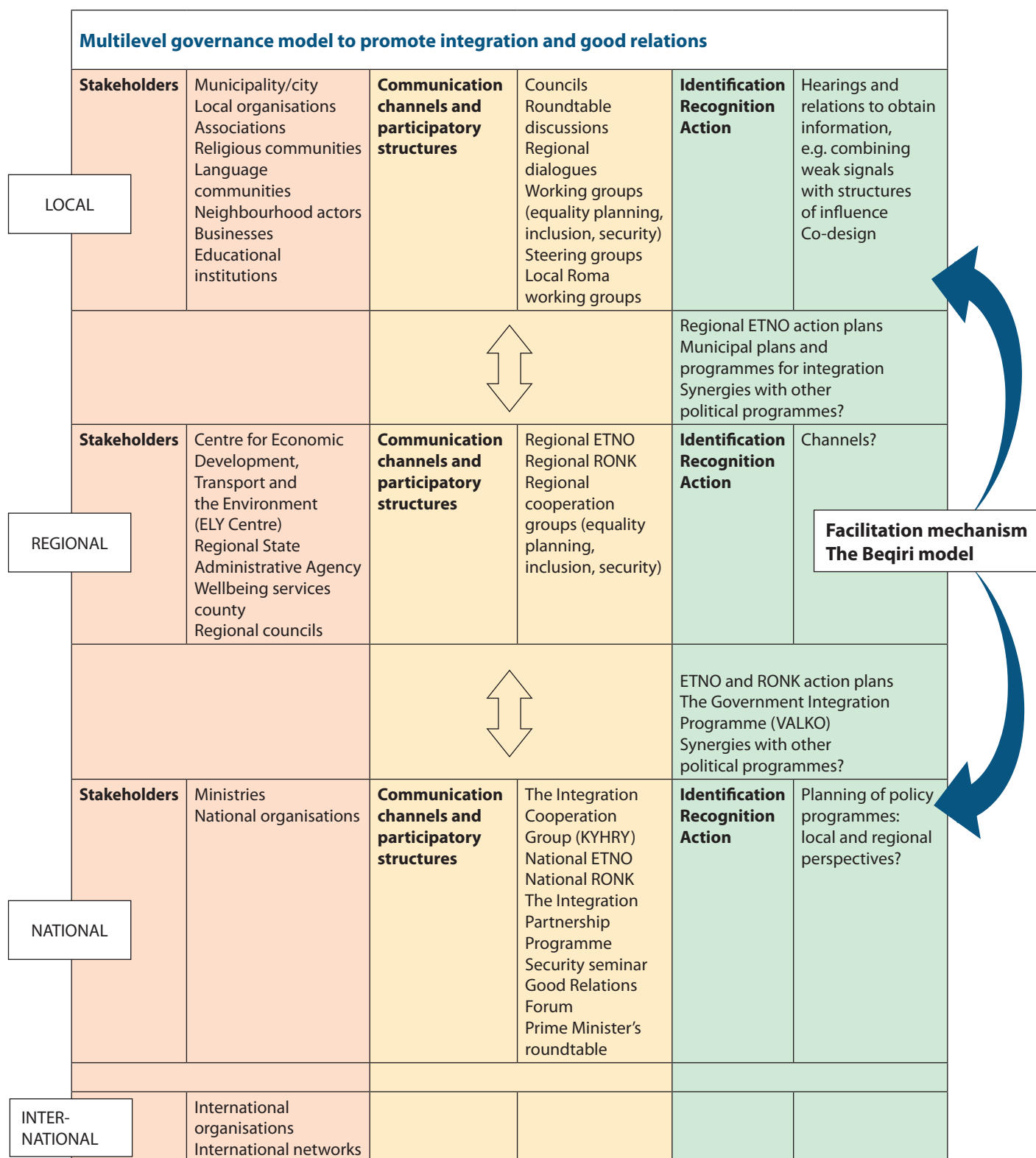
to contribute. Problems that are identified and recognised together are addressed in some way, and experiments and changes are made to solve them.

The Beqiri model of facilitated information flow

A key element of the national model of multilevel governance is the facilitated flow of information. This is because, in addition to structures and actors, it is important to consider interaction as a factor in its own right. An inclusive, encouraging, open and genuine tone in interactions paves the way for meaningful inclusion. The importance of interaction is discussed further in Part III, under the heading "An equal focus on issues, methods and social capital".

