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Integrational Needs and Experiences of Estonians in Finland

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<p>In recent years, a large number of Estonians have made Finland their home, becoming the largest minority in Finland. It is assumed that Estonians integrate easily, resulting in a limited amount of information and in-depth knowledge on the specific needs or challenges Estonians might face in Finland. The goal of the thesis was to produce information concerning the integration needs of Estonian minority in Finland and what an Estonian immigrant association can do to assist with regards to the integration process.</p> <p>The study is qualitative. The data was collected by interviewing 12 Estonians. The interviews were semi-structured and focused on the experiences of the interviewees regarding their arrival and settling in. The theoretical framework is based on Berry's model of acculturation and ethnic identity as a salient part of determining one's integration process.</p> <p>The results showed that having an adequate level of the Finnish language was a prevalent factor influencing the chances for successful integration. A sufficient command of the language opens up possibilities for advancing in the working life, education and increases the chances of creating social contacts with locals. Reaching an adequate level of Finnish seemed to be the greatest difficulty for most.</p> <p>Based on the results, we concluded that there is a lack of support structures to promote better language learning. It is only over a longer period of time that the interviewees integrate fully into the society, gaining a sufficient level of Finnish that enables one to function as an equal member in the society.</p>	
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<p>Virolaisista on syntynyt suurin maahanmuuttajavähemmistöryhmä Suomessa. Yleisesti oletetaan, että virolaiset kotoutuvat helposti, joka osaltaan vaikuttaa siihen, ettei virolaisista ole saatavilla juurikaan tietoa heidän kotoutumiseen liittyen. Työmme tavoitteena on ottaa selville virolaisten tarpeita kotoutumisprosessiin liittyen ja mitä maahanmuuttajajärjestö Suomi Uutena Kotimaana Ry voi tehdä näiden tarpeiden kohtaamiseksi.</p> <p>Työ on laadullinen tutkimus, joka tehtiin haastattelemalla 12 virolaista. Haastattelut tehtiin teemahaastatteluina ja keskittyivät haastateltavien kokemuksiin Suomeen tuloon ja täällä oloon liittyen. Teoreettisena viitekehyksenä käytimme Berryn akkulturaatiomallia sekä tarkastelimme etnisen identiteetin vaikutusta integraatioon.</p> <p>Tuloksien perusteella saatoimme nähdä, että kieleen liittyvät kokemukset nousivat eniten esiin kotoutumisesta keskusteltaessa. Suomenkielen osaamisen myötä osallistuminen yhteiskuntaan mahdollistuu eri elämän osa-alueilla, niin työelämän, opiskeluiden sekä sosiaalisen vuorovaikutuksen osalta. Lisäksi huomasimme, että suurin osa haastateltavista viettää suurimman osan ajastaan muiden virolaisten kanssa.</p> <p>Saatoimme päätellä, että virolaisille ei ole riittävästi tukitoimia kielenoppimisen mahdollistamiseen. Oppiminen jää usein sattumanvaraiseksi ja hidastuu johtuen vähäisistä kontakteista suomenkielisiin. Täten kielenoppiminen sekä yhteiskuntaan vahvemmin juurtuminen kestää odotettua kauemmin.</p>	
Avainsanat	maahanmuutto, kotoutuminen, virolaiset, maahanmuuttajajärjestö, tarpeet, edistäminen

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<p>Viimaste aastate jooksul on paljude eestlaste uueks koduks saanud Soome, mille tagajärjel on eestlased tõusnud Soome suurimaks vähemusrahvuseks. Kuna levinud on üldine arusaam, et eestlased integreeruvad kergesti, siis leidub vähe avalikku teavet ja teaduslikku materjali Soomes elavate eestlaste vajaduste ning väljakutsete kohta. Bakalaureusetöö eesmärk oli saada teavet eestlaste integratsiooni vajadustest Soomes ja uurida, mida saab teha Eesti immigratsiooni ühendus, et toetada rahvuskaaslaste integratsiooni kulgu.</p> <p>Uurimusküsimusele läheneti kvalitatiivselt. Andmekogumiseks tehti intervjuud 12 eestlasega. Intervjuud olid osaliselt struktureeritud ning keskendusid intervjuueeritavate saabumise ja kohanemise kogemustele. Andmekogumisel ja -analüüsil kasutati temaatilise sisuanalüüsi meetodit. Teoreetiline seisukoht toetub Berry akulturatsiooni mudelile ja etnilisele identiteedile, mis avaldab inimeste integreerumisele tugevat mõju.</p> <p>Tulemustest selgus, et edukat integreerumist mõjutab domineerivalt piisav soome keele oskus. Keele küllaldane oskus avab võimalusi edasiliikumiseks töö alal ja hariduses ning suurendab samas ka võimalusi luua sotsiaalseid kontakte kohalikega. Adekvantse soome keele tasemeni jõudmine tundub osutuvat enamikule suurimaks raskuseks.</p> <p>Töö tulemusel saadud kvalitatiivsetest teadmistest võib järeldada, et Soome ühiskonnas puuduvad toetavad struktuurid, mis soodustaksid paremat keeleõpet. Alles pikema aja möödudes integreerutakse ühiskonda täielikult, kui on saavutatud piisav soome keele oskus, mis võimaldab talitleda võrdse ühiskonnaliikmena.</p>	
Peamised sõnad	immigratsioon, integratsioon, eestlane, Soome, immigrantide ühendus, vajadused, arendus

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1 Introduction

Estonians are the largest immigrant group in Finland, constituting 21.6% of the entire immigrant population in Finland (Statistics Finland). Most arrive with the intention to work or study, and a large proportion come due to family connections. It is assumed that Estonians can learn the Finnish language relatively easily, as Estonian and Finnish both belong to the Finno-Ugric language group. Estonians tend to keep a low profile within Finnish society, blending in with the mainstream population. Consequently, in general they go unnoticed; this is part of the reason why there is no in-depth knowledge of the specific needs or challenges that Estonians might face in Finland.

In Finland, the objective of immigrant umbrella organisations is social advocacy, in their aim to promote the interests of their member organisations and of the minorities they represent. This primarily means promoting the integration of immigrants and their status. (Seppälä 2013: 12.) Estonians, however, do not have a representative umbrella organisation on the national level to voice their concerns to the authorities. The narrow focus of Estonian associations in Finland creates challenges in reaching out to Estonian migrants in Finland and gaining a thorough understanding of their needs. Most of the activities and services organised by Estonian associations centre around cultural activities and there are relatively few such associations compared to the population of Estonians in Finland.

The aim of this thesis is to explore the experiences and needs of Estonians in Finland regarding their integration process. More specifically, we will explore the factors influencing the integration process based on our findings. Lastly, we will discuss the role that a civil society organisation, with a focus on integration, could have in assisting and improving the situation of Estonians regarding their integration. The findings contribute to an analysis of what the specific support needs would be and what kind of action civil society organisations, specifically Suomi Uutena Kotimaana Ry, could take to improve the situation of Estonians in Finland.

The research is qualitative in nature, and is conducted through 10 semi-structured interviews. The interviews focus on the experiences that the individuals taking part have had upon arrival and during the time spent in Finland. The thesis is in part a needs-

assessment for Suomi Uutena Kotimaana Ry, an Estonian immigrant organisation, active in the capital area. The information will also benefit Järjestöhautomo (Organisation Incubator), a sub-unit of the Finnish Refugee Council, which supports immigrant associations in Finland and has played a supportive role throughout the creation of this thesis.

2 Working Life Partner

Suomi Uutena Kotimaana Ry is an Estonian organisation founded in 2012 in the capital region. The aim of the organisation is to be a competent and reliable partner for public authorities, Estonian associations and companies as well as Estonians living in Finland. The organisation has faced certain challenges in trying to provide its services on a regular basis due to financial and human resources challenges. As Suomi Uutena Kotimaana Ry was founded only recently, the organisation has not yet established a vast membership base. This in turn affects the information flow that the organisation receives regarding the current and most prominent issues that Estonians face in Finland. Therefore, Suomi Uutena Kotimaana Ry is looking to redefine its core activities, which this study is supposed to aid by providing insight on the most pressing issues facing Estonians regarding integration.

3 Context of the Study

Migrants can be categorized as three distinct groups based on the reason or motivation for deciding to move countries; immigrants, refugees and sojourners. Immigrants are those that leave their countries of origin voluntarily, settling for longer periods of time, even permanently, often seeking better life in the destination country. Refugees are forced to leave involuntarily into a new environment and most often settle temporarily. Sojourners are characterized by short-term stay, and refer to tourists, students and migrants, who are sent by their companies abroad for a specific period of time. (Ward 2001: 412, van Oudenhoven 2007: 163.) In our study we are looking at the integration-al experiences of Estonian immigrants in Finland, because they have made the decision to stay in Finland permanently for the time being and will inevitably experience integration.

3.1 Immigration into Finland

Finland was for a long time a country of emigration, and became a country of immigration approximately two decades ago (Söderling 2004: 46). Immigration into Finland has been in the recent years under significant growth. In 2000 there were 92 000 foreigners living in Finland and by 2010 it had nearly doubled to 168 000 foreign nationals. The number is estimated to grow to 330 000 people by 2020 and to 500 000 by 2030. The reasons for immigration have diversified compared to the 1990's when immigration was mainly based on humanitarian reasons. Currently, immigration is more frequently based on family ties, employment and studies. (Valtion Kotoutumisohjelma: 2012.) In 2010, the share of immigrants, depending on the classification, was 3, 1 - 4,6% of the population (Martikainen, Saukkonen & Säävälä 2013: 38). As of 2013, the total recorded number of immigrants in Finland was 207 511, comprising 3, 8% of the whole population (Statistics Finland).

The majority of immigrants in Finland come from neighboring regions. In 2010, 65% of the foreign-born immigrants came from a European country. There are a few larger immigrant groups in Finland, among them are those that have moved from Sweden and the former-Soviet countries, including Russia and Estonia. Among the most frequently spoken languages are Russian, Estonian and Somalian, but also English and Arabic, both of these languages are spoken in several countries of origin of the immigrants. (Martikainen et al 2013: 38.)

3.1.1 Estonians in Finland

Currently, the largest immigrant group in Finland are the Estonian migrants, with 44 774 people as registered residents. It is estimated that all in all up to 100 000 Estonians reside and work in Finland, however, the number is not officially known. This group includes the tens of thousands of workers that commute between Finland and Estonia weekly. (Vuorinen 2014). Estonians are also the fastest growing migrant group. However, the largest foreign language group, 62 554 people, is the Russian-speaking minority. (Finnish Immigration Service 2012, 2014.) The explanation for the largest group of Russian-as-the mother tongue speakers is that aside from Russian citizens, some Estonian and other Eastern European citizens speak Russian as their mother tongue

as well (Assmuth, 2013). Consequently, when looking at the statistical data, Estonian citizens may belong to the Estonian or the Russian-speaking groups.

3.2 Estonian identity

It is assumed Estonians blend in easily and many seem to think no specific attention should be given to the integrational needs of Estonians. This is not surprising, as Estonians in their appearance easily fit in with the general appearance of the Finns; both have fair skin, light-coloured eyes, light-coloured hair and both are rather reserved in nature. Also, both of the languages, though different, are nevertheless closely related. Nonetheless, Estonian identity is unique, valiant and has rich roots. Estonia as a nation is only 23 years old, after it regained its independence in 1991. The Estonian identity, however, is much older, with its first roots already in the late nineteenth century. Estonian identity expressed itself first in 1860s, during the period of National Awakening, when patriotic songs were collected and sung at the first Song Celebration. Throughout the years, even in the grimmest and darkest political years, Soviet occupation (1941-1991), Estonian identity has showed valence by uniting the people as a *singing nation* in their struggle for independence. (Estonian Song and Dance Celebration Foundation.) Despite foreign occupation and its repercussions, Estonians have managed to maintain own identity by singing patriotic songs, passing on stories from generation to generation in their mother tongue, which is the Estonian language.

