



# **Integration of quota refugees in Åland**

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Master's Thesis  
Master's Degree in Global Health Care  
2017

MASTER'S THESIS	
Arcada	
Degree Programme:	Master's Programme in Global Health Care
Identification number:	5907
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Title:	Integration of quota refugees in Åland
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Commissioned by:	Red Cross, Åland District
<p><b>Abstract:</b></p> <p>Many people around the world have been forced to flee their homes because of war, conflict, persecution, generalized violence, and terrible human rights violations. The refugees must settle in a new country with other norms, values and cultures. The purpose of this study was to gain a richer understanding of refugees' experiences of integration and civic attachment as well as refugee coordinators' experiences of integration and civic attachment, and to devise a list of recommendations for the integration of refugees into the Åland society.</p> <p>The research group consisted of quota refugees, aged 18 years or older, who had arrived in Åland during 2015-2016, and the research group for the refugee coordinators were all refugee coordinators working in the Åland municipalities. The research questions are based on Ager and Strang's Indicators of integration framework. Civic attachment may help expand the framework of integration by conceptualizing citizenship in a broader manner. The author of the thesis has therefore chosen to add questions about civic attachment as a complement to the model. Based on the above mentioned, the following main research questions emerge: 1) What kind of experiences do quota refugees have of integration and civic attachment in the Åland society? 2) What kind of experiences do refugee coordinators have of integration and civic attachment in the Åland society?</p> <p>The study was a qualitative research project and focus group interviews were conducted with a semi-structured interview guide. A deductive content analysis was used for analysis of the material. The results show that the integration process is very complex, and it takes a long time to harmonize in a society. The refugees were very well received when they came to Åland. The refugees and the refugee coordinators experienced language skills, employment, housing, health, and citizenship as significant indicators of integration. Social relationships were also found to be import during the integration process. The results show that municipalities can improve the situation for the refugees in the Åland society by providing information, social inclusion, education and intensive language learning.</p>	
Keywords:	Refugees, Integration, Framework, Citizenship, Language, Social Connections, Security and Safety, Red Cross
Number of pages:	76
Language:	English
Date of acceptance:	

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## FOREWORD

The writer would like to give a big thanks to all of those who have participated in this study. The commissioner, The Red Cross, Åland District, I would like to thank for financial support. Thank you, Tomas Urvas, Director of the Red Cross and Monica Hägerstrand-Selander, Refugee Coordinator at the Red Cross for personal support and encouragement during this time. I would also like to thank the informants involved in the study, who contributed with valuable knowledge and information on the subject. Thank you to my classmates and my supervisor, Gun-Britt Leijonqvist, who have offered significant opinions in the writing of the essay. And finally, I would like to thank the language editor Andy Horner and my family who encouraged and supported me during the process.

Mariehamn, November 2017

Gun Lindman

# 1 INTRODUCTION

A large part of the world's population is forced to flee today due to dramatic conditions in the country of origin. Civic attachment and integration in a new country is a complex long-term process seen both from an individual perspective and from a societal perspective. The refugees' experiences of culture and customs in the new host country can differ from those in the native country and it can provide a challenge in the integration process. The author considered therefore the choice of subject of the thesis as relevant to the prevailing international situation. The Åland society has received refugees since the 1990s and today there are about 100 quota refugees living in Åland. No previous study has been carried out on the integration of refugees in Åland and the writer believes that the survey may benefit the Åland society.

This study will focus on integration of quota refugees in the Åland society. The purpose of this study was to gain deeper understanding of refugee experiences and civic attachment during integration as well as refugee coordinators' perspectives of integration, and the aim was also to develop a PM (memorandum) of recommendations for integration of refugees into the Åland society.

The thesis begins with a historical background of the refugee situation in the world. There follows a description of the refugee situation in Finland and in Åland and a definition of concepts. The first chapter ends with a literary review, a literature summary and a description of the theoretical reference framework of the study. Chapter two describes the research implementation plan and in the third part of the work follows a presentation of the results. In the fourth and the final part, the validity, reliability, and trustworthiness of the study, the ethical aspects, the results, the conclusion, and further possibilities are discussed. The fourth part ends with a PM of recommendations regarding refugee integration in the Åland society. The author has mainly used the databases Cinahl, PubMed and Medline to search for scientific articles, but also Google Scholar and Google have been used. The article research has been limited to the year 2000 and onward. The word refugee is used in the thesis as a synonym for quota refugee.

## **1.1 Historical background of the refugee situation in the world**

Over 65 million people around the world have been forced to flee their homes because of war, conflict, persecution, generalized violence, and terrible human rights violations. This is a global displacement crisis. Every day, all over the world, people make the most difficult decision of their lives, namely to leave their homes in search of a better life (Swedish Migration Board, 2016; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2016a; Wek, 2016). This is a humanitarian catastrophe. Millions of refugees are streaming in to almost every country in Europe. The countries are to some extent unprepared for the extreme problems which have arisen.

There is a continuing dramatic growth in mass displacement from wars and conflicts, which is reaching levels unprecedented in recent history. The population of 65,3 million forcibly displaced people includes: 21,3 million refugees, 40,8 million internally displaced people and 3,2 million asylum-seekers. If they all resettled in one place, it would be the 21st largest country in the world, larger in population than the United Kingdom, and nearly three times as large as Australia. If the population of the 21st Largest Country continues to rise at this rate, by 2030 it will become the 5th largest country in the world. Nearly 250 million children live in regions affected by conflict, and half of the world's refugees are under 18. Children in humanitarian crises and those who have been displaced for years are often denied many of their basic rights, including the right to survive, the right to protection from violence, the right to health care and education, and the right to be heard. About half of all refugees are women. Women who are unaccompanied, pregnant, heads of households, disabled or elderly, are especially vulnerable. Many refugees, migrant women and girls have already been exposed to various forms of sexual and gender based violence either in their country of origin, first asylum or along the journey to the host country (Save the Children, 2016; UNHCR, 2016a, b, c).

Throughout history, migration has been a fact of life. The situation is complex, and the reasons people migrate are varied. Some people move to new countries to improve their economic situation. Others leave their countries to escape human rights abuses, such as torture, persecution, armed conflict, and extreme poverty. Their journey can be full of danger and fear. Some face detention when they arrive in another country. Many face



daily racism, fear of being seen as foreign or strange, fear of losing their identity, and discrimination. They are extremely vulnerable and lack the usual support structures (Amnesty International, 2016; UNHCR, 2016a; UNHCR, 2014).

The global humanitarian system has been severely stretched. New crises have broken out in the Middle East and Africa, compounded by continuing unresolved conflicts in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and elsewhere. The conflicts in the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Ukraine and Iraq, among others, and the ongoing crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic, have caused suffering and extreme displacement. The war in the Syrian Arab Republic, entering in to its fourth year in 2014, has been a major cause for the global increase in refugees. Globally, one in every five displaced persons worldwide in 2014 was Syrian. The country also became the world's largest source country of refugees during 2014, overtaking Afghanistan, which had held this position for more than 30 years. The escalating crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic resulted in Turkey becoming the world's largest refugee hosting country, a ranking that had been occupied by Pakistan for more than a decade. As a consequence of the combined number of refugees and internally displaced persons, countries have reached a record high of persons who need protection and a safe environment (UNHCR, 2014).

## **1.2 The situation in Finland and in Åland**

In a politically intense atmosphere, Finland's first president, Kaarlo Juho Ståhlberg, had to personally resolve the fate of a number of foreign nationals. Finland's first quota refugees arrived in 1923. Twenty years later Finland evacuated tens of thousands of Ingrians (Swedish: Ingermanländare) and from the 1970's and onwards, quota refugees relayed by the UNHCR. However, in the first years of independence, Finland set an example for actively seeking refugees (Leitzinger, 2017).

Refugees who have left their home country or country of permanent residence for another country, where they may, however, not settle down permanently, can be chosen for resettling in a third country under the so-called refugee quota. Under the refugee quota, Finland accepts persons whom UNHCR has designated as refugees or other foreigners who are in need of international protection for resettlement. At present, there are some 25

countries that receive quota refugees. In Finland, Parliament decides annually, in connection with the approval of the state budget, how many quota refugees Finland will undertake to accept. Since 2001, the number of quota refugees accepted by Finland has been 750 per year. The Parliament can decide on an additional quota. The refugee quota was increased, for instance, in 2014 and 2015 due to the severe situation in Syria, and 1,050 quota refugees were admitted (Finnish Immigration Service, 2017a). Finland has accepted about 9800 quota refugees during the period 2003-2016 (Finnish Immigration Service, 2017b).

Quota refugees coming to Åland undergo the same process as other quota refugees in Finland. The Åland society has received refugees since the 1990's and today there are around one hundred quota refugees in the Åland municipalities. The quota refugees come mainly from Syria and Iran. They are scattered all over the region. Åland is a small society geographically, with around 30 000 inhabitants, isolated from mainland Finland and neighbouring Sweden. The infrastructure in Åland differs from that of mainland Finland because it consists of a large archipelago with a small population base (Fogelström, 2017).

The local government of Åland (Swedish: Ålands Landskapsregering) has in 2016 adopted a program for integration promotion 2016-2019 (Swedish: Landskapsregeringens program för integrationsfrämjande). The program builds on the first one adopted, in February 2013. It contains objectives and measures to promote integration, which will continuously be monitored and evaluated. Focus areas include access to Swedish language instruction, education, employment, health and promotion of participation and good relations, as well as increased preparedness in a changing world (Ålands Landskapsregering, 2016). The local government of Åland has also in 2014 adopted a practical manual of information for the receiving communities upon a possible future refugee reception in Åland. The manual contains previous experiences of refugee reception in Åland and other relevant material collected and the document can serve as a basis for discussions among Åland municipalities that are interested in receiving refugees. A checklist has been developed, giving practical assistance in the planning and carrying out of refugee reception (Ålands Landskapsregering, 2014).

### 1.3 Definitions

World Health Organization (WHO) (2016) defines refugees in the following way: “A refugee is someone who fears being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. A refugee is outside the country of his or her nationality, and is unable to, or unwilling to be protected by that country”.

Finnish Immigration Service (2016) defines quota refugees as “A person considered a refugee by the United Nations (UN) refugee agency UNHCR who has been granted a residence permit under the refugee quota verified in the Budget”.

UNHCR (2015) defines migrants as “A migrant moves around within their own country, or from one country to another, usually to find work, although there may be other reasons such as to join family. Some move voluntarily, while others are forced to leave because of economic hardship or other problems. People can migrate ‘regularly’, with legal permission to work and live in a country, or ‘irregularly’, without permission from the country they wish to live and work in”.

UNHCR (2015) defines asylum-seekers as “An asylum-seeker is someone who has left their country in search of international protection, but is yet to be recognized as a refugee”.

UNHCR (2007) defines integration of refugees as “a dynamic and multifaceted two-way process which requires efforts by all parties concerned, including a preparedness on the part of refugees to adapt to the host society without having to forego their own cultural identity, and a corresponding readiness on the part of host communities and public institutions to welcome refugees and meet the needs of a diverse population. The process of integration is complex and gradual, comprising of distinct but inter-related legal, economic, social and cultural dimensions, all of which are important for refugees’ ability to integrate successfully as fully included members of society”.

UN (2004) defines internally displaced persons (IDPs) as "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or humanmade disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border".

Flanagan and Faison (2001) define civic attachment "as a sense of one's importance as a member of the community and the desire to contribute to the well-being of the community, as well as the skill/action of having a voice in relation to community concerns".

## **1.4 Literary research**

Burnett (2013), Capo Zmergac (2007), Holt (2007) and Griffiths (2001) stating, refugee identities are complex and formed not only by internal feelings, beliefs, ethnic and cultural traditions, but also by external factors, such as resettlement practices, forced migration, policies, cultural traditions, and the economic, political, and social conditions of his/her new host country. Over time, refugees undergo a complicated process of identity reformulation as a result of displacement. Koser Akcapar (2006) states, once given the status of refugee and resettled into their new host country, refugees begin another phase of identity reformulation. The resettlement of refugees into new social, cultural, economic and/or political environments can be disruptive to their identity and their sense of belonging in their host country. It can give a feeling of being an outsider. Ager and Strang (2008b) state that integration is a two-way process characterized by the involvement of refugees and migrants, as well as host societies, in the adaptation of newcomers.

The Red Cross (2017) describes the integration process through the integration cycle. On arrival, the refugee feels that all doors are open and the future looks bright. Everything seems to be in order, but soon comes a time of misery and doubt. Language learning eventually begins but unemployment is usually a fact which spoils the mood. Language learning continues and becomes increasingly intense. At the same time unemployment is a fact, as well as the crisis-situation in the world. The thoughts are with the family and friends in the home country, that is in the middle of a war. Their own powerlessness and

a sense of guilt arises. Gradually refugees are engaged in activities, meet new friends, get social relations, and find new colleagues. The family may be reunited, which gives a satisfying feeling. In the family a discussion arises about what kind of roles each family member has. Refugees are still dependent on other people's help. Job applications continue but usually with negative results. There may be problems with making friends, the language is experienced as difficult and the children have difficulties in school. There is a risk that the children or adolescents end up in trouble. Language skills are still deficient, and unemployment is commonplace. Perhaps a hobby is found, but the issues are many concerning life in the new country with many ups and downs. Integration is a complex and long process for every individual. Depending on the individual's resources and strengths, the process may take different lengths of time (Red Cross, 2017).

### Making a living

Employment and education are widely cited as indicative of successful integration. It is, therefore, appropriate to include them in an operational definition of 'integration' and to encourage programs working in these areas (Ager and Strang, 2008a). Kiagia et al. (2010), Ager and Strang (2008b), Archer et al. (2005), Valtonen (2004) and Wanhe (2004) state that refugees consider work as necessary for their survival. Work is also a link to social integration. Common for the refugees is non-selective work and temporary work. Employment potentially be seen as providing multiple benefits in terms of integration. It leads to financial security but also self-respect. If employment opportunities are limited, this could serve as a major barrier to effective integration and a likely prompt for migration from the area. Unemployed refugees who are suffering from status inconsistency or a loss of traditional roles have a tendency toward marital conflicts, depression, and homesickness. Many of the refugees' experience discrimination at the workplace, such as dissatisfaction with the work schedule, and refugees don't have the same opportunities to get an ordinary job like other citizens (Kiagia et al., 2010; DeFreitas, 2005; Valtonen, 2004). Refugees are often highly educated in comparison with other groups of immigrants. However, a major barrier to securing employment is difficulties relating to non- recognition of qualifications and previous work experience. Many refugees are unable to produce proof of previous qualifications and even when they can, employers may not recognize them. Consequently, under-employment is a common factor in the experience of refugees in the labor market (Ager & Strang, 2008b).

Ager and Strang (2008b) suggest that education is generally seen to be of value for two reasons. Crucially it provides the opportunity to acquire qualifications or skills to advance opportunities for employment. It provides a fertile context for ‘mixing’, enabling the development of relationships across the community. Alfred (2017) states that more than half of the world’s refugee children do not go to school – some 3.7 million children, including over half a million Syrian children. Refugees’ chances of getting an education drop even further as they grow up: only 22 percent of refugees go to secondary school, and just one percent attend university. There are many obstacles standing between these children and a classroom. Some are legal and political – around 20 percent of refugee-hosting countries restrict refugee children’s access to national schools. Others are financial – education for refugees is chronically underfunded, hovering at around 2 percent of humanitarian aid in recent years. Ager and Strang (2008b) state that for refugee children (and in many cases, refugee parents) schools are experienced as the most important place of contact with members of local host communities, playing an important role in establishing relationships supportive of integration. Refugee children’s experience of education is impacted by insufficient support for learning the host-society’s language, isolation, and exclusion (bullying, racism, difficulties making friends, etc.). Some schools provide special language units for refugee children in seeking to meet their needs, but recognize that such provision limits opportunities for mixing with local children. A lack of information about the school system, including the consequences of pupils’ choice of subjects on subsequent employment options, is a further constraint on the potential for schooling to support integration (Ager & Strang, 2008b).

#### A place in the society and cultural awareness

Housing is an area which can facilitate – or disrupt – the process of integration. Both the permanence of housing arrangements and their location has been seen to influence processes of integration through the sorts of relationships that have been available as a result of housing (Ager & Strang, 2008a, b). Ziersch (2017) shows a link between housing and health, safety and stability and social belonging. Housing is of central importance to health and wellbeing and impacts on health in a range of ways, including affordability, the suitability of housing in relation to physical aspects such as condition and layout, and social aspects such as safety and belonging and issues around security of tenure. Living in housing in poor condition affects refugee’s health negatively. Ziersch (2017) reinforces

the importance of housing for both the physical and mental health of refugees and refugees living in resettlement countries. Improving housing quality, affordability, and security of tenure have all the potential to lead to more positive health results.