The Beqiri model of facilitated information flow follows the principle of identification, recognition and action described above. It was developed in a pilot project on good relations, which implemented a national anti-racism and good relations programme. Following the guidelines of the programme, the aim was to implement local actions that would be in line with the action programme. The planning of local actions was based on local needs assessments, i.e. the process started with the generation of information. It collected information on the state of relations between different language groups (identification), brought this information to the discussion among actors and decision-makers in the region (recognition) and then made regional action plans based on the identified needs (action).

In the project, a national actor (Nexhat Beqiri) went out into the regions, made contact with the different language communities via regional actors, and resourced the language communities themselves to organise focus groups to learn about the views and needs of individuals from different language groups concerning the promotion of good relations. The key was the facilitation of interaction situations, which in itself also built relationships between the actors. The national lead convened regional decision-makers and facilitated meetings between local actors and decision-makers from different language groups to hold joint discussions and to raise awareness among decision-makers of the ideas of groups that they would not otherwise have reached, and which may not have reached them. The next step was to draw up regional action plans based on national guidelines and to fund local initiatives based on local needs.



PART III

The municipal process for promoting cross-sectoral cooperation, integration and good relations

Promoting integration and good relations are statutory tasks for municipalities. This is stipulated not only by the Integration Act, but also by the Non-Discrimination Act, which obliges municipalities to assess and actively promote equality. This part reviews the perspectives and tools that municipalities can use to build integration and good relations policies that take into account the principles of multilevel governance.

A non-discrimination plan also provides an opportunity to develop relations between different groups at a local level. (Municipalities promote good relations – Practical tools for municipal efforts on good relations)

The responsibility for promoting integration and good relations does not lie solely with services targeted at immigrants or other specific groups. Targeted services are only one part of the whole. Mainstreaming diversity into the planning and development of different municipal sectors is recommended and required by the Integration Act. In addition to mainstreaming and targeted services, this guide will demonstrate that there is also a need for a good relations policy that influences interaction. Considering such an entity requires cooperation, coordinated by an actor. The most natural option for a coordinator is the municipality, but an ELY Centre can also take on this role if it

makes more sense for several municipalities to plan a joint strategy.

This chapter presents a pyramid model, a structure that provides an overview of the actors and levels of action required for cross-sectoral cooperation, integration and good relations, and that can serve as a basis for a strategic process to promote integration and good relations. This structure is based on the framework for good relations policy and the Council of Europe's approach to inclusive intercultural integration, developed by the Intercultural Cities programme. Both approaches emphasise respect for diversity, equality, inclusion and interaction, and the need for a multilevel and cross-sectoral approach.

The municipal process for the strategic planning of integration and promotion of good relations first requires an overview of the current situation. The following model can be used to create such an overview, in which actions (and the actors responsible for them) are structured across three levels: general, universal structures, services and practices (mainstreaming diversity across sectors); group-specific structures, services and practices which refer to specific actions taken for the underrepresented or those in need of special support or attention; and structures, services and practices that support interaction and conflict resolution.

