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INTERPLAY AND CO-OPERATION BETWEEN NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS IN INTEGRATION POLICY

Case Helsinki, Finland

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Tässä työpaperissa tarkastellaan suomalaista kotouttamispolitiikkaa kansallisen ja paikallisen tason välisen vuorovaikutuksen ja yhteistyön näkökulmasta. Analyysi kohdistetaan valtionhallinnon ja Helsingin kaupungin väliseen suhteeseen sekä pääkaupunkiseudun kolmen suurimman kaupungin, Helsingin, Espoon ja Vantaan väliseen suhteeseen.

Tutkimuksen teoreettisen viitekehyksen tarjoaa Peter Scholtenin laatima malli, jossa keskus- ja paikallishallinnon toimijoiden välillä sekä eri paikallistason toimijoiden välillä voi olla eroja (divergenssiä) ja yhtäläisyyksiä (konvergenssia). Kansallisten ja paikallisten kotouttamisohjelmien perusteella suomalaisessa kotouttamispolitiikassa ei ole suuria eroja valtionhallinnon ja paikallishallinnon välillä eikä myöskään kaupunkien välillä.

Scholten kutsuu tällaista kotouttamisen hallintamallia ylhäältä alas johdetuksi keskitetyksi malliksi. Suomen tapauksessa yhtenäisyyteen vaikuttanee kuitenkin keskusjohtoisen poliittis-hallinnollisen ohjauksen sijaan enemmän yhteinen ymmärrys kotoutumisesta ja siihen liittyvistä haasteista. Tätä käsitysten yhtenäisyyttä puolestaan todennäköisesti edesauttaa keskeisten toimijoiden tiivis vuorovaikutus.

Kotoutuminen ja kotouttaminen ymmärretään sekä valtiolla että kunnissa yhtäältä suppeasti ja toisaalta laajasti. Laajassa näkemyksessä kotoutuminen on koko yhteiskuntaa koskettava kaksisuuntainen ja kokonaisvaltainen prosessi. Suppea näkemys kotoutumisesta ja kotouttamisesta keskittyy maahanmuuttajien mahdollisimman nopeaan työllistymiseen ja sen edellytyksiin.

Suppean kotouttamisen tapauksessa tärkeimmät kotoutumista edistävät toimenpiteet ovat ohjaus ja neuvonta, alkukartoitukset, kotoutumissuunnitelmat ja kotoutumiskoulutus. Nämä tuet ja palvelut ovat vuodesta 2010 lähtien olleet periaatteessa kaikkien maahanmuuttajien saatavilla. Käytännössä suurin osa on kuitenkin yhä kohdistunut lähinnä kansainvälistä suojelua saaneille henkilöille ja työttömille työnhakijoille. Tämä havainto supistaa edelleen suomalaisen kotouttamispolitiikan tosiasiallista toiminta-aluetta.

Kotouttamislainsäädäntö säätelee valtion ja kuntien työnjakoa ja yhteistoimintaa, ja roolitus ja koordinointi näyttävätkin melko selkeiltä. Käytännössä kunnat kuitenkin vastaavat alkukartoituksista ja kotoutumissuunnitelmista vähemmän kuin mitä lain perusteella voisi päätellä. Toisaalta ainakin pääkaupunkiseudulla kunnat ovat tärkeitä kotoutumiskoulutuksen tarjoajia ja mahdollistajia, erityisesti jos huomioon otetaan kaikki maahanmuuttajien saavutettavissa oleva koulutus ja kurssitoiminta.

Yleistason yhteisymmärryksestä huolimatta suomalaista kotouttamisjärjestelmää on viime aikoina kritisoitu koordinoinnin puutteista. Kotoutumisen edistäminen on poikkihallinnollista toimintaa, ja niin valtion kuin kuntienkin tasolla hallinnon eri haarat voivat usein toimia melko itsenäisesti. Kunnilla on vahva itsehallinto sekä suhteessa valtioon että muihin kuntiin. Rahoitus on valtion keskeinen ohjausinstrumentti kuntiin nähden, mutta sen tehoa heikentää rahoituksen riittämättömyys suhteessa koettuun tarpeeseen. Lisäksi suuri osa toiminnoista tapahtuu määräaikaisissa hankkeissa, joista on vaikea saada kokonaiskuvaa.

Kotouttamispolitiikan analysoinnin ja arvioinnin suurin ongelma on kuitenkin, että joudumme tekemään paljon päätelmiä oletusten perusteella. Järjestelmän todellisen luonteen ja toimintakyvyn selvittäminen vaatisi perusteellista ja systemaattista analyysia politiikan kansallisesta ja paikallisesta toimeenpanosta. Tarvittaisiin enemmän tietoa siitä, mitä kotouttamistoimia toteutetaan kenen toimesta, millä tarkoituksella, kenelle ja millä resursseilla. Toistaiseksi voimme lähinnä muodostaa hypoteeseja ja tehdä karkeita arvioita. Lisäksi kotouttamisen vaikuttavuuden arviointi on hyvin hankalaa.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, there has been growing interest in the local level of immigrant integration processes and policies (e.g. Alexander 2007; Bosswick & Heckmann 2006; Capionio & Borkert 2010; Zapata Barrero 2015). This is a positive development because finding your place in a society always takes place at the level of local communities. Therefore, it is also the development in the local context that ultimately defines the success or failure of both integration processes and integration policies.

In a recent article, Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas and Rinus Penninx (2016, pp. 19–20) point out that the essence of policies, generally speaking, is the intention to guide and steer processes in society. In the case of our scholarly community[1], we are hence specifically interested in the integration processes of immigrants and how these processes are guided and steered. These integration processes cover practically all areas of personal and social life, and Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx also rightly propose that a systematic analysis of integration policies should go beyond integration policies in their strictest sense. Policies in fields such as housing, education and health care also exert influence on the integration processes of immigrants.

The authors mention three important questions that should be analysed (ibid., pp. 20–21):

- How do different political and social actors perceive immigrant integration in terms of policy frames and policy shifts?
- What should be done to enhance immigrant integration processes?
- For whom are integration policies meant; e.g. individuals or groups; specific target groups or all citizens?

These are the questions I will also try to give a response to in this paper, which focuses on the Finnish integration policy context. Answers to this kind of research question are often searched for from policy documents and political discourse. Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx, however, also aptly point out that there might be a discrepancy between policy discourse and policy practice that, in turn, misleads researchers to take for granted something that never becomes reality (ibid., 21). Therefore, it is essential to complement the study of integration policies with concrete and detailed analyses of actual policy measures, with the ways in which policies are implemented, and how bureaucrats, practitioners and professionals adapt policy principles to their own work.

Furthermore, in addition to fieldwork among policy practitioners, it is also fundamental to examine the financial assets allocated to integration policy implementation (ibid., 21). Few policy ideas, plans or initiatives can be put into practice without sufficient resources designated to these purposes. In turn, the differences between budgets for different purposes and between different levels of government also say something about the importance and hierarchical order of these policy levels and policy areas.

In recent years, there has also been increased interest in the relation between the state level and the local level of integration policy principles and practices (e.g. Dekker, Emils-

1 This paper has originally been written for the Multi-level governance panel at the 2017 IMISCOE Conference in Rotterdam.

son, Krieger & Scholten 2015; Emilsson 2015; Scholten 2015). In their article, Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx (pp. 22–23) also emphasise that we should shift the focus from government to governance. This means analysing more closely both the vertical dimension of policymaking between the national, regional and local levels, and the horizontal dimension that includes organisations and other actors from different sectors of public administration and the civil society.

I take the ideas of Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx as the starting point of my paper, concentrating specifically on the vertical dimension of Finnish integration policy. In addition to the questions mentioned above, I will therefore try to find answers to the following questions:

- Who is in charge of integration policies?
- How are the different levels coordinated?
- Do they respond to different political and social imperatives?
- Do they complement or contradict one another?

In this paper, the relation between national and local level of integration policy-making will be analysed in the specific context of the city of Helsinki, the capital of Finland, and its relation to the central government. However, as the Finnish capital region is composed of two other cities that also have a significant foreign-born population and their own integration policy programmes, the analysis also includes some comparison between the cities of Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa, located in the region of Uusimaa in southern Finland.

The analysis is based on a variety of sources. In addition to Finnish legislation, other integration policy documents and available research literature on the topic, I have interviewed or otherwise talked with a great number of integration policy actors at both the national and the local level. As a member of numerous integration policy working groups, steering groups and other formal and informal networks, my findings are also partly founded upon participatory observation.