Social support from the host society is critical to the integration process. Social relationships are important in satisfying the refugee's need to communicate and enabling them to avoid social isolation. The refugees can experience mistrust and exclusion when they find themselves caught in a situation of reciprocal incomprehension (Akhtar & Choi, 2004). Yi Cheung and Phillimore (2013) show that social networks are important for integration while the absence of networks is problematic. Supporting access to any kind of network or organization is important. This might mean making efforts to direct new refugees to local community organizations to ensure that they can connect with people. The social network is also largely dependent on the language skills of the refugees and access to work is also important for the creation of a social relationship. Ager and Strang (2008b) say that social relationships have been influential in identifying assets associated with social connection and trust. Further, Ager and Strang (2008b) distinguish between three differing forms of social connection: social bonds (with family and co-ethnic, co-national, co-religious or other kinds of group). Bonds with own family are of value because they enable them to share cultural practices and maintain familiar patterns of relationships. Such connections play a large part in making them feeling 'settled'. For example, for a single male it is traditionally the family's responsibility to find him a wife. Without family, he will be anxious about whether he will ever get married. Relationships with a same-ethnic group also appear to have health benefits. Refugees who do not have a same-ethnic community available to them, may suffer a risk of depression three to four times as high as others who have access to this resource'. Social bridges are of importance in the relationship between refugees and host communities and are generally characterized by issues relating to social harmony and refugee participation in the host society. An important factor in making them feel 'at home' in the new area is the friendliness of the people they encounter on a daily basis. Being recognized and greeted by others in the neighborhood is valuable. Small acts of friendship appear to have a disproportionately positive impact on perceptions. Friendliness from the settled community is very important in helping refugees to feel more secure and safe and persuading them that their presence is not resented. Social links refer to the connection between individuals and structures of the state, such

as government services. It is generally recognized that refugees' special circumstances (lack of familiarity with their surroundings, not speaking the language etc.) lead to barriers that require additional effort from both refugees and the wider community, if genuine equality of access to services is to be achieved. Connecting refugees to relevant services is a major task in supporting integration (Ager & Strang, 2008b). Correa-Velez (2010) found discrimination and bullying to be a negative factor in creating social belonging among refugees.

Ager and Strang (2008b), consider the local language an essential means of local integration, a necessary tool for survival. It is a dominant component in successful integration. The ability to communicate in the local language is viewed by refugees as a particularly important component of integration into the society. Language skills facilitate in developing friendships and relationships with the host community and lead to more productive communication with institutions and members of the host community. Language enables refugees to feel 'understood', provides greater access to services and shared/mixed activities, boosts self-esteem and feelings of well-being. Language helps children to progress academically and be successful at school, helps create a feeling that they belong to and are part of the community and can serve to relieve hostility from the host community. Many in the community expect refugees to learn the language and they may interpret continual use of other languages as antisocial. With a 'two-way' understanding of integration, the issue of language competence is also, however, a challenge for receiving communities, especially for providers of essential services such as health care (Ager & Strang, 2008b).

Cultural knowledge in enabling integration processes and outcomes included both refugees' knowledge of national and local procedures, customs and facilities and - to a lesser extent - non-refugees' knowledge of the circumstances and culture of the refugees. Adjusting to a different culture is, in the experience of most refugees, not straight forward. Refugees who have experienced close family ties in their own culture, find their isolation and the lack of a strong local strong to be alienating and depressing (Ager & Strang, 2008b). Refugee Center Online (2017) describes cultural adjustment as a step model. The first phase, the honeymoon phase, evokes feelings of excitement and happiness. This occurs soon after arrival in the new place. Then comes step two, the culture and shock phase.



During this time, feelings of unhappiness, sadness, fear, and anger appear, the home country feels far away and the native country is seriously missed. Language skills are of importance in how long this period will last. In step three, the adjustment phase, the feelings start to settle down and the refugees start to feel more comfortable in the new place. The fourth step is the mastery phase. This phase is characterized by a feeling of being settled with the new life and culture, although there are still difficult periods sometimes. Bhugra and Becker (2005) state that individuals who migrate experience multiple stresses that can impact on their mental well-being, including the loss of cultural norms, religious customs, and social support systems, adjustment to a new culture and changes in identity and the concept of self. The loss of one's social structure and culture can cause a grief reaction.

Ager and Strang (2008b) say that the importance of 'lack of trouble' is noted as a very important key factor in integration. Freedom from physical threats, fear and abuse is frequently stated by refugees to be a key issue in enabling a sense of engagement with local communities. If fear of physical threats and abuse occurs, refugees frequently feel unable to be active and involved in their neighbourhoods. A sense of safety and stability is a key issue in facilitating integration. Community stability is potentially an important facilitator of integration. Edwards (2017) and Neate (2014) state that refugees have an enormous need for security and safety in their new host country. Many refugees have been on the run for many years, often under unsafe and violent conditions. Being able to feel safe and secure is a prerequisite for a successful integration process.

Ager and Strang (2008b) emphasize that refugees seek and find advice from various sources including Housing Office staff, schools, libraries, and volunteers at drop-in centres. In many cases refugees recall particular individuals who have played a pivotal role in supporting them. This feels particularly important at times when circumstances have changed (e.g. upon arrival or being granted refugee status). Information and support regarding access to services is considered crucial.

Alencar (2017) shows that the media play a critical role in how different groups of people perceive themselves and are perceived by others. In recent years, however, digital technology has had the potential to transform the settlement of refugees in the various areas of sociopolitical, economic, and cultural integration. Thus, new technologies can provide

refugees with general information about rights, citizenship, and local refugee support services. This helps overcome feelings of isolation by making information available to refugees in their own languages as well as cultural practices of both their home and new destination countries. New technologies promote language learning through training programs online and the inclusion of marginalized immigrant youths. Social media platforms are used among refugees in order to maintain contacts with family members and friends in their country of origin. Social media networking sites were particularly relevant for refugee participants in acquiring language and cultural competence, as well as in forming bonds and bridging social relationships (Alencar, 2017).

Ager and Strang (2008b) emphasize that ‘Full and Equal Citizenship’ is fundamentally organized around themes as social welfare, housing, employment, education and health. Refugee integration in Europe can be traced back to the 1951 Geneva Convention. A refugee quotation from Ager & Strang (2008b),

*“Living in another country as a refugee is very difficult. We were forced to leave our country. We have not chosen to come here ourselves. I don’t say that it is not a good place to live but I want the government to treat us like other citizens. We are human beings and have the right to live”.*

Articulating refugee rights defines the foundation of integration policy, to which governments are accountable. Rights may include: human dignity, equality, freedom of cultural choice, justice, security, and independence. Rights raise the question of responsibilities. The government should lead, but successful integration depends on the contributions of all sectors in society, including public bodies, community and religious leaders, the education system, voluntary organizations, employers, and trade unions (Ager & Strang, 2008b).

### Health

In the course of local fieldwork, health is a core factor in integration. Good health is widely seen as an important resource for active engagement in a new society. Language difficulties may make it difficult for refugees to communicate with health care professionals; a lack of information about services available may prevent some from utilizing services (Ager & Strang, 2008a). The health problems of refugees and migrants are similar to those of the rest of the population, although some groups may have a higher prevalence. Female migrants frequently face specific challenges, particularly in maternal,

newborn and child health, sexual and reproductive health, and violence. Migrants are exposed to the risks associated with population movements. Psychosocial disorders, reproductive health problems, higher newborn mortality, drug abuse, nutrition disorders, alcoholism and exposure to violence increase their vulnerability to noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). Vulnerable children are prone to acute infections such as respiratory infections and diarrhea because of poor living conditions and deprivation during migration, and they require access to acute care. Lack of hygiene can lead to skin infections (WHO, 2015). Yun et al. (2016) indicate that the health profile of children depends on the country of departure. Common health issues for refugee children are anemia and malnutrition, Hepatitis B infection (HBV), Tuberculosis (TB) and Strongyloides.

Shannon et al. (2012) and WHO (2015, 2016) state that the aftermath of witnessing and surviving horrific and violent war atrocities leaves many refugees with significant symptoms of psychological distress including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and major depression. Shannon et al. (2012) state that the strongest factor associated with PTSD was torture, followed by cumulative exposure to potentially traumatic events. Mass violence contributes to PTSD more than any other type of disaster. Survivors who endured torture indicate that this emotional distress is long-lasting and best predicted by physical complaints recorded at baseline. For many refugees, the initial primary care visit may be the first opportunity to detect traumatic experiences and their associated psychological and physical symptoms. Such patients may present varied and complex symptoms including headaches, abdominal pains, sleep difficulties, traumatic brain injury, body aches and pains, psychosomatic illness, depression, anxiety, PTSD, and injuries to eyes, ears, and mouth. In response to the extreme stress of war, refugees may also struggle with substance use and domestic violence (Shannon et al., 2012).

## **1.5 Summary of the literature review**

The above literary research demonstrates that the integration process is a complex and it progresses gradually over many years. Refugees can experience a conflict of identity when they come to a new society. The integration process can also be described as a wheel that moves to and froe with many ups and downs and different intensities. Getting established in society as a refugee is not very easy. Learning the new language and finding a

job are major challenges in a successful integration process. The previous literature shows that it is important to find friends and to create a social network. The media are important as a source of information and social media provides both information and new friends. The cultural habits of the new country are often different from the cultural norms found in the native country and this can create confusion. Health is another problem area. Refugees have both physical and mental health-related problems. Mental health, in particular, is mentioned as the focus for a lower level of health. PTSD is not uncommon. One of the most important factors when a refugee arrives in a new society is to what extent that society feels safe and secure. In order for a refugee to feel like a full member of society, it is important that they are treated according to the law and that human rights are respected.

## **1.6 Theoretical framework for the study**

Earlier studies by Ager and Strang (2004, 2008a, b) show ten key domains (figure 1) from which evidence has been gathered. These domains are of central importance to the integration of refugees. The ten domains are grouped under four headings. These include 1) Means and Markers. There are four domains within the framework under the heading “means and markers”: Employment, Housing, Education, and Health. Grouped together, these domains represent major areas of attainment that are widely recognized as critical factors in the integration process. 2) Social Connections. There are three domains within the framework under the heading “social connections”: The refugee’s developing relationships with other members of their ethnic group (bonds), developing relationships with other natives (bridges), and accessing social services (links). Viewed together they stress the importance of relationships in the understanding of the integration process. 3) Facilitators: There are two domains within the framework under the heading “facilitators”: “language and cultural knowledge” and “safety and stability”. These represent key facilitating factors in the process of integration. 4) Foundations: the refugee must have basic citizenship and rights for equal engagement in the new society. The author chose to add questions about civic attachment and leisure, network and emotions. These topics do not appear so clearly in Ager's and Strang's (2004, 2008a) model of Indicators of Integration.

Figure 1. Ager's and Strang's (2004 and 2008a) model of Indicators of Integration.

Headings      Key domains



## **2 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESEARCH**

### **2.1 Identifying of the problem**

At present there is a difficult refugee situation in the world. There is a global humanitarian displacement crisis and disaster. Integration is a long-term, complex process and refugees may meet another culture and customs in their new host country (Edwards, 2017). This topic is of great immediate interest when taking into account the current situation in the world. Seen from a historical perspective, refugee reception is quite new for Åland and no survey has previously been carried out regarding refugee integration in Åland.

### **2.2 The purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to gain a richer understanding of refugees' experiences of integration and civic attachment, as well as refugee coordinators' experiences of integration and civic attachment, and to develop a PM of recommendations for the integration of refugees into the Åland society.

### **2.3 The research target group**

The research target group consisted of quota refugees aged 18 years or over, who have arrived in Åland during 2015-2016, and the research group for the refugee coordinators comprised refugee coordinators who all worked in the Åland municipalities.

### **2.4 The research questions**

Thomas and Hodges (2010) show that good, clear statements indicating a project's research aims, objectives or questions do not normally just appear fully formed in a sudden eureka moment. They tend to emerge slowly, after considerable thought, and they take time to develop and finalize. To read around the subject, to analyze previous studies and to look at how other researchers frame their aims and objectives can be helpful in formulating research questions. Thomas and Hodges (2010) also urge one to look at how previous authors have phrased their research objectives when reviewing published articles

on research topics - and that to take objectives or questions from an existing study and review how clear they are, can help the researcher to think about how to frame their own research objectives.

The questions in this thesis are based on Indicators of integration framework, written by Ager and Strang (2004). The framework has been undertaken by Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh and commissioned by the Home Office. The aim for the mentioned framework has been to encourage a coherent understanding and approach to refugee integration and it has also aimed to help local projects and their clients towards integration (Ager & Strang, 2004). As a potential indicator of integration, Civic attachment may help expand Ager and Strang's (2004) framework by conceptualizing citizenship in a broader manner. The author of this thesis has therefore chosen to add questions about civic attachment as a complement to Ager and Strang's (2004) model.

Ager and Strang's (2004) indicators of integration framework provide specific indicators for assessing refugee progress towards and experiences about integration and UNCHR (2016a) states that integration as a process at both the individual and the community level.

Based on the above, the following main research questions emerge:

- 1) What kind of experiences do quota refugees have of integration and civic attachment in the Åland society?
- 2) What kind of experiences do refugee coordinators have of integration and civic attachment in the Åland society?

## **2.5 Description of the procedure**

Request for ethical permission was sent to Arcada University of Applied Sciences and to the Director of Red Cross Åland District (attachment 1). After ethical permission had been granted, the survey was sent out - including information about the study, a fact sheet (attachment 2) and consent to participation (attachment 3) - to all refugee coordinators in Åland. For the refugees, the mentioned documents were sent to the Red Cross's Refugee

Coordinator. The Red Cross Refugee Coordinator contacted one of the refugees who could help gathering a group of informants for the investigation's implementation.

Of the seven refugee coordinators working in Åland, four announced that they had the opportunity to participate in the study. The researcher took contact with them by telephone and agreed on meeting place and time. Two focus group interviews were held on two different occasions. On the first occasion, two refugee coordinators participated and on the second also two. The interviews were conducted in Swedish and held in the meeting room at the workplace.

Regarding the refugees, the Red Cross Refugee Coordinator contacted one of the refugees who had arrived to Åland in 2016. The Refugee Coordinator explained the purpose of the study and mediated contact information to the researcher. The researcher took contact with the person concerned by telephone and by Messenger and explained the purpose of the study. This person, who acted as an intermediary in the process, announced that she could help by providing informants for two different interview occasions. The researcher suggested a time and place for the interviews. The intermediary chose and contacted five women and five men who had the opportunity to participate in the study. Two focus group interviews were held on two different occasions. On the first occasion five men were interviewed and on the second occasion five women. The interviews were held in the Red Cross meeting room. The interviews were conducted with the help of a professional interpreter who translated from Swedish to Arabic and from Arabic to Swedish. For the female group, a female interpreter worked and for the male group a male interpreter worked. The interpreters came from a professional interpreter company in Stockholm.

All the refugee informants were informed orally about the principle of voluntariness, confidentiality, anonymity, and the usefulness of the study. The refugee coordinators were informed both orally and by letter of consent, of the principles. All informants had the opportunity to halt the interview at any time without need for explanation. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and written down and they will be destroyed at the end of the study.



## 2.6 Methods of research

The study is a qualitative research focusing on refugees and refugees' coordinators' experiences of integration and civic attachment in the Åland society. When it comes to investigating experiences, perceptions, and phenomena in qualitative research, individual or focus group interviews are the best method of investigation (Polit & Beck, 2012, 2004; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Olsson & Sörensen, 2007; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Focus groups can reveal a wealth of detailed information and deep insight. When well executed, a focus group creates an open environment that puts participants at ease, allowing them to answer questions thoughtfully in their own words and add meaning to their answers. Surveys are good for collecting information about people's attributes and attitudes but, when it is necessary to understand things at a deeper level, then a focus group interview will be suitable (Eliot and Associates, 2005). According to Elo and Kyngäs (2008) and Granheim and Lundman (2004) semi-structured questions are suitable for use for data collection in qualitative studies. The interview begins with an open question and then concentrates on details, finally leaving time for participants to add or supplement opinions on the subject. According to Malterud (2012) it is important that the interview is conducted step-wise and the interview should be recorded, transcribed, and written down. According to Jacobsen and Landau (2003) for a group of refugees to be a representative sample they must have been randomly selected from the population, every person (or household) in the target population must have had an equal chance of being selected to be interviewed. The informants in this study were not randomly selected. The reason for this will be explained in chapter four.

The method for this research was a focus group interview. The investigator used a semi-structured interview guide (appendix 4, refugees and appendix 5, refugee coordinators) including both open-ended and fixed-response questions. The researcher triangulated focus group interviews with refugees from different communities in Åland, as well as focus group interviews with refugee coordinators in Åland. The writer has conducted a pre-test interview with one family member and one friend.