The pyramid model for creating a situational overview

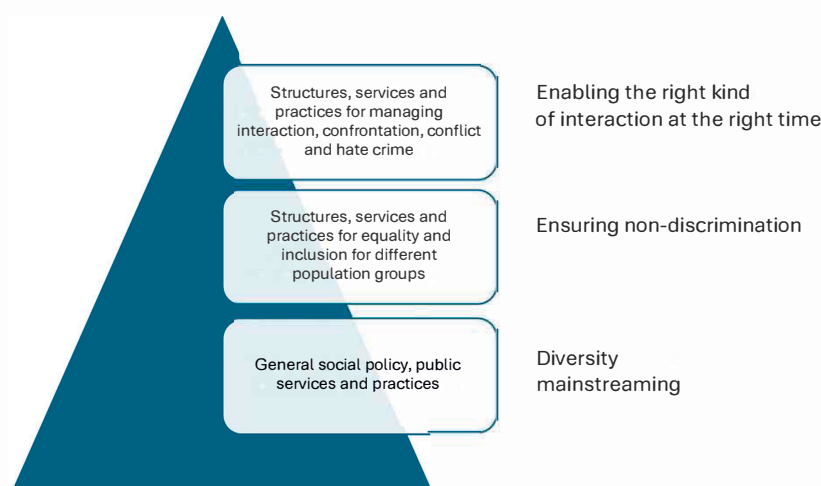


Figure: Levels of good relations and intercultural integration

General social policy, public services and practices

The idea behind the model is that the bottom of the pyramid represents the “big picture”. The basis is the mainstreaming of diversity in general social policies, services and practices. All sectors can have an impact on population relations and interaction. Policies related to housing, education and employment, for example, each have direct or indirect effects on the opportunities for encounters. Is social exclusion and segregation prevented at a city level? Do children and young people from different backgrounds meet each other at different stages of their educational path? Do people from different population groups meet in the workplace? How do different services take into account the needs of a diverse population?

Structures, services and practices for equality and inclusion

Good relations cannot develop without equal encounters. Equality and participatory structures, services and practices aim to prevent and address discrimination against people from different groups and to promote equality and inclusion through group-specific and targeted services. This perspective is present, for example, in general non-discrimination and anti-racism policies and practices, as well as in group-specific services and practices, such as those aimed at strengthening the inclusion of linguistic and cultural minorities, sexual and gender minorities, people of different ages, people with disabilities, Roma and indigenous Sámi, and immigrants. For example, integration services for immigrants and participatory structures such as immigrant councils fall into this category.

Structures, services and practices for managing interaction, confrontation, conflict and hate crime

The top of the pyramid depicts actions that promote timely and appropriate interaction between groups. Not all types of interaction promote good relations. Some encounters can even undermine them, as negative experiences easily lead to negative attitudes and “intergroup anxiety”. In order to change attitudes between groups in a more positive direction, encounters must take place within a certain framework. The institution or organisation facilitating or organising encounters and interactions must support equitable interaction within an equal framework, engage the parties equally through a multi-stakeholder approach, shared goals and cooperation, create or reinforce a sense of security, and ease tensions. This requires knowledge and conscious reflection, as there is always a risk that encounters and interactions will easily reproduce ethnic hierarchies and (even unintentional) structural discrimination between groups of people, unless a conscious effort is made to dismantle these structures. This requires a rebalancing of power structures and genuinely equal consideration of the views of all groups.

In addition to ensuring equal encounters and interaction, this level also refers to dealing with confrontations and conflicts that arise in intergroup encounters due to assumptions, prejudices and resulting interpretations. These encounters can be horizontal or vertical; they can take place and escalate in neighbourhoods or in work, school or other communities between any citizens, or they can manifest as discrimination or perceived discrimination in institutions. Hate crimes are also an example of this. The essence of hate crime is that it affects not only the direct victim; the wider

community also feels targeted, and therefore hate crime can easily affect intergroup relations by dividing and polarising the local community. When a community is divided and polarised, and when there are conflicts between groups, it is particularly important to identify the need for the right kind of interaction at the right time and to target it towards the right people. (Attias, 2022; Attias & Kangasoja, 2020)

It is also important to recognise and acknowledge that promoting equality and non-discrimination in itself brings up resistance, identity clashes and conflicts. It is therefore important to be prepared to deal with these situations by maintaining effective communication and interaction, and by creating structures, services and practices to deal with conflicts and hate crimes. This is recommended in the [Intercultural Cities programme](#) and in the Ministry of the Interior's [national guidelines for local security planning](#).

