



Strengthening Migrant Family Integration through New Dialogue Methods with Communities, Schools, and Services in Vantaa Neighbourhoods



Vantaa is a growing multicultural locality in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, with over 242 000 inhabitants. The mother tongue of over 25% of its population is a language other than Finnish. Accessing employment and education can pose considerable challenges for migrants in Vantaa.

The **SMILE** project aimed to strengthen migrant family integration through new dialogue methods with communities, schools and services in Vantaa. Part of the EU-funded **Partnerships and Financing for Migrant Inclusion (PAFMI)** initiative, and managed by Vantaa Municipality, SMILE strengthened and created partnerships between organisations that support integration and the city's employment services. It also supported the learning and integration of immigrant children by creating new cooperation and communication between schools, families and communities in Martinlaakso, Koivukylä and Hakunila, and developed new dialogue channels between immigrant communities and Vantaa's services.

The three components of the project were a community-based job coaching partnership with migrant-led NGOs providing job services in nine languages, the development of community work – such as free extra-curricular activities for migrant children – in three school neighbourhoods, and co-creation workshops to design activities jointly with the communities.





Results

Employment coaching:

- **456 beneficiaries** received employment coaching and were supported in finding employment, starting a job, continuing training and education. 54% were female, and 18% were under 30 years old.
- **186 migrants** found employment, education, training or self-employment. 62% were female, and 14% were under 30 years old.

Work with families and migrant children in schools:

- **685 parental school visits** took place through multilingual “parental corners”, which provided advice and help to migrant parents.
- **621 children** participated in different activities which promoted integration in schools.



Best practices and lessons learnt

- **Adopting an inclusive approach to youth- and children-centred activities** and involving non-migrant children can help to promote social cohesion and prevent discriminatory practices.
- **Using a Multisensory Learning Method, i.e. combining the physical and digital learning environment, can enhance interaction between different cultural groups** and generate new learning methods for immigrants to better understand Finnish society.
- **The selection of NGOs by local authorities to deliver job-coaching services, together with an employment coach provided by municipal employment services** can provide an effective job-searching service to unemployed migrants in their mother tongue.



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The PAFMI funding enabled us to look at the key factors that affect integration of our migrant background families in Vantaa, and to create a cross-sectoral project that involved employment of the parents, cooperation between schools and migrant-background parents, and the local dialogues with our communities.”

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