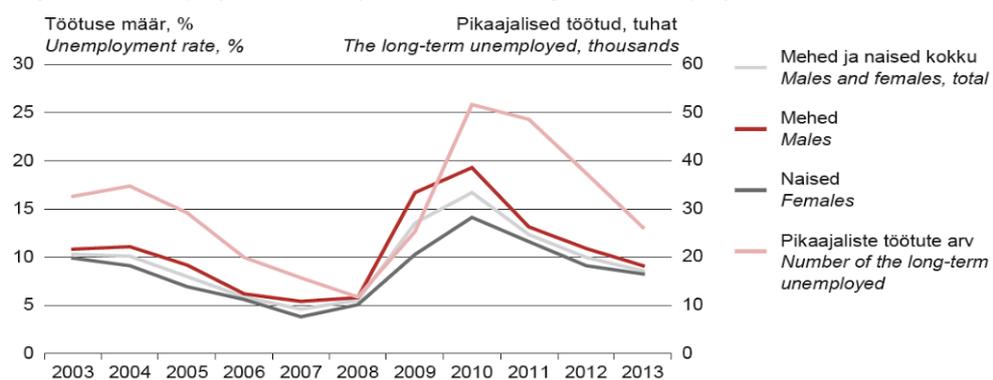
3.3 Economic situation in Estonia

In an effort to explore the general reasons of Estonians moving to Finland, access to the labor market is perhaps the most influential reason (Anniste et al 2012). The same is reflected in the demographic of people emigrating from Estonia to Finland. According to the Estonian Statistical center, in 2012 the majority of the emigrants were working age, between 20 - 44 years of age (Statistics Estonia). In order to understand the broader picture behind this phenomenon, it is important to look at the situation in Estonia and what might possibly influence people to move abroad. Looking retrospectively, Estonia joined the European Union in 2004 and in 2006 the restriction on free labour

market movement was lifted (Eurooppatiedotus). Estonia joined the Schengen area a year later, in 2007, after which people were able to move freely and access labour markets across European Union (EUR-Lex). Consequently, with each year the number of Estonians emigrating abroad, especially into Finland began to increase.

It is natural that the financial difficulties around the world also affect the economic situation in Estonia. The statistical yearbook of Estonia (2014) says the Estonian labour market did not undergo tremendous changes in the year 2013, which would have encouraged people to move across the Estonian borders. When in 2012 the unemployment rate in Estonia was 10%, by 2013 it fell by 1,4%, equaling a total of 8,6% unemployed in the whole country (see Figure 1). However, the trend of more Estonians arriving to Finland than returning to Estonia has continued for the past five years. (Statistic Estonia 2013.)

Figure 1. Unemployment rate in Estonia 2003 - 2013



The average gross income in Estonia is approximately 700-799 euros. However, it varies by occupation, gender and even location. In 2013 over half of those whose wage was higher than the median, managed. However, more than half of those whose salary was lower than the median, had difficulties in coping. The unskilled receive a miserly pay for their labor, which might explain why some have sought and seek employment opportunities abroad, where the salaries for unskilled work are higher. (Statistics Estonia 2013: 32.) Access to the Western European labour market, in the specific case of Estonian migrants in Finland, has had a tremendous importance for the disadvantaged workers in the labour market, such as the lower-educated and rural inhabitants, and that in consequence, emigration has increased in those population groups. Accession

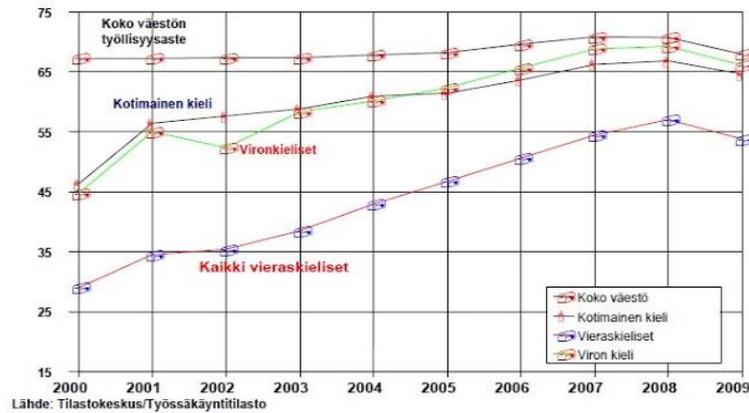
to the EU and the opening of the labour markets have thus been the final steps in removing restrictions from the free movement of labour within the EU and providing opportunities for the disadvantaged in the society. (Anniste & Tammaru 2014:231.)

Other reasons besides free movement within EU are migration are studies, family ties, and work, either temporary or permanent (Miettinen, 2014). The preparation and longing to move is firmly impacted by one's attachment and connection to the nation of inception. For some, their country of origin is not their historical homeland, which might mean they are less connected to the nation where they live and are receptive to the welfare differences within Europe. Which might lead some to move to a third country through the free movement within EU (Anniste & Tammaru 2014: 378-379.) The reasons why the people, we had a chance to interview, had moved to Finland will be considered in more detail in the data analysis.

3.4 Situation of Estonians in the Finnish labour market

Appreciation for work as a means to enter the community in Finland is not only historical but remains a prevalent factor in today's society and the attitudes towards immigrants (Wrede 2010: 16). In Finland, active participation in the labor market is a prerequisite for integration (Act on Integration 1386/2010 §9/10). According to the Government Integration Programme, the rate of employment increases as the time spent in the country extends. The situation and contribution of Estonians in the Finnish labor market is worth exploring. In 2009 over half of the Estonians were employed. Compared to other foreign-speakers, employment among Estonians is higher than that of the other immigrants (See *Figure 2*). (2012-2015:12.)

Figure 2. Unemployment rate of immigrants in Finland



In a demographic research, Anniste and Tammaru discovered that over 80% of Estonians living in Finland have started working in the first three months. However, one-third of the Estonians informed their job is lower than their qualification (2014: 393). It is also worth noting that according to a study made on immigrants' living conditions, a third of Estonians reported having faced discrimination in searching for work. In addition, Estonians had faced unequal treatment regarding the level of salary. (Pohjanpää, Paananen & Nieminen 2002: 73).

3.5 Social services EU citizens are entitled for

As citizens of the European Union, Estonians are entitled to certain rights and benefits in Finland. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union ensures equal treatment of EU citizens. When it comes to social security and assistance as well as health care, immigrants from other EU states are entitled to services in accordance with the national law of Finland. Anyone permanently residing in Finland or coming to live with a family member who has permanent residency, is covered by the benefits of the Finnish social insurance (KELA). For employees from EU states, permanent residency in Finland is not required and their right to social security is, in practice, employment based (Koikkanen, Tammilehto & Kangas et al. 2011: 143). A temporary work permit (less than 4 months) entitles an EU citizen to a child home care allowance and public health care. Anyone working between 4 months and 2 years is allowed to receive child and sickness benefits, and unemployment insurance. After 2 years one would be regarded as permanent and be fully covered by the Finnish social security system. The family members of employees coming from EU states can get medical

care, child benefits and child home care benefits even if they do not live in Finland or their stay is only temporary. As a cross-border worker between two EU countries, one is covered by the social security of the country where they work, even if one does not live there. (KELA 2012.) Based on this, Estonians are covered through the Finnish Social Insurance Institution quite extensively, independent of the status upon arrival or whether one has permanent residency in Finland or not.

3.6 Immigrant associations in Finland

Since one of the aims of this study is to explore the role a civil society organisation could have in advocating and assisting Estonians in integration, it is beneficial to look at what role and responsibility do the immigrant associations have in Finland. Foreigners have had the right to establish associations and to participate in political parties with the precondition that they are permanently settled in Finland (L 503/1989) since the revision of the association law in 1989. It was around the same time when the Finnish authorities began to actively encourage immigrants to get organized. In the act on the integration of immigrants and refugees (2010), immigrant associations have been specifically mentioned as having the role of promoting integration in cooperation with the local authorities by organizing activities and services.

During the mid-1990's more immigrant associations started to emerge as the number of immigrants, the size of immigrant communities and the diversity grew (Pyykkönen & Martikainen 2013: 287). Since the end of 1980 till the mid 2000's, about 700 immigrant associations have been founded in Finland (Saksela-Bergholm 2009: 125). Pyykkönen (2007: 72) writes that the majority have been founded by refugees, although this group only makes up less than about 20% of all immigrants. The countries from where the majority of these refugees have originally come from include Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, former Yugoslavia and Vietnam. Return migrants from Russia and former Soviet countries have also been active in establishing associations.

Zrinščak describes the nature of immigrant organizations as an ethnic or religious community. As such, they perform dual tasks, serving as social networks and helping immigrants integrate into the society. They provide information and help with different administrative procedures and are able to offer welfare assistance or services. However, as the second, and more prominent task, is carrying out education in their mother tongue as well as helping acquire the necessary skills in the host language. The cultur-

al context and welfare system of a given country affect the way NGOs are given the space to operate in the service provision. In the Nordic countries not much space has been provided for NGOs to deliver services, which is connected to the universalistic welfare state. However, due to the recent cuts in the welfare programmes in Finland, space has been opened up also for NGOs to get involved. (2012: 204.)

According to Pyykkönen and Martikainen (2013: 290), the activities of immigrant associations vary slightly between the different associations in Finland. Most associations list festivities, seminars, discussions as well as cultural and sport events as the most frequently organised events. About a three fourth of the associations mention holding presentations, guidance as well as writing up statements as a part of the regular activities. Networking and cooperation with authorities has become more common in the past years. The latter is pursued especially by integration associations.

3.6.1 Advocating role of associations

Civil society can be seen as the construct of ideas and social practice that disseminates norms of civility, structures social and political behavior and informs knowledge of self and others (Hall & Trentmann 2005: 18). Civil society cannot exist without the freedom of assembly, the freedom of opportunity and of expression, which enable the citizens to criticize the use of power and to attempt to influence it, while a democratic state cannot exist without a functioning civil society. When associations, organizations, and social movements are seen as central parts of civil society, what is emphasized implicitly is that autonomous citizens need cooperation in order to influence the state and society. (Pesonen & Riihinen 2002: 87-88.)

Associations are the most important channels for different minorities to publicly voice out, continue and define their own cultural, political and religious traditions. The activities of associations are not limited to the minority communities, but they also spread their traditions and their interests, identities and meanings to the society at large. They engage in public debate related to the ethnic relations, status and rights of minorities in the society. (Pyykkönen & Martikainen 2013: 283).

3.6.2 The Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations

In order to systematically involve and consult the civil society, the Ministry of Interior appoints an advisory board for ethnic relations (ETNO), that assists the Ministry as an expert on immigration policy (Ministry of Interior: 2011). The functions of the advisory board are to promote good ethnic relations and ethnic equality, as well as mutual interaction and cooperation in the various component areas of immigration policy, to provide expert assistance in the development of immigration policy, to help promote organisational activities among immigrants and to provide information about immigration policy and ethnic diversity as a social resource and make both topics better known (Ministry of Interior, 2014). The board is comprised of representatives of authorities, regional ethnic advisory boards, political parties and civil society organisations, including several immigrant associations. Since Estonians are a large minority group in Finland, one would expect there are accordingly immigrant associations, advocating and voicing out the needs of the people on a societal level. Currently, there is no organisation representing Estonians.

3.6.3 Estonian Associations in Finland

There are several Estonian associations, clubs and organizations in Finland. Most of these groups aim to deepen the Finnish-Estonian relations, as well as uphold and contribute to the maintenance and development of Estonian language, culture and identity, which is an important task in maintaining and valuing own ethnic identity. The Estonian-Finnish friendship associations (*ystävyyssseurat*) are the most common type of associations with the longest historical roots and are active in several cities around Finland. Although no organisation is collectively representing Estonians on a national level, *Suomen Viro-Yhdistysten Liitto* (SVYL, Estonian Associations in Finland) and *Tuglas-seura* (Tuglas-association) fulfill this role to a certain extent. Opening of the Estonian Cultural Center is seen positively due to their role in information provision of Estonian events and taking the lead in developing activities. (Lagerspetz 2011: 28.)

