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# European Rural Parliament



WELCOMING REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS  
FINAL REPORT



DRUŠTVO ZA RAZVOJ  
SLOVENSKEGA PODEŽELJA

*Hela Sverige  
ska leva!*

*SUOMEN  
Kylätoiminta ry*



TÜRKİYE KALKINMA VAKFI  
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The thematic project “Welcoming refugees and migrants”  
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## Content

Contact and partners .....	3
Responsible theme partner .....	3
All partners involved in the thematic work .....	3
1. Introduction .....	4
1.1 Purpose and aims .....	5
1.2 Objectives .....	5
2. Background .....	6
3. Survey – Rural welcoming of migrants and refugees .....	7
3.1 How they got involved .....	7
3.2 Activities .....	7
3.3 Obstacles and challenges .....	8
3.4 Support needed .....	8
3.5 Best advices from respondents .....	9
4. Workshops, lectures and webinars .....	11
4.1 Brussels on social inclusion 9th of February .....	11
4.2 Bygdegårdarna rural integration conference 6th-7th of May .....	11
4.3 Webinar – From migrants to workers 30 August.....	12
4.4 Finnish Rural Parliament 2 September.....	12
4.5 Immigrant integration to rural areas 19-20th of September .....	13
6. Input for the ERP .....	14
7. Suggestion of text for manifesto .....	14
8. Appendice .....	15
9.1 Survey - Rural welcoming of migrants and refugees .....	15

## Contact and partners

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We also had Human Geography student Hannes Willner in an internship for the project from March-April. He helped out setting up the survey and writing parts of the background for the project.

# 1. Introduction

In this preliminary report from the thematic project “Welcoming refugees and migrants to rural areas” we will share the results, so far, from the project in order to give input to the workshops and field trips that will take place on the European Rural Parliament in Venhorst 18-21 October 2017. We also give a preliminary suggestion on an updated text for the Manifesto concerning refugees and migrants.

The report is based on a survey that we have conducted during April-June, where 40 persons involved in integration activities in rural areas have answered and shared their thoughts on why people are engaged in these activities, good examples and how their efforts can be strengthened by the rest of society.

In addition to the survey we have held workshops, lectures and webinars aiming at spreading the survey and gathering more input for the European Rural Parliament 2017.

The European Rural Parliament (ERP) 2016-17 Action Programme, centred on a series on multi-national projects, has a highly practical focus. The aim is to gather and disseminate practical ideas which will help rural stakeholders to take action, to build partnerships and to work with governments. A starting-point for this theme, ‘*welcoming refugees and migrants*’, is provided by section 13 of the European Rural Manifesto 2015:

*“The arrival of desperate people from areas of conflict and disaster, seeking refuge and new lives in Europe, is provoking thought and action within our networks. While urging governments and other agencies to work urgently to solve the underlying causes of this crisis, We call for a warm-hearted response, based on solidarity between peoples. We believe that for many rural areas, and particularly those with declining populations, this offers an opportunity to integrate refugees and other newcomers. The process of integration must include the necessary job creation, investment in housing, services and infrastructure. Successful integration efforts should be celebrated.”*

Furthermore, the first statement from the Cork 2.0 declaration also supports the chosen theme:

*“Point 1: Promoting Rural Prosperity: The rural potential to deliver innovative, inclusive and sustainable solutions for current and future societal challenges such as economic prosperity, food security, climate change, resource management, social inclusion, and **integration of migrants** should be better recognised.”<sup>1</sup>*

It is proposed that each thematic project should gather exchange and synthesise practical ideas on its theme from many countries. This will enable the project group to understand the scale and geographic pattern of the key issue that they are working on; to assess the challenges or problems involved; to identify practical solutions; and to clarify the factors which enable rural

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<sup>1</sup> European Rural Manifesto, adopted at the conclusion of the second European Rural Parliament, held 4-6 November 2015 in Schärding, Austria and attended by 240 delegates from 40 European countries.

communities, enterprises and other stakeholders to shape and apply those solutions in a manner suited to each locality and country.

The thematic activities and their results assist our national partners and other rural organisations throughout Europe in their action to support rural communities. It will strengthen their advocacy to governments to ensure a climate of law, policy and action which will enable positive solutions to be found. It will also enable the ERP European partners to draw upon proved reality in seeking to influence multi-national policies and actions.