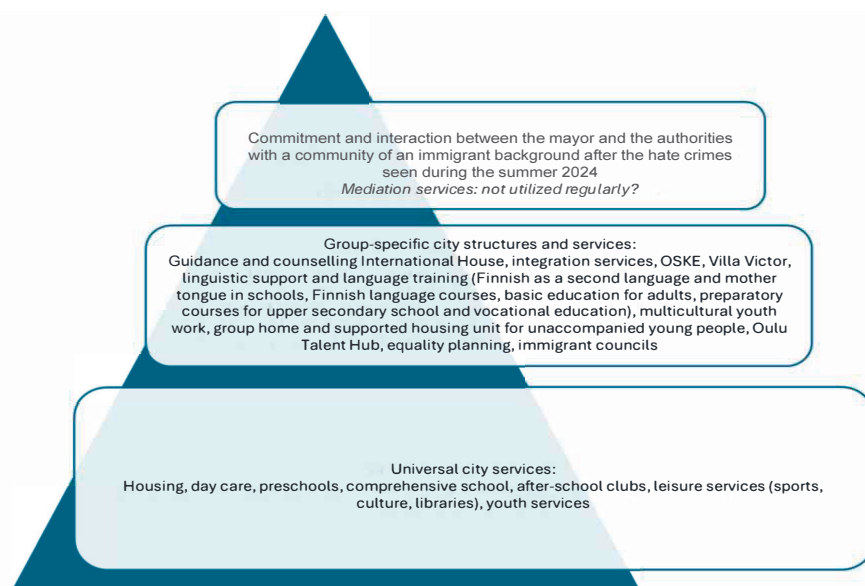
All three levels are needed to promote intercultural integration and good relations. This diagram can be used to obtain an overview of a municipality's structures, services and practices. Structuring existing aspects into different levels also reveals where the municipality's strengths are and what areas need further development. It also helps each actor to position themselves in relation to other actors and other work.

Example: Analysis and overview of Oulu's integration programme

This structure was used to analyse Oulu's integration programme in autumn 2024. The figure visualises all the services, structures and practices mentioned in the integration programme (2022–2025), structured at each level:

- General services that take into account the diversity of the population
- Group-specific services aimed at including, integrating and ensuring equal treatment, non-discrimination and inclusion
- Services that enable and facilitate interaction and conflict mediation, and deal with hate crimes or their consequences.

This was done in order to identify gaps and thus identify the levels and areas where improvements are needed. The structure helped to show that mainstreaming was already comparatively advanced: almost all sectors had been involved in the integration programme. There was also a comprehensive range of group-specific and targeted services, and the Immigrant Council, as an inclusive structure, had gained recognition in the city. A weakness was found at the top of the pyramid: there were no structures and services in the city that were systematically used to ensure timely and effective interaction and conflict resolution. However, one good practice that was identified was the response of the city authorities and the mayor to the hate-motivated stabbings in Oulu in the summer of 2024. They caused agitation and fear in immigrant communities, which was brought to the attention of the city's inclusion structure, the Immigrant Council. The city responded by convening a discussion forum, listening to concerns, and taking them seriously. This figure does not take into account services provided by non-city operators. When building a local situational overview, these services should be taken into account and placed correctly on the diagram in order to identify areas where strategic partnerships and collaboration agreements should be established.



Inclusion from the identification of areas for development to the implementation and evaluation of measures

Different forms and structures of inclusion are central to building a multilevel governance model. This part provides perspectives and examples of good practice and approaches to help municipalities ensure that groups targeted by policy measures are heard and able to express their needs to decision-makers.

Forms of governance participation

Once the actors and actions at different levels have been identified, it is possible to see an overall picture of strengths and the gaps within structures, services, or practices.

From a multilevel governance perspective, the views of different levels and stakeholders must be taken into account throughout the planning, implementation and evaluation process. This approach aims to ensure that services and resources are properly allocated. This is why a key component of multilevel governance hinges not just on what actions are taken, but also on the viewpoint of how those actions are carried out. Inclusive practices and ensuring inclusion are key.

It is always useful to examine inclusion carefully, considering what people are being invited to participate in. [The Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra](#) has presented six different types of governance participation, starting with information participation, followed by five others that align with the phases of decision-making: initiation, planning, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation.

- ▶ Information participation is the basis of everything, and [the right of access to information](#) is what makes it a legal obligation. Without knowledge of the things one can influence, no other form of participation is possible. Considering the information participation of various population groups involves offering multilingual and multichannel information, while also being available to address inquiries from local residents. Another good way to promote information participation is to provide “systems training”, such as visits by the authorities to various events where different language groups are “trained” to understand the municipality’s activities.
- ▶ Initiation participation is about who takes the initiative. Municipal residents have a statutory [right of initiative](#) in the affairs of the municipality and in developing the municipality’s activities. Participation in initiatives can be supported by creating channels for interaction, allowing direct contact with policymakers and elected representatives, and by creating structures with

direct links to decision-making structures, such as councils for specific groups.