The structure of the paper is as follows. The next chapter is devoted to informing the reader about immigration to Finland and the immigrant population in Finland and, in particular, in the Helsinki capital region. Thereafter, the general framework of the Finnish integration policy is presented.[2] The analysis of the Finnish integration policy is divided into two parts. In the first part, I will examine and compare the national integration programme and the local integration programmes of the cities of Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa. In the second part, I will take a closer look at the implementation of both national and local integration policies, paying special attention to the main instruments in the Finnish integration policy: initial assessments, integration plans and integration training. I will also briefly discuss my findings on integration policy expenditure in Finland. In the concluding chapter, I will summarise the key results of my research. Furthermore, I will deliberate on the reasons why answering research questions has been so complicated, and on what should be done about it.

2 On Finnish integration policy, see also Saukkonen 2016.

MIGRATION TO AND IMMIGRANTS IN FINLAND

During the Cold War, there was little immigration to Finland. The country was poorer than its Nordic neighbours were and the border between Finland and the Soviet Union remained closed to everybody, with only a few exceptions. Finland received some hundreds of refugees from Chile and Vietnam in the 1970s. In the late 1980s, foreigners in Finland mainly consisted of Finns' family members and remigrants from Sweden.

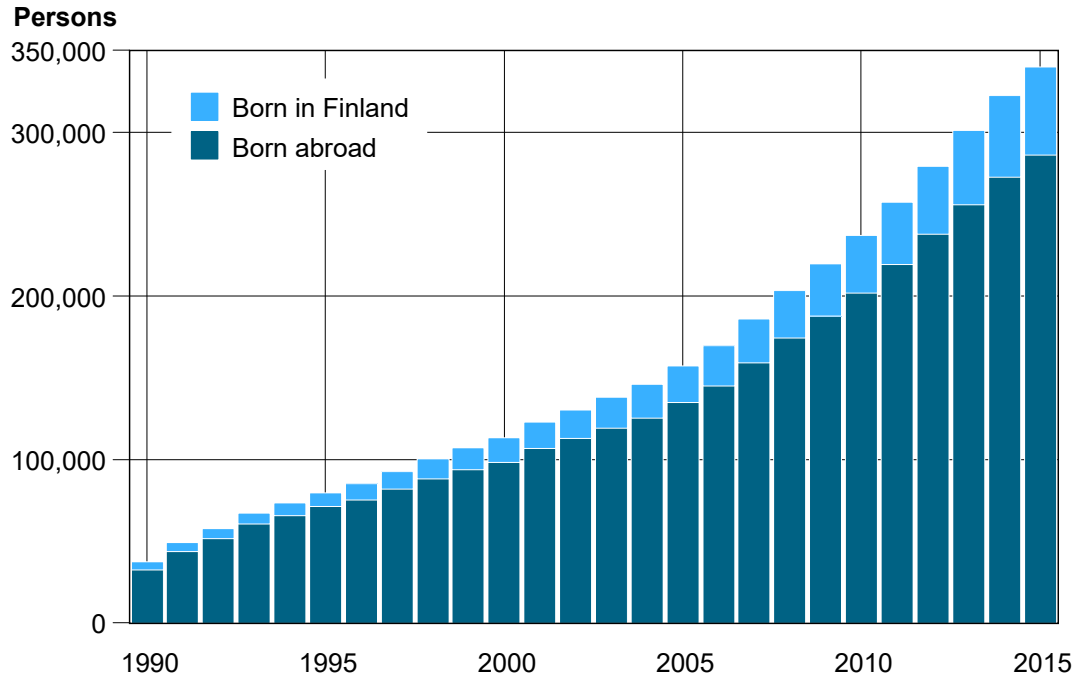
The situation changed as the socialist bloc collapsed, the Soviet Union ceased to exist and Finnish participation in the European integration increased. In 1990, President Mauno Koivisto made a public statement that those with Finnish nationality in Russia and in countries that had belonged to the Soviet Union would be treated as remigrants if they wanted to move to Finland. This interpretation led to the immigration of some 30,000 Ingrians and their family members. The arrival of Somali refugees in the early 1990s was connected to the outbreak of the civil war in Somalia, and to the disappearance of the country many of them came from, the Soviet Union. As a result of asylum seeking and family unification, the Somali community has grown relatively large. From Estonia and Russia, Finland has also received family-migrants and work-related migrants during the last quarter of a century. Especially after joining the EU in 2004, the movement of workforce from Estonia has been significant. (Korkiasaari & Söderling 2003; Martikainen, Saari & Korkiasaari 2013.)

At the end of 2015, the number of people with a foreign background[3] in Finland was 339,925, about 6% of the population (Figure 1). Of these, the great majority were also born abroad, whereas some 53,000 were born in Finland to two parents born abroad.[4]

3 In the official Finnish statistics, people whose parents (or the only known parent) have been born abroad are considered to be people with a foreign background. People of foreign background thus include both people born in Finland and abroad. A relatively similar classification is used in the other Nordic countries.

4 In addition, there are some 120,000 people born in Finland with one parent born in Finland, the other abroad (Statistics Finland 2014).

Figure 1. Persons with foreign background in Finland 1990–2015, total



Source: Statistics Finland

The main countries of origin among persons with a foreign background are Russia and the former Soviet Union,[5] Estonia, Somalia and Iraq (Figure 2). More than two thirds of immigrants originate from countries with a high Human Development Index (HDI). The share of people whose background is from low HDI countries is much higher in the second generation, i.e. children of those born abroad. In the city of Helsinki, 36% of those born in Finland to parents born abroad have parents born in Africa, mainly in Somalia (22% in the whole country). (City of Helsinki Urban Facts 2017, p. 7).

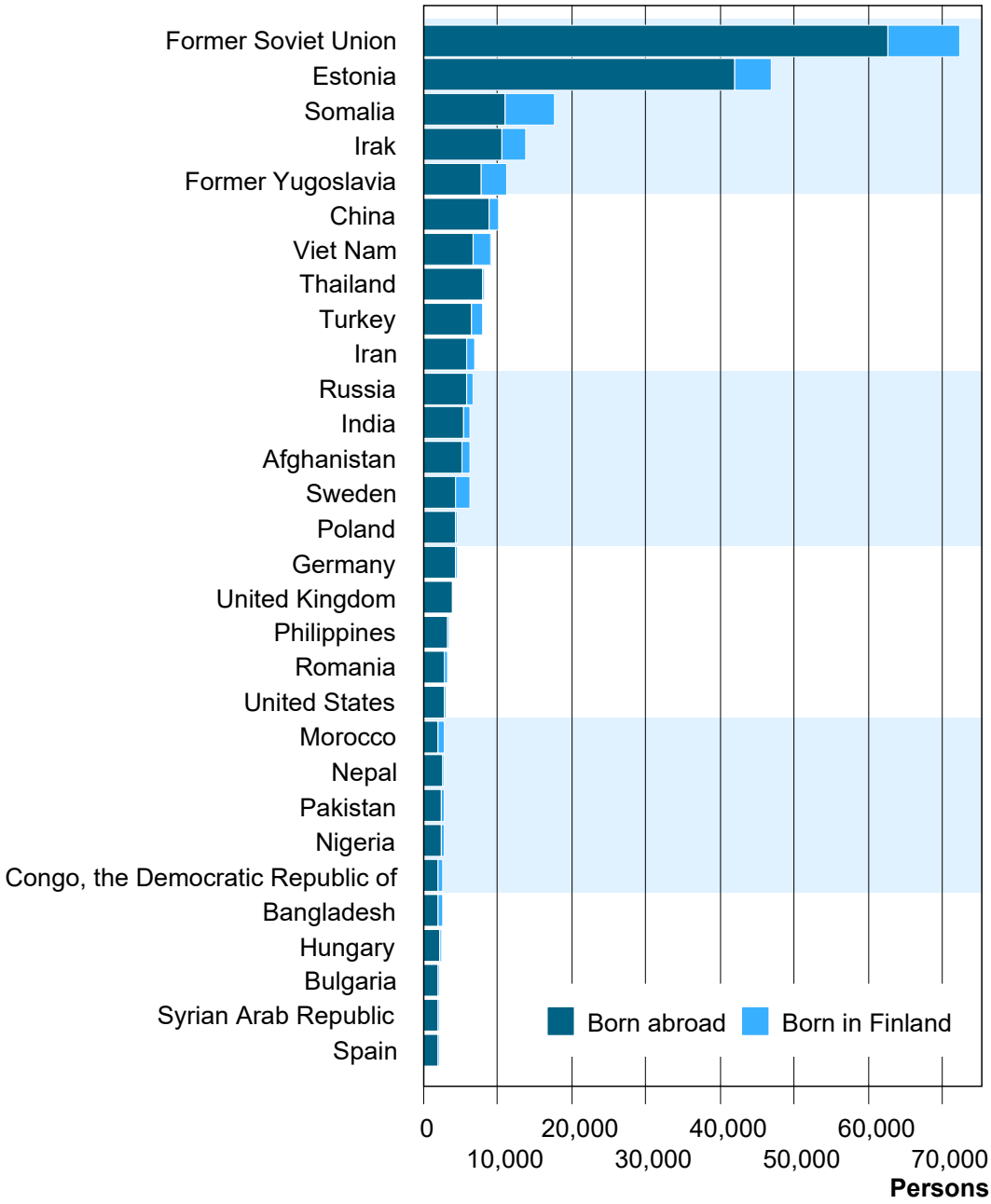
Roughly half of immigrants and their offspring are living in the Helsinki capital region, and, again, half of those in the city of Helsinki.[6] In this metropolitan area, the share of people with an immigrant background is close to 15% of the whole population. Their share is, however, significantly higher in the younger age groups. Figure 3 shows the division of persons with foreign background divided between first and second generation of immigrants in the city of Helsinki and in the whole of Finland.