## 1.1 Purpose and aims

The purpose of the thematic project *Welcoming refugees and migrants* is to strengthen the potential for rural communities and organizations to be powerful forces for a humanitarian integration and inclusion of refugees and migrants in Europe. More specifically, the aims are:

- To clarify key issues of integration and inclusion of asylum seekers and economic migrants in rural areas
- To identify and document case studies of successful integration through community action
- To offer conclusions on what could be done on a political level to help integration of newly arrived in rural areas.
- To prepare a report to disseminate the findings of the project (key issues, case studies and propositions of statements for the European Rural Parliament).

## 1.2 Objectives

- Complete and disseminate a questionnaire aimed at gathering examples, conclusions and ideas on welcoming of refugees and migrants.
- Arrange at least five webinars on different themes relating to the purpose of the project.
- Involve 250 participants in the webinars and/or answering the questionnaire from at least six different countries.
- Organise a final seminar to involve the main partners in discussing the outcomes from the information gathering and in agreeing the basis for reporting to the 2017 ERP.
- Prepare a report from the project concluding key issues, case studies and a proposal for a statement on humanitarian welcoming of refugees and migrants to rural Europe.

## 2. Background

Throughout the entire history humans have always been on the move. Nomadic cultures aside, also settled societies and civilisations have needed to migrate as a response to different outside stress, such as changes in climate and weather, shortage of food and water, degradation of fertile land and natural disasters. Thus, even though migration suddenly has soared up as a “major issue” for politicians, journalists and also researchers, it can be seen as a way for people to adapt to new circumstances that has always been a part of the human culture. Today we see international and internal migrations flows that are perhaps even more of a proof of that than ever. Wars and armed conflicts such as that in Syria and Afghanistan, droughts and famines such as in Somalia and Eritrea, failed states and prosecution of political opponents in totalitarian states, not to mention climate change as an extra layer of stress added on all of this. All these trends point towards that we will see rising flows of migration and displaced people in the near future. Even though the majority of migration flows happen within countries as well as within regions, there is a strong likelihood that we will see an increase in transnational migration as well.

Another trend that we see is that the responses of especially richer nation-states and international confederations such as the European Union towards these migration flows have been restrictive. These responses from nation-states can be correlated with the rising public opinion on immigrants as a problem, along with xenophobia. Even though the absolute majority of the refugees from the war in Syria are displaced within Syria and in neighbouring countries and only a small portion reach the EU, this group is often portrayed as a major threat to the culture, the welfare system, the job market, personal security, women and so on. A surge in right-wing populism as well as extremism has seen its light again. Protectionism and border control become logical political answers to such opinion and populists thrive in the xenophobic soil. As a results, the actual immigration to the EU dropped dramatically during 2016 and 2017 compared to 2015, when the last European Parliament Manifesto was written and adopted. Rural areas in Europe today stand in front of a series of challenges as well. Even though the city is the one being supplied by the countryside with labour, resources, and primary production it is often portrayed the other way – that the rural areas are dependent on the urban areas. A significantly smaller portion of investments are being allocated to rural areas, and only a small portion of the gains of production stay in rural areas. To create and sustain thriving rural societies with well-functioning social services, job markets, attractive living conditions and well-functioning communications are not only desirable for those who live in rural areas but is an essential part of sustainable and resilient societies.

We thus have two challenges that need to be addressed. One is the humanitarian and moral challenge of Europe responding in a worthy and constructive way to the migrants and refugees fleeing from war, political persecution or unsustainable living conditions. The other challenge is to create living rural areas for all. Could these two challenges be the answers to each other? If so, the key must lie in successful integration of migrants and refugees in rural areas. In this project we respond to these two challenges by gathering examples and suggestions to welcome refugees and migrants to rural areas, since we see that this is a fruitful way of meeting these challenges. There is much potential for rural Europe in succeeding with welcoming refugees and migrants. The rural movements in Europe are doing a lot of interesting work in this area, which we now want to gather and learn from.

### 3. Survey – Rural welcoming of migrants and refugees

During April-June we circulated a survey in the networks of the thematic partners. In total, we got 41 answers from 10 countries. The purpose of the survey was to gather examples, experiences and knowledge on how rural citizens work with welcoming refugees and migrants, and how this work could be further supported by society. The final, thorough analysis of the survey is not done yet, but we will present some preliminary results here. In the final report we will also write about the cases, but first we need to contact them to get some more information and pictures which we will do in the beginning of the autumn.