- ▶ Planning participation refers to the interaction between citizens and the administration in preparing issues, planning activities and developing services. In addition to statutory consultations, this can be promoted through customer panels, citizens’ panels, co-design and counter-planning.
- ▶ Decision-making participation refers to the direct or indirect influence on decision-making. Examples include electing decision-makers in elections and holding positions of trust in institutions. Giving an opinion on a draft decision and lodging a complaint or appeal against a decision can also be seen as participation at the decision-making level. Lobbying, or targeted communication, is also one of the ways in which citizens can exert influence.
- ▶ Implementation participation means the involvement of citizens in the practical implementation of decisions, either together with the authorities or on their own initiative.
- ▶ Evaluation participation means that local residents are consulted when the administration’s activities are evaluated. The use of feedback and other evaluation data supports the continuity of participation and links it more closely to the regular operations of the administration.

Measuring inclusion: THL’s Experiences of Social Inclusion Scale

The experience of inclusion can be measured with the Experiences of Social Inclusion Scale (ESIS) developed by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL). It can be found on THL’s website at ([Osallisuusindikaattorimittaa osallisuuden kokemusta - THL](#)).

The Experiences of Social Inclusion Scale is a scientifically validated tool, so if you wish to use it, you may not modify or adapt it. It can be used, for example, to provide monitoring data, to evaluate activities or to stimulate discussion and ideas in group activities.

The ESIS survey consists of ten statements that map the respondent’s feelings of belonging, the meaningfulness of what they do, and their scope for action and management. Although the statements are theoretically divisible along these dimensions, scientific validation shows that all the statements fall under one factor, i.e. the influencing factor, the experience of inclusion. The answers to the statements are placed on a scale, with one end representing the experience of exclusion and the other the experience of inclusion.

The statements of the ESIS survey are:

1. I feel that my daily activities are meaningful
2. I get positive feedback on what I do

3. I belong to a group or community that is important to me
4. I am important to other people
5. I can influence the course of my life
6. I feel that my life has a purpose
7. I can pursue things that are important to me
8. I get help when I really need it
9. I feel that I am trusted
10. I can influence some aspects of my living environment.

Instructions for using the Experiences of Social Inclusion Scale can be found on the [Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare's website](#).

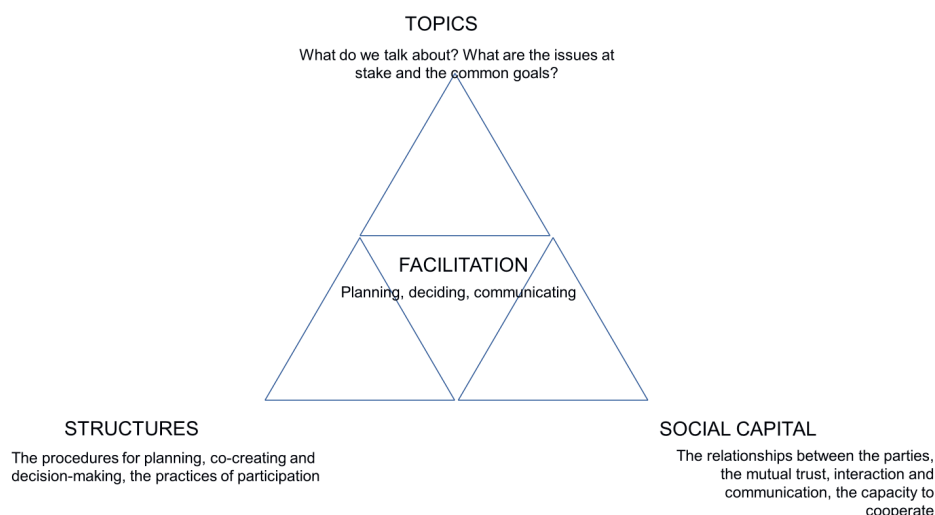
An equal focus on issues, methods and social capital

Meaningful inclusion is about ensuring that the voices of the people targeted by services, practices and policies are heard in decisions that affect them. This kind of

approach requires genuine engagement in dialogue, not-knowing, and especially not-knowing-better.