In 2015, Finland received 32,476 asylum applicants, which is about 10 times the figure in 2013 and 2014. Some 20,500 of these were of Iraqi origin, and 5,214 came from Afghanistan. Among the latter group, there were almost two thousand unaccompanied minors. Of the asylum seekers, 4 out of 5 were male. Many asylum reception centres were established to manage the situation and to try to distribute asylum seekers relatively evenly across the country. (European Migration Network 2016, pp. 18–19.) The Finnish Integration Service granted international protection to 6,375 asylum seekers in 2016. In that year, Finland received only 5,651 asylum applications, including internal transfers within the European Union. (European Migration Network 2017, pp. 18–20.)

5 Those born in the former Soviet Union do not include those born in the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic.

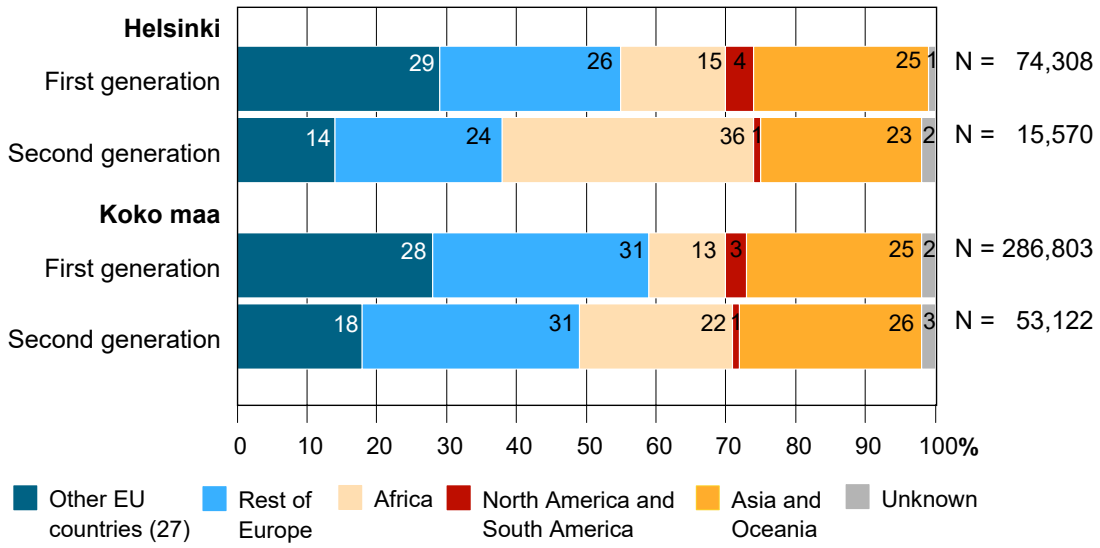
6 The capital region has altogether 1.4 million inhabitants (about one quarter of the whole population of Finland). The city of Helsinki had some 635,000 inhabitants in 2017.

Figure 2. Biggest background country groups of persons with foreign background in Finland in 2015



Source: Statistics Finland

Figure 3. Persons with foreign background according to geographical areas of origin 1.1.2016



Source: City of Helsinki Urban Facts. Data source: Statistics Finland.
Turkey is here included in the rest of Europe.

FINNISH INTEGRATION POLICY FRAMEWORK

Historical development and the current division of labour

Some integration policy activities were started already as a response to the reception of refugees from Chile and Vietnam in the 1970s. When immigration grew in the 1990s, there was an immediate recognition of the need for action by public authorities. Helsinki and the other cities in the metropolitan area promptly started organising reception and integration services for newcomers. The first national Integration Act came into force in 1999 following the guidelines of a commission report.[7]

The main goal in the Finnish policy has been flexible and efficient integration of all immigrants into Finnish society and working life. In the policy preparation process preceding the legislation, Nordic, especially Swedish, and Dutch examples and experiences were used as models and sources of inspiration. As a result, the basic principle in the Finnish integration policy became the idea that people moving to Finland should participate in society on equal grounds, in the labour market in particular, while simultaneously they were granted the right to maintain their own language and culture. Integration was also understood as a two-way process in which the host society and its institutions also have to adapt to the changing situation and new service needs. The Finnish approach to immigrant integration is thus neither assimilationist nor segregationist (radical multiculturalist). In terms of basic principles, it closely resembled the models adopted in Sweden and the Netherlands. (Saukkonen 2013a; 2016)[8]

In the 1999 legislation, it was, however, mainly refugees and unemployed immigrants who were entitled to publicly-funded integration activities such as an integration plan (*kotoutumissuunnitelma*), integration education (*kotoutumiskoulutus*) and integration assistance (*kotoutumistuki*). This focus was soon seen as too restrictive, and in the legislation reform that took place in 2010, the scope of integration activities was enlarged. Nowadays, the instruments of immigrant integration are available to all those who, after initial assessment (*alkukartoitus*), are deemed to profit from these measures.

The purpose of the current Integration Act is to support and promote integration and to make it easier for immigrants to play an active role in Finnish society, and to promote gender equality, non-discrimination and positive interaction between different population groups. The Act applies to persons who have permission to reside in Finland. The integration process is defined as interactive development involving immigrants and society, the

7 Maahanmuutto- ja pakolaispoliittinen toimikunta 1997. An unofficial translation of the Act on Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers (439/1999) is available at http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/1999/en19990493.pdf.

8 This right to own culture and identity includes the obligation of public authorities to support individuals and groups in their efforts to keep up language skills and to practice culture. This right was justified with the arguments that good skills in the mother tongue and the recognition of own culture would enhance learning either of the two official languages, Finnish or Swedish, and promote the acceptance of the Finnish way of life. In addition, it also fitted well into the traditional Finnish bilingualism and the more general recognition of minority cultures within Finland. In the 1990s, an amendment was made in the Finnish Constitution that guaranteed the Sámi, the Roma, and other groups, the right to maintain and develop their own language and culture. (Saukkonen 2013b; for Finnish multiculturalism, see also the website of the Multiculturalism Policy Index, http://www.queensu.ca/mcp/home.

aim of which is to provide immigrants with the knowledge and skills required in society and working life. Immigrants shall also be supported to maintain their culture and language. Integration as a policy refers to the multi-sectoral promotion and support of integration processes using the measures and services provided by the authorities and other parties.[9]

In the Finnish public administration and the provision of public services, there is a constitutionally anchored division of labour between the central government and municipalities.[10] Municipalities are self-governing units that have a right to levy taxes and that, according to the Local Government Act (1995), shall strive to promote the welfare of their residents and sustainable development in their area. In practice, local authorities carry out many tasks of the Finnish welfare state, especially by arranging services such as day care and schools, health centres and dental care, and social welfare services. (Pesonen & Riihinen 2002, pp. 189–200.)

In this context, it is relevant to notice that employment policy and employment services mainly belong to the responsibilities of the central government. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment is responsible for the planning and implementation of labour policy and for labour legislation. Local authorities, however, can voluntarily promote employment in their area in many ways. Municipalities can, for example, participate in or finance different projects, workshops and other services enhancing labour market entry.

In the education system, the Finnish National Board of Education is responsible for the national implementation of the policy aims defined by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Local authorities[11] are in charge of making decisions on the allocation of funding, local curricula, recruitment of personnel in their area. Municipalities have a high degree of autonomy, and they can delegate decision-making power to schools. In addition to education for children, many municipalities or joint municipal authorities also maintain or finance occupational education institutes and universities of applied science.

In the Finnish integration policy, the state is in charge of composing the national integration programme that contains integration objectives for every four years. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment is responsible for the preparation of this programme. The same ministry is also responsible for the overall development, planning and steering of the integration policy and for the coordination between integration policy and the promotion of good ethnic relations. Furthermore, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment is in charge of the assessment and monitoring of the integration policy and the promotion of good ethnic relations.

Other ministries relevant to the planning and implementation of integration policy are the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. All these ministries define their goals and measures in the integration policy areas for which they are responsible. Each of them also determines, for its own administrative branch, the objectives and measures concerning the development of integration as a part of the overall operational and financial planning.[12]

9 For a more detailed description, see unofficial translation of the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1386/2010) at http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/2010/en20101386.pdf.