## 2.7 The analysis method of the research

Content analysis is a method of analyzing written, verbal, or visual communication messages (Cole, 1988). Content analysis is a research method for making replication and deducing valid inferences from data to their context, with the purpose of providing knowledge, new insights, a representation of facts and a practical guide for action (Krippendorff, 1980). Content analysis is a systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena. Content analysis is extremely well-suited to analyzing the multifaceted, sensitive phenomena characteristic of nursing. Especially in nursing research, content analysis has been an important way of providing evidence for a phenomenon where the qualitative approach used to be the only way to do this, particularly for sensitive topics (Malterud, 2012; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Content analysis is the most common method in refugee research (Jacobsen & Landau, 2003).

The data analysis should to be done as truthfully and ethically realistically as possible. It is therefore important that the author looks at the collected information with as open eyes as possible. It is important that preconceptions must not affect the data analysis and the author will examine the topic as objectively as possible (Malterud, 2012). Each step within the content analysis, from the overall impression to the synthesis should be done with utmost care and accuracy. For example, selected quotes should be as comprehensive as possible and reflect the group's thoughts in general (Rolfe, 2006). The author should be aware that the method is time-consuming from start to finish (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The author should also consider that the content analysis does not proceed in a linear fashion and is more complex and difficult than quantitative analysis because it is less standardized and formulaic. One challenge of content analysis is the fact that it is very flexible and there is no simple, "right" way of doing it. This makes the analysis process most challenging and interesting (Polit & Beck, 2004).

Content analysis can be used in an inductive or deductive way. If there is insufficient prior knowledge about the phenomenon or if this knowledge is fragmented, the inductive approach is recommended (Lauri & Kyngäs, 2005). Deductive content analysis is used when the structure of analysis is operationalized on the basis of previous knowledge (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The aim of this study was to investigate experiences of the phenomenon

of refugee integration, and it is also based on a previous operationalized research model for integration of refugees. Therefore, a deductive content analysis can be considered as an appropriate analytical method in this study.

## **2.8 Ethical aspects of the research**

The author must be extremely careful with the ethical principle “Do no harm”. Leaning (2001) and Anderson (1999) show that the problem of “doing no harm” in refugee research is particularly difficult to anticipate or control. When refugees are interviewed, the information they reveal can be used against them either in the camp or in their areas of origin. Refugees can become stigmatized or targeted if certain information is known about them - for example, if a woman has been raped or if a refugee has access to a special source. In focus group discussions, there can be no confidentiality, even when questions are carefully designed. The information can be forwarded by the participants. They cannot be fully controlled, even by diligent researchers (Leaning, 2001; Andersson, 1999). The author is aware of the problem and will pay attention to secure confidentiality through ethical principles; the principle of non-malevolence and benevolence, the principle of honesty and the principle of justice and fairness is observed. This is in line with Finnish Advisory Board on research integrity’s (TENK) (2012) ethical guidelines.

In this study, the principle of confidentiality and anonymity has been taken into account as follows: the interviews have been linked using the voice recorder program of the telephone. Then they have been transferred to the author's own computer whose password only the owner knows. The phone interviews were deleted after they were transferred to the owner's computer. The interview material was transcribed into written text. The informants’ interview material was allocated different colours, with associated code tables. The code table was stored in a locked cabinet. The written text material was stored in another locked cabinet. The writer pointed out the importance of confidentiality and anonymity within the group several times during the interview.

## **2.9 The usefulness of the study**

The results can be useful to the Åland society. No research has been done previously into the integration of refugees in the Åland society. Based on the results of this study, the investigator will draw up recommendations regarding the integration of refugees in the Åland society. This can be useful for the communities, refugee coordinators and other persons/organizations who have any contact with refugees and the integration process in the societies. The result and the recommendations might hopefully also be of benefit and support for persons working in transcultural, crisis or disaster environments.

### **3 RESULTS**

The aim of this study is to gain a richer understanding of refugee experiences of integration and civic attachment, as well as refugee coordinators' experiences of integration in the Åland society. The aim was also to draw up recommendations for integration in the society. The recommendations can be used both by individuals and authorities. The informants in the study were quota refugees who came to Åland during 2015-2016. The result is divided into three parts. Part one describes the refugees' experiences of integration and the second part describes the refugee coordinators' experiences of integration. In part one, describing refugees' experiences, there were seven categories with several subcategories (appendix 6, categorization matrix - refugees). In part two, describing refugee coordinators' experiences, there were five categories with several subcategories (appendix 7, categorization matrix – refugee coordinators). The categories and subcategories are based partly on Anger and Strang's model (2004) and partly on results that emerged during the process of analysis.

#### **3.1 Refugees' experiences of integration in the Åland society**

The refugees experience of integration is described in seven categories with several subcategories. The categories are: The Integrations process, Means and Markers, Social Connections, Facilitators, Foundation, Network and Leisure, and Emotions.

##### **3.1.1 The Integration Process**

The result shows that integration is a complex phenomenon and coming as a refugee to a new country and a new society is a challenge. It is associated with many different experiences and feelings, both positive and negative, even though all informants think they have been very well received by the Åland community. It is a very tiring and demanding process to go through. The category The Integration Process has resulted in four subcategories, which are: experience of concern, experience of security and safety, experience of sadness, captivity, fear, alienation and loneliness, and experience of discrimination and racism.

### Experience of concern

All informants have had some experience of concern for the new life. They can experience worries for the future, what is going to happen now? What does the new society look like? It leads to a thousand questions at the same time, often associated with anxiety of some kind. Common to everyone is worry about learning the new language. Especially those who are a little older express anxiety and worries about learning a new language and a new alphabet. It is difficult to concentrate on language learning when their thoughts remain in their home country and what the situation there looks like for their families and their relatives. The informants also express concern about their economic situation, even if they receive support from the society. Work is another factor that gives rise to concern. In order to get employment, one must be able to speak the language, so there are several factors that are connected. Likewise, the lack of opportunities for education gives cause for concern. Their language skills are again crucial.

*"We came to a European country. I feel like a prisoner, we can't get out, we can't return to my country that speaks my own language".*

The informants also expressed concerns about their children's upbringing and their friends. There are other rules and norms for children in the new society which are different when compared to their native country. Further informants expressed concern about residence permits and the long time it takes to obtain Finnish citizenship.

*"Without citizenship and a passport, one can't move freely, and I feel shut in",* said one informant.

State of health is also something that causes concern for several of the informants. Many have physical diseases that should be taken care of. Likewise, their mental well-being is neglected. The informants expressed a wish of receiving better help in controlling and managing their health.

### Experience of security and safety

All informants expressed that they were well received when they came to Åland and they immediately felt a great sense of safety and security. Interviewees stated: We felt liberation from the war and happiness over our freedom. Life in our native country was hard and we were worn out, we could not work, we could not do anything. There was no medical treatment and we felt completely out of our minds. The informants also expressed a

sense of security and stability for their children and the opportunity for a safe school. The women almost immediately felt gender equality. It creates security.

*"The war affected and persecuted us in different ways. We felt like we are human beings when we came to Åland, a warm sense of being welcome and we were still alive, and we felt safe".*

#### Experience of sadness, captivity, fear, alienation and loneliness

The informants describe a feeling of sadness about leaving their native country, their family, relatives, and the sense of community they were used to. They describe a sadness that runs very deep. They feel lost and sad. Furthermore, they describe how they miss the native country's soil, scents and air and they feel a sense of exclusion. Captivity is another experience they can feel. Refugees have a sense of captivity because they cannot speak the language of the country, they have no citizenship and no passport. It feels like sitting in prison. An informant describes integration as a transplantation process. There is a fear of how the new organs will work.

*"It feels like getting transplantation. Like getting new lungs. It will take time for the body to accept these new organs. You need new organs".*

The participants also describe loneliness and alienation. The language feels strange, the culture is different, as well as customs and norms. Several informants expressed the lack of a sense of coherence. As a refugee, you are lifted out of your context and suddenly you don't know who you really are, said one informant. They also described how people do not talk so much to each other here in Åland. Everyone seems very busy and it gives a strange feeling of alienation.

#### Experience of discrimination and racism

There are a small number of Åland citizen who show that they do not like refugees. Participants reported racism both in contact with official authorities and also in their leisure time. One informant said that it is very easy to feel pointed out when the back-ground and culture are different.

*"We are Muslims but not terrorists like IS, it's a difference that not everyone understands. There is therefore racism but very little".*

### 3.1.2 Means and Markers

The category Means and markers is divided into four subcategories. Employment, Housing, Education and Health. The informants thought the four subcategories were an indicator for a good integration in the new society.

#### Employment

The informants expressed the importance of having a job in order to feel like a good and useful member of the community. Most of the informants want a job but their language skills are limiting. One informant describes language as a bridge between a job and yourself. Some of the men had temporary jobs for a few months, sometimes unpaid. The men also expressed some concern about having a short working relationship. At the same time, they were also aware of the language skills required in order to obtain a permanent job. Most of the informants experienced the employment situation as difficult and said that it gives a feeling of being an outsider when you do not have a job or speak the language. Almost every man had a practical profession but no education. They found that education is required in Finland to get a job. An informant expressed that

*“The work is difficult for us Arabs. We have experience, but it requires education to be able to work”.*

A female informant had an unpaid job that she performed a few days in a week. The other female informants were at home with their children or retired. The female informants would also like to have a job if it would be possible. Some of the informants expressed a desire to eventually start their own business, a cafe or a restaurant. They said that this would be a way to enter the Åland business community and to earn their own living. Some informants had a farmer's background and they wanted a small piece of land to grow vegetables and fruits. Those who have or have had a job are very happy with their work. All informants had been well treated at the workplace and they had not experience bullying or racism.

#### Housing

All informants were happy to have their own home. They also felt very safe and secure in their homes. One participant said that some days we might even leave the door un-



locked. But it also emerged that there were a lot of problems in the flats. Problems mentioned were, for example, that the fan did not work, moisture in the home, cold and draughty housing, especially in wintertime. One informant expressed

*“My apartment is cold, we are freezing and it's an old building, it effects my health”. The rent was also very high, so I have difficulty in paying the rent”.*

### Education

Common to all was that the participants had a low degree of education or no education at all. All men had a practical profession that they had learned through workplace training, but lacked education. The younger men usually had a practical education such as car mechanic or carpenter. The women lacked education altogether. According to the parents their children were pleased with the schooling in elementary school. The children showed no tendency for playing truant.

MEDIS (Medborgarinstitutet, Adult Education Institution) is an important institution regarding language education. All informants were offered SFI (Svenska för inflyttade, Swedish for migrants) courses. The participants expressed that the way to work is through the language and one has to learn the language. The informants felt that they invested a great deal in education regarding the Swedish language. Several interviewees thought the best way to learn a new language is “on the street” or at the workplace.

*“We have a good opportunity for Swedish education, but the language is difficult, the grammar is difficult, and the language contains a different alphabet than we are used to. If you can speak the language, you experience, that you are a part of the society”.*

In the discussion about education and language, it was found that pensioners in the society are a resource who give time to speak with refugees and it becomes a natural way of learning a daily language.

### Health

The study showed that refugees were happy with their experience of the initial healthcare reception at ÅHS (Ålands Hälso- och sjukvård, Åland Health Services). The doctor examined the state of refugees' health and follow-up times were arranged. The parents felt that the children received good health checks at school and the school would gladly help if the child has problems with his or her health.

The informants stated they had difficulties understanding the Finnish health care system because they have another system in their home country. The participants reported that they had a great need for health checks because they had been fleeing for a long time and had been unable to seek medical attention. The interviewees experienced a great need for specialist care, but it was difficult to get an appointment with a specialist physician. Waiting times and queues were experienced as abnormally long. There was also a great need for dental care and the participants felt that they did not receive the dental care they needed. Participants experienced a lot of psychological and psychiatric problems. The informants felt that the mental health care did not work as well as they would like. The interviewees also described difficulties and misunderstandings with interpreter assistance. One participant pointed out that sometimes the interpreter is not present during the whole visit, and then

*“I do not understand what the doctor says and what recommendations he gives, I do not know what medications I will take and how I should take care of myself”.*

Refugees argued for a greater need of a refugee coordinator at ÅHS. This person could coordinate visits and assist patients with practical things and explain how the Åland healthcare system operates and transmit information about healthcare.

### **3.1.3 Social Connections**

The category Social connections are divided into four subcategories. Social Bridges, Social Bonds, Social Links and Personal experiences of social connections.

#### Social bridges

Refugees spoke of positive feelings towards members of the Åland community, although they also reported limited interactions between refugees and Ålanders. The difficulties of contacts depend largely on inadequate language skills, but they also report difficulties in getting in touch with the Ålanders. One informant said:

*“It feels like the Ålanders are a little bit difficult to get close to and get in touch with”.*

Participants expressed, it takes a long time to be accepted into the Åland community. Several families have made new friends through the children's school and through neighbours. Almost all informants stated neighbours as important for social fellowship and friendship. Another mentioned group was the pensioners who take the time to speak with the refugees. Likewise, almost every participant said:

*“But in general, we feel accepted and we have a sense of coherence with the Ålanders”.*

The Red Cross is an important organization for the refugees. Through the Red Cross, the refugees have made friends and the Red Cross arranges valuable activities and meetings. Another organization mentioned was Folkhälsan (Public Health Organization), which arranges different activities that refugees can participate in. In general, the third sector, as it is called, plays a major role in arranging activities for refugees.

### Social bonds

The interviews showed that refugees in Åland have strong ties to other refugees in the community. The study also showed strong ties between refugees who arrived on Åland at the same time.

*“The children bring us together, they meet and play and then the families meet too”.*

*“We meet often, drink coffee and talk to each other. We are all brothers and sisters, we are human beings and meet often, we need to talk so much”.*

### Social links

Participants have both positive and negative experiences of contact with social authorities. In some municipalities they work well while in other municipalities less well. It may also depend on the person handling the case. Everyone finds it important to be treated fairly, according to the law. The study also showed difficulties understanding the social insurance system. Refugee participants were to some extent aware of existing services in the community. But more information is needed on a regular basis. Because the refugees in this study have been such a short time in Åland, it is not yet possible for them to engage in the political process. They are not eligible to vote in municipal or parliamentary elections.

### Personal experiences of social connections

Åland has given them a very good reception, and the refugees experience a sense of guilt and would like to “pay back” the community, for example by working and being a resource in business life, said informants. The interviewees express a wish to start their own businesses. Several participants said:

*“We can open restaurants, markets, coffee shops, and be a part of the Åland industry”.*

The refugees repeatedly pointed out that Åland is a safe and secure place to live. But they also said that it is difficult to get into the Åland community and be accepted, to make friends.

### **3.1.4 Facilitators**

The category Facilitators have four subcategories. Language, Culture, Religion, and Safety and Stability. The mentioned subcategories shine as a guiding principle throughout the interview, especially language is often a recurring factor, as it is very important in the integration process.

#### Language

The study shows that being able to understand each other and speak the language is one of the most important factors for living a normal life. Refugees pointed out that by knowing the country's language you make friends and get more opportunities for education and work. During the interviews it was mentioned that many Ålanders help refugees in shops by using google translate and it works quite well. The participants also explained the importance of neighbours in language learning,

*“With the neighbours we can speak the everyday language, and at the same time create a closer relationship”.*

The Refugees also emphasize senior citizens as an asset because they have time to talk. The Red Cross and the Red Cross friends are also significant in language learning because they meet on a regular basis.

## Culture

The study showed a major cultural discrepancy between refugees and Ålanders. Many refugees also said that people do not really know the difference between culture and religion.

*“Unfortunately, our culture become strongly associated with religion, terrorism and IS. And we take a strong distance from this approach”.*

The refugees celebrate festivals, feasts and dine together. The participants feel they can, to a certain extent, carry on their culture in Åland and the Ålanders also show respect for it.

*“But it will not be the same as in our native country, there is a big difference”*, said an informant.

The study shows that many Ålanders have asked about Ramadan, what it really means and how it is celebrated. Another common question is why women wear hijab. The refugees try to explain what it means.

## Religion

The refugees said they can practice their religion in Åland, but it is not the same as in their native country. There is also a disparity between women and men. Women have better possibilities to exercise their religion. They can pray in their homes. The men can also pray in their homes, but they lack a local (mosque) where they can practice the Friday prayer.

*“We are brought up with religion. It is important for us to exercise our religion. We wish there was a mosque here”.*

The informants said, Ålanders lack to some extent knowledge about our religion. People do not understand Islam. The Government of Åland should inform people living in Åland about our religion and culture.

*“People perceive Islam in the wrong way. Islam means peace. We love peace, we respect our neighbours, we respect the elderly”.*

## Safety and Stability

The refugees said that they feel safe here in Åland and they have access to police. Emergency care works well in Åland, according to refugees. Social insurance covers the loss

of income in case of illness. During the interview, refugees mentioned several times and highlighted how happy they were because they felt safe and secure in Åland.

*“When I was at work, I was injured. It took just 15 minutes to get an emergency car and I was transported to the hospital quickly”.*

### **3.1.5 Foundation**

The category Foundation has two subcategories. Civil rights and citizenship and Civic attachment and Environment.