One way of outlining it methodologically is to focus on three things in equal measure:

- Issues, i.e. finding out what information and views the participants provided on the substantive issues relevant to the survey.
- Methods, i.e. structures for participation and how to communicate them, so that the purpose of the consultation, its principles and the importance of participation are clear to all, and people have the opportunity to prepare in advance.
- Social capital, i.e. building dialogue, relations and cooperation, and ensuring the functioning of relations and interactions between the parties involved. This sometimes requires facilitation in order to create a motivating and supportive atmosphere and relations (Stenroos, Jääskeläinen, Attias, 2021).



Councils for specific groups

Many cities have immigrant councils, which are permanent participatory structures (similar to youth, elderly and disability councils) that strengthen the inclusion and empowerment of immigrants in municipal decision-making and build cooperation between integration and good relations stakeholders.

To achieve truly meaningful inclusion, rather than symbolic inclusion and tokenism, there are a few elements that need to be taken into account:

- Reflecting on the structure of meaningful inclusion: what issues the council will focus on in each period, what structures will be used to influence those issues, and what relations and places for interaction should be built.

- A link with municipal or city decision-making: the council should have a mandate to submit initiatives and proposals to the municipal or city council, at least on issues concerning immigrants.
- Right to information and participation: the council should be able to monitor accessibility, especially of the accessibility of targeted services, and to participate in the strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation of integration and good relations, i.e. it should be linked to the strategic and monitoring group for integration or other cooperation groups. The council could also have a mandate to take initiatives and propose thematic and ad hoc working groups when problems or areas for development are identified.

- Council formation and selection of members: recruitment should seek to include people who represent the diversity of communities (heterogeneity of backgrounds, languages, religions, nationalities, gender, occupations, etc.) but who also have expertise in integration issues and the motivation to make a difference. The role of chairperson may have specific requirements, such as expertise concerning the mandate, plus good communication and interpersonal skills.
- Skills development: the skills of council members should be continuously developed so that they can influence the structures of the municipality or city in the “right language” and have an impact. The council can provide training, information and study trips, for example.
- Financial resources: members should be compensated for their participation in the council and receive a meeting fee.

Co-design

Co-design is a process in which people with professional and experiential knowledge (staff and clients) work together as equals to improve services or policy programmes, for example. Every person involved in co-design is treated as an equal partner in the process from the start. The process starts with identifying a problem, challenge or development need together, and progresses by listening, learning and making decisions together. The advantage of co-design is that by including the target group of services or practices in the planning and design phase, they are more likely to meet their target group’s needs.

Co-design is an approach that can fulfil several municipal obligations. According to the Local Government Act, residents and service users have the right to participate in and influence municipal activities. In addition, the Integration Act obliges municipalities to include immigrants in the planning and monitoring of integration plans and the promotion of good relations. The co-design process allows for meaningful inclusion.

Co-design can be applied to any project that aims to improve or influence a service. Examples include

improving the quality of a service, developing a new service, drafting a policy programme, or conducting a research project.

Conditions for co-design

It is important to carefully assess the conditions for co-design. The process must allow for real inclusion and influence, not just a semblance of inclusion. This means that sufficient resources (financial and time) are allocated to the process, and that the co-designer has a genuine and real curiosity and openness to develop or change the service, practice or policy programme as envisaged in the process.

Relations are at the core of co-design. Co-design requires and means building relations between different groups (e.g. authorities and clients), so rather than being a one-off event, it is instead a process and a way of thinking. Building and maintaining relations takes commitment – and skill.

The process must also identify the power imbalance so that it is not repeated or reinforced in the process. There are many ways to balance power. The role of the facilitator is important, and a skilled professional must be chosen as a facilitator for co-design. The characteristics of a facilitator include a shared identity with the community that provides experiential knowledge or experience of working in the context in question; the ability to build relations; a curious mind that is open to learning (rather than assuming to know what’s best for everyone); objectivity and a sense of comfort with the subject (not, for example, someone who is at risk of re-traumatisation). In addition, a couple of people can be chosen to lead the process, one of whom is a member of the community with experiential knowledge. It is also a good idea to select participants so that a number of members of the community are involved, and to include those who have networks and tacit knowledge but may not otherwise always represent the community at different events. Choosing the right space also balances power: meetings should be organised in a place that is accessible, easy to get to and comfortable.