10 In 2017, there were 311 municipalities in Finland. Municipalities also have extensive rights to decide upon their own system of decision-making, public administration and service production.

11 Municipalities or joint municipal authorities.

12 A cooperation body with representatives of the ministries central to integration assists the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment with the purpose of promoting cooperation and the flow of information in integration-related matters between ministries and in the coordination of measures.

The Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centres) are responsible for the regional implementation and development tasks of the central government in their regions.[13] As a part of their responsibilities regarding labour force and employment, these ELY Centres are also in charge of the integration of immigrants at the regional level. The Employment and Economic Development Offices (TE Offices) in the same region are in charge of integrating those immigrants that have been registered as jobseekers. The main tasks of ELY Centres regarding integration policy include the regional development, coordination and monitoring of integration, and regional cooperation in integration matters. The Centres provide municipalities with support and advice and TE Offices with guidance, advice and support. ELY Centres are also regionally in charge of the promotion of good ethnic relations and for intercultural dialogue.[14]

Municipalities, in turn, have overall coordination responsibility for the integration of immigrants at the local level and for the planning and monitoring of local integration policy. According to the Integration Act, the goal is to support internationalism, equality, equity and positive interaction between different groups. In addition, immigrants' opportunities to maintain their own language and culture should be supported and the needs of the immigrant population have to be generally taken into account. Municipalities are obliged to ensure that local services also suit the needs of immigrant inhabitants.

In cooperation with other actors operating in the same geographical area, such as the ELY Centre, the TE Office, local police, and the NGOs that provide integration services, municipalities periodically prepare an integration programme. The law regulates that this local integration programme may contain, for example, a report on how integration measures are linked with the strategic planning and monitoring of the municipality, a plan on how general services provided by the municipality can be adjusted to the needs of the immigrants, and a plan on the measures promoting and supporting integration.[15]

Integration policy measures

Measures and services promoting immigrant integration are provided either as basic governmental or municipal services or as specific measures that only immigrants are entitled to. The last-mentioned measures and services include basic information about Finnish society and about the rights and obligations of immigrants in Finnish working life and society.[16] In addition, integration services contain guidance and provision of advice for immigrants provided by municipalities, TE Offices and other authorities. The most important instruments promoting immigrant integration, however, are tailor-made initial assessments (*alkukartoitus*), integration plans for and for families individuals (*kotoutumissuunnitelma*), financial integration assistance[17] (*kotoutumistuki*) and integration training (*kotoutumiskoulutus*).

13 In 2017, there were 15 ELY Centres in Finland.

14 The ELY Centres also conclude agreements with municipalities on the allocation of persons receiving international protection into municipalities.

15 In this programme, details of the municipal authority responsible for the coordination of the integration and parties responsible for the different measures can also be presented.

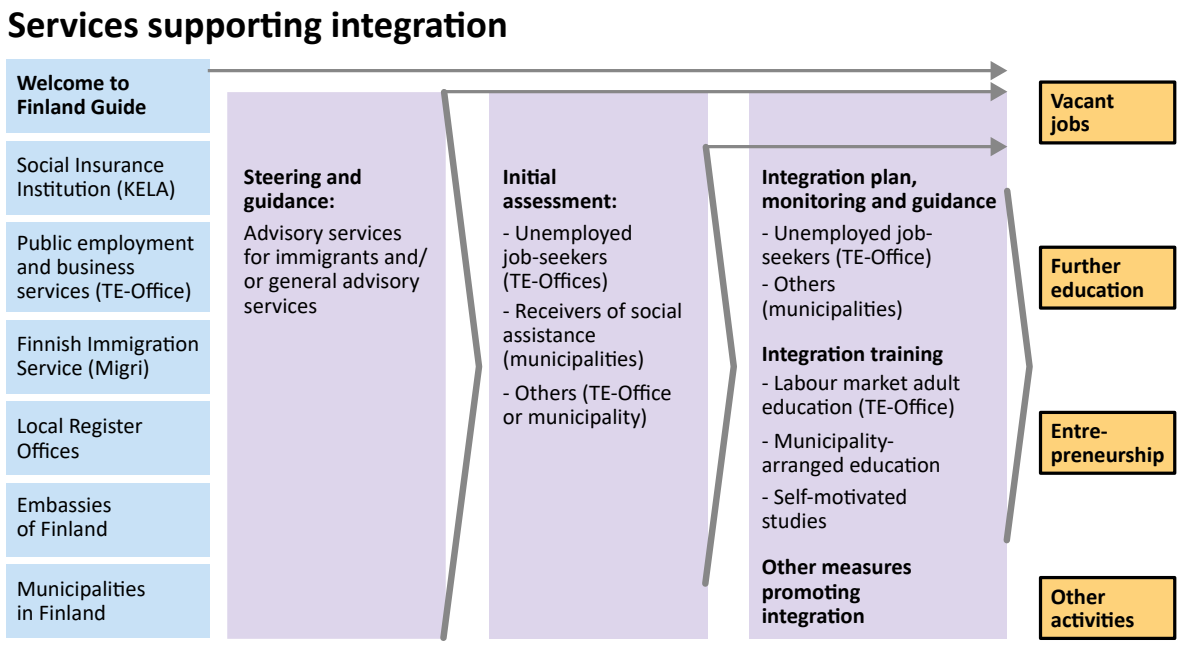
16 This information is distributed to all persons moving to Finland in connection with the service of the decision on the residence permit, registration of the right of residence, issue of a residence card or the registration of the population information and information on the municipality of residence.

17 According to the original version of the law, integration assistance was financial support paid to an immigrant so that he/she has secure means of support for the duration of the participation in the measures carried out as part of the integration plan. In 2015, this specific form of support was abolished. It was replaced by either labour market subsidy or social assistance.

The starting point of the Finnish integration policy is thus nowadays based on individual service needs, regardless of the reasons for moving to Finland. These needs are determined in the initial assessment that includes, for example, an examination of education, training and work experience. This assessment is always made for those who receive a residence permit after an asylum application procedure, for the so-called quota refugees (750 in 2017) and for those newcomers of working age that seek access to the labour market with the help of an employment agency. The TE Office initiates the assessment for those without work who belong to the work force, whereas municipalities have arranged initial assessments for those who have a long-term need for financial social assistance[18]. Initial assessment is also available to other immigrants. In these cases, either the TE Office or a municipality conducts the assessment.

After the initial assessment, an integration plan is, whenever needed, drawn up for the immigrant or for a family. This integration plan is a mutual agreement[19] on integration training that includes, in addition to language instruction, courses that promote access to employment, and training that improves social, cultural and life-management skills. The first integration plan shall be prepared within three years after the issue of the first residence permit or residence card or the registration of the right of residence. Language courses are chosen after language skills tests. Most participants start courses in the Finnish language, but integration in the other official language, Swedish, is also possible. From the point of view of an immigrant, the integration services and the authorities in charge can be summarised in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4. Services supporting individual immigrant integration and the organisations in charge



Source: Ministry of the Interior & Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2015, p.71. Translation: Pasi Saukkonen.

18 Social assistance, or income support, is a last-resort form of financial assistance for individuals and families, which covers some of the necessities of life. From January 2017, basic social assistance was removed from municipalities to the social security institution KELA.

19 The integration plan is as a rule drawn up jointly by the municipality, the TE Office and the immigrant.

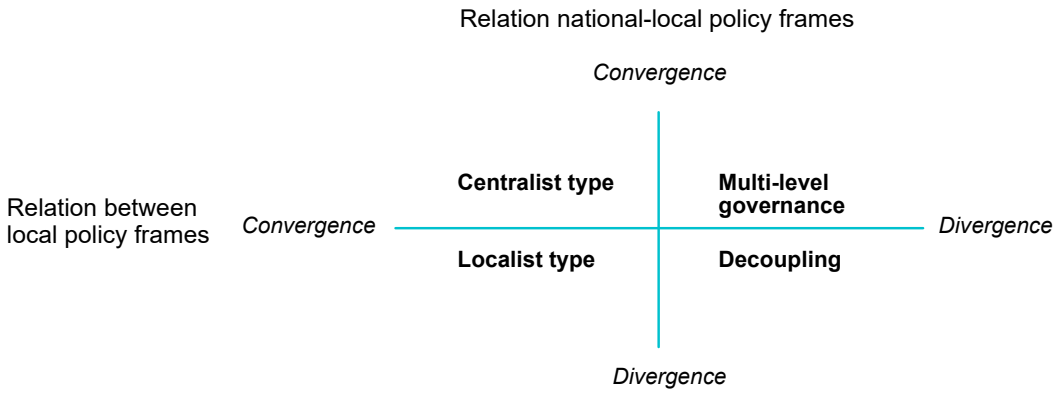
Overall assessment

Finland has received credit for its integration policy in the international migrant integration policy comparison. In the latest edition of MIPEX, Finland was ranked fourth and it was overall judged as having slightly favourable policies on equal opportunities for immigrants. The country was praised for its investments in integration, its traditionally inclusive democracy, and the role of immigrant volunteers promoting integration through often government-funded NGO actions. Recommendations included the need to speed up the learning of domestic languages through more tailored language courses, for example.[20]

Based on the legal framework, the Finnish model indeed seems ambitious, well-structured and quite coherent despite the somewhat complicated division of tasks between different authorities. What we do not know, however, is how this system works in practice. From the point of view of state–municipal relations, and with our research questions in mind, we should examine more closely whether the central and local government integration policies really converge and work together as a team.