In a study by Lagerspetz (2011) on the participation of Estonians in cultural and civic activities in Finland, it was found that the activities of associations depend largely on the efforts of single individuals, which in turn affects the continuity of the work of these associations. This is characteristic also of *Suomi Uutena Kotimaana Ry*, creating a challenge for the organization to have a united vision, which would lay a strong founda-

tion for the work. The biggest reason for not participating in events of Estonian associations was the lack of knowledge of the events or associations themselves. (2011: 28 - 29). In the case of Estonians, the linguistic, cultural and geographic vicinity of the country might impact the way Estonians in Finland do not consider the maintenance of their ethnic identity to be important (Lagerspetz 2011: 7). This in return could be thought to have an impact on the low level of organising in Finland.

An extensive list of Estonian associations in Finland can be found in the appendix.

3.7 Sources of information targeted towards Estonians

Current sources of information that provide information for Estonians in Finland are to a large extent web-based and partly provided by organizations. There is a web-site (<http://estinfofin.ee/>) that aims at giving information on the different spheres of society as well as news that Estonians might find relevant in their daily life. Finest radio is a radio channel based in Greater Helsinki area, broadcasting all their programs in Estonian and giving legal advice based on the callers' needs. Additionally, the Estonian Church in Helsinki, located at the Alppila church aims to serve Estonians and all who are interested in the Estonian language and culture.

When it comes to gaining information informally, there are several peer support groups on Facebook, some of which are targeted towards women only. As the three largest and most used groups, *Viro naiskade jutunurk*, *Aita kaasmaalast Soomes*, *FinEst-Eestlased Soomes* are worth mentioning. The discussions that take place in the groups are related to everyday situations dealing with work, housing, social services, networking, social events and where to find information on specific topics.

4 Integration

Following paragraphs in this part introduce integration in the Finnish context, looking at the Finnish Integration Policy, Government Integration Programme, available integrational services for immigrants and the associations' role in supporting integration.

4.1 Finnish Context

The way a nation sets their strategy and policies on immigration and integrational questions partly determines the way immigrants are able to acculturate. Therefore it is important to have a look at the legal framework and the approach that is set consequently. The new act on the promotion of integration was issued in 2010. It gives the multidisciplinary promotion and support of integration a bigger role, putting the services and measures implemented by authorities and other parties in the focus. As a new element, the act obligates the government to draw up an integration programme every four years. In addition, the definition of an immigrant was broadened, meaning that a wider audience has now the right to have an individual integration plan made for them. (Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration 1386/2010).

The way integration is defined legally shifted from the act of 1999. Integration is now seen as the interactive development of the immigrant and society, which aims at giving the immigrant the knowledge and skills needed in the society and working life while keeping the possibility of maintaining one's own language and culture. In the act of 1999, integration was not thought of as a two-way process as such, but placed more emphasis on the programmes and services targeted towards the immigrants. Most of the services relevant for integration were to be organized by the municipalities, which have a vast autonomy when it comes to the decision-making concerning the services. The integration act did, however, obligate the municipalities to have their own integration plans and to monitor the functioning and effects of them. (Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers 493/2009).

Over the past 10 years, the main focus of integration in Finland has been on the attraction and reception of immigrants rather than integration (Koikkalainen, Tammilehto & Kangas et al. 2011: 154.) When it comes to the integration work done over the last 20 years, the goal has been employment (Shafae 2010: 66). As the unemployment rate for immigrants remains much higher than for the mainstream population, the efficiency of the policy could be questioned. The current integration act that puts more emphasis on the individual, will hopefully consider the aspirations and motivations of the individual.

4.2 Finnish integration policy

The act on the promotion of integration of immigrants (324/2009) defines integration in the following ways:

- 1) Integration means interactive development involving immigrants and society at large, the aim of which is to provide immigrants with the knowledge and skills required in society and working life
- 2) integration also means the multi-sectorial promotion and support of integration referred to in paragraph 1 using the measures and services provided by the authorities and other parties;

The Government's Integration Programme for the years 2012-2015 therefore describes integration summarizing the two aspects set by the act:

Integration is a continuous, two way process that requires commitment from both the immigrants themselves as well as from the receiving society. In a changing environment, the prerequisite to a successful implementation of integration policies is that the immigrants feel as a permanent, equal and welcomed part of the Finnish society. As soon as possible after moving to Finland, the immigrants need to be offered an opportunity to acquire a sufficient level of language knowledge and information of the Finnish society regardless of the reason they have moved to Finland.

4.3 Government Integration Programme

The programme came into force in 2012, being first of its kind. It is based on the Integration Act as well as the Government Programme's goals for integration and immigration. The general objective of the programme is to support the participation of immigrants in all sectors of society, while reinforcing the foundation for good ethnic relations and smooth interaction between various population groups. Integration of immigrants as municipal residents forms a key foundation of integration. (Employment and Labour Ministry, 2012).

There are several parts in the Government Integration Programme (2012) that relate to the research questions of the thesis. The promotion of employment of immigrants and

support for immigrant children and young people, families and women constitute specific focus areas of the programme. Employment is being promoted particularly by developing the services offered by the employment administration, alongside integration training, and the teaching of Finnish and Swedish in particular. Further measures include supporting the increasing diversity and quality of working life, in cooperation with labor market organizations. Developing early childhood education, education and social and health care services support immigrant families. In addition to this, it is seen that housing, sport and cultural policy promote integration in everyday life. Inclusion of civil society and organizations in integration efforts is an important starting point for the programme.

4.4 Integrational services for immigrants

Immigrants that are seen to require assistance in terms of integration are entitled to an integration plan. It is done in cooperation with the employment and labour office and should be done within the first three years of residing in Finland. The integration plan consists of measures to enable one's better integration into the society, namely to integrate into the working life or participate in education. (Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration 1386/2010). Often the plan includes participation in an integration training or course, where one learns the language and receives information regarding the Finnish society and culture.

People seek the labour and employment trainings (työvoimakoulutus) through the labour and employment offices. Raunio writes that the trainings and courses offered through them are given on the basis of the applicant's situation in the labour market, meaning that one must be unemployed and seeking for work in order to be eligible for a course. For many immigrants that have been working since the beginning of their stay in Finland, they can most likely cope with a limited or non-existent Finnish language knowledge at work, but are faced with difficulties outside of the workplace. However, as the courses offered by the labour and employment offices are full-time, it becomes impossible to attend for someone who is working. (2013: 63-64). As many Estonians arrive to Finland for work-purposes and are generally very quick in finding work, they are often ineligible for having an integration plan and attending a language course offered by the labour and employment office.

4.5 Associations' role in supporting integration

Immigrant associations have been given more emphasis in the recent years both in the act promoting the integration of immigrants as well as in the Government Integration Programme. The act on the promotion of integration refers to immigrant associations in relation to their role in supporting the integration of immigrants through the services and activities they organize. Immigrant associations are to be involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the integration program that each municipality is to make every three years. If the local authority were to set up a council on integration, the immigrant associations would naturally be included.

The Government Integration Program (2012) specifically mentions the inclusion of civil society and immigrant associations into the integration work as an important part of the foundation for integrational policy. Examples of this include the development of the mutual work between the authorities and organizations, as well as supporting the possibilities of the organizations to provide quality and culturally sensitive services. It is also mentioned how integrating immigrants into the organizational culture is equally important to supporting their associations when it comes to the peer support, linguistic, sport and cultural activities of the associations. Immigrant associations are important partners to the authorities when it comes to strengthening the targeted guidance and counseling of immigrants.

4.6 Preconceptions of immigrants in Finland

When discussing integration, the cultural background of the receiving nation needs to be taken into account just as much as that of the immigrant themselves. Finland as traditionally been viewed as a unified people due to its conformity ethnically and culturally. In the Finnish national ideology or identity, language and citizenship, and often the idea of a common ancestry, have been intertwined. (Saukkonen 2013: 90.) The way immigration or immigrants are perceived is affected by the information the mainstream population has. Peoples' opinions are shaped not only by media, but their own understanding, experiences and the information received through other channels. Educational institutions, workplaces, neighbors and hobbies all function as informational

channels, and their credibility is often higher than that of the media. Media has the biggest role in affirming opinions, and in determining which kind of information and how things are presented to the public. (Haavisto, Kivikiuru & Lassenius 2010: 230).

Since there are still relatively few immigrants in Finland, and most Finns do not have personal connections to immigrants, for a large number of people the only sources for receiving information regarding immigrants or immigration are the media and rumours (Joronen 2012: 94). Therefore, it could perhaps be thought that most Finns do not have firsthand information regarding immigrants. Koikkanen et al. write that research-wise more attention has been given to migrants that have been integrated through the welfare system than the labour market. A reason why the experiences of the Western or European migrants have received little attention could be explained due to the fact that they do not generally require social services or integration assistance. (2011: 151.)

This part of the study has laid a ground for integration in Finland, by looking at history of integration in Finland, legal acts, as well as the role of associations. It is also foundational in understanding how the theoretical framework, explained in the following chapters, connects to the results of this study, which will be explored in the conclusions.

5 Theoretical Framework

In this section, we will introduce the theoretical framework of the present study. As the focus of the study is on the integrational experiences of Estonian migrants and how the process can be improved, it is necessary to examine what integration as a concept means and identify what factors affect it, in order to draw grounded conclusions for improving the situation. Therefore, we will look at what it means to integrate successfully by utilising acculturation as a theoretical basis. Specifically, we have chosen to use Berry's model of four acculturation strategies as a framework. In order to better understand the migrants' experiences and what factors affect the acculturation process, we have decided to take a closer look at ethnic identity as a concept, as it is a salient part of acculturation.

5.1 Acculturation as a vast concept

Acculturation is a vast theoretical concept that describes the process in which groups of individuals from different cultures come in contact with each other. As a consequence, change happens in the patterns of one or both of the cultures involved. Specifically, change happens on both psychological and sociocultural levels. (Berry 2002: 17-18.) In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, acculturation was used to explain the changes and transformations that societies were going through. With the world becoming increasingly globalised, acculturation has also been used to explain the development of multicultural societies (Trimble 2003: 5).

Colleen Ward (2001: 413), a professor with particular expertise in cross-cultural psychology and acculturation, explains that there are three approaches within the vast theory of acculturation. The first approach encompasses social identification theories. The main focus is on how people see themselves and others; consequently, this construct is analysed from two perspectives – the individual level and the group. In the former, acculturation is seen as a state, meaning that acculturation as a construct is seen at a specific time. The latter sees acculturation as a process, which ‘... implies changes over time in beliefs, emotions, attitudes, values, behaviour, identification patterns, etc. of persons in first-hand contact with persons representing another culture’ (Liebkind 2006: 386).

The second amalgam of theories explores acculturation through a cultural learning approach. It assumes that those coming into a new cultural environment have difficulties in managing everyday life. Consequently, attention is given to the social and psychological aspects of immigration in terms of what kind of culture-specific skills people need to learn in order to survive and even flourish in their new environment. (Ward, Bochner & Furnham 2001: 51.) Ward (1996) explains that over the years, research has begun to emphasise certain factors involved in immigration such as ‘...culture-specific knowledge, intercultural training, language fluency, previous experience abroad, contact with host nationals, cultural distance, and cultural identity’ (cited in Ward 2001: 413). It is a process whereby migrants acquire culturally relevant social knowledge and skills in order to survive and thrive in their new society. These refer not only to language skills but to the hidden social norms and elements of non-verbal communication that contribute to people’s social interaction and behaviour (Ward, Bochner & Furnham

2001: 51). In multicultural societies, successful culture learning for newcomers involves acquiring bicultural communication competence, so that they can function effectively in both the in-group to which they belong and in the host society (Masgoret & Ward 2006: 61-62).

The last approach views acculturation through a lens of psychological stress and coping. In this framework, the focus is on how one goes through cross-cultural transition and adaptation. It is assumed that going through cross-cultural transition brings about a chain of stress-provoking life changes, so one's personality and the characteristics of the situations in which one finds oneself will either support or hinder adjustment to the new cultural environment (Ward 2001: 413).