#### Civil rights and citizenship

Refugees in Åland spoke positively about citizenship and rights. All refugees were waiting for Finnish citizenship. Several informants said:

*“I want to be an Åland citizen, work and be seen as an equal community member when compared to other Ålanders. Ålanders show a great respect for those who have moved to the municipality”.*

The interviewees also said they felt as appreciated and valued municipal citizens because they receive their civil rights and are treated equally before the law. Just a greeting, a smile or somebody who gives a nod is a confirmation of acceptance for the refugees and thus they feel appreciated and valued. Participants saw equal citizenship and civil rights as an important indicator of integration and felt it was happening to a relatively great extent in Åland. Above all, to be met with bad treatment or to experience unfair treatment by social authorities, created a sense of exclusion and not being a valued community member. To hold a valid passport is also something refugees have paid attention to several times. A passport gives the feeling of a full community member. A passport gives freedom, opportunities for travel and citizenship.

*“To be without a passport feels like sitting in prison”*, one informant said.

#### Civic attachment and environment

The interviewees pointed out that settling down in a new country is a huge, complex and long process full of nuances. It takes several years to harmonize with the society. There are so many new customs and norms which are strange. Participants spoke about the Swedish language as a major component of integration, and likewise finding new friends is a challenge.

The participants described the scenery on Åland as beautiful and that it creates harmony and a peaceful feeling. The beautiful surroundings could be seen as an asset helping to create stability and peace in the soul. They describe Åland as a beautiful, calm, friendly and safe place, but

*“Sometimes it’s too calm and boring, nothing seems to happen”* said an informant.

### **3.1.6 Networks and Leisure**

The category Network and Leisure is divided into two subcategories. Neighbours, schools, organizations and media and Festivals and Voluntary work.

#### Neighbours, schools, organizations and media – a important network

Neighbours, organizations and media creates social network. The refugees described the neighbours as a resource. They felt that neighbours could help with practical things, like bus timetables. They know how the system in Åland works and at the same time they can also be friends. Likewise, pensioners were perceived as a resource, they have time to speak and spend time together, and they are also happy helping with varied practical services.

Further the interviewees also described the staff in the elementary school as helpful. The staff at the school will get in touch quickly if something has happened or if they want to discuss something that seems unclear. They also experienced that the school's staff understands the refugees’ culture and the school offers alternatives, for example in various sports activities. Through the children's school, friendships and network are created with other families.

The refugees felt that the Red Cross is one of the most important organizations in the Åland society. The Red Cross offer services, friends, activities and The Red Cross is always on duty when there is a need for help. Social authorities are usually also very helpful, provide information and explain how the Åland society works.

*“The Red Cross is all for us and through them we have gotten our friends. We would like to practice more often. When I’m with a Red Cross member, they meet their friends and they introduce us to each other and then they are visiting us”*

The participants named the important role of social media and newspapers in finding out what is happening in the society. They also explained that Åland is a small society and it is therefore easy to find out what is happening in the community or in Åland in general. The informants stated that social media create networks.

#### Nature, festivals and voluntary work on leisure time

Refugees described their leisure time as valuable. Some refugees spend their leisure time with fishing. Åland offers good fishing opportunities, which can be seen as specific for Åland. Being out in nature, walking and just meeting friends are also enjoying the refugee's leisure time. The refugees also saw Åland as a small beautiful landscape which was considered as an advantage to heal the broken soul after the long refugee process. Their leisure time is also devoted to socializing with other refugees and spending time with new friends in Åland. The celebration of different festivals is important in their culture, as is visiting the elderly in their families. Refugees lack a social meeting place, a cafe where they can drink coffee and socialize in the same way as in their home country. The interviewees take part in the Åland festivals, such as the celebration of Midsummer. Neighbours, friends and MEDIS have explained the importance of the midsummer pole in the Åland culture. The participants described voluntary work as important. An informant explained:

*“We who are Muslims like charity and we are looking forward to helping other people”.*

*“We are shopping, we are going to the centre, we walk in the nature, we are fishing, we hang out, we talk to the family and we talk to each other”*

### **3.1.7 Emotions**

The category Emotion is divided into one subcategory, which is Happiness.

#### Happiness

The interviewees described happiness as follows: Happiness is to feel safe, secure and to have freedom. Being able to reunite with our loved ones, our relatives and families, and being able to visit our native country is happiness. Happiness is to have a valid passport, a citizenship and to be able to speak the country's language. One informant said,



*“When you can speak the language, all doors and gates will be open for you and you can get a job and manage by yourself”.*

Happiness is to have a little bit of land to grow food on and a place to live. Happiness is to have friends and to be a part of the society. Happiness is good health and education for the children.

Most informants felt some degree of happiness living on Åland. Participants unanimously agreed that the goal of the future is to learn the language, find a job and stand on their own two feet. The refugees felt the Åland community has treated them well and that they received a good reception when they came to Åland.

*“A good reception and being welcome is also happiness”,* said an informant.

Happiness is also to be able to visit one’s native country, but not under the circumstances prevailing today. Some of the informants said that if peace came, they could return to their native country. Happiness is to receive support and adapt to the society, to have someone to talk to.

*“At the beginning when we came we got everything, after a while the thoughts start spinning and I needed someone to talk to and so.....we need a contact or support person who speaks our language.....so we can open our hearts and feelings”.*

### **3.2 Refugee coordinators’ experiences of Integration in the Åland society**

Refugee coordinators had varied backgrounds and education. Some of the interviewees were new in the field while others had worked for over ten years with refugees and asylum seekers. Some of the informants were born and raised up in Åland while others had moved to Åland. None of the informants had gone through migration themselves. In common, everyone interviewed expressed integration as a complex process and it occurs both on an individual level as well as on a community level. The refugee coordinators experience of refugee reception is different in different municipalities. The coordinators experienced many community individuals as helpful, for example with furniture and clothes, but there were also people who thought quota refugees have received VIP treatment. The informants stated that some community members also thought that the Åland society should take

care of our own people first before helping refugees. Organizations and most of the individuals have prepared themselves well and there was great expectation in the communities before the refugees arrived. There is of course room for improvement and things can always be done in different ways, but in general the refugee reception has worked well in Åland.

Part two describes the refugee coordinators' experiences of integration. It is divided into five categories with several subcategories. The categories are The Integration process, Means and Markers, Social Connections, Facilitators and Foundation.

### **3.2.1 The Integration Process**

This category, The Integration Process, is divided into three subcategories: rules, norms, laws, civil rights and cultural aspects, inclusion, social network and information, and the preparedness in the communities.

#### Rules, norms, laws and civil rights and cultural aspects

Participants explained that

*“Integration is a complex process that goes on gradually over many years.”*

Integration is about what norms and rules exist in a society. Integration involves taking into account human rights. Cultural aspects are also included in integration. Refugees come from a different cultural background and it is important that a mutual exchange occurs. The people of Åland must learn about the refugees' culture and the refugees must learn about the culture of Åland. In addition, integration requires that refugees are treated according to the law and that their civil rights are respected.

#### Inclusion, network and information

The interviewees explained that for a newly arrived refugee inclusion in society is important. It is important that they feel themselves “one of us” and that they become a part of the social network. Inclusion in the society also means receiving information about what is going on in the society, but also information about the Åland social system, health service, infrastructure, education, where to find shops and library, how electricity and

water works, schools and nursery schools - in other words, everything necessary to lead a normal life.

*“The need for support is greatest in the beginning, when the refugee needs to learn how the Åland society works,”* said one participant.

When the refugees have lived in Åland for a few months and have come to terms with the everyday life, then the questions start to come up. Questions like, what shall I do? Shall I study? Or start to work? Where do I pay taxes? Quota refugees are a group who have often been in fleeing over a long period and often they cannot wait to get started and advance their lives. After around five years most have been integrated in the society and are able to lead a normal life, hopefully with employment and better knowledge of the language. After ten years one often no longer notices the refugees. They have adjusted to the society. The women already find work possibilities when their children are small, but they often need support in order to get into employment. According to the official rules, women who are on maternity leave do not have the right to study on the SFI courses. This puts them in a worse and isolated situation. The Red Cross friendship and friend family schemes were seen by the refugee coordinators as a very important resource for refugees.

#### Preparations in the municipalities

The participants pointed out that integration is also about the municipalities being prepared at all levels. Today it is the social services who look after the new refugees' needs and this is not the most suitable situation. The social services already have a heavy burden of work and it would be best if there was a separate organization to look after refugees. Some municipalities employ support personnel, who look after practical issues, like organizing doctor's appointments, MOT tests (test of vehicle safety) or appointments with FPA (Swedish: Folkpensionsanstalten, the social security office). It is also the responsibility of the municipality to offer and organize language courses. Learning the language is one of the most important indicators of integration, according to the refugee coordinators. All the refugee coordinators agreed upon the need for coordinators in the municipalities and they wished that the politicians were of the same opinion, since it is a question of finance.

### **3.2.2 Means and Markers**

The category Means and Markers is divided into four subcategories, Employment, Housing, Education and Health.

#### Employment

Some of the refugee coordinators pointed out that since this group of refugees has been such a short time in Åland they are mostly not yet in employment. For the moment they must concentrate on learning the language in order to have a possibility of finding work in the future. Some of the refugee coordinators explained that it is difficult for the refugees to find work for the very reason that they do not know the language. It is a requirement that the refugee has completed the SFI course and has a working knowledge of the language. We have found though that it is easier for men than for women to find work. They often have a practical trade, such as taylor, butcher or carpenter, which the society has a need for. Some refugees have created their own employment by starting their own company. As far as employment contracts for men and women are concerned we have found that women often have temporary, part time jobs and therefore less social security, while men more often have longer employment contracts. The refugee coordinators did not have any knowledge of whether bullying or racism occurs at the work places.

#### Housing

The refugee coordinators had differing experiences of the housing situation. It is the municipalities who have to organize housing, but in some municipalities, it is difficult to find suitable housing. Private landlords are a resource in the municipalities. The refugee coordinators thought that the quality and standard of housing was good.

#### Education

Those interviewed stated that the SFI courses organized by MEDIS are compulsory and valuable but that the courses also provide a social meeting place. The refugees' previous level of education varies from the illiterate to those with a high level of education. Most of the refugees who already have a profession do not think that it is necessary to study further. There is a need to provide the possibility for adults to complete their elementary education, but this problem has not been solved. Further education for young adult school

leavers is not without its problems either, because of poor knowledge of the language. Such education is the responsibility of Ålands Landskapsregering (the local government). Another problem is the question of course validation. At present it is possible to turn to AMS (Arbetsmarknadsstyrelsen, employment organization) for validation. But validation is really the responsibility of each educational institution. The refugee coordinators noted that there are still many unsolved problems in Åland regarding education.

### Health

The refugee coordinators reported varied states of health among the refugees. Many have been subjected to violence, been imprisoned and tortured both physically and psychologically. PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome) is occurrent. The children have been witness to a lot of things that children should not see. The children have psychosomatic symptoms. Headaches are common among the children. The parents get worried when their children have ordinary cold symptoms. Many of the children have never had a cold in their home country. The refugee coordinators would welcome greater efforts from the Åland Health Services. Above all the refugees would benefit from the help of a psychologist or psychiatrist, but they often associate such visits with guilt or shame. It is not usual to visit a psychologist in the refugees' home countries. It is a taboo zone. The refugee coordinators stressed the need to make a plan for health check-ups covering several years and that there is a need for a contact person in the Åland Health Services, who could help to organize the refugees' appointments and also help them with practical health questions.

### **3.2.3 Social Connections**

Social connections are divided into three subcategories. Social bridges, Social bonds and Social links.

#### Social bridges

Those interviewed told that the refugees do not have very much contact with other groups. This can be a result of fear or not really knowing how to be.

*"It's not easy to get into the Åland society,"* says one informant.

The refugees think that Ålanders too seldom visit each other spontaneously. Ålanders are rather withdrawn, at the same time as it is an open society. The interests of the family and especially the children can often steer how much contact they have with the Åland society and other groups. Study circles, the Red Cross, friend families and voluntary work provide a natural way to get in touch with other groups in society, say the refugee coordinators.

### Social bonds

According to the refugee coordinators, ethnicity, culture, language and religion all play an important role in bonding within the group. In some municipalities the refugees seem to spend a lot of time together, while in other municipalities they seem to have less contact. One must remember that people in Åland do not necessarily socialize with each other just because they are Ålanders. Individual interests can also influence to what extent a group will bond together.

*“It is important to be able to speak one’s own language and language is a significant factor in holding a group together”.*

Refugees who have come to Åland earlier are helpful and provide support for the newly arrived refugees. The old and new refugees socialize quite a lot when the new refugees first arrive, say the informants.

### Social links

Very few refugees involve themselves in political bodies. They are also prevented by the requirement of local citizenship from being candidates in the local government elections. One reason why they are unwilling to get involved in politics is that many come from countries where the authorities cannot be trusted. Refugees notice quite quickly that the situation is very different in Åland, that one can trust the official authorities and that we have democracy. One informant said:

*“The Red Cross is an organization that they are happy to get involved with, as thanks for the help that they themselves have received.”*

### 3.2.4 Facilitators

Facilitators are divided into four groups: Language, Culture, Religion and Safety and Stability.

#### Language

The need to learn the language shines like a guiding star throughout the interview. All of the refugee coordinators agreed that mastering the language is one of the most central indicators in integration. Language provides the basis for finding employment, the basis for creating a social network. It forms the basis for a normal life in the society, according to the informants. The refugee coordinators also said that most of the refugees' experience difficulties in learning the language and they feel that it takes several years before they are able to manage in Swedish. They also noted that MEDIS, which offers the SFI courses, is an important social point of contact for the refugees.

#### Culture

The participants noted that there are diverging perceptions in the Åland society about the refugees' background and culture. People often mix up culture and religion. They also pointed out that the media reporting of the refugees' situation in their home countries influences people's perceptions about the refugees' way of life and culture. One informant said that

*"They are an interesting phenomenon, we think that they are different because they come from another country, for example how will they drive a car here, if you cover your head you are a Muslim, there are many preconceptions...many say that they can come from any country they like as long as they are not Muslims...we must not be afraid to be together, as soon as you get to know another human being you notice that he or she is a human being."*

The refugee coordinators would like that society and especially schools should arrange multicultural days, dance, cooking etc. They also mentioned that the local government organizes training days which deal with different cultures. They are well attended by private individuals, organizations like ÅHS and MEDIS, officials and the media. The media follow up with reports from the training days, which increases knowledge and understanding in the society as a whole. These training days are perceived very positively in the society and should happen more often.

## Religion

The refugee coordinators pointed out that many of the refugees who come here have a Muslim background, but not all. One informer noted that

*“There are many different doctrines and languages within the same religion. Christianity is very broad, there are both conservative and freer doctrines, but all say that they are Christians. The same is true of Muslims.”*

The informants pointed out that religion is a subject that ”triggers”. It engages and awakens emotions. They also hold that generally the Åland population knows too little about the refugees’ religion and what it really consists of. To some extent the society gets the wrong impression due to media coverage. Reports in the media often contain information about terror attacks and IS and the word Muslim is often mentioned in this context. This is one of the sources that leads to misrepresentation among the population about what the refugees’ religion really is. One participant stated that

*“I feel that much more information about the refugees’ religion and culture is needed in our Ålandic society, and also information about women’s and men’s roles in different cultures”.*

The informants also said that the congregations and church have a positive attitude and that they donate economically. Several congregations have installed WiFi so that refugees can keep in touch with relatives in their home countries.

## Safety and stability

The refugee coordinators stated that Åland feels like a very safe place to come to. Åland is a small society, which means that the social control also functions as a safety network. According to the informants, an immigrant will always be more likely to be accused, not in the name of the law, but by other people. The level of tolerance is lower for anybody who commits a crime if they are an immigrant. One informant stated:

*“It’s a little society. In a big city people can be hidden away. Here it’s quite difficult...here everybody can see you, for better or for worse, you can’t do anything without your neighbour knowing about it...I can’t imagine anywhere else that would feel as secure...but of course there is crime here...but there aren’t any gangs of racists who would go out in the town and murder refugees or immigrants...one can’t get away with just anything in a society like this, everybody is controlled”.*

One informant stated that in Åland refugees become integrated with the other inhabitants in the municipality. There are no refugee camps. It is an ideal situation. Refugees im-



mediately become inhabitants of the municipality. A disadvantage is the distance to different services and the lack of public transport. The refugees are dependent upon having a driving licence and a car.

### **3.2.5 Foundation**

The category Foundation is divided into two subcategories: Rights and Citizenship and Civic attachment, mentioned in this context.

#### Rights and Citizenship

The refugee coordinators expressed the opinion that it is important that refugees are treated fairly according to the law and that the authorities take into account their human rights. It is also important that they are provided with information about how to obtain Finnish citizenship and a Finnish passport. The interviewees thought that it is important that new citizens receive information about Åland's special status, autonomy laws and Åland's and Finland's history. In order to assimilate in the municipality and be a good citizen they need to receive information about what is happening in the society and they need to be invited to different information meetings about, for example, educational possibilities, social support and the FPA. Further, the refugee coordinators stress the need for the refugees to be seen as normal members of society, just like "you and me."