In his analysis of integration policy frames, Peter Scholten (2015) has applied a multi-level governance approach that looks at convergence and divergence between different levels of government and between local policy actors (Figure 5). In the next phase of this paper, I will try to locate the Finnish integration policy system in this framework by analysing the national integration programme and the local integration programmes of the cities of Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa.

Figure 5. Expected association between types of governance configurations in multi-level settings and convergence and divergence in policy frames on the national and the local levels.



Source: Scholten 2015, p. 6.

The Finnish Government in June 2012 accepted the national integration programme for the years 2012–2015.[21] The integration programme of the city of Helsinki for the years 2013–2016 was prepared in spring 2014. The integration programmes of the cities of Espoo and Vantaa are both for the years 2014–2017. All these programmes contain lots of policy objectives and initiatives, many of which are relatively detailed, small-scale goals and activities. In my investigation, I will pay most attention to the questions regarding the definition of integration, policy aims and objectives and the target group of integration measures.

20 The 2015 version of Migrant Integration Policy Index is available at http://www.mipex.eu/.

21 A new national integration programme was approved by the Government of Finland in September 2016. Local integration programmes for the next years are, however, still under preparation in the capital region. This is why I am here analysing the earlier version.

CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE IN INTEGRATION PROGRAMMES

National integration programme

The Finnish national integration programme 2012–2015 is actually composed of two documents: a more concise version, officially accepted by the Finnish Government, and a longer version that was published by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. I will use the longer version as my primary source. The shorter version actually consists of only a list of policy objectives and policy actions.

The definition of integration as a process in the Finnish Integration Act has already been described above. The national integration programme quite naturally follows this definition while also recognising the then incumbent Government's programme. In that programme, the most important statements regarding immigrant integration are as follows:

- All means available will be employed to enhance the integration of immigrants into Finnish working life. The objective is to increase the employment rate of immigrants and to halve their unemployment rate. Special attention will be paid to groups with low employment rates.
- A system will be created that supports and encourages both employers and employees to study Finnish or Swedish in tandem with employment.
- When implementing the Integration Act, the Government will ensure the targeting of appropriations in the relevant main titles [in the state budget] in such a manner that sufficient allocations for enhanced integration measures are secured. (Government of Finland 2011, 47–48.)

The main purpose of the integration programme is to decide on the focus areas for the programme period and on the main policy measures within these focus areas. The starting point is the general change in Finnish society because of increased integration; multiculturalism, multilingualism and the diversity of habits and values will be an increasingly integral part of Finnish society. In social planning and in the development of public services, immigrants have to be taken into account and their status as full members of society and local communities has to be supported. The programme emphasises the need to enhance the participation of immigrants in all areas of societal life in order to prevent marginalisation, fragmentation and an increase in inequality.

> *This programme envisions a Finnish living environment that supports the interaction among all inhabitants and their close networks: family, working life, leisure activities. (Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2012, p. 15.)*

The general objective in the programme is to increase immigrant participation in all sectors of society, especially in working life and in education. Special attention is paid to the promotion of immigrant employment and to different kinds of support for immigrant chil-

dren, the youth, women and families. In addition, the programme strives for underpinning social cohesion and for two-way integration by housing policy and with activities in culture, sports and youth work. (Ibid., p. 5.)

Integration is thus perceived broadly. This is also reflected in the target areas. One of them focuses on the need to empower local communities and immigrant families to assist in integration processes. There are also separate chapters for immigrant women, for the integration of children and the youth and for the promotion of positive interaction between groups and communities.[22]

Despite the broad perspective, there is a lot of attention to the need to promote the integration of immigrants in working life and to measures that are supposed to improve immigrants' chances in the labour market, such as language skills and education. At the launch event of this programme, the Minister of Labour, Lauri Ihalainen, put it bluntly:

> *The most important ingredients of solid integration are, in my opinion, language, education and work. (…) Without employment, the integration process remains half-baked.*

Therefore, the programme aims at enhancing the participation of immigrants in the labour market and the enlargement of integration education so that all immigrants can receive the education that meets their needs. This requires an increase in financial appropriations for these purposes. The needs of immigrant women are again explicitly mentioned. Also characteristic for the twofold integration policy approach is that the policy measures regarding labour market participation and its prerequisites are regularly more detailed, including information about required funding.

City of Helsinki integration programme

The law-regulated city of Helsinki integration programme is, formally speaking, comprised of the city strategy 2013–2016 approved by the City Council, the action plan approved by the City Board and the periodical reports on the city economy and operations. In the city strategy, there is a heading regarding Helsinki as an international city, emphasising immigrants as active city inhabitants. Under this heading, the main objective is to increase immigrants' participation and employment and to decrease unemployment and the marginalisation of immigrant youth. The city strives for social equality and for equal rights and responsibilities.

Following these strategic statements, the highest local decision-making body, the City Council, gave the Human Resources Division, to which the City Immigration Unit then belonged, a task to prepare an action plan to implement the city strategy with regard to this section. In the action plan, entitled *Immigration and Diversity in Helsinki 2013–2016* (City of Helsinki 2013), policy measures are structured according to the more detailed activities and objectives mentioned in the city strategy.[23]

The city of Helsinki integration action plan provides us with a good example of a situation where local integration programmes should rather be interpreted as sectoral implementation programmes of local city strategies than as local implementation programmes

22 There are also more technical target areas related with the assignment of those receiving international protection to municipalities and with the integration monitoring system.

23 The city of Helsinki action plan is available in English at http://www.hel.fi/static/kanslia/elo/HKI_maahanmuut_toimenpideohjelma_ENG.pdf.

of national integration policy. The law obliges municipalities to have an integration programme, in case the local community is willing to receive state funding for these purposes, but the Integration Act leaves it largely up to local authorities to decide on the structure and the content of the programmes. City strategies, on the contrary, are authoritative documents that the sectoral units of local administration have to comply with.

In the city of Helsinki action plan, the two main objectives in the city of Helsinki immigrant and diversity policy are that, firstly, all Helsinki residents, irrespective of their native language, nationality and country of birth, can feel themselves to be residents of Helsinki, and secondly, that all immigrants are active participants in society. Essential factors in active participation are work, a meaningful career path and positive future prospects. Therefore, the most important goals of immigrant policy are fast employment in fields that correspond with each person's skills and competencies, meaningful career paths, and education paths for children and young people that support the above goals. A crosscutting key principle is that immigrants participate in local decision-making that concerns them, and in the development and production of services. This participation can take place through organisational activities, for example.

The action plan is divided into nine policy areas that altogether contain 33 policy measures, all directly related to statements in the city strategy. The overwhelming part of the action plan discusses developments regarding employment and education (9 measures) and education of children and the youth (9 measures). Especially the last-mentioned chapter is long and detailed, even though it actually contains references to immigrant youth only. Under other headings, families supporting immigrant children, elderly immigrants, cultural and leisure services, integration in the Swedish language, diversity in the city organisation and civil society co-operation are dealt with.

The definition of immigrant integration, the most important policy objectives and the target groups are relatively similar to the national integration programme. In the city of Helsinki action plan there is, however, a stronger focus on the identificational integration of immigrants, on integration services in the Swedish language and on the need to recruit people of foreign background to the city organisation. Strong emphasis on education matters is understandable because municipalities are the main providers of education for children and the youth. The city of Helsinki also maintains occupational education institutes and adult education institutes.

Integration programmes of Espoo and Vantaa

The name of the city of Helsinki integration action plan already contains the notion of diversity, denoting a broader, and more collective, approach than that directed to individual immigrants and their integration processes only. In the text, though, there were few references to that diversity, e.g. linguistic, religious, or ethnic. The integration programmes of the cities of Espoo and Vantaa are called multicultural programmes, further emphasising this scope enlargement. In practice, however, this does not have much effect on the contents of these programmes either. Programmes mainly deal with immigration and immigrants.