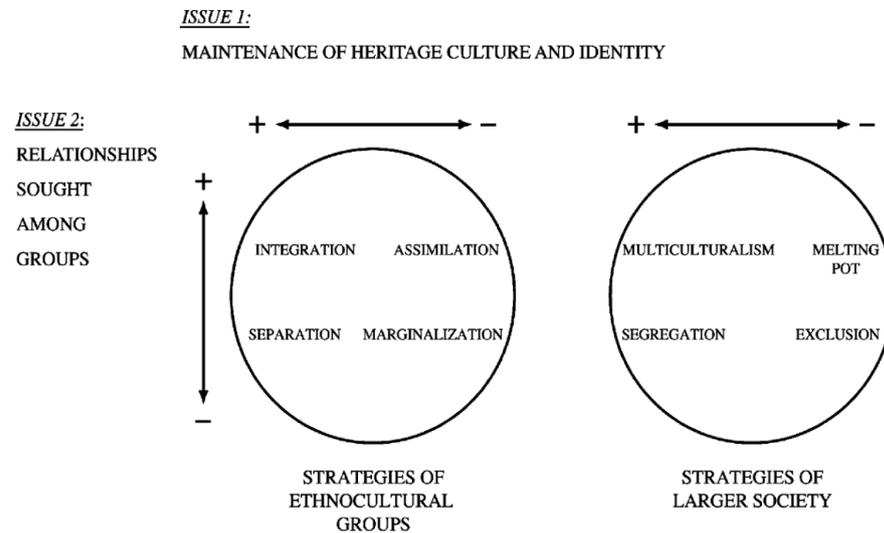
5.2 Acculturation as explained by J. W. Berry

Earlier we looked at an overview of acculturation and its three different approaches - social identification, cultural learning, and psychological models of stress and coping. However, approaching the process of acculturation by looking at only one theory is limited. Consequently, we have found a more sophisticated theory by John W. Berry, whose approach encompasses the aforementioned theories. Berry is an Emeritus Professor of Psychology (Queen's University) and is perhaps one of the best-known voices on the psychology of intercultural relations, including acculturation. Berry's model of acculturation sees home culture (*non-dominant*) and host culture (*dominant*) identities as independent. Identity is strongly a part of acculturation; it refers to how individual and group identities change over time and what influences the development and formation of identity (Ward 2001: 417).

In Berry's opinion, acculturation is best explained through categorising identities into four strategies – *assimilation*, *integration*, *separation*, and *marginalisation*. In essence, these four strategies gravitate in two directions – either towards maintaining one's own heritage culture or an inclination to join and partake in the larger society. These two directions can be seen in both the dominant group, which is the hosting society, and in the non-dominant group, which is the population arriving in a new society. In an effort to conceptualise this, the two main questions that Berry's model asks are -

- 1) Is it valuable to maintain one's own cultural heritage and identity?
- 2) Is it meaningful to seek relationships with the host culture?

Figure 3. Berry's model of four acculturation strategies



The non-dominant groups are what Berry calls the ethnocultural groups (*left*). The +/- signs refer to the positive or negative responses of the individuals in the non-dominant group. If someone values their own culture and wishes to maintain it, yet also seeks to engage with the dominant society, this person is using the *integration* strategy. This strategy is most desirable and is considered to represent successful integration. If one seeks to maintain one's own culture but avoids interaction with the dominant culture, then the *separation* strategy is being used. The *assimilation* strategy is used when one does not wish to keep one's own culture but instead seeks to interact with the other culture on a daily basis. The *marginalisation* strategy is used when one has little or no interest in keeping one's own culture and little interest in interacting with the dominant culture. Berry explains, 'Although marginalisation can be a strategy that people choose as a way of dealing with their acculturative situation, it can also result from failed attempts at assimilation (involving cultural loss) combined with failed attempts at participating in the larger society' (2002: 24).

These four strategies of acculturation are built on the assumption that there is a freedom of choice for the non-dominant group members. In his work on acculturation Berry explains,

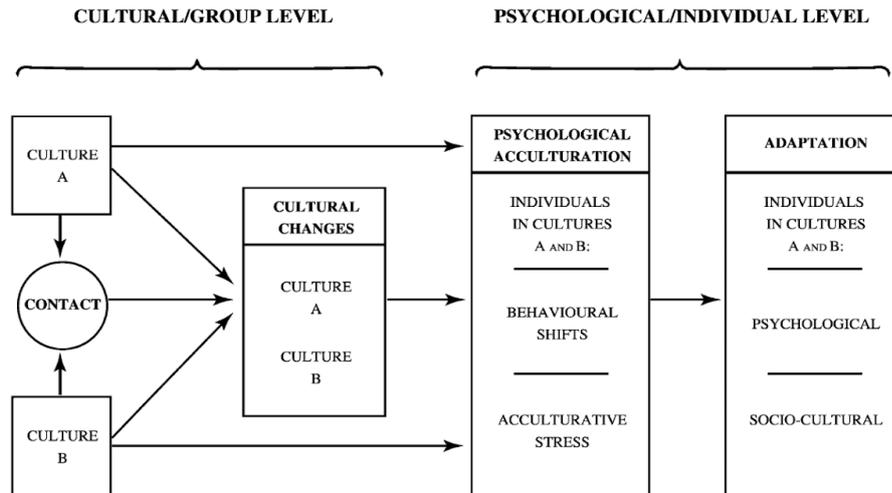
'Integration can only be freely chosen and successfully pursued by non-dominant groups when the dominant society has an open and inclusive orientation toward cultural diversity (Berry 1991). Thus, a mutual accommodation is required for in-

tegration to be attained, involving the acceptance by both groups of the right of all groups to live as culturally different peoples within the civic framework of the larger society. This strategy requires non-dominant groups to adopt the basic values of the larger society, and at the same time the dominant group must be prepared to adapt its national institutions (e.g., education, health, labor) to better meet the needs of all groups now living together in the plural society' (2002: 24).

Even though the two groups are independent, the larger society has influence on the acculturation process of the ethnocultural groups (*right side*, Figure 3). When the non-dominant groups try to acculturate through assimilation, Berry calls the result a *melting pot*. When the dominant group forces separation on the non-dominant group, the result is *segregation*. *Exclusion* happens when the dominant group forces marginalisation on the non-dominant group, for example through discriminatory attitudes and practices. *Multiculturalism* happens when the society at large accepts diversity (Berry 2002: 25).

As explained in the previous paragraphs, both groups will be acculturated when they come into contact. Berry provides a framework to better understand the cultural and psychological changes in both of them. In the larger cultural context (*left side*, Figure 2), it is vital to grasp the main characteristics of the two original culture groups even before they come into contact, since both sides – the acculturating groups and the host society – have their own cultural and psychological attributes (2002: 19 - 20). Consequently, both sides' ability to live in one society in harmony or discord is influenced by the personalities, cultural values and attitudes of the new and existing culture communities. Furthermore, it is necessary to consider what the distinctive attributes of the two cultures are, their disposition to relationships, and the consequent dynamic cultural change that these groups and individuals go through. Are their contact relationship styles dominating, respecting or hostile? (Sam & Berry 2010: 473.) Also, the political, economic, and social contexts of the country from which individuals have immigrated are important determinants that influence how individuals left and how they are going to adapt in a new society. Settlement factors on the social level also have a strong influence on how one will acculturate. On the social level, how immigrants will acculturate is greatly affected by immigration policies and the overall attitude towards immigrants in the receiving society (Cabassa 2003: 130). Also, since acculturation is a two-dimensional interaction, it is assumed that individuals in both of the groups will experience change (Sam & Berry 2010: 473).

Figure 4. Framework for understanding acculturation



Berry explains that on the individual level (*right side*, Figure 4), these changes can relate to behaviour – for example one’s choice of food or clothing, or acculturative stress, evoking uncertainty, anxiety and depression in everyday situations (Berry 2005: 702-703; Berry 2002: 20-21). Adaptation is either psychological or socio-cultural, connecting one to others in intercultural everyday life. ‘Moreover, individual factors related to the disposition to move, involvement in this crucial decision, as well as prior contact with the new society will determine the trajectory that the individual will take in acculturating to a new society’ (Cabassa 2003: 130). Additionally, the reasons behind immigration, as well as the way that an immigrant has left and arrived, tell much of the intensity of the experience and needs to be taken into account when thinking of the acculturation process. Also on the individual level, ‘immigrants’ changes in demographic factors such as occupation, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status (SES), among others, as well as their accomplishments or failures in the country of settlement, can have profound effects on how an individual adapts to their new culture’ (Cabassa 2003: 130). These demographic changes are what Berry refers to as producing acculturative stress, uncertainty, anxiety and depression. In summary, in order to understand the individual who is going through acculturation, we need to understand the two original culture groups, the psychological changes that all of the individuals in the groups go through, and how they come into contact with each other (Berry 2005: 702-703.)

5.3 Ethnic identity and acculturation

When speaking of acculturation, the socio-psychological dimensions should not be overlooked, such as ethnic identity and the attitude towards other ethnic groups (Liebkind 2007: 79). In order to understand what affects the acculturation process, it is essential to pay attention to the identity of an individual and how this is shaped in new cultures and what their role is in relation to their social groups. In addition, Horenczyk states that, although Berry's model of four acculturation strategies is not expressed in terms of identity, they could also be conceptualised as distinct identity orientations (2009: 68).

Although there is no widely agreed definition of ethnic identity, the term is linked to origin and culture, with history and culture being the main components of ethnicity. Ethnic identity has been treated as the ethnic component of social identity and has been commonly seen as embracing the following aspects: self-identification, feelings of belongingness and commitment to a group, and a sense of shared values and attitudes towards one's own ethnic group (Liebkind 2006: 78).

It is worth noting that, as culture may be in continuous transformation and ethnic minorities are exposed to the surrounding environment, the ethnic identity of an individual does not equal static cultural distinctiveness. Elements of culture may be transformed or filled with new meaning and take on new significance in the acculturation process as it comes into contact with other ethnic or cultural groups (Liebkind cited in Liebkind 2006: 80). In other words, as the ethnic identity of an individual is exposed to new cultural elements in the host society, the individual is likely to go through changes affecting their ethnic identity.

Phinney (2002: 68) describes the most fundamental part of ethnic identity as being strength and valence, which refers to the degree of attraction and attitude of how individuals feel towards their group membership. This is linked to the Social Identity Theory of Tajfel and Turner (1986), which defines social identity in relation to one's sense of belonging to a group and the attitudes one has regarding membership. The theory posits that group membership is an important part of one's self-concept as one finds value in the groups one belongs to and derives self-esteem from the sense of belonging. Social identity is the sum of the social identifications used by a person to define themselves (Turner 1982: 18). Similarly, Liebkind states that most members of an ethnic group usually identify themselves within a group with which they have – or think they have – a common ancestry, and display some distinctive cultural patterns (2006: 80).

However, it is important to note that ethnic or cultural self-identification or categorisation does not reveal the attitude an individual holds towards their heritage culture or the extent to which they actually identify with the self-applied category. Yet, the strength and nature of actual identification with the in-group will determine much of the individual's response to acculturation. This is explained due to the fact that those with a strong identification with the minority culture increase their identification with it, and those with a weaker sense of identification show decreased identification with their own culture (Ethier & Deaux, cited in Triandis & Trafimow 2003: 373).

According to Eriksen (2010: 110), it is possible for an immigrant to be a full member of either their new community or society without properly belonging to it. One can be an integral part of a community without, for example, knowing the local language or customs. Alternatively, one can be a full member of a society by paying taxes and voting without knowing anyone else within that society. This creates an interesting paradigm when it comes to questions regarding integration and its definition.

6 Implementation

6.1 Forming the research questions

The process began with the search for working partners among the organisations that work within the themes of integration and immigrants in Helsinki. The Finnish Refugee Council has a sub-section called Järjestöhautomo, or Organisation Incubator, that supports immigrant associations. Through the discussions held with them, it was concluded that, generally speaking, there is a lack of information regarding Estonians as an immigrant group in Finland and Helsinki. Secondly, Estonians have formed few associations that advocate or work within integrational policy, further contributing to the lack of information on the biggest issues that Estonians face.