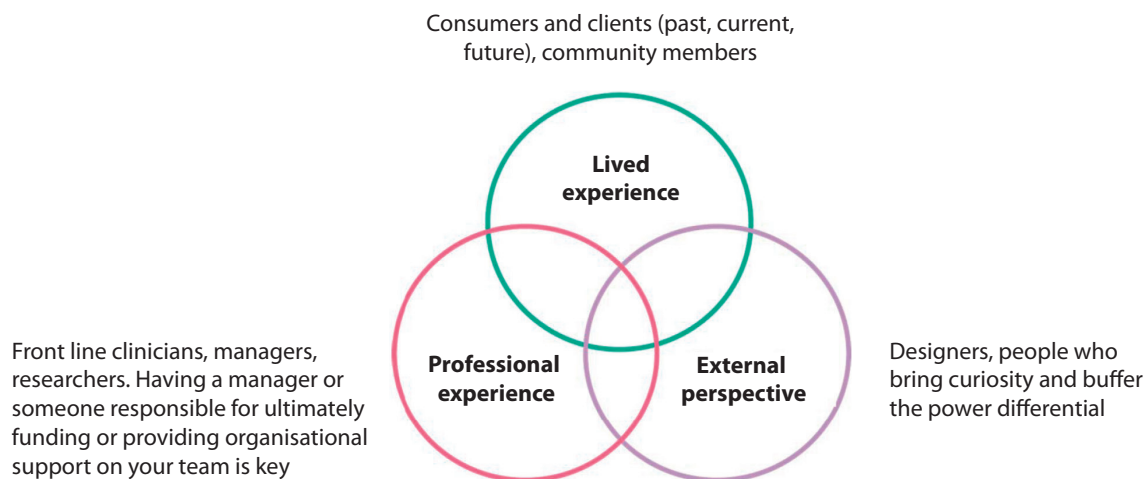
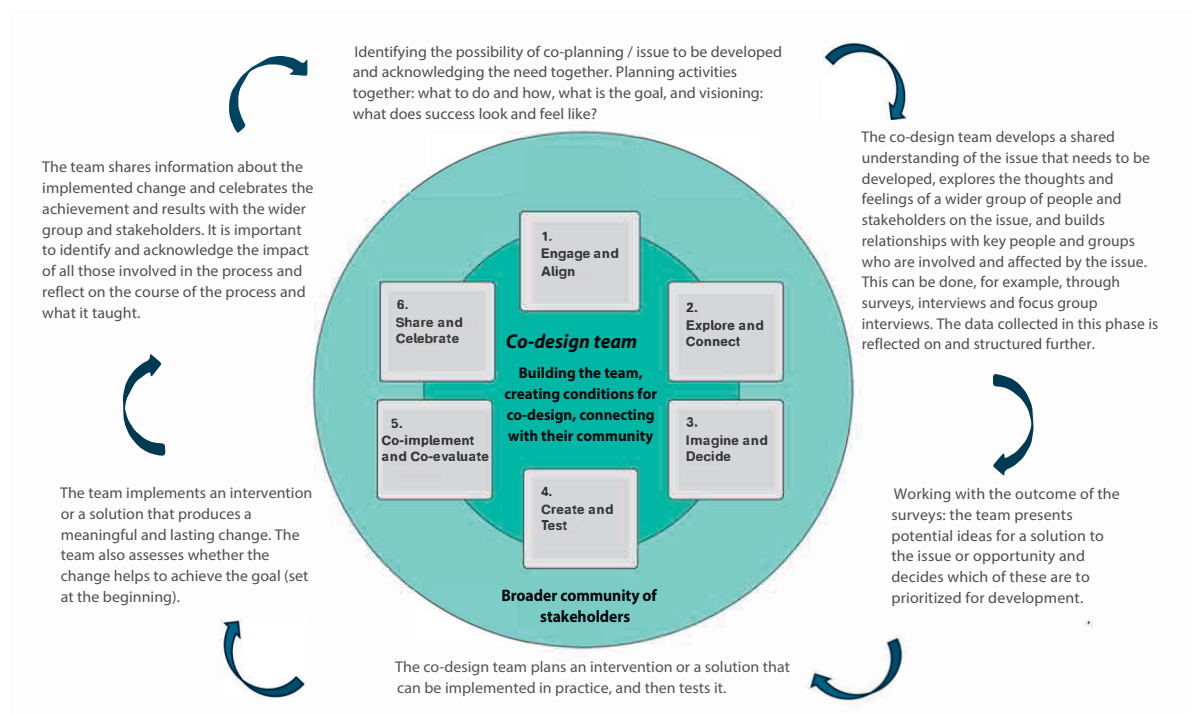