In the city of Espoo programme for the years 2014–2017 (City of Espoo 2014), there is a direct reference to the Integration Act, which obliges the municipality to prepare this document every four years. Nevertheless, this programme is more closely linked to the city strategy than to national legislation, much like its Helsinki counterpart. The main purpose of the document is to guarantee the equality of city inhabitants with an immigrant back-

ground in relation to the general objectives mentioned in the city vision. According to this vision, Espoo should be a good place for everyone to live, learn, work and do business in, and a place where residents can have their say.[24] The city also aims at responding to the challenges emerging from the diversification of its population and at grasping the opportunities provided by this development.

The first part of the programme discusses the different perspectives of immigration, immigrants or diversity in relation to the cross-administrative development programmes mentioned in the city strategy. The city of Espoo strives for including marginalised groups such as foreigners to decision-making processes. Future perspectives of immigrant youth are also discussed in the context of general youth inclusion. Prevention of both the marginalisation of immigrants and of the segregation of housing districts forms a part of a general effort to build sustainable local development. Immigration is also seen as an asset in the context of competitiveness and innovation.

The second part of the programme enumerates more specific integration policy objectives in different policy sectors. The objectives and actions are listed in a slightly different order than in Helsinki, and there are some other minor differences. Nevertheless, employment and education affairs, and the situation and the role of children, the youth and families, are also here central. The headings under which different objectives are discussed are as follows: City staff; Language skills; Employment and income; Health and well-being; Communication; Reception of humanitarian migrants; Homelessness among migrants.

In the case of the City of Vantaa integration programme for 2014–2017, entitled Everybody's Vantaa: Multicultural Programme 2014–2017 (City of Vantaa 2014), there are slightly more references to ethnic and/or cultural groups other than immigrants. The programme refers to the Integration Act that is interpreted as emphasising the cultural diversification of the whole society. The emphasis is, however, again clearly on immigrant integration challenges and integration measures for newcomers. The point of departure in the city strategy is to support social cohesion and participation and, in particular, the fast employment of immigrants.

The programme's objectives have been divided into three pillars: 1) Work, skills, and future; 2) Everybody's Vantaa; and 3) Networks and partnerships as a resource. All pillars contain five to six more specific goals, policy measures and also information about the agencies in charge of implementation. The programme mentions five basic principles concerning multiculturalism and immigrant integration in Vantaa. Integration should be more comprehensive, lighter[25] and more diverse. Integration services should be more flexible and co-operation should work better. The city atmosphere should be more multicultural.[26]

Comparison and additional questions

Despite some differences, we can safely conclude that there is much convergence both between the Finnish state and the city of Helsinki and between the three cities in the capital region. Even though immigrant integration is not clearly defined in the local programmes, all these documents reflect the main notions expressed in the Finnish integration legisla-

24 The city vision, the Espoo Story, as available in English at http://www.espoo.fi/en-US/City_of_Espoo/Decisionmaking/The_Espoo_Story.

25 "Lighter integration" refers to a shift from social services to consultation.

26 The use of statistics and research in the planning and development of immigrant integration should also be improved.

tion. The basic principles of integration policy and the most important objectives are also relatively similar. There is no explicit disagreement as to what are the responsibilities of the state and of local authorities, either.

Integration is in all cases defined both broadly and more narrowly. On the one hand, integration is a personal task that belongs to all (including native Finns), and as a process, it comprises all aspects and dimensions of personal and social life. On the other hand, many policy measures are directed at only those immigrants that participate in the integration services (with a particular focus on those with a refugee background). The more narrow definition also strongly focuses on employment and its prerequisites. The possibility to approach integration in the context of multi-dimensional and multi-faceted diversity in practice only appears in the names of local programmes.

Children, the youth and families play a prominent role in all these programmes. This partly echoes genuine interest in these issues and focus groups. However, this emphasis is probably also a result of a specific Participative Integration in Finland programme for the years 2011–2013. This programme was launched simultaneously with the new Integration Act in 2010 and it paid much attention to children, the youth and immigrants with special needs, such as homemakers. In this programme, the co-operating partners were the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, and two wealthy private funds, the Finnish Cultural Foundation (Suomen Kulttuurirahasto) and the Swedish Cultural Foundation in Finland (Svenska Kulturfonden).

In the typology of multi-level governance configuration proposed by Peter Scholten, the Finnish case, in the capital region at least, would thus clearly be located in the centralist slot because of convergence both between the central and the local government and between different municipalities. The notion of centralism might be somewhat misleading, though. In the Finnish case, the degree of coercion by the state administration is relatively low, and the municipalities in question probably have decided upon their approach quite autonomously. As mentioned, historically speaking the city of Helsinki was also sometimes ahead of the state in the preparations of integration activities.

To clarify this point, in theory, the Finnish integration policy could have a clear and coherent top-down structure. National legislation would provide a strong frame for national integration programmes that turn the law into practice-oriented policy goals and measures for every four years at the national level. Municipalities, in turn, would concretise in their integration programmes the national agenda at the local level and according to local circumstances in the policy areas that fall under the competence of municipal authorities.

In practice, however, the national integration programme also reflects the incumbent Government's programme. This was actually more obvious in the case of the latest national integration programme, accepted in 2016, than in the programme under scrutiny in this paper. Local integration programmes then rather comply with city strategies than with national legislation and programmes that give a lot of leeway to local communities. Therefore, these programmes could also diverge much more than what they actually do. Where does this unanimity then come from?

In this context, reasons for homogeneity in the Finnish integration policy approaches can be deliberated upon only briefly. Finnish multi-party politics has traditionally had a tendency to be quite consensual. Because no party is ever able to form a government alone, nationally nor locally, parties are always forced to make concessions and to search for common ground. At the local level, political power structures vary among these three cities, but in all cases, the nationally big parties participate in the decision making. Despite

the rising popularity of the populist Finns Party since 2007, integration policy has not, at least yet, become a major issue.

Another aspect worth mentioning is the official and unofficial connections between different levels and actors both institutionally and individually. Especially in the capital region, where all major central government ministries and agencies are located, people tend to meet each other and exchange ideas regularly. The relationship between the state and municipalities is in Finland sometimes very tense, and there can be severe conflicts about the division of labour and the financing of public services. The key players nevertheless know each other well. During their careers, people in politics and in public administration often move between central, regional and local levels – or occupy posts at different levels simultaneously.

During the period in question, there was also a specific integration programme for the capital region (Pääkaupunkiseudun aieohjelma) for 2013–2015. In this programme, the partners were the Finnish state (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment; Ministry of Education and Culture), the cities of Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa, the Chamber of Commerce of the Helsinki region and enterprise organisations in the region. The purpose of the programme was to enhance integration, education and employment of immigrants with common action directed to the development of integration services. Also this programme probably contributed to a mutual understanding of challenges and opportunities in immigrant integration.

The main problem, however, is that on the basis of these programmes it is still quite difficult to be completely convinced how Finnish integration policy works in practice, nationally and locally. To begin with, the analysis of these documents was no simple task because of the somewhat opaque nature of expressions regarding policy principles and objectives and because of the fragmented structure of these programmes. The lists of objectives and policy measures seldom constitute a coherent whole. Rather, one gets the impression that at least some of these measures have been collected and incorporated into the programme somewhat arbitrarily.

Furthermore, it has been publicly criticised that the Finnish integration policy system does not work quite as well as it has been planned. Finnish authorities have also often admitted a certain discrepancy between promises and realities. I will here refer to three relatively recent sources.

The Finnish Government informs the Parliament once in every four years about the implementation of integration legislation. The most recent report is a joint publication by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of the Interior and it comprises analysis of both immigration policy and integration policy. In the integration policy section, the report confesses that the extension of immigrant integration that was supposed to take place after the legislation reform in 2010 has not happened as expected. Initial assessments and integration plans have been made less than supposed, and these assessments and plans have been unevenly utilised. Furthermore, the supply of integration education has not properly responded to growing demand. The report also complains that the division of labour and responsibilities between municipalities and the TE Offices are, in practice, too unclear. (Ministry of the Interior & Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2015.)

In the evaluation report of the Participatory Integration in Finland programme, there is a more detailed analysis of the shortcomings of the system. Regarding the integration of adult immigrants, for example, the authors of the report complain that there is a lack of comprehensive strategic steering of the policy because of the cross-sectional character of the system. The availability of integration education is not at a sufficient level in the capital

region, in particular. Course tracks, and whole integration trajectories, are often inconsistent and lacking clear goals. Initial assessments and integration plans are exploited unevenly and many immigrants fall outside integration measures. Furthermore, instruments for policy monitoring do not give support to the steering of the policy, nor to the evaluation of policy results and impact. (Karinen 2013.)