Suomi Uutena Kotimaana Ry was included in the discussions as it is a new organisation wanting to work as the voice for Estonians and support the integration process of the many Estonians in the capital region. The organisation, still at the outset of establishing its actions and policies, could benefit from the support that this study may bring

to its work. As the organisation still has very few members, it has not been able to determine the biggest issues that Estonians face upon arrival and settling into Finland. Therefore, it has not yet successfully defined the focus of its work, and in which ways it could best support Estonians. Given this background, the following research questions were formed:

1. What are the needs of Estonians with regard to integration?
2. How can civil society organisations support Estonians' integrational needs?

6.2 Methodology

The methodology chosen for the thesis is qualitative research. Qualitative research is typically used when the researcher wishes to explore a topic or phenomenon of which little is actually known, to pursue a topic or to study something that is sensitive and has emotional depth, or to capture the so-called lived experience from the perspective of those who live it and create meaning from it. Finally, it is a suitable approach when one wishes to give 'voice' to a group and merge social activism with research. (Holosko 2010: 344-347.) As our aim is to explore the experiences of Estonians and their integration needs, qualitative research seemed the natural methodology for pursuing this.

For the purpose of exploring the experiences of Estonians in Finland, conducting the data collection through semi-structured interviews seemed the most suitable method. When making a semi-structured interview, it is important to have an initial topic in mind, but the interviewer needs to be open to what other kind of topics will arise from the interviewees responses (Robson 2011: 285). Following the suggestions of Robson (2007: 74) regarding semi-structured interviews, we worked out the overall focus of the main topics we wished to explore, making a sequence in which we wanted to cover the topics, and formulated the questions accordingly.

The interviews proceeded according to the larger themes that had been identified based on the literature, discussions with the working partner and with individuals already working with immigrant associations and Estonian associations, the theoretical framework, and previous studies. As the interview questions were open-ended and semi-structured, each interview focused on the specific issues that the interviewees brought up during the session.

6.3 Forming the interview questions

The interview questions were divided into three parts. The first part concerned finding relevant background information about the participants. The questions in this part were mainly closed-ended, since their aim was to explore factual information. Besides the most basic, factual background information, the first part also enabled the researcher to establish whether or not the interviewees were legitimate members of the target group'. The second part was about their experiences of settling in. We made a conscious point of referring to integrational experiences by using the word *kohanema* (*settle in, adjust to*) instead of using *integreeruma* (*integrate*) or *lõimuma* (*integrate, blend in*). The reason behind this decision was an effort to avoid using an abstract notion, but instead make the topic as clear as possible to the interviewees. In this part, the questions were open-ended and specific to participants' personal experiences of settling in – their expectations, future plans, feelings and needs to feel they have settled in. We were open to exploring and asking clarifying questions where we saw a need to do so. This part also focused more on the organisational aspect and the needs of Suomi Uutena Kotimaana Ry. In the concluding part of the interview, we asked organisation-specific questions – is there a need for an organisation; what help should it offer; how could individuals participate in an organisation's activities? We had a clear and purposeful structure for the interview yet the semi-structured nature of the questions gave us the opportunity to ask additional questions for clarification, and to explore areas that seemed of value and relevance further. For example, after the first interview, we added two more questions about whether the participants have Finnish social contacts and whether they keep up to date with current affairs in Finland. We believed that these questions would give valuable insight into the settling-in experience. The interview questions and structure are detailed in the appendix.

6.4 Target group

Since many Estonian migrants move between the two countries – living in Estonia and working in Finland – our aim was to narrow the target group to interviewing only permanent residents. Our second criterion was that participants would need to have lived in Finland for at least a year to have had sufficient time to experience the transition and

adaptation from Estonia to Finland. The third criterion was to interview people within the borders of the Greater Helsinki area: we resolved that it would be most beneficial if the interviewees came from a setting where they are all exposed to a similar environment in terms of living conditions, housing, and municipal services.

To find interviewees, we contacted a kindergarten that offers childcare services in the Estonian language to Estonian families. The parents of the children attending the kindergarten live and work in the Greater Helsinki area; such people have made Finland their permanent residence and thus, over time, they have acquired experiences of integration with and adaptation to Finnish society. We also posted an invitation to participate in the study in Facebook on the profile of Suomi Uutena Kotimaana as well as in peer support groups for Estonians in Finland. Most of the interviewees were parents from the Estonian kindergarten. Twelve people were interviewed in ten interviews – two of the interviews were conducted with couples. Of the interviewees, three were male and nine were female. The interviewees' ages ranged from twenty to forty-six. Their time spent living in Finland ranged from one to eighteen years. Ten of the interviewees spoke Estonian and two spoke Russian as their mother tongue.

6.5 Conducting the interviews

The interviews were conducted between the 8th and 15th of July, 2014. The locations were chosen according to the preferences of the interviewees. All of the interviewees who had agreed to participate through our contact with the Estonian kindergarten chose to have the interview on the kindergarten premises for convenience – parents dropping off or picking up their children were able to make time for the interview. Three of the interviews took place in cafés in different locations. The interviews with the two couples took place in their homes.

The objective of the research was explained to the interviewees, who then signed a letter of consent, acknowledging that they had been informed of their rights as an interviewee and had a right to withdraw at any time. It was explained that their anonymity would be reassured throughout the process of creating the thesis, and that anything that they shared in confidence would not be revealed. All were asked for permission to record the interview and were informed that the recordings would be deleted once the

study was completed. All interviews were recorded and lasted between 15 and 50 minutes.

Since our interviews were semi-structured in nature and had room for the interviewees to express themselves freely, we aimed at creating an environment that would be relaxed and welcoming, where the interviewees could be at ease. We offered refreshments and let the interviewees choose where to sit. Lishman, quoted by Allen and Langford, says that different chair heights and the angle of how chairs are set symbolise strong power differences (2008: 100); we therefore let the interviewees choose their seats first. When doing the interviews in the homes of the two couples, we asked them first where we could sit, in an effort to show respect and give room for the respondents to choose the places that were most natural to them.

During the interviews we tried to give the interviewees our undivided attention and expected the same from them. In the case of the kindergarten setting, we chose to conduct the interviews in the cafeteria while the children played outside with their teachers. Through this, we tried to reduce any external and internal distractions (Allen & Langford 2008: 101).

The interviewees were able to choose which language they preferred to use. Estonian was used in five cases, Finnish in four and English once. Russian was used partly in one of the interviews due to the interviewee not being able to express his thoughts in the other languages. In the cases where Estonian or Russian was used, Viktoria functioned as the main interviewee due to her knowledge of both languages. She translated the parts in Russian into English on the spot as the interview was otherwise conducted in English. In the case of Finnish and English, the interviews were conducted in cooperation, with Taina taking the lead.

6.6 Analysing the data

The data analysis began with the transcription of the data. We began by transcribing the interviews in the language in which the interview had been conducted before translating them into English. We soon switched to directly transcribing the interviews into English in order to save time. We chose to code the data using systematic codes.

'Systematic coding involved the attempt to go through the text to be analysed and to identify all the emerging themes that the researcher can find. Rather than making a choice as to which is the key theme or set of themes, systematic coding attempts to be less pre-emptive, and allow selection and reduction to occur more slowly and after initial coding has taken place rather than during initial coding. Only after the data has been coded in this way is it possible to test the significance of potential links between codes in a systematic way.' (David & Sutton 2011: 346.)

We applied different colour codes to the common themes that we identified in all of the interviews. As the next step, we grouped the themes in order to compare the answers found under each theme. We then broke down the themes by adding sub-categories in order to differentiate between topics that were present within a theme. This was followed by looking for correlations between the different themes and sub-categories in the data according to what was found relevant in relation to the research questions.

6.7 Ethical considerations and reliability

Considering the set-up of the interviews, a few issues should be considered. Conducting the interviews at a space chosen by the interviewees provided a safe and trustworthy environment for the interview to take place. However, in a few cases where the interview took place at the kindergarten, the parent seemed to be slightly rushed as their child was waiting to be picked up. On one occasion, the interviewee had thought that they had to fill in a written survey as opposed to taking part in an oral interview. This could have affected the study, as possibly the interviewee did not feel that they had the time to explain and analyse all of their experiences and instead provided us with simpler, less time-consuming answers.

When discussing personal matters, some topics were clearly more sensitive than others. As interviewers we were cautious of the manner in which we approached certain topics to not intrude upon the privacy of the interviewees. We asked from the first couple of interviewees what their profession was, but soon enough noticed it caused discomfort in the interviewees. We quickly realized working life is one of the most complicated topics, as it is known that there are plenty of cases where Estonians have been subject to discrimination or unjust treatment in relation to salaries or contracts. We adjusted our questions by not directly asking what they do for living in Finland. We expected for more interviewees to bring up experiences of discrimination in the working life, but in the end only three people discussed it in more details. It is possible that

some of the interviewees did not feel comfortable or did not want to deal with this specific topic, which might have affected the data we gathered. However, their satisfaction or lack of it did come out, but in the part where education and future was discussed.

Another subject where we felt the need to address the topic discreetly was the participants' level of Finnish language. It was often in relation to the ability to speak Finnish when the interviewees seemed to feel embarrassed or uncomfortable. We did not pursue the topic further out of politeness, but took note of the reaction of the interviewees. We did not want to come across as patronizing, implying that language knowledge would determine the way immigrants are perceived in society. It was clearly a relevant and a topical issue for most of the interviewees, especially the ones that had spent less time in Finland.

Regarding the reliability of the study, it is relevant to discuss the process of translation. One of us, Viktoria is a native Estonian speaker, and speaks Russian fluently. As half of the interviews were conducted in Estonian and one partly in Russian, Taina as the second interviewee was not able to understand the discussion completely. Parts of the interviews in Estonian she could follow due to the familiarity of the topics, but nuances and specific issues were left only for Viktoria to interpret and translate. As we transcribed the interviews directly to English from Finnish and Estonian, the style of language each of us used differed slightly, impacting the appearance of the raw data.

7 Results

The results are grouped according to the common themes that emerged from the interviews in relation to integration. They follow closely the different aspects that characterize successful integration and are discussed in the theory part. They include language, social relations, work, education, and institutional factors, such as the experience of bureaucracy. The different themes are discussed under the four main titles - contextual information of the respondents, factors influencing the experience of settling in, needs in relation to integration as well as the role Suomi Uutena Kotimaana Ry can play in improving the integrational needs.

7.1 Contextual information of the respondents

The interviewees have lived in Finland, prior to the interview, between one to eighteen years. Six of the interviewees have lived in Finland between one to four years, while four of the interviewees between five and nine years, and two of the respondents between ten and eighteen years. Employment or spouse finding employment was a reason to move to Finland for seven of the respondents, while two of the respondents moved to provide a better future for their children, and still yet two of the respondents moved to Finland due to their studies. Family ties were an important part for two of the respondents' decision to live in Finland.

Out of the twelve people interviewed, four respondents live in Finland with their spouse and children, four respondents live with their partner, and at the same time three are single parents and one lives alone. Majority of the respondents are currently employed. Nevertheless, three of the interviewees are not working, but instead one of them studies, another is unemployed and the third is on the care leave.

7.1.1 Expectations upon arrival

Majority of the respondents replied they did not have any expectations when moving to Finland, but were ready to see how things will go. When asked what hopes or expectations they had before moving to Finland, one of the respondents said, "No, I came just with my headfirst, didn't know what I'm getting myself into, and just came." Another interviewee responded by saying they just came to look and to be and explore. Three of the participants expected it to be a temporary move, in which case they did not have many expectations towards their stay in Finland at all. In some cases the persons had looked forward to moving back to Estonia. One of the respondents, while afraid of the move, expected it to be a long-term decision to create a new life in Finland. The respondent described what she was thinking before moving to Finland,

"I don't know, maybe I was a bit wondering and was a bit afraid. I knew there would be a lot of Estonians, but I wondered if I would find a new life and friends here. I expected to create a new life here completely, to have new friends, to have a good job and I was ready to stay here permanently. I don't like change, so I wanted to come for good and do things so that all would be well".

In fact, most of the respondents had plans of staying permanently or would perhaps consider moving abroad elsewhere, as was the case for two of the interviewees.