Figure: Stakeholders in co-design (figure: Involving the right people | Metro North Health)

Process design and implementation

The six-step co-design process is presented here to give an idea of what happens in practice. The process is described as a circle because it is not always linear. The basic idea of co-design is that the process is flexible, so these different steps are more like elements that can help you to think about the design of each process on a case-by-case basis.



Co-design | Metro North Health

Using dialogue to promote inclusion and good relations

The use and methods of dialogue have been developed to support societal decision-making, to promote equal social debate and to increase understanding of different phenomena, such as ETNO dialogues,

which in 2023 addressed racism and discrimination experienced by young people. Dialogue has gained ground in Finland in recent years, after the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra developed the Timeout dialogue method, which helps to learn conversational skills and gain a deeper understanding of a given topic. The Timeout Foundation's website is a good

resource for organising dialogues. Dialogue at its best creates an experience of equality and freedom, and is seen as a key method for learning the skills and values required for democracy.

The right kind of dialogue at the right time can make a difference in promoting good relations. Dialogue facilitation has the potential to influence the quality of interaction between people and groups, and thereby also the quality of relations between population groups (which are built in practice through interactions). Dialogue is an interaction that focuses on sharing experiences, meeting as equals and building consensus. It can model a respectful dialogue between all parties and thereby promote peaceful coexistence, even between those with irreconcilable conflicts of identity and values. A well-facilitated dialogue can prevent or mitigate polarisation and the escalation of conflicts into tensions between entire groups of people, thereby increasing a sense of security, inclusion and trust in society, or in this case, the city.

In terms of promoting good relations, there are certain pitfalls in dialogue that need to be taken into account. If dialogue is not organised at the right time, between the right actors and on the right subject, it can even increase polarisation and conflict. For dialogue to change attitudes towards another population group in a positive way, and to defuse confrontations, it must be organised in a timely manner (preventive dialogue, dialogue to defuse tensions or conflicts, dialogue to strengthen reconciliation), be based on a common interest or objective (which is carefully clarified), be facilitated in a balanced way (so that no one party dominates another), and have the support of society, in this case, the local government exercising public authority.

Dialogue activities require skills development, because they take place within and are part of the structures of society, and therefore easily reproduce ethnic hierarchies and structural discrimination and racism, unless a conscious effort is made to dismantle them.

National Dialogues

Dialogue has also been developed in Finland as part of multilevel governance. The National Dialogues model is a development project between the Ministry of Finance and the Dialogue Academy, which aims to develop a new model for social dialogue between citizens, communities and public authorities. The idea is to strengthen inclusion and increase people's experience-based understanding of societal challenges and opportunities by engaging in dialogue on issues that matter to people and communities.

The project started with the Lockdown Dialogues, a nationwide series of discussions on how the coronavirus pandemic affected different population groups. Since then, national dialogues have been organised on a range of topics, including immigration, community, security and trust. The aim is to involve as wide a range of people and communities as possible. The discussions aim to build understanding and a snapshot of different social phenomena, challenges and opportunities through the experiences of the participants. The idea is that the dialogues are organised by different organisations trained in dialogue, in different parts of Finland. The dialogues are confidential, but the main points of the discussions are recorded and compiled into a national report. This provides a wide range of empirical data from different population groups to support decision-making. The aim of the project is that, in addition to the national scale, the dialogue model could be scaled down to a local level, to a specific sector or industry, or conversely, scaled up to an international scope.

The National Dialogues model is not a political process, nor does it seek consensus or consensus-based decision-making. The aim is to gain as extensive an understanding as possible of people's experiences and the challenges at hand. The aim is to strengthen social inclusion, cohesion and the ability of Finnish society to change in the face of various societal challenges through a broader social dialogue.

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