Finally, in the city of Helsinki, a working group recently assessed the functioning of the system of immigrant integration. Also in this report, many problems in the system were mentioned. For example, provision of integration services was considered fragmented, lacking an organ to properly look after the development and monitoring of integration trajectories. As a whole, these trajectories were perceived as too long. Integration measures do not correspond to the varying needs of immigrants and there is not enough instruction of the Finnish language, mainly because of a lack of resources. Young people with a refugee background, in particular, are at risk of falling between future training options at the end of obligatory education. (City of Helsinki 2016.)

All these notions, complaints and criticisms give support to the idea that in order to really understand how the Finnish integration policy works in general and from the point of view of multi-level governance in particular, we should turn our attention to the implementation of the policy.

SECOND-GRADE INSPECTION: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

In an organisational context, implementation is a process in which a general will is transformed into a collection of rules, routines and social operations that change ideas into action to achieve an explicit goal (cf. O'Toole 2012, p. 293). Following this definition, we should analyse how policy ideas regarding immigrant integration are turned into action, into rules, routines and social operations, both nationally and locally. This is no simple task.

In the Finnish case, integration policy has both a broader and a more narrow meaning. On the one hand, integration is seen as a long process during which immigrants gradually find their place in the Finnish society and start actively participating in it in different areas of life. At the same time, the host society adapts into new, more diverse, circumstances. From this point of view, the implementation of integration policy practically includes all public or publicly-funded activities, nationally and locally, that directly or indirectly enhance these processes and otherwise promote equality, non-discrimination and positive interaction between individuals and groups.

On the other hand, the more limited understanding of the concept of integration refers to the participation of immigrants in working life, with emphasis on the creation and strengthening of those skills and capacities that contribute to labour market integration, such as language competence and professional qualifications. The main law-regulated policy measures are, in this case, initial assessments, integration plans and integration education provided for those immigrants that are deemed to benefit from them. This group mainly consists of quota refugees, of asylum seekers that receive international protection, of unemployed immigrants, and of all those who after initial assessment are told they need an integration plan.

A proper analysis of the true nature of the Finnish integration policy and of the system of integration services, and of the interplay and co-operation of the national and the local level requires an examination of how this policy is put into practice in both the broader and the narrower understanding of the concept. For practical reasons, the examination of policy implementation here has to be limited to the more narrow perspective, to the labour market oriented integration policy.

Therefore, to get an at least satisfactory picture of the functioning of the Finnish integration policy system, answers to the following questions should be gathered:

- How many initial assessments and integration plans are annually made in the TE Offices (or in the ELY regions) and in different municipalities?
- For whom are these assessments and plans made, in terms of, for example, age, gender, nationality/country of birth, reason for immigration/residence permit?
- What is the annual volume of integration education and how is it divided into different course contents? How is education divided between different education providers?
- Who are the participants of these courses, in terms of, for example, age, gender, nationality/country of birth, reason for immigration/residence permit?
- What is the total public expenditure allocated to these purposes? How is this expenditure divided between the central government, regional authorities and local communities?

Initial assessments

Unfortunately, it is very difficult to carry out this part of investigation even after choosing the more narrow focus. Precise statistical information about initial assessments, to begin with, is very hard to obtain. In the previously mentioned government report on immigration policy and integration policy, it is explicitly stated that the Finnish employment database (URA) does not provide unambiguous information about these assessments. (Ministry of the Interior & Ministry of Employment and Economy, p. 74). There is another database on immigrant education (Koulutusportti) that registers language tests. These tests, however, do not give an exact picture of the law-regulated initial assessments. (Ibid., p. 75).

Various sources also indicate that the initial assessments are, in fact, often much more modest examinations than what the government regulation[27] on the issue might let us think. In principle, these assessments could consist of, for example, information about literacy, language skills, learning skills and capacities, previous education and work experience, specific skills and competencies, education and work preferences, life situation and concomitant service needs. In practice, initial assessments vary a lot from simple language tests to ordinary assessments for all jobseekers and to other kinds of preliminary assessments (Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2016a, p. 11).

Gathering information turns out to be problematic also at the regional or local level. The Uusimaa ELY Centre, in whose area the cities of Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa are located, has annually sent a survey to municipalities in the regions of Uusimaa, Häme and Southeastern Finland. The results regarding the initial assessments conducting by municipalities are, however, somewhat difficult to interpret. In 2016, only 17 municipalities out of 66 responded to the survey. Of these, roughly a half answered that no initial assessments were made by the municipality in 2015. It is obvious that in many cases the respondent had not understood the question or had not been aware of the right of immigrants to have initial assessments. (Kuivalainen 2016.)

On the basis of this survey, the cities in the capital region annually make only few initial assessments. In principle, the city is responsible for conducting initial assessments for those immigrants that are either at work or outside the workforce.[28] There has been, however, little marketing of the service, which means that immigrants entitled to initial assessments often do not know their right. According to another survey sent to municipalities in 2016, local authorities usually arrange initial assessments mainly for parents of small children and for elderly immigrants (Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2016b, p. 10).

Integration plans

As mentioned, integration plans are prepared for three categories of immigrants: to those that are registered as unemployed jobseekers, to those that receive from the municipality social assistance, or to those that are expected to need such a plan after initial assessment. The integration plan should be drafted within two weeks of the initial assessment. The first integration plan should be drawn up no later than three years after the issue of the first residence permit or residence card or the registration of the right of residence. The first integration plan is drawn up for a maximum period of one year.

27 Valtioneuvoston asetus kotoutumisen edistämiseen liittyvästä alkukartoituksesta (570/2011). Available at http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2011/20110570.

28 See https://www.hel.fi/maahanmuuttajat/fi/tervetuloa-helsinkiin/Tukea-alkuvaiheessa/alkukartoitus/.

The government report on immigration and integration presents figures about the first integration plans issued in 2008–2013. Of the 7,779 integration plans in 2013, about 41% (3,200) were made in the Uusimaa region. Unfortunately, more detailed information is lacking. Immigrants that have a right to stay in Finland based on international protection are the most likely to have an integration plan. The report specifically mentions that it is difficult to obtain information about integration plans drawn up for minors and for families. (Ministry of the Interior & Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2015, p. 76–78.)

Integration plans often also are much more modest documents than what one might assume. The first plan is usually simply a short plan regarding participation in language training or in integration training either as labour market adult education or as self-motivated studies. According to a study, 41% of integration plans consisted of Finnish language studies only. Other services promoting labour market participation and/or active jobseeking have occasionally been added to the plan. (Soininen & Puuronen 2016, p. 25.)

According to a survey sent to municipalities on integration measures and integration services in 2016, 28% of local authorities responded that they prepare the integration plan for almost all those immigrants that need such a plan. It is, however, noticeable that almost a quarter of respondents could not answer the question. 35% of them answered that integration plans are made for less than a half of those in need or for hardly anyone. (Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2016b, p. 15.) These survey results indicate that those that receive international protection, in general, and unaccompanied minors seeking refuge, in particular, have the greatest likelihood to get an individual integration plan (Ibid., 16).

According to the law, the TE Office and the municipality together, or only one of these two authorities, together with the immigrant, prepares integration plans. There is, however, little information on how the co-operation between the TE Office and the local authority works in the cases where these two administrative bodies participate in the preparation of the plan. Recently, I was privately informed that there is nowadays less co-operation between the Uusimaa TE Office and the city of Helsinki than what was previously the case.

Many respondents representing municipalities expressed dissatisfaction with how co-operation works between the TE Office and local authorities. The division of labour between these two authorities was often considered not clear enough. Many of them also complained that the TE Office focuses too strongly on labour market entry. The survey response from the TE Offices, in turn, indicates a need for more communication between different actors in the integration policy processes and services. (Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2016b, pp. 17–19.)

Integration training

Analysis of the situation in the Finnish integration policy multi-level governance becomes increasingly complicated when we turn to integration training and education, an area that we with sound reason may expect to form the core of integration policy implementation. In fact, all education and training for immigrants promotes integration. In addition to the promotion of skills and capacities, courses enhance understanding of Finnish society and provide opportunities for language use and social contact. In this paper, I will however focus on the integration training that immigrants are supposed to receive after the integration plan has been agreed upon.

According to the Integration Act, adult immigrants[29] are provided with courses of Finnish or Swedish. Furthermore, integration training also comprises other courses that promote access to employment such as further training and education in social, cultural and life management skills. Whenever necessary, reading and writing skills are also taught.[30] Integration training is usually implemented as labour market adult education provided by the ELY Centres.[31] However, training can also be arranged as self-motivated studies provided by public or private education institutes. Immigrants are guided to education either by the TE Office or by a municipality, depending on with which authority the integration plan has been made.

Since 2012, the national core curriculum for integration training for adult migrants has given course providers guidelines with which they must comply. When the training provider draws up its own curriculum, it also must give due consideration to the local integration programme. The curriculum should include items that promote integration in the specific local operational environment.