#### Civic attachment

The refugee coordinators thought that there are many challenges for the municipalities and in order to create continuity in their work. Those interviewed called for the creation of integration plans for all the Åland municipalities, plans which can be used when receiving refugees. In some municipalities social workers or the social secretary help with applications for economical support, only at the next stage to pay the economic support to the same people. For the refugees this can lead to misunderstandings and a sense of unfairness. At present it is the social services in the municipalities who look after the refugees in their municipality. The participants stated that this is not an optimal situation, when the social sector is already overburdened and does not have the staff resources that the present situation requires. The interviewees had the impression that the local politicians have a positive attitude regarding refugees but that they do not have an insight into

the daily work and how much it involves. In the long run it is necessary to allot sufficient funds so that the municipalities are able to look after the refugees in an adequate and exemplary fashion. There was also a call for a long-term plan for the reception of refugees in the municipalities. In this way there would be more continuity and a better readiness to act in this issue. They also called for an organization at local government level which would be responsible for the first contact with refugees on their arrival to Åland.

The refugee coordinators assumed that the refugees feel that they are valued and welcome members of the society in some municipalities. It depends also on how the municipality chooses to handle the situation. One informant told how a municipality invited the refugees to an information meeting when they had already been living there for six months. The refugees were given information about what the municipality is, what it does and what different departments exist within the municipality. The refugees were also given information about their rights to vote and stand as candidates in local elections and how the municipal democracy works. The refugees experienced this meeting in a positive way and they got to see who the leaders in the municipality were.

There are also challenges for the inhabitants of the municipality regarding the integration of refugees. The refugee coordinators thought that it would be good if the inhabitants of the municipality were to find out more about the refugees' background, language, culture, religion and what it means to go through a process of integration. One informant said that

*"I as a person always make a choice about what I want to do, about whether I will accept the new citizen and I am happy to take a step back...to be more open."*

According to the refugee coordinators, one of the challenges for the refugees can be to understand the Ålandic system and division into municipalities. According to the informants they wonder, for example, why Åland has so many small municipalities. Some of the refugees live on the periphery, far from different services and there is no public transport which they can use. Whether or not the municipality should pay for the refugees to obtain a driving licence has become a political issue in some municipalities. The refugees are often not used to being able to decide about their children's day care or school. They are surprised at the democracy that we have in our country. At present some of the municipi-

papalities in the Åland countryside or the archipelago have only received one refugee family, and this can lead to a feeling under scrutiny and that they miss having people from their own culture in the society.

### **3.3 Summary of the interviews**

Both refugees and refugee coordinators experiences integration as a complex phenomenon with many challenges. Both informant groups emphasize the importance of being included in the new society, gaining access to information about the new society and how everything works. And, as well, both groups emphasize the need for greater support in the beginning of the integration process. Refugee coordinators stress the importance of the right to be treated in accordance with the law and the importance of observing human rights. They further mention the importance of preparedness in the municipalities at every level. Refugees stressed the importance of security and safety and they also mentioned a lot of feelings, like anxiety, sadness, fear and alienation during the whole process.

Both refugees as well as refugee coordinators thought that means and markers are a guiding indicator for successful integration. The quality of the housing is linked to health. Refugees find it difficult to find work and they often temporary jobs, when they get an employment. Both informants stressed the importance of education to get a job and likewise the importance of language learning. They were very happy with MEDIS (Medborgarinstitutet, Adult Education Institution) and the SFI (svenska för inflyttade, Swedish for migrants) courses. The refugees were happy with their initial healthcare. Both informants pointed out the great importance of a contact person at ÅHS (Ålands hälso- och sjukvård, Åland health services). The parents were very satisfied with the healthcare for their children in the primary school.

The refugees experienced a warm welcoming to the Åland society. But in the same way they experienced difficulties to get in touch with Ålanders and it takes a long time to be accepted into the society. Both informants pointed out ethnicity, culture, language and religion as an important role bonding within the group. Both informants expressed language skills as one of the most important indicator of integration. They also pointed out

that people in general mix up culture and religion. Culture is often associated with religion, terrorism and IS. Media reporting of the refugee' situation in their home countries influences people's perception about the refugees' way and life. The refugee coordinators also suggested multicultural days, dance, cooking etc. in the schools. The refugee coordinators also said that the congregations and church have a positive attitude to refugees and they donate economically.

Both informants expressed that Åland is a very safe and secure place, but sometimes it gives a sense of isolation. They pointed out that Åland is a very small place and you can't do anything without your neighbours knowing it. Both informants saw civil rights and citizenship as an important indicator of integration, likewise to be treated equally before the law. Both informant pointed out that civic attachment includes "everything in a society", like language skills, friends, etc. The refugees' experience's the beautiful surroundings as an asset helping to create stability and peace in the soul. The refugee coordinators spoke about the challenges for the municipalities in order to create continuity in their work. The refugee coordinators want an own refugee unit in the communities. The refugee coordinators called for an organization at local government level which would be responsible for the first contact with refugees when they arrive to Åland. A challenge for the refugees can be to understand the Åland system and division into municipalities and the infrastructure.

## 4 DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Discussion of the validity, reliability, and trustworthiness of the study

Reliability and validity are ways of demonstrating and communicating the rigor of research process and the trustworthiness of research findings (Roberts & Priest, 2006). Different authors discuss the terms validity and reliability in slightly different ways, partly depending on whether the study is a qualitative or quantitative approach. Roberts and Priest (2006) say that in qualitative research, reliability can be thought of as the trustworthiness of the procedures and data generated. It is concerned with the extent to which the results of a study or measurements are repeatable in different circumstances. Validity is assessed in terms of how well the research tools measure the phenomena under investigation. Sandelowski (1993) argues that issues of validity in qualitative research should not be linked to “truth” or “value” as they are for the positivists, but rather to “trustworthiness,” which becomes a matter of persuasion whereby the scientist is viewed as having made those practices visible and, therefore, auditable. Elo and Kyngäs (2008) and Graneheim and Lundman (2004) argue in the same way. They say that the analysis process and the results should be described in sufficient detail so that the readers have a clear understanding of how the analysis was carried out and its strengths and limitations. This means dissection of the analysis process and the validity of the results”, the trustworthiness. Graneheim and Lundman (2004) show that different authors propose that validity and reliability have the “the same essential meaning” irrespective of research tradition and nothing is gained by changing labels. Regarding to the discussion of validity and reliability by Elo and Kyngäs (2008), Rolfe (2006) and Graneheim and Lundman (2004) the author of the thesis paper will use the term trustworthiness when discussing validity.

According to Elo and Kyngäs (2008), trustworthiness is used in qualitative studies instead of validity. The trustworthiness of qualitative content analysis is often presented by using terms such as credibility, dependability, conformability, transferability, and authenticity. Based on the results of the literature search, the basic trustworthiness involves issues in the preparation phases, trustworthiness of the data collection method and sampling strategy, and the selection of a suitable unit of analysis (Elo et al., 2014; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008;

Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Elo et al. (2014) describe a checklist for researchers attempting to improve the trustworthiness of a content analysis study (appendix 8). The author has described the preparation phase, data collection method, sampling strategy and the selection of a suitable unit of analysis in a comprehensive manner in the essay. It can therefore be considered to meet the requirement of basic trustworthiness. The author has also used the previously mentioned checklist to increase the basic trustworthiness in the thesis.

Demonstration of the trustworthiness of data collection is one aspect that supports a researcher's ultimate argument concerning the trustworthiness of a study (Rourke & Anderson, 2004). Selection of the most appropriate method of data collection is essential for ensuring the credibility of content analysis (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Credibility deals with the focus of the research and refers to the confidence in how well the data addresses the intended focus (Polit & Beck, 2012). From the viewpoint of credibility, self-awareness of the researcher is essential. Pre-interviews may help to determine whether the interview questions are suitable for obtaining rich data that answer the proposed research questions. Dependability refers to the stability of data over time and under different conditions. Therefore, it is important to state the principles and criteria used to select participants and detail the participants' main characteristics, so that the transferability of the results to other contexts can be assessed (Elo et al., 2014). In order to satisfy the credibility of the essay, the author has attached the interview guide. The interview questions are based on a theoretical reference frame. The questionnaire shows the different categories used in data analysis. The author has created some additional categories that arose during the analysis work. The questions in the questionnaire can be considered to cover the topic based on the literature. The writer has also conducted test interviews and was previously aware of data collection methods and data analysis methods. The questions in the questionnaire can also be considered useful in other similar situations. This guarantees the dependability of the work and the transferability of the results to other contexts. The interviewees had only lived in Åland for about one or two years, which must be considered when discussing transferability.

According to Graneheim and Lundman (2004), an essential consideration when discussing the trustworthiness of findings from a qualitative content analysis is that there is always some degree of interpretation when approaching a text. All researchers must consider how to confirm the credibility and conformability of the organization phase. Conformability of findings means that the data accurately represent the information that the participants provided. The interpretation of this data is not an invention of the inquirer (Polit & Beck, 2012). Results of content analysis are particularly linked to transferability, conformability, and credibility. Results should be reported systematically and carefully, with particular attention paid to how connections between the data and results are reported. However, the systematic reporting of results can often be a challenge (Kyngäs et al., 2011). Problems with reporting results can be a consequence of unsuccessful analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Dey, 1993) or difficulties in describing the process of abstraction because it in part depends on the researcher's insight or intuitive action, which may be difficult to describe to others (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). According to Graneheim and Lundman (2004) it is ultimately down to the reader's judgment to decide if the reported results are transferable to another context or not. Polit and Beck (2012) argue for the use of quotations and they say that this is necessary to indicate the trustworthiness of results. Without a full description of the analysis and logical use of concepts, it is impossible to evaluate how the results have been created and their trustworthiness (Guthrie et al., 2004). An accurate description of the analysis and the relationship between the results and the original data allow readers to draw their own conclusions regarding the trustworthiness of the results (Elo et al., 2014).

The author has transcribed the interview material into written text. The material has been written down under the respective category. The material has been read several times, until the author has gained an essential perception of the content. In the event that the author has found content that does not fit into a finished category with associated subcategory, the author has created a new main category with associated subcategory based on meaningful units. Then a categorization matrix was created in order to give an overview of the result. In the results report the author continued writing down the content from the categorization matrix as well as reading the entire text for each category at the same time. At the same time the author chose one or two fitting quotations for virtually every cate-

gory or subcategory. The results are reported in the same way both for refugees and refugee coordinators. The above description provides support for the results' confirmability and authenticity. The results report is concluded with a comparative chapter of the refugees and refugee coordinators' experiences of integration and support from previous studies. In view of the above discussion, the study can be regarded as having high validity or trustworthiness. The results are presented in a systematic way, in depth and in a meaningful manner.

The size of the sample in the study can affect its reliability (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004). In this study the sample size may be considered as small, which may have had negative effects on reliability. However, the study results are supported by previous studies on the subject, and the author believes that the results may well be indicative. According to Graneheim and Lundman (2004) the reliability is increased by the fact that there is a difference in the background of the informants, which gives an opportunity for divergent stories. In this study there were as many women as men represented and the informants were between the ages of 20 and 65 years. The informants in the study had different experiences of work, different religions and cultures and they also had a certain geographical spread, which can increase the reliability. The author experienced that saturation of the interview material occurred relatively quickly during the interviews. Another factor that may have affected the reliability negatively is the interview language and translation. Interviews were conducted using interpreters who interpreted from Swedish to Arabic and then from Arabic to Swedish. The interviews have been written down in Swedish and then translated into English. There is a risk that the author may have missed or misunderstood important information. The author was very aware of the situation and was extremely careful to ask the interpreter of each interview answer that the answer had been correctly understood.

## **4.2 Ethical discussion**

The author justifies the choice of topic as highly relevant due to the prevailing world situation. There has been no previous study within this subject in Åland. The study results can benefit the Åland society seen from an individual perspective as well as from a social perspective. The study's implementation from start to the finish has been described partly



in the method chapter and partly in the discussion chapter. The author's choice of appropriate data method and method of analysis for the study has been based on scientific references. The researcher of the thesis has done a literature review and read published articles on the subject. A model was found of Ager and Strang (2004), Indicators of integration, and this was used as a theoretical framework for the study. Studies in the field have shown that integration is a complex process both from a personal perspective and from a societal perspective. Agers and Strang's model (2004) does not concern civic attachment to such a large extent. The model has therefore been supplemented with civic attachment based on previous study results. The author has been aware of the fact that the informants are an extra vulnerable and sensitive group and taken this into consideration. The author has shown the informants respect, human dignity and value and integrity. All vulnerable groups and individuals should receive specifically considered protection (World Medical Association (WMA), 1964).

Initially the intended target group was quota refugees who had come to Åland between 2008-2012. The author had chosen this target group because they should have sufficiently good knowledge of the Swedish language that an interview could be conducted in Swedish. The target group had also lived in Åland between five and nine years and had thus become integrated into the society. The author was assisted by the social workers in Mariehamn and the information letters were sent to twenty informants from the social office in Mariehamn. Only one informant responded and this person did not come to the interview at the agreed time. The author decided to change the target group and chose quota refugees who came to Åland in 2015-2016. The writer received assistance from the Red Cross contact person for refugees and could thus reach the new target group. The procedure used to reach them is described in the method section. According to Jacobsen and Landau (2003) the sample should be selected at random in order to be representative, but as this proved impossible, the author had to change plan and choose the sample in the manner described in the method section.

All informants were informed about the principle of voluntariness, confidentiality, anonymity, and the usefulness of the study. The informants had the opportunity to decide if they wanted to participate in the study. The refugee coordinators received information about the study in writing by letter and orally face to face before the interview began. The

refugees received information about the study orally from the Red Cross contact person and orally by the interviewer before the interview started. This can be considered a disadvantage and may have meant that some of the informants did not fully understand the purpose of the study. They had the opportunity to halt the interview at any time without explanation. The author guaranteed the informants' confidentiality and anonymity. One advantage of a focus group interview is that the investigator reaches a larger sample in the same time span as in an individual interview. It may therefore be considered less resource-intensive than individual interviews. One disadvantage of focus group interviews is, unfortunately, that the informants themselves can pass on important information. According to studies previously mentioned in the text, focus group interviews are the best method for interviewing sensitive subjects or persons, such as refugees. The information material was stored securely. The researcher was aware of the cultural aspects and organized separate interview situations for women and men.

### **4.3 Discussion of the result**

All informants expressed the view that integration is a demanding, long and complex process with many challenges at every level for the refugees. Coming to another country with a new culture, new habits, and a way of life that refugees are not used to is an overwhelming process. Integration is influenced by both internal personal factors and external factors in the society. There is a risk that the refugees will experience confusion of identity and their own identity easily becomes disrupted, resulting in internal chaos. It can create a sense of being an outsider in the society. This result is supported by the literature and earlier surveys published by Red Cross (2017), Burnett (2013), Ager and Strang (2008b), Capo Zmergac (2007), Holt (2007), Koser Akcapar (2006) and Griffiths (2001). Both informant groups emphasized the importance of support, especially at the start of the process, and the importance of being included in the new society, gaining access to information about the new society and how everything works. Alencar (2017) and Ager and Strang (2008b) show the importance of receiving general information about the society, the services, the infrastructure and generally about what is happening in the society on a daily basis. This may reduce the feeling of isolation. Alencar (2017) also states the importance of the media and social media as an information channel. The refugees in this

study stated that they commonly use the media and social media as an information channel. Ager and Strang (2008b) describe how integration is a two-way process, characterized by the involvement of refugees and migrants as well as host societies in the adaptation of newcomers. The results of the study also point out that integration is a process working on different levels. Firstly, it is a personal adaptation to a new community for the refugees, but it is also of concern how optimally the receiving society works and what kind of service is available. The Red Cross (2017) describe an integration cycle. The integration cycle is characterized by a process that progresses in different phases. In the beginning, refugees are happy and satisfied with their new freedom, security, and safety. After a few months misery, thoughts of friends and the members of their own family that they left behind in their home country start to arise, a sense of guilt and an enormous homesickness. Refugees experience major language difficulties and unemployment is often a fact. Refugees try to find new friends and new channels that facilitate integration. This integration process continues for a number of years with steps both forwards and backwards. They will experience many ups and downs during the process. The author of this study found similar descriptions of the integration process to that of the Red Cross (2017). The study results show that refugees experience many concerns when they move to a new country. The move can give rise to fear, anxiety, alienation, isolation, and loneliness. Lack of language skills is indicated as a significant factor in terms of work opportunities. The refugees worry about their health, economy, adult education, their children's schooling and their own further education. Likewise, there may be different rules for children's upbringing in the new country that do not coincide with their own ethic rules and norms. A chaos arises and the refugee informants state that it can be difficult to handle the situation. This is in line with Ager and Strang (2008b). According to the refugee coordinator informants in this study, integration is about what rules, norms, laws, and civil rights exist in the society and the refugee informants are also concerned about the same subjects. This approach is supported by Ager and Strang (2008b). Further, the refugee coordinators mentioned that integration is about optimal preparedness in the municipalities at every level, a view that Ager and Strang (2008b) also support. Integration according to the refugee informants is also about discrimination and racism. The Åland society shows some discrimination and racism, but very little. Ager and Strang (2008b) state that discrimination can be seen among the refugees from the very beginning, especially at workplaces.