#### 3.1 How they got involved

Most of the ones who answered the survey had been involved in work to welcome refugees and migrants from 1-2 years, which shows that most of them started following the events of 2015. The reason they got involved is for many that they acted on a human or moral responsibility to help. Many of them were already involved in an organization of some sort, which started working with welcoming refugees and migrants (but had not before, likely), or joined friends/colleagues who started. The first step to get involved is often a practical one, close to something the respondents already do. Some held music classes for children, some attended a circus workshop, some was contacted to help translate, started teaching their language, held football practice, through church activities. Some just went to where they knew refugees were living and asked what they could help out with.

#### 3.2 Activities

##### Leisure activities

- In south east Turkey a group is working with circus workshops in order to create social cohesion of children who are from Syria and Turkey. They teach circus and street arts to children so they play and learn together and this workshops and trainings integrate children.
- Setting up dinners and get togethers.
- Arranging sports and finding gears to do the sports.
- Sewing
- Parties
- Visits

##### Useful knowledge, job support etc.

- Learning-on-the-job-contracts
- Accompany migrants to day-to-day activities such as the dentist, authorities, the bank etc.
- Explaining the way things are done
- Learning to ride a bicycle
- Information on birth control and abortion

##### Advocacy/research

- Write articles for papers on migrants.



- Inform local volunteers on the situation in the municipality.
- Housing schemes
- There are also research projects, for example on what the reasons for international migrants to move to rural regions are.
- Some are very involved in the lives and faiths of individuals and families and help them in struggles to get family members to them or help those who are sick.

### 3.3 Obstacles and challenges

The obstacles and challenges are perhaps what differs most between the different countries. In the countries where the authorities are not willing to welcome refugees and migrants it is much harder than in those who do.

The obstacles and challenges the participants in this study identified can be categorized in relation to 1) Government/authorities, 2) Other citizens, 3) Practical/economical, 4) Lack of knowledge.

Government/authorities:

- Get authorization from government to go to refugee camp to help
- Lack of strategy, coordination, communication and information from municipality and other authorities. Leads to bad integration and hard time for volunteers and migrants.
- When you start to help – those who should tend to lean back

Other citizens:

- Attitudes
- Xenophobia, prejudice and fear among locals
- Prejudice between children
- Threatened by xenophobic people, not backed up sufficiently by authorities
- Attitudes in local companies to hire migrants

Practical/economical → find better solution together with migrants and villagers. Meeting needs

- Have housing but not work (or the other way around)
- Camps too far from the village
- Lack of time
- Lack of money

Knowledge → education and support

- Language barrier
- Cultural barriers
- Lack of pedagogic competence in the community
- Reaching women migrants/refugees
- Lack of competence to help people who are in very difficult situations and have gone through a lot.

### 3.4 Support needed



The participants in the study identify some support needs.

#### 1) Government/authorities

- Better coordination from authorities and municipality
- Coordinated authority platform where all information is
- Support from political leaders
- More coordination of the work with asylum seekers and refugees – they are treated as two different groups and nothing is coordinated. A lot of knowledge is lost when they are transferred from one group to the other.
- Better migration policies – that way the voluntary work could do more good.

#### 2) Practical/economical

- It should be possible for a refugee to open a bank account
- How to arrange insurance for a refugee?
- Daycare for refugee children
- Money
- More psychological assistance for refugees
- Public transportation
- 

#### 3) Knowledge

- Pedagogic training

#### 4) Other citizens

- Warmer attitudes
- Training to raise awareness of families
- Less prejudice from companies, locals, authorities and policy makers.
- More volunteers

### 3.5 Best advices from respondents

- Involve both those who live in the area and newcomers in planning and doing the activities.
- To believe in what you are doing
- Build networks, create a feeling of security.
- Be brave and stand up against xenophobia and racism
- Be a good friend is what is most needed
- Welcoming attitude
- Be open-minded and ask questions (not sensitive ones)
- Respect not pity
- Fight the urban norm – show that it is fully possible to live a good life in a rural area
- Create meetings between newcomers and locals
- Do practical work together

- Sit together and talk with all stakeholders from the beginning (refugees, migrants, hosts, politicians, sport/culture clubs, church, red cross, NGO:s, teachers, potential employers etc.)
- Talk to people that you meet