Many of the participants said they expected things to be better in comparison to their life in Estonia, but two of the participants specifically mentioned they expected more opportunities for the future of their children. This can be seen also in terms of the parents having a more secured job and hence being able to provide for their families better. One of the respondents moved to Finland because of his children, and he explained, "I wouldn't have come on my own, I wasn't interested in Finland as such. I came for the children, it was easy to receive education here and to engage in hobbies." Two of the participants expected the bureaucratic process of the paperwork to be very difficult, but were surprised to see how fast everything went. The same respondents also expected finding social contacts in the new environment to be easy and quick. They explained, "But of course, we were thinking, like in a dream, that it would be easy to live here but it's quite difficult to live here for the first time, without relatives."

7.2 Factors influencing the experiences of settling in

7.2.1 Language

Language was the recurring theme in relation to settling in. Many of the interviewees mentioned that everything would be or would have been easier, if only they knew the language. Language was most often mentioned in relation to meeting locals and being able to communicate. One describes how language has kept her from getting to know locals: "When you ask something repeatedly and still don't get it, people think how can they start a friendship with you if you don't even understand...".

As there are twelve participants in the interview, there are also diverse stories of how one acquired Finnish language skills. Majority of the interviewees explained their knowledge has come through life - either at work, daily life or through communication with their neighbours. One of the interviewees said watching Finnish TV and listening to Finnish programs on the radio, as a child and teenager, was of great help in his adult years. The other interviewee explained taking Finnish language courses in high school

did not seem to help much, since moving here still posed a language challenge, but instead practicing with Finnish speaking colleagues helped the most.

The connection between language, managing and coping in the society was made by a few interviewees. One interviewee explained that although he did not know the language when he came, he kept on learning the language on his own, as otherwise it would have been difficult to manage. One respondent said: "It's made taking care of things easier, and gets rid of prejudices". Another explained that they are now looking to learn the language, as otherwise things are fine.

Language was strongly linked to feeling at home by several interviewees. One interviewee described having settled in Finland in the following way:

"I feel like I am at my own home. Like I have been here already. If you can talk to the people and understand them, then this is not too hard. In the beginning it was hard, because I didn't understand anything. But once you understand, then it's not hard anymore."

Finding opportunities to practice Finnish seemed to be an obstacle for many. One mentioned that speaking is difficult, as all of her colleagues are Estonian, so she does not have opportunities to practice the language. Two of the interviewees experience insecurity in their Finnish skills, which seems to express itself in a fear to engage with other Finnish speakers. One of the interviewees explained, "I know the basic grammar, maybe, but I'm scared of talking to people in the shop, because I don't like making mistakes. I need to think a lot to ask something in Finnish." Another interviewee said, "If I'm put in a situation where I immediately need to speak then I will say words in Estonian, Russian, English and only then comes Finnish and by this time I am completely red in my face and I think, HELP! It's so terrible."

It could be observed that those with a more reserved personality have experienced more difficulties in making social contacts and as a result, learn the language. This results for example in limited willingness to take part in social events as the interests are different, or fear in trying to use Finnish in social situations.

7.2.1 Language

Half of the interviewees experience their Finnish language skills need improvement. Many seem to think their lack of adequate language level is a barrier and an obstacle to develop further, whether in working life or by studying another profession. Two of the interviewees, who are employed as cleaners, explained they would like to learn more of the Finnish language, so they could change their job. "I would like to learn the language and I think that if I could know more of the language, then I would obviously change the job as well. At the moment it stops in the language". Another respondent echoes the first, "Practically, my job is maybe something I would like to change, but my language is still not so clear".

One of the interviewees, who works as a shift supervisor at a restaurant, explained, she wants to improve her language skills as there is a possibility to become the manager of the restaurant. The interviewee said,

"Now I'm supervisor of the shift (vuoropäällikkö), and for this month when my boss is gone, I'm the one in charge. I need to email a lot, send orders, phone a lot. And when in Finland you are in a high position, your written and verbal skills should be good. It says a lot about the person how they write or speak, it looks bad, for this reason I want to learn."

7.2.2 Social Networks

The support networks people had upon arrival and during the course of their settling in experience varied. Half of the interviewees either came with their core family, meaning either spouse, children or parents and siblings. The other half had connections to more distant relatives or acquaintances that were already residing in Finland. Many mentioned that their friends comprise of Estonians, some did not have any Finnish acquaintances, whereas others had gained Finnish contacts through their workplaces and a few from their neighborhood.

Almost all of the interviewees mentioned that having social contacts or family has helped them in settling in and it has made things easier. This was presented in relation to having had someone help with taking care of things and being able to ask for help when needed and in terms of settling in as there were other Estonians or their family present as well. One interviewee thought that having Estonians around makes being in Finland easier and another said: "In the beginning when you are more insecure, it helped to have someone around who spoke the same language." For one, they have

settled in after they made friends; “At first I thought to only come here to work and that’s it, but now I’ve been here several years and also my friends. I have a few Finnish friends also. It’s normal life here too, it goes normally.”

This finding seems to be confirmed by a research project where they stress the importance of family as the basic social unit for immigrants. Family, including extended family becomes closer due to the solutions and support they provide. The family provides advice and assistance in many difficult situations such as with administrative procedures. (Zrinščak 2012: 202.)

In contrast, those of the interviewees who did not have family or had not acquired social contacts in Finland mentioned that knowing more Finns or people in general would make a difference in their life. One describes that it is “...difficult to live without having relatives or family in Finland,” and another emphasized that they could have put more efforts into getting to know locals in the beginning of their stay so they would have more social contacts outside of work. Having contacts in the working life was also referred to, as it was seen a factor for improving the possibilities of finding work.

When it comes to having Estonian acquaintances in Finland, two of the interviewees, having spent the longest time in Finland out of the interviewees, made a clear distinction of not being interested, or wanting to have much to do with other Estonians. One referred to not wanting to be mixed with the construction workers and the other mainly due to the negative attitude he felt from many Estonians.

A similar result was found in a study by Lagerspetz (2011:31), where some of the interviewees in customer service had expressed discomfort of the situations where they had to face other Estonians, namely construction workers. On the other hand, some interviewees frowned upon the behavior of an Estonian who had refused to speak Estonian with them in a public space. A same kind of an experience was told by one of the interviewees in our study. The person pondered upon the fact how Estonians at times do not want to engage in public spaces, as if they had something to be ashamed of.

7.2.3 Employment

Work was referred to by almost all of the respondents, as 11 out of 12 of the interviewees are in working life or looking for work. In three cases, the interviewees mentioned

the beginning stages in Finland were easy as they already had a job to come to. For many, their social networks were closely linked to their work places, as many had acquired friends through their work.

Two of the respondents explained they no longer feel as foreigners in Finland, because they manage in the Finnish working environment. One of them explained, “I don’t feel as a foreigner anymore, as an outsider. Work has impacted this the most, I do the same as Finns. If I were unemployed, I’m sure I would feel differently.” Interestingly enough, the rest did not mention work directly impacting their experience of feeling at home.

One of the respondents had faced criticism and inequality in the working life for being Estonian. Consequently, the respondent seems to be hopeless to talk about it to anyone, saying “It is not useful to talk about it, I know the response. It’s that because it’s not possible to pay me more. When it’s not of interest to someone, they send you off without doing something about it.” Another person mentioned having had difficulties at work that they had tried to solve through the labour union.

7.2.4 Working life and legal provision

Four of the interviewees expressed a need to know about their rights and responsibilities in the working life and in terms of the Finnish legislation. In addition, knowing more about contracts and how to seek work were mentioned as well. One of the interviewees said,

“When dealing with Kela, for example, what rights do I have and things like this I don’t know anything about. It really depends what kind of a worker you end up with, one will say you are eligible for this and that, but the next one says: *No, no, you’re not eligible for anything!*”.

Another interviewee expressed, “... laws could be somewhere more available, about work, for example what the employer can do and what not...employment is an area that has so many problems.”

Legal help and advice and working life related questions were seen as something Suomi Uutena Kotimaana Ry could do, as well as provide information on the issues men-

tioned above. One interviewee discussed the inequalities in working life and housing market as big issues that Estonians face, but did not see that the organisation should take the issues forward as such. This person seemed to think nothing could be done about the issues.

7.2.5 Other

Other factors that were mentioned in relation to feeling welcomed in Finland include the services provided. A few interviewees talked about the difference between Finland and Estonia, saying that they felt welcomed in Finland as there are options and possibilities here when it comes to social security, and the child benefits. The attitude of Finns being non-judgemental in relation to one trying to learn Finnish was perceived as a very helpful thing in feeling more at home as well. This is an important notion, as the behavior, attitudes, values and linguistic choices of those members of the society that receive the immigrants impact the language learning process, the language the immigrant is exposed to and how their integration path forms (Latomaa, Pöyhönen, Suni, Tarnanen 2013: 164.)

7.3 Needs in relation to integration

The availability of information was discussed in terms of settling in. Generally, those who have lived in Finland more than a year, explained they knew where to find information, in case the need or a question arises. As they had learnt the language, looking for things independently had become easier too. Many mentioned using the websites of the respective authorities, calling places directly or generally using the internet. Language did not seem to be an issue in terms of information seeking. One interviewee described seeking information in the following way: "In general, so much has been translated... search from the Internet, actually you can find everything. Let's be honest, Google is huge." On the other hand, two interviewees mentioned the lack of knowledge of where to seek information regarding free time activities as a barrier to getting involved.

Half of the interviewees expressed that upon moving to Finland, they were confused about the order of the necessary steps to take care of the important paperwork. One of

the interviewees said, “Maybe just where to take care of the papers and the order of the paper work, because all of that was so different”. Another interviewee expressed lively, “And when we began to do all the paperwork, the order of this, this is something. In general somebody knows something and you just keep on running from place to place until you get everything done”. Half of the interviewees think it would have been helpful to know what are the documents they need, what is the order of applying for them and where this can be done. Many mentioned that Suomi Uutena Kotimaana Ry could help by providing information and clarifying the process.

There seems to a connection between the length of stay in Finland and the eagerness to learn more about the society. Two of the interviewees, who have lived in Finland little over a year, were eager to find out more about the society. One of the interviewees expressed, “Every time I notice a flag, I think there’s something happening again, what is it?!” However, most of the interviewees did not bring up any need to acquire more information regarding the social or cultural aspects of the society besides the opportunities for hobbies.

The interviewees were asked whether they follow the current affairs of Finland or Helsinki. The relation of years spent in Finland, the level of language skills and whether one follows the current affairs can be detected from the answers. The longer one has spent in Finland, the more likely they seemed to be in following the news and politics. One respondent, having spent a year in Finland, mentioned that they would follow the local news if they were available in Estonian or Russian but is unable to follow any news at the moment due to language barriers.

7.3.1 Service provision

The needs related to better information provision regarding the different public services were closely linked to the time spent in Finland. For those having spent 3 years or more in Finland, these needs were not as pressing anymore. With regards to the health care system, two interviewees mentioned that it is difficult to know and understand how the system works, for example to book a doctor’s appointment. Both also mentioned that the system worked better in Estonia, where it is even possible to have home visits, and where the practice of a family doctors is still used.

Interestingly, two of the interviewees, who have been in Finland the longest, over ten years, mentioned they had to struggle on their own without getting any help from the authorities or service providers. Nor was information available and easily accessible. Perhaps, these experiences are connected to the service availability to immigrants ten or more years ago. Since immigration is a recent phenomenon in Finland, over the years the services are being developed to meet the needs of all peoples and groups. The same interviewees also expressed that it is easier for an immigrant that does not blend in to receive help than for an Estonian, who fits in more easily.

7.3.2 Education

The apparent willingness to find out about educational possibilities seemed to be a reoccurring, theme. Study related questions concerning Finnish language courses, the availability of adult education or other educational opportunities were mentioned by almost half of the interviewees. Not knowing where they could study a certain field, what the requirements were, whether it is possible to complete unfinished studies, or in some cases wanting to know how the education system works were the main topics discussed during the interviews. One of the interviewees mentioned there is an informational deficiency on available Finnish language courses. The interviewee mentioned, "Language courses could be somehow more available. I know they exist and everyone is constantly going, but I don't know how they got there." In addition, it was mentioned that knowing where to look for schools for the children would be useful.