Both refugees and refugee coordinators thought that means and markers are a guiding indicator for successful integration. Ager and Strang (2008a, b) and Marks (2014) state that means and markers are widely suggested as indicative of successful integration and it is important to encourage programs working in these areas. Both informant groups experience the employment situation as difficult. The refugees experience difficulties in getting an ordinary job. A short job contract or a temporary job, sometimes unpaid, is commonplace. One reason is inadequate language skills. Another reason mentioned was lack of education, especially for women. In the refugee coordinators' experiences it is easier for men than for women to get a job. Both informant groups pointed out that several refugees had started their own businesses, for example shops. The refugee informants expressed the view that unemployment gives a sense of being an outsider and makes it more difficult to find friends. Kiagia et al. (2010), Ager and Strang (2008b), Archet et al. (2005), Valtonen (2004) and Wanche (2004) state that refugees consider work to be necessary for their survival. Employment is also linked to social integration. Commonplace for the refugees is non-selective work and temporarily work. Employment can be seen as potentially providing multiple benefits in terms of integration. It gives financial security, but also self-respect. Unemployed refugees who are suffering from status inconsistency or a loss of traditional roles have a tendency toward marital conflicts, depression, and homesickness. Many of the refugees experience discrimination at the workplace, such as work schedules, and refugees do not have the same opportunities to get an ordinary job as other citizens. Many refugees are unable to produce proof of previous qualifications and even when they can, employers may not recognize them. Consequently, underemployment is a common factor in the experience of refugees in the labor market (Kiangia et al., 2010; Ager & Strang, 2008b; DeFreitas, 2005; Valtonen, 2004). All informants in this study had been well treated at their workplaces. The refugee coordinators had not received any information about bullying or racism at the workplace. The refugees expressed a wish for further support from the communities or Ålands Landskapsregering (the local government) to start their own businesses.

All informants were happy to have their own home. They also felt very safe and secure in their homes. The refugee coordinators pointed out that communities have to organize housing. They also thought that housing standards were good. This deviates to some extent from the refugees' experience of the housing situation. The quality of the housing

varied from municipality to municipality. Some refugees pointed out that it was cold and draughty in their homes and that this had a negative impact on their health. Ager and Strang (2008b) state that refugees are happy to have their own housing. Both the permanence of housing arrangements and their location was seen to influence the process of integration positively or negatively. Ziersch (2017) demonstrates a link between housing and health, safety and stability and social belonging. Housing is of central importance to health and wellbeing and impacts health in a range of ways, including affordability, the suitability of housing regarding physical aspects such as condition and layout, and social aspects such as safety and belonging and issues involving security of tenure. Living in housing in poor condition negatively affected refugee's health. Ziersch (2017) reinforces the importance of housing for both the physical and mental health of refugees and refugees living in resettlement countries. Improving housing quality, affordability, and security of tenure all have the potential to lead to better health.

Common for all the refugee informants was that they had a low level of education or no education at all. Both informant groups stressed the importance of education in getting a job and likewise the importance of language learning. They were very happy with MEDIS (Medborgarinstitutet, Adult Education Institution) and the SFI (svenska för inflyttade, Swedish for migrants) courses. The refugees experience the Swedish language as very difficult and, in their opinion, the expectations were too high. They pointed out that the best way to learn a language is "on the street", at the workplace or in everyday situations, while the refugee coordinators stressed the importance of the SFI courses in a wider context and they also pointed out the validation problems with different certifications. On the whole the refugee coordinators considered that the education system in Åland is in need of change and improvement for migrants. There is a need to provide the possibility for adults to complete their elementary school education and likewise a need of further education for young adult school leavers. The refugee children do not have any classes of their own in Åland. They are integrated into the general school system, which can be an asset according to the refugee coordinators. The refugees saw pensioners and neighbours as resource persons who give their time to talk about daily concerns and this gives language training at the same time. The parents were happy with the education in the elementary school and the parents had no experiences of their children playing truant. The refugee informants also said that they had made new friends via their children's school.

These results are supported by earlier research by Ager and Strang (2008a, b) and Alfred (2017). Ager and Strang (2008b) hold that education is generally seen to be of value for two reasons. Crucially it provides the opportunity to acquire qualifications or skills in order to advance opportunities for employment. It provides a fertile context for ‘mixing’, enabling the development of relationships across the community. Alfred (2017) states that more than half of the world’s refugee children do not go to school. There are many obstacles standing between these children and a classroom. Some are legal and political. Others are financial. Education for refugees is chronically underfunded. Ager and Strang (2008b) state that for refugee children (and in many cases, refugee parents) schools are experienced as the most important places of contact with members of local host communities, playing an important role in establishing relationships supportive of integration. Refugee children’s experience of education is impacted by insufficient support for learning the host-society language, by isolation, and exclusion (bullying, racism, difficulties making friends etc.). Some schools provide special language units for refugee children in seeking to meet their needs, but recognize that such provision limits opportunities for mixing with local children.

Both informants experienced good health as an indicator for successful integration. The refugees were happy with their initial healthcare. But they lacked check-up times on a regularly basis and they also expressed that they were used to other health service systems in their home country. Both informants pointed out the great importance of a contact person at ÅHS (Ålands hälso- och sjukvård, the Åland health service) The refugees expressed language difficulties during health visits at ÅHS. Further, both informant groups stressed the problems for the refugees in understanding the health care system in Åland. Both informant groups expressed a major need for health care - both physical and mental problems emerged during the interviews. Both informant groups described how refugees had been on the run for a long time, during which medical care was severely limited. Both informant groups pointed out that more resources are needed for psychological, psychiatric, and dental care. The refugee coordinators named especially PTSD as a common condition among refugees and likewise psychosomatic symptoms among children. The refugee coordinators called for a long-term plan regarding health check-ups, one covering several years. The parents were very satisfied with the healthcare received by their children in the elementary school. The findings in this study are consistent with previous

similar studies and literature. WHO (2016) and Shannon et al. (2012) state that PTSD is common both among child and adult refugees. Ager and Strang (2008b) show that the health problems of refugees are similar to those of the rest of the population, but there is a higher prevalence of health problems among refugees. Refugee informants in this study held that there is a link between health and the quality of housing - just as Ziersch (2017) and Ager and Strang (2008b) do.

The refugees experienced a warm welcome by the Åland society. But at the same time they experienced difficulties in making contact with Ålanders, saying that it takes a long time to be accepted into the society. The refugees stated that social relationships create a sense of safety and security. Bridges to neighbours and the Red Cross were mentioned as resource for making friends. Language was experienced as a limiting factor in creating friendships. This is line with the refugee coordinators' experiences and the refugees also said that they do not have very much contact with other groups in the society. Ager and Strang (2008b) state that social bridges are of importance in the relationship between refugees and host communities and this is generally characterized by issues relating to social harmony, and to refugee participation in the host society. An important factor in making refugees feel 'at home' in an area is the friendliness of the people they encounter on a daily basis. Being recognized and greeted by others in the neighborhood is of great value. Small acts of friendship appear to have a disproportionately positive impact on perception. Bonds with one's own family are of value because they enable them to share cultural practices and maintain familiar patterns of relationships. Such connection plays a large part in refugees feeling 'settled' (Ager & Strang, 2008b). Both informants pointed out the important role of ethnicity, culture, language, and religion in bonding within the group. Refugees who had arrived in Åland earlier were experienced as a resource for the newly arrived refugees. Both informants also saw a strong tie between refugees who had arrived in Åland the same time. Links to the host community depend partly on how long time the refugees have been in the society. The refugees in this study had been too short a time in Åland to become politically active, according to the refugee coordinators. Åland's special regional citizenship is a requirement for taking part in government elections. Both informant groups expressed that social links, like the Red Cross, are important for settling in a new community. The refugees pointed out that they had difficulties un-

derstanding the social service system and the social insurance system in Åland. The refugee coordinators stressed that refugees quite quickly felt they had confidence in the official authorities and likewise in the local democracy. Ager and Strang (2008b) emphasize that it is generally recognized that the refugees' particular circumstances (lack of familiarity with their surroundings, not speaking the language etc.) lead to barriers that require additional effort from both refugees and the wider community if genuine equality of access to services is to be achieved. Connecting refugees with the relevant services is a major task in supporting integration (Ager & Strang, 2008b).

The results show that language is a guiding star in the integration process. Both informant groups named language skills as one of the most important indicators of integration. Language is the basis for employment and further education and in creating a social network. It is the basis for a normal life. This is in line with Ager and Strang's (2008b) research. Both informant groups experienced a major discrepancy between the refugee's culture and the culture in Åland. They also pointed out that people in general confuse culture and religion. Culture is often associated with religion, terrorism, and IS. Media reporting of the refugee situation in their home countries influences people's perceptions about the refugees' way and life. Both groups agreed that refugees are able to exercise their culture and religion to some extent, but it is not the same as in their home country and both informant groups thought that Ålanders should know more about the refugee's culture and religion, just as the refugees should know more about the culture and religion in Åland. The refugee coordinators pointed out that religion is a subject that "triggers". Ager and Strang (2004) also discuss culture and religion at the same time and they show that the subjects interact with each other. The results of this study are supported by Ager and Strang (2008b) and Bhugra and Becker (2005). Ager and Strang (2008b) do not mention terrorism in their discussion of culture and religion. The author feels that terrorism has increased greatly over the past decade, which can explain today's perceived connection between terrorism, culture and religion. The refugee coordinators also suggested that multicultural days, dance, cookery etc. be introduced in the schools. The refugee coordinators also said that the congregations and church in Åland have a positive attitude to refugees and they donate economically.

Both informant groups thought that Åland is a very safe and secure place, but isolated. They pointed out that Åland is a very small place and you cannot do anything without



your neighbors knowing it. This functions as a social control network and increases safety and security. The refugees highlighted several times how happy they are in feeling safe and secure. Both informant groups, especially the refugee informants, pointed out that safety and security is a prerequisite for successful integration. The refugees have confidence in the police and in the emergency services. The refugee coordinators pointed out that Åland does not have any refugee camps. The refugees are integrated into society with its other inhabitants and that is an asset. This is in line with the results of research by Edwards (2017), Neate (2014) and Ager and Strang (2008b).

Both informants saw civil rights and citizenship as an important indicator of integration, likewise, equal treatment before the law. Ager and Strang (2008b) also referred to the importance of observing human rights and the law and to be seen as a “full and equal citizen”. Further, a Finnish passport gives a sense of being a valued member of the community. Both informant groups pointed out the value of being seen as a normal member of the society, just like “you and me”. The refugee coordinators also thought that it is important for the refugees to receive information about Åland’s special status, autonomy laws and Åland’s and Finland’s history.

Both informants pointed out the long and complex process of settling down in a new country. They maintain that civic attachment includes “everything in a society”, like language skills, citizenship, friends, etc. The refugees’ experience the beautiful surroundings as an asset, helping to create stability and peace in the soul. The refugee coordinators spoke about the challenges for the municipalities in creating to continuity in their work. The refugee coordinators think that each municipality should have its own refugee unit. This should not be the job of social workers, which now can lead to so many misunderstandings. They also highlighted a need for a plan for every municipality where all actors concerned are integrated. They think that politicians should have more insight in the daily work and how much it involves, and that they should award funds for work with refugees. The refugee coordinators called for an organization at local government level which would be responsible for the first contact with refugees when they arrive in Åland. The refugee coordinators also mentioned challenges for the inhabitants of the municipality. It would be good if the inhabitants could find out more about the refugees’ background, culture, etc. and the integration process. A challenge for the refugees can be to understand the Åland system, Åland’s division into municipalities its infrastructure.

The author chose to ask questions about network and leisure in order to find out whether there was anything there specifically supporting the integration process on Åland. Likewise, the author chose to ask questions about happiness in order to gain a deep understanding of what happiness means for a refugee. Those questions were only directed to the refugee informants. Refugees mentioned fishing and the beautiful scenery, with its surrounding sea as an advantage. They also stressed many times that Åland is a small, safe and secure society and that it is relatively easy to take contact with the neighbours. Happiness is first of all a sense of security and safety, of freedom, but also ability speak the language, and to feel like a “full member of the society, an equal citizen”.

#### **4.4 Conclusion and further possibilities**

The study shows that integration into a new society is a long and multidimensional process. Learning the new language is one of the most important and greatest challenges for a newly-arrived refugee. The author finds the theoretical reference frame to be valuable and very useful. The reference framework is like a wide umbrella in terms of integration. Further, the writer finds the focus group interview and content analysis to be a valuable method for collecting and analyzing data in the study. The author has gained a deep insight into the subject, which was the purpose of the study. The author has received answers to all the research questions and specific answers regarding issues of refugee integration in Åland. The result of the study is also supported to a large extent by previous research.

The study's findings show that the refugees experienced a welcoming atmosphere when they arrived in Åland and that the Åland community is perceived as a small, somewhat isolated, but very safe and secure society. The beautiful scenery and the sea are perceived as an asset in the long-term recovery process for refugees. The Red Cross, neighbours and pensioners are perceived as an asset for establishing friendship and social networks in the Åland communities. The survey further shows that it is an advantage that refugees are integrated into society among all other community members. It creates a sense of inclusion. The refugee parents are satisfied with their children's elementary school and the staff at the elementary school are experienced as being very helpful. The refugee children are well integrated with their classmates, which is perceived by the parents as being

safe. However, the Åland education system for young adults and adults is in a need of change and improvement. Another area which is in a need of improvement is the health service. The results show a great need for a contact person at ÅHS and the refugees experience a greater need for psychological and psychiatric services than those which ÅHS currently offers. The refugees are satisfied with the pre-hospital emergency care and the refugee parents are happy with the healthcare for their children in the elementary school. Refugees feel trust in official authorities and the visible presence of the police in the Ålandic community is perceived as safe and secure. In general, the study shows that there is a need at all levels of the Åland society to raise awareness of what refugee integration means and the author concludes with a PM of recommendations, based on the study results, regarding possibilities for improvement in the Åland society. A continuing research area that the author sees as valuable is how ÅHS can develop health care services for refugees.

## **4.5 PM of Recommendations**

### Ålands Landskapsregering (The Local Government)

- A separate refugee unit that will look after all refugees on their arrival in Åland and which will also act as a coordinating body.
- Make sure that the municipalities receive sufficient funding for taking care of the refugees.
- Information days (like those that have taken place previously), concentrating on the refugees' backgrounds, culture, religion, and integration.

### The Åland municipalities

- A separate refugee unit in the municipalities that is apart from the social services.
- Allocate economic resources within the municipality administration for integration of refugees.
- Each municipality should have its own integration plan that all concerned are party to (at individual or family level).
- A refugee coordinator in every municipality, or shared between several smaller municipalities.

- Information days in the municipalities concentrating on the refugees' backgrounds, culture, religion, and integration.
- Information meeting about the municipality's activities, how the municipality works, and to give the municipality a public image.
- Regular meetings concentrating on what is happening in the municipality.
- A physical meeting place for the refugees.
- Prepare the inhabitants of the municipality before the arrival of a refugee family.
- Language immersion club.

#### ÅHS (Åland Health Service)

- A refugee coordinator for all healthcare.
- Enable easier access to mental healthcare.
- Create a long-term plan for health checks and healthcare issues.

#### Education and pre-school

- Make it possible for adults to complete their secondary education.
- Create better possibilities for young adults in further education.
- Allow pregnant women to study on SFI language courses.
- Create more possibilities for Swedish language courses.
- Make it possible to validate different education courses.
- Promote multicultural information days and activities in high school, secondary and primary schools, and nursery schools.

#### The business community

- Encourage refugees to start their own businesses, such as cafés and restaurants.
- Shops that can specialize in oriental ingredients and products.
- Shops that can help to supply textiles and oriental clothes.

#### Private individuals

- Learn more about refugees' backgrounds, culture, religion, and integration.
- Be open, talk to and get to know refugees.
- Be a friend family or just a friend.

### Politicians

- Learn more about the refugees' backgrounds, culture, religion, and the integration process.
- Take part in the information days that are organized.
- Allocate the municipalities sufficient economic resources for an optimal integration of refugees.

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## APPENDICIES

Appendix 1/1(2)

### RED CROSS, ÅLAND DISTRICT

#### REQUEST FOR ETHICAL PERMISSION FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDY, INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES IN ÅLAND

I, Gun Lindman, am studying at the Arcada University of Applied Sciences on the Master's Degree programme in Global Health Care. The framework of the education programme includes writing a master's thesis and I plan to conduct a focus group interview both with quota refugees who have immigrated to Åland and of persons working as refugee coordinator.