## 4. Workshops, lectures and webinars

Already stated in the action plan, instead of organising one physical event ourselves and inviting others, we have focused on arranging webinars since we wanted to involve people who perhaps are not already that involved in our network to go to a physical event. We then agreed on the objective of organising at least five webinars in the project. However, when we started the work we realised that there were a lot of conferences and events on the theme of welcoming refugees and migrants planned already to which we were invited to host workshops and lectures. Because of this, we changed our approach to holding lectures and workshops along with webinars. Through this method we are managing to reach the goals of the project by spending less money than we would have otherwise. We also connect to other networks and initiatives. All in all, we have done four physical workshops/lectures and one webinar and will by that reach the objectives set for the thematic project.

### 4.1 Brussels on social inclusion 9th of February

The first event where we hosted a workshop was in Brussels on the 9<sup>th</sup> of February, on a seminar on social inclusion hosted by ENRD. The workshop was one of the stops on the 'social route' that took place in the afternoon of the event. We had two slots in the social route, with around 10 persons attending each of them.



Read more about the seminar here:

*Project manager Josefin Heed at the workshop in Brussels, gathering good ideas on welcoming refugees and migrants from the participants.*

[http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-workshop-social-inclusion\\_en](http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-workshop-social-inclusion_en)

### 4.2 Bygdegårdarna rural integration conference 6th-7th of May

On the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> of May we held a lecture at a rural integration conference hosted by Bygdegårdarna in Sweden where we spoke about the project and the activities we are doing. We also participated in workshops where the participants shared their ideas and experience on good strategies to welcome migrants and refugees to their rural areas. The participants were all



Swedish, all of them active in groups working with rural development in the Swedish organization Bygdegårdarna. There were 32 participants at the conference, who listened to the lecture we had about the findings from the survey so far.

*1 Participants at the rural integration conference hosted by Bygdegårdarna where we had a lecture about the project.*

### 4.3 Webinar – From migrants to workers 30 August

The 30th of August we organized a webinar together with Nordregio with the title *“From migrants to workers – local practices on integration of labour migrants and refugees in rural areas in the Nordic countries.”*

Questions that were posed in the webinar were: How can newly arrived migrants be included in local communities? What are the different roles of the local, regional and national actors in managing labour market integration? Since 1990, the population of the Nordic countries has grown by 15 percent up to 26.5 million people, mainly due to immigration from abroad. Still many Nordic municipalities

struggle with declining and ageing populations, and labour shortages. In this webinar Leneisja Jungsberg and Hjördis Rut Sigurjonsdottir, researchers at Nordregio, discussed the role of migrants in rural and remote areas and the local practices in the regions which have included immigration as part of their development strategy.



### 4.4 Finnish Rural Parliament 2 September

At the Finnish Rural Parliament the project held a workshop on the theme “Migrant integration to rural areas”. The workshop was held together with the Finnish Village Movement and Nordregio. Read more here:

<http://www.maaseutupolitiikka.fi/en/rural-parliament>

The program for the workshop was as follows:

- Welcome & Introduction 10min, Petri Rinne, Finnish Village Movement
- Migrants in Scandinavian countryside 15min, Pipsa Salolampi, Nordregio
- Welcoming migrants and refugees to rural Europe 15min, Josefin Heed, Hela Sverige ska



leva / European Rural Parliament

- Whole village integrates 15min, Marjut Haapanen, Finnish Village Movement
- Discussion: What can we learn from the rural integration experiences? How could we do it even better, contributing to rural and community development?

## 4.5 Immigrant integration to rural areas 19-20th of September

In September we held a lecture with discussions on the conference “Immigrant Integration to rural areas”, for 110 participants from different European countries. The conference was organized by Community Led Local Development Halland, within a transnational cooperation project that they are doing with Austria and Finland.

The theme for the lecture and the following discussion was why people voluntarily in rural areas get involved in integration and what we can do to support these people, since they are essential for successful integration. The basis for the lecture was our survey, and we got some valuable feedback that has been written in to this report. At this meeting, those of us from the thematic working group who could attend came together to discuss the final report and our workshop at the ERP.