7.3.3 Culture

When it came to knowing more about the Finnish traditions, customs or possibilities to engage in the society in general, the needs seemed to focus on knowing where to find out about diverse possibilities. The responses included where to find hobby groups or possibilities to engage recreationally, sports and singing groups for children and adults as well as having information on where Estonians meet for common activities. Both providing information on Estonian events and celebrations taking place in Finland were mentioned as well as bringing the Finnish culture closer to Estonians. Though there are several associations (Viro-Suomi ystävyysseurat) in Finland providing cultural activities

specifically with the aim of bringing the Estonian culture closer to Finns and vice versa, there seemed to be a lack of knowledge on their existence.

7.4 Suomi Uutena Kotimaana Ry role in improving integration of Estonians

7.4.1 Perceptions on the focus of Suomi Uutena Kotimaana Ry

In this part we summarize the views and perceptions the interviewees had regarding the importance of having an Estonian association, with an aim to advocate and represent Estonians in Finland as well as contribute to the integration of Estonians. Most agreed that there is a need for such an organisation in the society, with the exception of a few. Overall, the meaning of having a representative organisation was not straightforward, which could be explained by the differences in the traditions and culture of associations as a representative voice in the civil society in Finland and Estonia. For the two interviewees that did not seem to think it would be necessary, nor fair, to have a separate organisation for Estonians to voice out their needs, instead they suggested that they should adopt to the ways in Finland and not try to change Finland into another Estonia.

The importance of having such an organisation was linked to the salience of having a place for seeking information, being able to contact someone or a service directly, having information offered in Estonian and targeted towards Estonians and receiving reliable and realistic information. It was also mentioned that the role of the NGO could be more guiding and providing information on where to look further for things. The content of which type of information SUK should provide or focus on is explained in the previous section together with all needs that arose in the interviews.

As a lot of information is already available on the internet, several commented that double work should be avoided when it comes to producing information. However, one interviewee mentioned that having news on the possible website of the organisation would be useful. One interviewee stated that as there is so much misleading information given in Estonia regarding the living standards in Finland, the organisation should provide pragmatic information about the opportunities and daily life in Finland. "I think there should be more realistic information. I think it could be giving the harsh truth, but it'd be better than polishing things to look like something they're not."

7.4.2 Participation in Suomi Uutena Kotimaana Ry

Over half of the interviewees expressed an interest to attend possible events if they were organised by Suomi Uutena Kotimaana. In fact, it was mentioned by three interviewees that making social contacts, whether Estonian or Finnish would be great through the organisation. In these cases, the scope of the event did not seem to matter as much since their primary interest lied in making more contacts outside their current setting, whether work or study place. For a few, the interest to participate seemed to be strongly linked to the scope of the event. If the event was to have a component that appealed to them personally, they would attend. Given the limited time resources most parents have, this is logical. Similar findings were reported in the study by Lagerspetz, where the parents of small children particularly complained about the lack of time or energy (2011: 22).

8 Conclusions

In the results, we have presented the experiences of the participants as Estonian migrants in Finland, the needs they had and the factors that influenced their integration process. Based on all of this, we will present conclusions from the results in two parts. In the first part, we will present the important themes occurring in the results by connecting them to the theory of acculturation and ethnic identity. The second part will consist of suggestions and recommendations for Suomi Uutena Kotimaana Ry as ways to improve the situation of Estonians in terms of integration, based on the background information and needs that we have presented earlier.

8.1 Achieving successful integration through Acculturation

In this first part, we will present the important themes occurring in the results by connecting them to the theory of acculturation and ethnic identity.

As mentioned earlier by Cabassa (2003: 130) context – specifically the economic, political and social setting of the country of origin – is an important factor in an individual's decision to emigrate and how they will acculturate in their chosen destination. The eco-

conomic context in Estonia seems to be what influenced the majority of interviewees to move to Finland. As was mentioned earlier (see *Economic Situation in Estonia*, 3.3), access to the Finnish labour market has had a remarkable impact on workers who would have been disadvantaged in Estonia, with a lower salary than the Estonian labour market average and who would have had difficulties coping financially. However, we did not wish to assume that our interviewees had been disadvantaged workers in Estonia. Consequently, we asked our interviewees what their expectations upon arrival were. Most of them initially replied that they did not have any expectations; however, as they thought more about this question, two interviewees specifically mentioned they had wanted a better future for their children and the majority answered that they expected their life to be better than their life in Estonia.

Acculturation is a process in which change is inevitable when people from different backgrounds come into contact with each other. Consequently, acculturation is not a state – it does not happen in one specific time. Instead, acculturation is a process and change happens over time. (Liebkind 2006: 386.) This can be seen in how the interviewees saw their acculturation experience. When asked if they felt as if they had settled in, three of the interviewees said that they did not feel settled in at the time of the interview. These interviewees had lived in Finland the shortest time – approximately one year. Two of these interviewees explained that they did not comprehend the Finnish language and one said that they had a limited knowledge of the language, which importantly affected their feeling of being settled in. However, the rest of the interviewees stated that they felt settled in at the time of the interview. Many of the interviewees seemed to have grasped that acculturating in the new environment and culture takes time and is a process.

The social identity theory coined by Tajfel and Turner (1986) explains that individuals choose group membership based on the value it brings to them as well as the positive influence it has on their self-esteem. Liebkind (1992, in 2006: 80) opens up this notion further by exploring the ethnic identity of migrants, which includes self-identification, feelings of belongingness and commitment to a group, and a sense of shared values and attitudes towards one's own ethnic group. Based on our findings, this was clearly seen in the preferences of the interviewees: the majority spent most of their time with other Estonians. This was often due to having first gained social contacts among Estonians, whether at the workplace or among relatives, family or other previous acquaintances from their country of origin. As many did not initially know Finnish, it was natural

to choose to build relationships with those they can best communicate with. When everything is new and confusing, it is natural for people to tend to stay close to those who speak their language and share a common ancestry. Many of the interviewees therefore highlighted having Estonians around them as an important factor to feeling settled in and feeling at home.

However, two of the interviewees explained that they did not have any, or had very few, Estonian acquaintances or friends, nor were they interested in meeting Estonians. Integration is a process, where, when ethnic groups come into contact with other cultural or ethnic groups, elements of their culture may be transformed or filled with new meaning. In this case, where the individuals had been exposed to a new culture for a longer period of time, they had gone through changes that had affected their ethnic identity, specifically with regard to their attitude and commitment to their ethnic group and values, as Liebkind (1992) describes.

The in-groups one joins impact the way one acculturates, as the social environment has an effect on the individual. The consequences of this can be clearly seen in the way the interviewees had adapted to the main population in terms of language and contacts. Due to many having a work environment consisting mainly of Estonians, they were not exposed to a Finnish-speaking environment on a daily basis. A few of the interviewees also described the lack of opportunities to practise Finnish, which meant that it took an immigrant longer to learn the language, posing difficulty in making Finnish contacts. Additionally, lack of time, especially in the cases of parents, limited immigrants' opportunities to learn the language outside of the workplace. A lack of social contacts within the majority population hinders the integration and true creation of a multicultural society where cultural exchange happens in both directions. In consequence, the Estonian participants' language learning became more difficult and coincidental.

Berry (2002) explains that the most desirable strategy of acculturation is integration, in which an individual undergoing acculturation sees it as valuable to maintain their own cultural heritage and identity, while still seeing the value of seeking relationships with the host culture. This requires a mutual focus toward multiculturalism. The greater society needs to adapt its civic framework to meet the needs of all of its citizens, whether from a native or foreign background, and the non-dominant group needs to adopt the basic values of the larger society. This is the only way for successful integration to

happen (Ibid 2002: 22). This pull between adopting basic values and adapting to better meet the needs of people can also be seen in the needs of the interviewees. The interviewees saw education as a means to advance in working life, whether by completing unfinished schooling or gaining a new profession. However, several interviewees mentioned that they lacked sufficient language skills to be able to complete school or access new areas of study. A lack of these skills creates a barrier in societal integration and poses a challenge to have equal opportunities to advance in life. In order for the receiving society to enable the integration of immigrants, institutions should adapt to the needs of immigrants. It can be concluded that many Estonians would prefer to do something other than they are currently doing, but language creates a barrier in allowing people to pursue education or different work, which would often require a higher level of language sufficiency. The Finnish integration policy should, therefore, be adapted to enable more successful integration of Estonians in terms of education and labour.

This topic of advancing in life could be even developed further, referring to what Cabassa (2003: 130) calls demographic factors: '...occupation, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status (SES), among others, as well as the accomplishments or failures in the country of settlement, can have profound effects on how the individual adapts to the new culture.' When Estonian migrants get a chance to attend a Finnish language course, it is only geared towards achieving a manageable level of language proficiency. Most of the interviewees explained that they could manage in Finnish and had gained their current language skills through working life. However, most of them also stated that if they had a better command of the Finnish language, they would seek to improve and develop in their education and vocation. Some of the interviewees mentioned that they would like to go to university but felt that they would not manage in terms of the Finnish language requirements. It could be argued that language learning is an individual effort and exclusively the responsibility of the one wanting to learn the language; however, the majority of the interviewees expressed that they worked long hours to make ends meet without even having the time for hobbies. Most of the people we interviewed worked modest jobs in the cleaning and construction services. Based on this, it is not surprising that people with similar experiences might gravitate towards other Estonian speakers, creating in-groups, as it adds self-esteem and value, or even living trans-nationally, travelling frequently between Estonia and Finland. On the other hand, it might be reasoned that if one values learning Finnish to a sufficient level, then

one will delay the gratification of earning a salary for a while to learn the language and will then seek advancement. This, though possible, is not feasible for everyone, especially if there are children to feed, bills to pay and a desire to not want to live off of state benefits. Consequently, it seems appropriate to state that national institutions need to be modified to better meet the needs of all groups now living together in this plural Finland so that they in turn can invest their time, skill and effort.

8.2 Recommendations for Suomi Uutena Kotimaana Ry

The importance of having an Estonian association that focuses on integrational matters instead of cultural matters can be clearly seen, based on the interviews. Considering the role that immigrant associations are expected to have and play in supporting the integration of immigrants, the relevance of having such an association is obvious. Without having a functioning association that advocates for the needs of Estonians, valuable information is not communicated towards national authorities as there is no state alternative to carry out such a role. Additionally, the role that immigrant associations play in providing information, services and support for their members is valuable in terms of integration.

The section of the findings concerning needs of Estonians gives clear and direct answers as to what the most prominent issues for Suomi Uutena Kotimaana Ry to take up would be. The question of availability of resources is not discussed in this study, but the suggestions we make do not require financial assets. In order to avoid unnecessary work by providing information that, for example, Infopankki or FinEst provides, a clear understanding of where the real problems and needs lie is essential. Additionally, the cultural background of Estonians, as well as the cultural context of Finland, need to be taken into account when planning the actions of immigration associations, as these factors affect the way people behave, and acculturate essentially. This is supported by acculturation theory - in order to understand the individual going through acculturation, we need to understand the two original culture groups, the psychological changes that all of the individuals in the groups go through, and how they come into contact with each other.

As Estonians are a very diverse group within themselves, the association also needs to consider the profile of the group whose needs it wants to focus on. This includes lan-

guage differences: would the association work in Estonian and perhaps also Russian, and to what extent would Finnish be included? Based on the interviews, the association should serve Estonians primarily, but if Finns wanted to get involved, they might not have sufficient knowledge of Estonian. It has become evident that the needs of Estonians depend largely on the background and life situation of the individual. Whether one is married to a Finn, is in Finland only for work, has family, or is a student makes a difference to the needs that one has.

Based on the experiences and the most acute needs that have been uncovered through the interviews, the following services would assist and be of help in improving the integration process.