**The aim of the study:** The aim of the qualitative study is to gain a richer understanding of refugees' feelings of integration and civic attachment as well as refugee coordinators perspectives on refugee integration in the society. The aim is also to develop a memorandum with proposals for measures to support immigrated refugees in Åland.

**Background and usefulness of the study:** Many people in the world are forced to flee their home countries because of war, conflict, persecution, general violence and appalling human rights violation. People make the most difficult decision of their lives, namely to leave their homes and seek a new residence in another country. It is of great importance for each society to integrate refugees in a proper manner into an active, normal daily life. Local integration is a complex and gradual process with legal, economic, social and culture dimensions. No investigation has been made earlier into the integration of refugees in the Åland Islands and the results of this study could be used to support refugees, municipalities, and various organizations in the integration process.

**Description of the study and time-frame:** The study has a qualitative approach and the data collection method will be focus group interviews with semi-structured questions. (attachment 1, refugee questionnaire and attachment 2, refugee coordinator questionnaire). Ager and Strang's (2004 & 2008) indicators of integration framework have been chosen as a tool for the questionnaires because of its focus on the integration at both individual and community level. The interviews will be conducted in Mariehamn at Röda Korsgården in March and April 2017. The interviews will be recorded on tape, transcribed and destroyed at the end of the study. The interviews will be conducted in English or Swedish. Content analysis will be used as the analysis method. The analysis will start in April 2017 and the thesis will be finished in December, 2017.

**Description of the study's practical approach:** The writer will take contact with the refugee coordinator in Mariehamn by telephone to obtain access to the records of refugees in Åland. The refugee informants will be selected randomly. The researcher will then take contact with the selected informants and refugee coordinators by letter. Information about the study and its purpose will be provided in the letter (attachment 3) and consent for participating in the study will be sent to the participators (attachment 4). The researcher

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will take ethical aspects in consideration. The informants will be informed of the principle of voluntariness, confidentiality, anonymity and usefulness of the study in the letter.

**Inclusion criteria:** The informants must be aged 18 years or over. Regarding refugee informants, the researcher intends to obtain as equal gender distribution as possible between women and men. Refugee informants must also have lived in Åland for at least 5 years.

The supervisor of the study is Principal Lecturer Gun-Britt Leijonqvist at Arcada University of Applied Sciences. Contact details: gun-britt.leijonqvist@arcada.fi telephone number: +358 207 699 646

I have read the request for the ethical permission and I give my consent for the implementation of the study:

Place and date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name clarification: \_\_\_\_\_

Gun-Britt Leijonqvist, Supervisor, Arcada University of Applied Sciences

Place and date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name clarification: \_\_\_\_\_

Tomas Urvas, Director of the Red Cross, Åland District

Mariehamn, March 2, 2017

Kind regards

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name clarification: \_\_\_\_\_

Gun Lindman, student

References:

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Appendix 2

## **FACT SHEET – INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES IN ÅLAND**

Dear participant,

I, Gun Lindman, am studying at Arcada University of Applied Sciences, on the Master's Degree Program in Global Health Care. The framework of the education programme includes writing a master's thesis and I plan to conduct a focus group interview of quota refugees who have moved to Åland, and a focus group interview of refugee coordinators.

The title and aim of the study: The title is Integration of refugees on Åland. The aim of this qualitative study is to gain a richer understanding of refugees' feelings about integration and civic attachment, as well as refugee coordinators' perspectives on refugee integration in the society. The goal is also to develop a memorandum with proposals for measures to support immigrated refugees in Åland.

Background and usefulness of the study: Many people in the world are forced to flee their home countries because of war, conflict, persecution, general violence and appalling human rights violation. People make the most difficult decision of their lives, namely to leave their homes and seek a new residence in another country. It is of great importance for each society to integrate refugees in a proper manner into an active, normal daily life. Local integration is a complex and gradual process with legal, economic, social, and cultural dimensions. No earlier investigation has been made into the integration of refugees in the Åland Islands and the results of this study could be used to support refugees, the municipalities and various organizations in the integration process.

Description of the study approach: You have been requested to participate in this study. The data collection method will be focus group interviews to be conducted in March or April 2017. The interviews will be conducted in English or Swedish. The interviews will be recorded on tape, written down and destroyed at the end of the study. Content analysis will be used as the analysis method in the study. You are guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity. Participation in this interview is voluntary and you may halt the interview at any time without giving a reason for this. Results of the study will be published in the master thesis. The thesis will be finished in December, 2017. My client on Åland is the Finnish Red Cross, Åland District. Ethical permission for this study has been approved from Arcada University of Applied Sciences and the Finnish Red Cross, Åland District.

Attached is a consent form for participation in the study. Send the signed consent form in the enclosed addressed envelope no later than March 22, 2017. Please give your telephone number so that I can contact you if necessary regarding the interview.

Mariehamn, March 2, 2017

Kind regards

Gun Lindman, [gunlindman@gmail.com](mailto:gunlindman@gmail.com) telephone: +358405961398

Appendix 3

**CONSENT OF PARTICIPATING IN THE RESEARCH**

Integration of refugees in Åland

I have been requested to participate in a thesis with the topic Integration of refugees in Åland. The thesis is a part of a Master's Degree in Global Health Care program at Arcada University of Applied Sciences.

I have received, read and understood the fact sheet supplied to me about the thesis. From the fact sheet I have gained enough information about the thesis and the data collection in the form of group interview and the process itself. The content of the fact sheet will also be presented to me orally before the start of the interview. I will have sufficient time to consider my participation in the interview related to the thesis. The information will be given to me by Gun Lindman.

All the information gathered from me during the interview will be held confidential. I understand that my participation in the thesis and the interview is completely voluntary. I have the right to refuse participation in the interview or in any part of it, without explanation. Refusal to participate in the research, discontinuation of participation in the research or the withdrawal of consent will not affect me in any way.

Place for the interview: Röda Korsgården, Västra Esplandgatan 2, the meeting room, floor 2.

Date for the interview: April 3, 2017 at 6 pm. (1800).

I confirm with my signature, participation in Integration of Refugees on Åland research and an interview related to it.

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

Name clarification

Telephone number

Send the signed consent form in the enclosed addressed envelope no later than March 22, 2017

Gun Lindman  
Styrmansgatan 7  
22100 MARIEHAMN

The consent form has been received

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the author of the thesis      Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Name clarification



## **SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE – REFUGEES**

### **Background and Integration**

1. Can you describe the feeling of being a refugee and coming to a new and foreign country!
2. How did you experience the reception when you came to Åland? What could have been done differently?
3. What are the major challenges for a newly arrived refugee?
4. What are the major challenges later in the integration process?
5. How would you like to describe the integration process in a new society? What kind of feelings occur during the process?

### **Means and Markers** (employment, housing, education, health)

6. Do you have work? Are you happy and satisfied with your work? Why or why not? Have you experienced racism or bullying? In what situations?
7. Are you happy with your housing? Why or why not? Do you feel safe in your house? Why or why not?
8. What kind of educational opportunities have you had on Åland? (For example, Swedish language). What kinds would you like?
9. What have your experiences been like in obtaining health care (equity)? Is there something else that would be important for the Åland society to know regarding opportunities to get health care?

### **Social Connections** (social bridges, social bonds, social links, relationship, social services)

10. What have your experiences in obtaining social services been like? Are you satisfied with this? Why or why not? If not, what would make you feel more satisfied?
11. Which are the places you feel most connected/accepted on Åland? Do you have a sense of connectedness in the Åland society? Why or why not? If not, what might make you feel more connected/accepted in the society?
12. Can you describe your contact with, (your feeling when you are in contact with) a) other (ethnic, religious) groups in the society, b) your own ethnic group c) governmental groups?

### **Facilitators** (language & culture knowledge, safety & stability)

13. Do you talk to Åland people? How often? In what circumstances? What do you talk about? Do you feel as though they listen to you? Do you feel as though they understand you and your culture? Why or why not?
14. Describe your culture? What are important foods, rituals, events? How are your cultural practices different than Ålandic cultural practices?
15. How do you practice your culture here on Åland? Do you feel supported in this? (by the people of Åland?) Do they understand/accept your culture? For example, if you wear traditional clothing, do you feel as though people in Åland accept it? Why or why not?
16. Do you feel that it is important to practice your religion in Åland? Why or why not? What would make it easier for you to practice your religion?

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17. Do you feel physically safe in Åland? Have you ever felt physically unsafe and if yes, what was the situation? What would make you feel safer?

**Foundation** (civic attachment and rights & citizenship)

18. What do you like about Åland? What difficulties have you encountered?
19. Do you feel as though you are a valued/integrated member of the community? Why or why not? What would make you feel more like a valued/integrated member of the community?
20. Are you involved in any community organizations such as councils or boards? What do you like or feel about it? Your opportunities to influence decisions? Have you worked with solving problems in your community? Describe the issue and what you did? If not, would you like to participate in solving problems and decision making? Why or why not?

**Network and leisure**

21. What does your (community) network and support in Åland look like?
22. How do you learn about what is happening in Åland/your community? Do you attend these events? Why or why not? Do you feel as though voluntary work is important for you? Why or why not?
23. What do you spend your free time/leisure doing? Do you feel happy about it? Why or why not?
24. If you need help with something (like childcare, healthcare), who do you call?

**Feeling questions**

25. What does it mean for you to be happy?
26. What would you like or need to be happy on Åland?
27. What are your goals and aspirations for the future? What would you like? What can the Åland society do for you?
28. If you could go back to your home country, would you like to do it? Why or why not? What do you feel about this issue/question?

**Final questions**

29. What are the most important support measures for a) newly arrived refugees, b) after 1 year, c) after 5 years d) after 10 years?
30. Questions? Anything to add?

## **SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE – REFUGEE COORDINATORS**

### **Background and Integration**

1. Describe your background and work with refugees in Åland?
2. Describe how you understand integration?
3. What sort of reception have refugees received in Åland? What could have been done differently?
4. What support measures are the most important in the integration process (or successful resettlement experiences) a) for newly arrived refugees b) after 1 year c) after 5 years d) after 10 years?
5. Have you seen any gender differences in the integration process? Are there different needs for women and men?

### **Means and Markers** (employment, housing, education, health)

6. How do you understand the a) employment (racism, bullying, satisfaction, in which situations?) b) housing (safe, happy) c) education d) health situation for the refugees (equity)?

### **Social Connections** (social bridges, social bonds, social links)

7. Do you think refugees have a sense of connectedness a) with other groups in the society b) with their own ethnic group c) with governmental/non-governmental services? Why or why not?

### **Facilitators** (language, cultural knowledge, safety & stability)

8. Do you think people in general (in Åland) understand refugees' a) background b) culture c) religion? Why or why not?
9. Do you feel that Åland is a safe place for refugees? Why or why not?

### **Foundation** (rights & citizenship, civic attachment)

10. What are the major challenges for the a) communities b) community members?
11. Do you think refugees are valued community members? Why or why not?
12. How involved are refugees in making decisions in the policy of councils, communities? Voting in elections? Why or why not?
13. Name some specific challenges that refugees face in a small society/community?
14. Do you have any recommendations for a) politicians, b) decision makers in the communities c) community members regarding refugee integration?
15. Questions? Anything to add?

**CATEGORIZATION MATRIX – REFUGEES**

Category - <b>Integration</b>
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Subcategories	Worries	Security and safety	Alienation, loneliness, sadness, and captivity	Discrimination
What kind of experiences do refugees have during the integration process?	<p>Worries about the future</p> <p>Worries about health conditions</p> <p>Worries about future occupation and education</p> <p>Worries about language learning</p> <p>Worries about citizenship</p> <p>Worries about relatives and family in the home country</p> <p>Worries about economy</p> <p>Worries for the children and their friends, the way they are living</p>	<p>A great sense of stability and security in the new country</p> <p>Safety for the children</p> <p>Happiness to come to a safe country, happiness for freedom</p> <p>A secure and warm sense of being welcome</p> <p>Relief from war and freedom</p> <p>Equality between women and men</p>	<p>Alienation of language, culture, and customs</p> <p>A sense of loneliness</p> <p>Lack of a sense of coherence (people just pass each other and they do not talk to each other)</p> <p>A tiring process</p> <p>A sense of captivity, not able to speak the language and no citizenship, no passport</p> <p>An experience of being in prison</p> <p>Sadness to leave home country, family, relatives, and friends and social involvement</p> <p>Missing the native country's soil and scents</p> <p>Missing the home country</p> <p>A sense of being "lost"</p>	<p>A sense of discrimination because we are refugees</p> <p>Acceptance - people must accept me as I am</p> <p>I must be a part of their interests to be accepted (drug, alcohol)</p>

## Category – Means and Markers

Subcategories	Employment	Housing	Education	Health
What kind of experiences do refugees have in relation to means and markers?	<p><b><u>Language skills</u></b></p> <p>Lack of language skills - Language skills is a prerequisite for getting a job</p> <p>Language is a bridge between a job and yourself</p> <p><b><u>Alienation</u></b></p> <p>A sense of being “an outsider” if you don’t speak the language, reduces the opportunity to get a job</p> <p><b><u>Sense of coherence</u></b></p> <p>Language skills mean you are a part of society</p> <p><b><u>Personal experiences</u></b></p> <p>Temporary jobs, sometimes as a trainee without salary</p>	<p><b><u>Happiness</u></b></p> <p>Overjoyed to have a home</p> <p><b><u>Quality of the housing</u></b></p> <p>Dissatisfaction due to moisture and cold</p> <p><b><u>Safety and security</u></b></p> <p>A feeling of safe and secure home – to one hundred percent</p>	<p><b><u>Language skills</u></b></p> <p>Lack of language skills</p> <p>Difficult to learn grammar</p> <p>The language test is too difficult</p> <p>MEDIS is very important in language learning – they are doing their best</p> <p><b><u>Personal experiences</u></b></p> <p>Lack of motivation to learn a new language because the longing is so great to meet relatives and friends – these are connected</p> <p>We invest heavily in education</p> <p>Great work experience of practical occupations, but lack of education</p>	<p><b><u>Health Services</u></b></p> <p>First reception very good</p> <p>Difficulties understanding the Finnish health system</p> <p>Lack of specialist care</p> <p>Difficulties with interpreter</p> <p>Dissatisfaction with dental care</p> <p><b><u>Personal health problems</u></b></p> <p>A lot of personal health problems. Difficult to explain and receive help/care</p> <p>A major need for psychological / psychiatric care</p> <p><b><u>Cooperation/Wishes</u></b></p> <p>A need for a refugee coordinator at ÅHS</p>

Category - **Social Connections**

Subcategories	<b>Social Bridges</b>	<b>Social Bonds</b>	<b>Social Links</b>	<b>Personal feelings and experiences</b>
What kind of experiences do refugees have in relation to social connections?	<p><b><u>Other groups</u></b></p> <p>Difficulties as a result of the language</p> <p>Long time to be integrated and accepted in the society</p> <p>It's hard to get in touch with "Ålanders" – it's easier with other foreign ethnic groups</p> <p>Some Ålandic friends via the children and neighbours are of great importance</p> <p>The school gives our children friends, which in turn gives us friends</p> <p>The Åland Red Cross has given us a lot, friends and relationships</p>	<p><b><u>Own ethnic group</u></b></p> <p>Very good</p> <p>We meet often and drink coffee and speak to each other, it's very important</p> <p>We are all brothers and sisters, we are all human beings, we see each other often and the children see each other's families</p>	<p><b><u>Social services</u></b></p> <p>Both good and bad experiences, majority – good</p> <p>Important to be treated according to the law, fair treatment</p> <p>Difficulties understanding the social system</p> <p>Depending on the person</p>	<p><b><u>Sense of guilt</u></b></p> <p>Åland has given a very good reception, we want to leave this feeling and "pay back"</p> <p><b><u>The small society</u></b></p> <p>Åland is a small area – it gives a safe and secure feeling and a sense of coherence on one hand but on the other hand it's difficult to be a part of the Åland society, to get friends</p> <p><b><u>Industry</u></b></p> <p>If it's possible – we can open restaurants, markets, coffee shops, to be a part of the Åland industry/economy</p>