Read more here: <https://ruralintegration.eu/>





## 6. Input for the ERP

The rural movements of Europe make a big difference for local development on the local level. The strength is that we see what needs to be done, we have the social network and knowledge to make it happen. Most of us are volunteers who work with local development in our spare time, because we want to. The element of doing work voluntarily is especially important when it comes to welcoming refugees and migrants to our rural areas. Employed persons from authorities and municipalities are important, but for the refugee or migrant it is a different thing to be welcomed by a volunteer, simply because they are not paid. In the role of a volunteer you can meet friends and persons to do leisure activities with and someone to show you around in the new context.

If authorities do their job in the establishment, the people in the local community can create good conditions for the rest. Voluntary organisations should not have to fill in the gap and do the job that the authorities have responsibility for, but to succeed the authorities need to cooperate with local volunteers.

The rural movements of Europe could create better conditions for local volunteers by developing a toolbox of good practices, creating exchanges of experiences through conferences and webinars and to spread the point of view that newcomers contribute to the society rather than creating problems.

Many other organisations are involved in the issue of welcoming refugees and migrants, these are important especially when we want to work with advocacy and to change policies concerning how we welcome refugees and migrants.

## 7. Suggestion of text for manifesto

This is a suggestion of rewriting of the text, which will be reworked by all the partners in the group before the ERP. We welcome dialogue and suggestions on this.

*"We live in a time of great migration, which most likely will keep increasing. We call for European governments to take a global responsibility for solutions of the causes of migration such as conflicts and climate change related natural disasters as well as for the persons migrating. We believe that for successful welcoming of migrants, Europe needs to focus on how migrants can contribute to our communities, rather than seeing migration as a problem. We call for long-term policies that welcome migrants to Europe and create good conditions for the people living here already to welcome migrants into their communities."*

## 8. Appendice

### 9.1 Survey - Rural welcoming of migrants and refugees

This survey is a part of one of six thematic projects connected to the European Rural Parliament, which is a campaign aimed at expressing the voice of rural people in Europe. Please read more here: [www.europeanruralparliament.eu](http://www.europeanruralparliament.eu)

If you have any questions concerning the survey, please contact project leader Josefin Heed from the Swedish rural movement Hela Sverige ska leva, at [josefin.heed@helasverige.se](mailto:josefin.heed@helasverige.se).

#### *What is the purpose of this survey?*

In this survey we aim at gathering examples, experiences and knowledge on how rural citizens work with welcoming refugees and migrants, and how this work could be further supported by society. There is much potential for rural Europe in succeeding with welcoming refugees and migrants. The rural movements in Europe are doing a lot of interesting work in this area, which we now want to gather and learn from.

#### *Who should answer this survey?*

Any rural citizen who are or have been actively involved in activities aiming at welcoming refugees and migrants.

#### *What will happen with my answers?*

Your answers will be analysed and form a basis for a report that will be an important part of the decisions made at the European Rural Parliament in Venhorst, Netherlands 19-21 of October. You will get a digital copy of the report sent to your e-mail.

\* 1. Name

\* 2. Age

☐ <30

☐ 30-65

☐ >65

\* 3. Gender

☐ Female

☐ Male

☐ Other

4. Organisation

\* 5. Province or region

\* 6. Your country

\* 7. E-mail



8. How long have you been active in welcoming migrants and refugees in your rural area?

- ☐ < 1 year
- ☐ 1-2 years
- ☐ 3-4 years
- ☐ 5-10 years
- ☐ > 10 years

9. Why did you get engaged in welcoming migrants and/or refugees in your rural area?

- ☐ I acted on a moral responsibility to help.
- ☐ I joined friends/colleagues/neighbors who were already working with this.
- ☐ I was involved in an organisation that started working with this.
- ☐ I had the possibility to receive personal benefits (economic or similar).
- ☐ Other (please specify)

10. What was your first step to get involved? What did you do? Who did you contact?

11. What focus areas does your work with integration of migrants and refugees in your rural area include?

- ☐ Language training
- ☐ Work and employment
- ☐ Sports
- ☐ Cultural activities
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Farming and agriculture

Other (please specify)

12. Please describe briefly the activities and work that you do.

13. Are there any obstacles and challenges that you face in your work with integration of migrants and refugees?

14. What would you need in terms of support from society in order to increase your capacity to welcome migrants and/or refugees to your rural area?

15. What is your best advice for successful voluntary work with integration of migrants and refugees in rural areas?

16. Could you please provide us with e-mail addresses to any refugees or migrants in your rural area that we could send a similar survey to?

\* 17. Can we contact you via e-mail if we have any further questions?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No