



Summary of the Koto project, aimed at developing integration work in the Helsinki metropolitan area

The Koto project, aimed at developing integration work in the Helsinki metropolitan area between 2007 and 2009, developed the integration measures carried out by social services among the refugee population. The project originated from the common desire of the units responsible for refugee reception operations. As workers from different municipalities are faced with largely the same challenges in a decidedly similar environment, it was deemed prudent to continue operational development together and share the results.

The Koto project has served to boost the visibility of refugee integration work, and the participating municipalities have detailed and developed their procedures. In addition to the collaborative development work, each unit chose their own development task. Moreover, the selection of common development themes was based on the needs of the workers themselves.

Results of the Koto project

- Refugee integration work has been brought into the spotlight and the processes have been detailed in the entire metropolitan area.
- Regional networks have been formed among workers to teach Finnish to educationally deprived women and mothers (subproject of Espoo).
- The roles and tasks of the workers involved in reuniting refugee families have been defined (subproject of Vantaa).
- The transition of refugees from special services to basic services has been facilitated by tightening the co-operation between authorities (subproject of Helsinki).
- The workers have described their own expertise and strengthened their multiprofessional approach to the work. They have also bolstered inter-municipal collaboration.
- Concrete tools have been created for workers and clients alike (Immigrant notebook and Skill book).

The participants of the development project were the Immigration Unit of the City of Helsinki Immigrant Services, City of Espoo Immigrant Services and City of Vantaa Multi-Service Office for Immigrants. The development work was conducted by the workers of the refugee integration units in Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa with the help of a number of project workers.

Socca - The Centre of Excellence on Social Welfare in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area - coordinated the project that was funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

Information on the Immigration Units of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area

- The immigration units are in charge of the integration and training of refugees who have received the right to reside and receive welfare services in a given municipality (kuntapaikka), and of comparable individuals, primarily for a period of three years.
- The immigration units create a foundation for the integration process, educate their clients on the particulars of Finnish society, advise them in the use of services and ensure that they receive the necessary support from the basic services.
- The units offer their expertise in matters relating to equality and co-operate with, for example, the basic services provided by the municipality, immigration authorities, labour administration, Kela - The Social Insurance Institution of Finland, adult education institutions and various organisations.