The scope and content of integration training vary according to students' individual needs. There have been four main study paths available: fast-track study path; basic study path; slow-track study path; and a study path for those that need reading and writing skills training. The maximum scope of the study path of adult migrants has been 60 credits, where one credit is equivalent to about 35 hours of a student's work.[32]

Information about the provision of integration training arranged by the ELY Centres is to some extent available, despite some technical and harmonisation difficulties. The problem is, however, that lots of immigrants with an integration plan actually go to self-motivated studies. This is especially common in the Uusimaa region, where the lack of designed integration courses has been an acute problem.[33] The ELY Centres make decisions upon the recognition of this training as part of the integration process. In practice, however, this education and training is diverse, and reliable information about the volume of different forms of it is difficult to obtain. (Ministry of the Interior & Ministry of Employment and Economy 2015, pp. 83–84.)

It has often been mentioned that the availability of meaningful education and training is elementary for the functioning of the whole integration system (cf., Ministry of Employment and Economy 2016a, p. 14). However, it has also been frequently admitted that the increase in course supply has not corresponded to the growing needs (Ministry of the Interior & Ministry of Employment and Economy 2015, p. 79). As a result, immigrants have been forced to wait for the start of their training and to choose courses that are not most suitable to them. There has also been a passivating standstill between different courses.

29 Adult refers here to those over the compulsory education age. Children go to normal schools where they can receive instruction preparing for basic education or secondary education and instruction of Finnish or Swedish as a second language. They also have the right for instruction of mother tongue and one's own religion.

30 Integration training may also include studies complementing basic education, identification of previously acquired skills, recognition of qualifications and degrees and vocational planning and career guidance. The integration plan may also include teaching of the immigrant's mother tongue but I have never actually heard evidence of this.

31 The ELY Centres periodically put the provision of integration training out to tender. In the city of Helsinki, there are at the moment (spring 2017) six accepted education providers of which one is the Institute of Adult Education in Helsinki, maintained by the city of Helsinki.

32 The structure of integration training was recently modified. New implementation models were introduced to speed up access to training as well as entry to working life and further studies, to support supplementation of prior learning, to diversify and enhance implementation methods, and to enhance the effectiveness of training. http://www.oph.fi/download/178120_new_implementation_models_for_the_integration_training_for_immigrants.pdf.

33 There are at the moment (spring 2017) 35 providers of courses of Finnish language in the Helsinki region, some of which are municipal education institutes. See http://www.finnishcourses.fi/en/training-providers.

As a result, we have to conclude that there is a gap between promises and realities when it comes to integration training. Because of deficits in the monitoring system, we however cannot make exact judgements about the size and form of this discrepancy. It is obvious that, in this area, local actors, such as municipal education institutes, play a stronger role than what one might assume from the national framework. It is, however, impossible to obtain precise information about this role. In an evaluation report prepared by the City of Helsinki in spring 2016, the authors criticise that there is no organ properly taking care of immigrants' service needs in a comprehensive manner (City of Helsinki 2016, p. 12).

Integration policy expenditure

Calculating total integration policy expenditure and dividing these public costs into central government and local government expenses is an immensely challenging task. Again, gathering the costs of all activities that fall within the broad definition of integration is practically impossible. However, even if we confine our effort to the more narrow definition, the task remains difficult.

In the state budget, integration policy expenditure in the last mentioned sense is included in the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment branch of the budget. The title in the state budget for public employment and enterprise services comprises, among other items, resources for integration education, language tests and skills assessments.[34] The class for integration policy includes an item stipulating how central government covers the expenses that derive from the reception of those granted international protection.[35] This compensation is paid either based on a given formula or in accordance with real costs. The formula-based compensation works so that the state allocates a municipality a fixed amount of money per year per received person.[36] The most important cost-based state compensation covers the integration assistance that is paid by the municipality as social assistance for those immigrants that have an integration plan.[37]

Of the integration measures that have been discussed in this paper, the state covers the local expenses for initial assessments, including interpretation or translation costs when necessary.[38] The state transfer system also compensates the municipalities for integration training for adults (Ministry of Employment and Trade) and for the preparatory education for basic education for immigrant children at school age (Ministry of Education and Culture).

A problem with gathering information about Finnish integration policy expenses is that in addition to the sources of expenditure mentioned above, much work is conducted in mainstream services without an earmarked allocation of resources for integration purposes. Consulting and guidance, in particular, often take place within either the central government or local government organisations that receive lump-sum financing.

34 Item 32.30.51 on public employment and business services.

35 Item 32.70.30. Item 32.70.03 on the promotion of immigrant integration and employment mainly covers the expenses for the Centre of Expertise in Integration of Immigrants within the Ministry.

36 In 2016, 2,300€/year for those at least 7 years of age and 6,845€/year for persons under 7 years of age. The state also allocates resources to municipalities according to a complicated state transfer system. In this system, the share of population that does not have Finnish, Swedish or Sàmi as a registered mother tongue, is one determining factor.

37 These resources are available only for municipalities that have made an agreement with the ELY Centre about the reception of refugees.

38 The compensation for initial assessments is at the moment 700€ per person.

Another problem is that a large part of integration activities actually takes place in either state-run, municipality-run, or NGO-run projects that often combine European, national and local funding. It would be a very difficult task to make a comprehensive list of all these projects, not to speak of collecting reliable information of expenditure. Both the state and municipalities sometimes allocate ad hoc funding to specific purposes or temporary arrangements.[39]

According to one report on the financing of the integration system, the evaluation of the local integration policy expenditure in a comprehensive manner is close to impossible because of differences in the systems gathering data (Tuominen, Peltonen & Köngäs 2013, p. 17). In order to reach a satisfactory level of information, the monitoring system regarding immigrant integration should be essentially improved. From the point of view of this paper, this development is also necessary for the evaluation of the multi-level governance in integration policy as well.

39 For example, the City Board of the City of Helsinki allocated in 2016 10 M€ outside the ordinary budget to measures promoting immigrant integration, with special attention to asylum seekers.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper has been to study Finnish integration policy from the point of view of the interplay and co-operation between the national and local level of policymaking and with special attention to policy implementation. In this analysis, I have specifically looked at the relation between the central government and the city of Helsinki, and examined the relation between the three cities in the capital region, Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa.

The analysis shows that as far as national and local integration programmes are concerned, the Finnish integration policy fits into the type where there is convergence both between the state and the local authority and between different municipalities. The congruence, however, probably rather depends on a shared understanding of the situation and of the challenges involved than on centralist, top down policy-making. The main actors in the field are in close interaction, and there has been, at least so far, little politicisation of integration issues.

At both levels, integration is in Finland perceived both broadly and more narrowly. The broad notion of integration takes it as a bidirectional comprehensive process that includes all inhabitants of the country and developments in all areas of life. The overall goal is a society of equal opportunities without discrimination and with good ethnic relations. The more narrow understanding focuses on immigrant employment and on the prerequisites for as quick an entry as possible into the labour market. In this case, the most important policy measures are initial assessments, integration plans and integration training.

Since the legislation reform in 2010, the last-mentioned integration measures have been in principle available to every newcomer, irrespective of the reason to come to and stay in Finland. In practice, it however seems that these measures still are in fact accessible mainly to those persons receiving international protection or to those who are registered as unemployed jobseekers at the TE Office. This finding further restrains the factual scope of Finnish integration policy.

In the Finnish welfare state, the division of labour between the state and the municipalities is relatively clear. Employment affairs are mainly a state responsibility whereas municipalities mainly arrange education. In integration policy, the law regulates the tasks of both levels of government and defines their co-operation. In practice, the situation is, nevertheless, somewhat different. Local authorities conduct fewer initial assessments than what has been expected, and it seems that their role in the preparation of integration plans is smaller than assumed. On the contrary, at least in the Helsinki region, municipalities are more important in the provision of integration training than what the legal framework makes us think. This is especially so if we count all education and training available for immigrants.

The coordination of service production and co-operation between and within different levels of administration also seems quite functional when one investigates the general framework. However, many analysts of the system have complained that, in reality, the coordination of integration policy suffers from many shortcomings. Integration is a cross-sectional activity par excellence, and different branches of government, nationally and locally, usually can operate relatively independently. At the national–local dimension, Finnish central government has a financial steering instrument in relation to the otherwise quite autonomous municipalities. However, this tool has lost much of its strength because state funding has not met the needs in the policy implementation.

The most serious problem, however, is that there is so much we are forced to only assume. Revealing the true nature of the Finnish integration policy would require a profound analysis of how the policy is implemented both nationally and locally. We should have a reliable database that responds to questions such as what policy measures are carried out by whom, for what purpose, to whom, and with which resources. As long as proper knowledge of these policy instruments is lacking, we can only make hypotheses and rough estimates. Needless to say, lack of data also makes the analysis of the impact of integration policy problematic.

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