Category - **Facilitators**

Subcategories	Language	Culture	Religion	Safety and Stability
What kind of experiences do refugees have in relation to facilitators?	<p><b><u>Language skills</u></b></p> <p>Being able to know the country's language is one of the most important factors in integration</p> <p>Many Ålanders offer themselves and help me, for example, in the store, we can use google translate</p> <p><b><u>Neighbours, retired persons and Red Cross</u></b></p> <p>Neighbours are of great importance to friendship and we get a feeling of solidarity. We learn the everyday language through the neighbours. We are talking about everyday things</p> <p>Retired people have time to speak, they are important</p> <p>Red Cross friend service and their families are very important for friendship and language skills learning</p>	<p><b><u>Sense of coherence</u></b></p> <p>Our culture gives us a sense of coherence. We celebrate the festivals and other feasts and dine together. We celebrate together, no matter what religion we have</p> <p>Opportunities to exercise our culture as much as we like, but it's not like in our native country. It's a big difference.</p>	<p><b><u>Respect</u></b></p> <p>Ålanders show respect for our culture. But Ålanders do not always understand the difference between our religion and our culture</p> <p>Ålanders lack to some extent knowledge about our religion. People don't understand Islam. The government of Åland should inform people living in Åland about our religion and culture</p> <p>It's very important to practice our religion</p> <p>The men lack a place (house) for the Friday prayer</p>	<p>A great sense of safety and stability</p> <p>The door can be left unlocked sometimes</p>

Category - <b>Foundation</b>
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Subcategories	<b>Civil rights and citizenship</b>	<b>Settlement and environment</b>
<p>What kind of experiences do refugees have in relation to foundation?</p>	<p><b><u>Appreciated and valued</u></b></p> <p>Appreciated and valued community member. We receive our civil rights</p> <p>A greeting, a smile, a nod, is a confirmation that I am an accepted community member, it means I feel appreciated and valued</p> <p><b><u>Passport</u></b></p> <p>It's very important to obtain a Finnish passport. It takes a long time. A passport gives freedom, possibilities to travel and citizenship.</p> <p>Without a real passport, it's like being in prison and a stifling feeling</p>	<p><b><u>Nature</u></b></p> <p>Nature gives safety and it's also a beautiful landscape</p> <p>It's a calm landscape and environment, it gives a sense of safety and security. But sometimes it's too calm and boring, nothing seems to happen</p> <p><b><u>Difficulties</u></b></p> <p>Language is difficult in daily life, For example in the store, in the bus</p> <p>It's not so easy to keep focus on language learning, one's thoughts are somewhere else</p> <p>Despite difficulties there is a strong will to learn</p> <p>Difficulties in making friends</p>



Category - <b>Network and Leisure</b>
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Subcategories	<u><b>Network</b></u>	<u><b>Leisure</b></u>
<p>What kind of experiences do refugees have in relation to network and leisure?</p>	<p><u><b>Neighbours, Red Cross and staff at Elementary School and Social Service</b></u></p> <p>Neighbours are important. They help us with everything. They know the system in Åland</p> <p>Friends and families from the Red Cross are very important in our network. The Red Cross is everything for us.</p> <p>The children give us new friends through the school.</p> <p>The staff in our children's school are very helpful</p> <p>The staff at the social service bureau are also helpful</p> <p><u><b>Contact person</b></u></p> <p>Contact persons who speak both Arabic and Swedish are needed</p> <p><u><b>Media</b></u></p> <p>Newspapers, Fb, Internet and MEDIS give us information about happenings in the communities</p>	<p><u><b>Festivals</b></u></p> <p>The children give us new friends and we can learn about the culture in Åland through our children</p> <p>We take part of different festivals in Åland, like the Midsummer feast</p> <p><u><b>Voluntary work</b></u></p> <p>Voluntary work is important. The best work is without earning money, "to stretch out the hand". We would love to help, but people don't ask us even if we offer help</p> <p><u><b>Activities</b></u></p> <p>There's a need for regular meetings with friends and to do activities together. It would be nice if our friends would invite us to activities</p> <p><u><b>Leisure time</b></u></p> <p>We spend time together with families, talking, and visiting the city centre</p>

Appendix 6/7(7)

Category - <b>Emotions</b>
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Subcategory	<b>Happiness</b>
<p>What kind of experiences do refugees have in relation to emotions?</p>	<p>Happiness is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a continual sense of safety and security</li> <li>a passport and citizenship</li> <li>to meet our relatives and reunite with relatives</li> <li>to speak and learn the language, we would like an easier language test, not so much grammar</li> <li>to have work</li> <li>to have friends</li> <li>to have a place to live</li> <li>to be a part of the society, to contribute to the society, to be a good member of the society, to be as all others in the society</li> <li>to go back to the native country and visit relatives, if the situation in the home country will change</li> <li>education for our children</li> <li>to be in good health</li> <li>a contact/support person, so we can open our hearts and feelings and help with practical things</li> <li>the society of Åland has done so much for us, it couldn't have been better, that's happiness</li> <li>in the beginning of the process, we got "everything...after a while, thoughts are occur, someone to talk to"</li> </ul>

**CATEGORIZATION MATRIX – REFUGEE COORDINATORS**

Category – <b>Integration</b>
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Subcategories	Rules, norms, culture, the law and civil rights	To be prepared - communities	To be included in the society, Information	Positive/negative attitude
What kind of experiences do refugee coordinators have in relation to integration?	<p>What kind of rules and norms exist in the Åland society, how we live and think in this country, we have different cultures. What is equality?</p> <p>Information to the Åland society about refugees' norms, rules and culture</p> <p>The right to maintain their own culture and values</p> <p>Communication in both directions an exchange between the partners</p> <p>To be treated fairly and impartially according to the law</p> <p>Taking civil rights into consideration</p>	<p>It's important that the communities are prepared at every level. The social authorities are heavily burdened.</p> <p>An independent refugee coordinator/contact person who takes care of the refugees would be optimal</p> <p>To receive refugees on a regular basis means that the authorities get into the habit of managing the process, an advantage.</p> <p>Coordinating authority in Åland is needed</p> <p>Integration is a long adaptation process.</p> <p>After a while come questions about the possibility to find employment</p>	<p>To get information about the social system, social security, the health system, infrastructure, school system, nursery school, information about everything that you need in a society, where is the store, how to pay taxes and so on</p> <p>Where can you turn in order to find answers to your questions?</p> <p>The refugees need to get a sense of coherence, to be included in the society</p> <p>For a newly arrived refugee language and networks are important</p> <p>Support/friend families in the process, not only in the beginning, at least for 5 years. They are needed for many practical things and as a psychological support</p>	<p>Majority of the inhabitants in Åland have a positive attitude towards refugee immigration. Especially in the beginning, it's easy to find people who will help with clothes, furniture and so on. A good commitment.</p> <p>You can always find exceptions</p> <p>Some people think that we need to take care of "our own" first</p> <p>VIP line</p> <p>Media biased</p>

Category – **Means and Markers**

Subcategories	Employment	Housing	Education	Health
<p>What kind of experiences do refugee coordinators have in relation to employment, housing, education, and health?</p>	<p><b><u>Work situation</u></b></p> <p>It's not so easy to find employment. It's because of the language</p> <p>Many have created their own work by starting companies</p> <p>It's easier for men, they often have practical experience and are very skilled, tailor, butcher, carpenter</p> <p><b><u>Difference between men and women</u></b></p> <p>A man can get an employment contract for six months while women are usually employed by the hour.</p> <p>If the woman becomes pregnant she is in a more exposed position because she has no contract</p> <p>Women may need support to get into working life</p>	<p><b><u>The housing situation is different in the municipalities</u></b></p> <p>It's not so easy, but the municipality is obliged to arrange accommodation</p> <p>There is also a great variation between the municipalities how the housing situation looks</p> <p>Sometimes private landlords can solve the situation</p>	<p><b><u>Medis</u></b></p> <p>SFI courses for adults (Medis), very valuable. It's also a natural meeting place</p> <p><b><u>Validation and education level</u></b></p> <p>If they have an education it's difficult to get validation, today it goes via AMS</p> <p>Education level is very varied from person to person</p> <p><b><u>Language and the school system</u></b></p> <p>Depending on the language knowledge, it can be difficult to find education after elementary school – the responsibility is the local government -</p> <p>There's a need to develop education possibilities for this age group</p>	<p><b><u>Health conditions</u></b></p> <p>Very varying from person to person. Many have been exposed to violence – it gives both physical and mental problems</p> <p>There's a need for a recurring plan for everyone, there should be a screening after six months, not just the first health check when they arrive</p> <p>They are very sensitive to common colds and worried about their children when they get colds</p> <p>Men smoke more than women</p> <p><b><u>Psychological and psychiatric care</u></b></p> <p>There's a need for psychological and psychiatric care, and a professional interpreter is needed for every situation, a friend can't exist just as an interpreter. It's not so easy to talk about mental health – it's taboo. PTSD exists</p> <p><b><u>Contact person</u></b></p> <p>who can Coordinate and explain our health system</p>

Category - **Social Connections**

Subcategories	Social Bridges	Social Bonds	Social Links
<p>What kind of experiences do refugee coordinators have in relation to social bridges, social bonds, and social links?</p>	<p><b><u>Fear – what norms apply?</u></b></p> <p>Hard to know how to be, should you behave in any particular way? It can be difficult to be accepted into the society, it's not so easy to get into society when you're not born here, fearfulness</p> <p>Why does nobody come and say hello and knock on the door? Ålanders are a little bit retiring, not so common with spontaneous visits and on the other hand there is transparency</p> <p><b><u>Interests and hobbies</u></b></p> <p>Depending on the interest, for example football can be a natural way to make contact with other groups, especially for children. The parents also come to the football pitch at the same time</p> <p><b><u>Studies, workshops, and friend families</u></b></p> <p>Can be valuable, they can be the gateway to other groups in the society (adults)</p> <p>Where do you meet after your work? We are used to meet in a cafe, Ålanders are not used to that “culture”</p> <p><b><u>Voluntary activities</u></b></p> <p>Various nonprofit organizations welcome refugees, it's not the same as a close friendship</p> <p><b><u>Language skills</u></b></p> <p>Importance to get in touch with other groups. Translations apps can be useful</p>	<p><b><u>Great network</u></b></p> <p>Very good. They have a huge network that provides security and they help each other</p> <p>Refugees living in Åland already like to help. They are a strength</p> <p><b><u>Ethnicity, language, culture, and religion</u></b></p> <p>Ethnicity and language play a big role in “keeping together” also religion and culture</p> <p>All refugees do not have the same religion and cultural background, in the same way as for us</p>	<p><b><u>The Red Cross</u></b></p> <p>RC is one of the most important organizations</p> <p><b><u>Political commitment</u></b></p> <p>Political commitment depends on how long you have lived here, but is not so common. More common is municipal involvement</p> <p>Local citizenship is a limiting factor.</p> <p><b><u>Trust and democracy</u></b></p> <p>They trust our society, there is credibility for authorities that they did not always find in their home country</p> <p>We have democracy</p>

Category – **Facilitators**

Subcategories	Language	Culture	Religion	Safety and stability
What kind of experiences do refugee coordinators have in relation to language, culture, religion, safety, and stability?	<p><b><u>Language skills</u></b></p> <p>To learn the language is one of the most important factors when a refugee is going to be integrated into a new society and country</p>	<p><b><u>Knowledge about culture</u></b></p> <p>We have deficient knowledge</p> <p>We connect religion and culture. But they are not the same thing.</p> <p>Ålanders usually don't understand the dissimilarity between quota refugees and refugees</p> <p>Equality</p> <p><b><u>Multi-cultural days in school</u></b></p> <p>In general we should invest in multi-cultural days in schools. We shall dare and share together</p> <p><b><u>The Refugee coordinator at the Åland Government</u></b></p> <p>Has arranged "education days", invited experts to talk about culture. It has been popular. The invitation is also addressed to Social security officers, Refugee Coordinators in the municipalities, ÅHS, MEDIS, and Media reports on it</p>	<p><b><u>Different perspectives</u></b></p> <p>There are many preconceived notions, we think we know, we interpret. Islam is a religion that triggers</p> <p>A religion has many faces. Both Islam and Christianity have several different ways of looking at and practising religion</p> <p><b><u>Terrorism, media, and religion</u></b></p> <p>Terrorism and Islam are not the same thing. Media, the war in Syria and the situation in the Middle East has an influence on our thoughts</p> <p><b><u>The congregation</u></b></p> <p>The congregations in Åland have been helpful in the integration process. The refugees are welcome to our church.</p>	<p><b><u>A small society</u></b></p> <p>Åland is a very small, safe, and secure, region. "You can't do anything without your neighbour knowing about it". The small society is important security, and it can also be of importance in discouraging crime</p> <p>A small society gives both advantages and disadvantages. Advantages: Generally, there is better accessibility. Disadvantages: There are not so many opportunities for choice</p> <p>A big city, advantages: You can find many people from your own cultural background and ask for help. Disadvantages: Very difficult to get in contact with the local Ålanders. You may not always say hello to a person on the staircase</p> <p><b><u>No refugee camps</u></b></p> <p>We don't have any refugee camps in Åland. It can be an advantage.</p> <p>The refugees are dispersed in the society, that's the ideal</p>

Category - **Foundation**

Subcategories	Rights and Citizenship	Settlement in the municipalities	Settlement in the municipalities	Settlement in the municipalities	Recommendations	Recommendations
What kind of experiences do refugee coordinators have in relation to rights, citizenship, settlement, and recommendations?	<p><b><u>Valued municipality member</u></b></p> <p>It's very important to be treated fairly, according to the law and to observe human rights</p> <p>To be seen as an ordinary person, like you and me</p> <p>Invitation to meetings, information about education, information about support system. They don't need to be so big "questions"</p> <p>Information about how to get Finnish citizenship both in the beginning and later in the process is important</p> <p>Information about the history of Åland and Finland</p>	<p><b><u>Challenges for the municipalities</u></b></p> <p>To create a continuity of the work to be successful at it. There is great variation (plan) in the Åland municipalities</p> <p>To understand the integration process as a whole</p> <p>Much of the work is on the social secretary's desk and that's not the right place.</p> <p>To allocate sufficient resources for this kind of work. Refugees need a lot of support in the beginning.</p> <p>Elected people on the municipality's decision-making boards and general councils do not have enough knowledge on the subject and they do not understand the content of the daily work with refugees. There is a great need for information.</p>	<p><b><u>Challenges for the municipality members</u></b></p> <p>Take a step back, get more open</p> <p>To know what it means to integrate into a society, it takes a long time, more information,</p> <p>The media also affect the way we look at refugees, positive or negative</p> <p>The language</p> <p>Not enough knowledge about religion and culture, get more information</p> <p>Everyone makes a choice, whether I am prepared to accept the newcomer</p>	<p><b><u>Challenges for the refugees in a small society</u></b></p> <p>Lack of people from their own country</p> <p>You are a minority, that you may be a marked person (refugee)</p> <p>You may not be so appreciated by your own group for breaking the standards (which exist in your home country). The own group can function as a control group</p> <p>A need for driving license, lack of functioning infrastructure</p>	<p><b><u>Municipalities</u></b></p> <p>Allocate enough resources. Integration is a time-consuming process</p> <p>Independent integration unit in the municipalities not on the social secretary's desk</p> <p>Every municipality in Åland should have a coordinated plan for integration</p> <p><b><u>Municipality citizens</u></b></p> <p>Be a friend family</p> <p>Learn more about different cultures. Invite refugees to things that happen in society, include</p> <p>Familiarize yourself with the refugees who comes to the municipality – be open</p>	<p><b><u>Politicians</u></b></p> <p>Politicians need to know more about integration. They should participate in seminars and courses which concern the complex integration process</p> <p><b><u>Other</u></b></p> <p>ÅHS, refugee coordinator</p> <p>Independent integration unit in the municipalities, not on the social secretary's desk</p> <p>Coordinated activities for refugee reception</p> <p>Opportunities to study elementary school (adult)</p>

**CHECKLIST FOR RESEARCHERS ATTEMPTING TO IMPROVE THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF A CONTENT ANALYSIS STUDY (Elo et al. 2014).**

Phase of the content analysis study. Questions to check.

**Preparation phase**

**Data collection method**

How do I collect the most suitable data for my content analysis?

Is this method the best available to answer the target research question? Should I use either descriptive or semi-structured questions?

Self-awareness: what are my skills as a researcher?

How do I pre-test my data collection method?

**Sampling strategy**

What is the best sampling method for my study?

Who are the best informants for my study? What criteria should be used to select the participants?

Is my sample appropriate?

Is my data well saturated?

**Selecting the unit of analysis**

What is the unit of analysis?

Is the unit of analysis too narrow or too broad?

**Organization phase**

**Categorization and abstraction**

How should the concepts or categories be created?

Is there still too many concepts?

Is there any overlap between categories?

**Interpretation**

What is the degree of interpretation in the analysis?

How do I ensure that the data accurately represent the information that the participants provided?

**Representativeness**

How do I check the trustworthiness of the analysis process?

How do I check the representativeness of the data as a whole?

**Reporting phase**

**Reporting results**

Are the results reported systematically and logically?

How are connections between the data and results reported?

Is the content and structure of concepts presented in a clear and understandable way?

Can the reader evaluate the transferability of the results (are the data, sampling method, and participants described in a detailed manner)?

Are quotations used systematically?

How well do the categories cover the data?

Are there similarities within and differences between categories? Is scientific language used to convey the results?

**Reporting analysis process**

Is there a full description of the analysis process?

Is the trustworthiness of the content analysis discussed based on some criteria?