A lack of information on several topics was very evident in the interviews. It would be useful to provide information regarding specific topics about which people feel they have a lack of knowledge and have difficulties finding information elsewhere. This could be done in different formats, depending on the issue and what the most suitable answer to a specific need would be. For topics that would require interaction and discussion, such as work-related matters where one's rights have been infringed or there is a lack of clarity as to how legal issues should be proceeded with, it would be important to organise informational presentations or discussions where an expert could present a talk about it and provide answers or advice so that individual cases could be dealt with. For topics where simply more clarification is needed, this type of information could be provided on the website. Such topics include questions related to procedures or one's rights, information related to the education, employment and social and health care systems. An example of such includes providing the information on the necessary steps to deal with the paper work related to moving to a new country as well as how the housing market works. This category would also include providing information on the different recreational and cultural opportunities there are for Estonians as well as providing information on existing databases about, for example hobby opportunities. A third category that we identified includes topics where people could benefit from rehearsing their skills in mentoring or through a workshop-style approach. Examples include CV writing and interview preparation, which are culturally specific and require different types of support.

Language plays a central role in enabling and providing further opportunities for migrants, a role which cannot be emphasised enough. Therefore it is important that a

society has accurate information on the needs of Estonians in this regard. There should be better information provision about language course availability and where to look for courses. Since Estonians learn Finnish more easily compared to most other immigrant groups in Finland, detailed information regarding the different types and levels of language learning available is also needed. The focus should be on the availability of courses that prepare one for studies, for more complex use of the language, and for skills in writing. Since most Estonians work, the courses would need to be more flexible and diverse than the current model of the integration language courses on offer. Whether evening, weekend, or partly as an online course or blended learning, different options should be weighed. Finnish discussion groups could be organised where people are grouped according to their needs and level of learning. Involving native Finnish speakers could and should be done for practicing the language.

Social contacts, namely to Finns, is another area where the association could help in order to improve the integration of Estonians. Networks and social contacts play a crucial role in promoting integration, in terms of language learning, support as well as labour market connections. Indirectly, such activity takes place through the facilitation of information regarding cultural, recreation and free-time activities, as people engage with Finns in their free time. Concretely the association could bring people together by organising events according to the interests of the members and in cooperation with other organisations.

Since Finnish civil society has a vast and diverse associational life, cooperation amongst different organisations and associations is an asset, especially for an association that is starting out. Cooperation allows for networking, creating synergies between associations that have similar goals and interests, and strengthening the voice of an association. When it comes to organising workshops or information sessions on specific topics, networking and cooperation could enable associations to invite people with specialist knowledge or personal experience in a certain area which they could share. Suomi Uutena Kotimaana Ry would not need to know everything about everything but simply to utilise the knowledge that lies within other associations.

9 Discussion

The objectives of the thesis were to find out what the integrational needs of Estonians are, and how Suomi Uutena Kotimaana Ry, as an Estonian association, can help to improve the situation by being an advocating voice for the Estonian minority in Finland. Given the number of interviewees and the varying lengths of stay and experiences each participant has had, we can say we successfully collected a good data sample. However, the results cannot be generalized to concern the entire group of Estonians in Finland. Consequently, our collected data does not describe the experience of all Estonians all over Finland. There is a need for further research on the diversity of Estonians' integrational experiences and needs all across Finland. However, within the data collected, the main issues identified were in several cases brought up by many of the interviewees. Based on the information collected regarding integrational needs and the background information presented, the recommendations proposed towards Suomi Uutena Kotimaana Ry are realistic and backed up by studied and analysed data.

9.1 Culture and Ethnic Identity

This study did not look in depth into the cultural aspects and identity of Estonians as a nation. Nevertheless, cultural background and history are a prominent part of one's ethnic identity affecting the adaptation into a new culture and should be taken into consideration (Liebkind 2006: 78). Consequently, there could be a direct link to why some of the interviewees stressed the importance of learning and knowing Finnish language. Since like the Estonian language has a big role in their identity, they also recognize a need to understand and speak the language of their new country, which will help them to integrate. Also, it might be that the reason why most of the Estonian associations in Finland focus on singing, dancing and activities in the Estonian language is to support the Estonian identity. This is how Estonians have kept and supported the Estonian identity from generation to generation. As the most desirable strategy of acculturation is integration, in which a person values own ethnic identity but also desires to interact with the new culture (Berry 2002: 24), it is important that Estonians also value their ethnic identity in Finland, but also seek opportunities to interact with the Finnish culture. This could also be one of the reasons why the participants of this study expressed a need to find more information and a readiness to participate in Estonian and Finnish singing and dancing groups for their children and themselves.

Also, some of the interviewees mentioned they try to do everything they can on their own and will ask for help only if there truly is a need. Some of the interviewees mentioned it is *the Estonian mentality*. Could this way of thinking come already from history? Might it be that Estonians do not voice out their needs because throughout history they have learnt voicing out needs does not matter, but one needs to do whatever is necessary to keep on going forward and that the identity is kept despite the changes that happen in the state?

9.2 Estonians as a diverse group

When it comes to the organisation of Estonians to represent their needs, whether on local, municipal or national level, the lack of it could possibly be impacted by the attitude many carry regarding their right to voice out their needs in the Finnish society. Considering the reaction of the few regarding the right to voice out the needs and Estonians not being very present in the discussions related to immigration, it should be considered why. Could there be a relation to Estonians not wanting to be visible by making noise about themselves? Or does the diversity within Estonians create too many difficulties in getting organised or in deciding on what to focus on? On the other hand, the Somalian community in Finland has managed to organise effectively despite the diversity among themselves. Therefore diversity should not be an insuperable barrier but the reasons must lie elsewhere. Lagerspetz explains how the common nationality might not be enough to bridge the gap that was created between Estonians that have stayed longer in Finland and those that have arrived more recently, or are transnational workers. Not only have the several years in Finland made a difference, but also educational attainment. It is also important to note that in the beginning, recent Estonian migrants often end up working in jobs that do not match their qualifications, impacting the social status, in comparison to the migrants that have spent a longer period of time in Finland. (2011: 31-32.)

Based on the importance and role immigrant associations play in the civil society, having an organisation a representative association of Estonians is worth a discussion. When it comes to representation with stakeholders on national level, such as ETNO, an organisation will only have the legitimacy to speak on behalf of Estonians once they

have established a profound membership base and can truly claim to be an expert of the issues Estonians face in Finland. Typically it is an umbrella organisation that takes this role due to the ability to gather the knowledge of Estonians living in different parts of Finland and from different backgrounds.

9.3 The role of host society in integration

The attitudes and behavior of the locals is an important factor of integration and creating a welcoming environment for the migrants. However, this cannot be measured very easily, nor is it traditionally examined very closely in different studies. Although many multicultural organisations work on bringing people from the different ethnic groups together, and migrants come in contact with Finns through such activities, this does not extend outside of the organised setting by default. It is therefore relevant to ask what impact can the surrounding society have, and how. As Finland is still a very homogeneous society, with the majority of immigrants mainly in the capital area, it could be difficult to voice out needs in fear of being different and standing out.

Given the demographic changes Finland will face in the near future, with a decrease in the working age population, it is in the interest of the state to have the migrants integrate successfully, both socially and economically. This would allow people to advance and move higher in the labour market, as opposed to remaining in certain sectors where many Estonians currently work. Considering the policy and resources allocated for the integration of migrants that are generally excluded from the integration services, the state does not seem to support a model where every migrant would be on the same line in terms of possibilities to participate and get involved in the different levels of society. If in Finland we truly want to include and involve foreigners, there have to be changes in educational and labour market policy.

9.4 Limitations of the study

Our target group included Estonian families, couples or single parents that mainly had been married to an Estonian. The needs and experiences of Estonian families in comparison to mixed families, where one of the parents is Finnish, differ greatly. Therefore it is vital to keep in mind that in our study, the focus was on Estonians, and does not

encompass the needs of Estonians that move to Finland and are exposed to the Finnish culture through their family relations. Secondly, in the study we interviewed one couple that have come to Finland as students. Students as a group experience a different environment daily as they most often come to Finland to study in English and are therefore exposed to a different social setting to begin with. However, this study did not go into details on the questions of students as a special group.

Estonians can have Estonian or Russian as their mother tongue. Depending of the background, the challenges faced upon arrival and throughout one's integration process are or can be different. As an example, learning the language can be easier for an Estonian speaker than one with Russian as their mother tongue. Therefore the needs Estonians have are also impacted by the language background. In the study we did not differentiate between the two language groups, nor did we interview an equal number of participants from both language groups to be able to research the questions pertaining to language in detail.

Estonians in Finland are a very heterogeneous group. A large number are cross-border workers, some are married to a Finn, there are those residing permanently in Finland, economic migrants and students. Additionally, the educational level of Estonians vary greatly; some come with or have obtained a higher education degree in Finland whereas others have only completed compulsory education in Estonia. It is obvious that the needs vary greatly depending on the reason and motivation for staying in Finland. The results of the study should not be generalized to portray an overview of all of the issues Estonians face in Finland but to give more clarity regarding the issues the interviewees brought up in this study.

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Interview Questions

1. Basic information

Age, gender - *Vanus, Sugu*

How long have you lived in Finland - *Kui kaua Sa oled elanud Soomes?*

Family composition - *Kellega Sa siin elad?*

Education level - *Milline hariduse teekond on Sul olnud?*

Main occupation of the interviewee - *Millega Sa hetkel tegeled?*

2. Reason of moving to Finland - Soome kolimise põhjus

Motivation, expectations and reason for moving to Finland - *Millised olid Sinu põhjused, ootused, ja lootused seoses Soome kolimisega*

3. Questions regarding one's experiences - Isikliku kogemust puudutavad küsimused

Describe your experience once you arrived to Finland in terms of settling in. - *Kirjelda oma kohanemise kogemust, kui sa Soome kolisid*

What things went smoothly and were easy to get used to? - *Mis asjad läksid ladusalt ja millega oli kerge ära harjuda?*

Were there any things that were difficult to find out about? - *Kas olid mingid asjad, mille kohta oli raske teavet leida?*

How about currently? - *Kuidas nüüd?*

Do you feel you have settled in, feeling a part of the society? - *Kas Sa tunned, et oled kohanenud*

Are you able to do the things you like to? - *Kas Sa saad teha seda mis sulle meeldib teha?*

What kind of things would you like to have access to in order to feel more settled in Finland? - *Millele sa tahaksid ligipääsu, et tunda sa oled rohkem kohanenud?*

Do you wish to find out more about the Finnish society? What exactly would that entail? (Examples might include habits, laws, traditions etc.) - *Kas sa tahaksid teada rohkem Soome ühiskonnast? Mida täpsemalt? (tavad, seadused, traditsioonid)*

How do you picture your life in Finland in the future? *How could your life look like in the future?* Would you consider seeking employment in Finland? How about studying (further)? - *Milline võiks Su elu välja näha tulevikus? Kas sa kaaluksid leida tööd Soomes? Aga, jätkata õpingutega?*

Do you have Finnish friends? *Kas Sul on sõpru Soomes?*

Do you follow the current affairs in Finland/ Helsinki (Internet, TV, Newspapers, Radio)? *Kas Sa hoiad ennast kursis Soomes/Helsingis toimuvaga (Internet, TVs, ajalehed, raadio)?*

4. On the needs for an organisation - *Organisatsiooni/ettevõtte vajadustest*

Have you sought guidance or assistance from alternative places? If yes, from where? (web-based groups, clubs, organizations or some place else?) - *Kas sa oled otsinud abi alternatiivsetest kohtadest? Kui jah, siis kust? (Näiteks veebi-põhised grupid, klubid, ettevõtted või kuskilt mujalt?)*

In your opinion, is there a need for an organization that promotes the interests of Estonians in Finland? / gives social guidance to Estonians specifically? - *Kas sinu meelest on vaja sellist organisatsiooni, mis annab abi või nõustab sotsiaal küsimustes spetsiifiliselt eestlasi?*

- If yes, would you seek their help or would have sought their help when you first moved to Finland? - *Kui jah, kas sa pöördusid nende poole abi saamiseks või oleksid pöördunud nende poole, kui sa alles Soome kolisid?*

- If no, why? - *Kui ei, miks?*

What should the main tasks of the organizations be? *Mis peamised ülesanded võiksid sellel organisatsioonil olla?*

What kind of role or purpose should this organization have? - *Millist abi ja tuge võiks see organisatsioon pakkuda?*

What kind of information would be important to find online through the web-site of such an organisation? - *Milline oleks esmavajalik info, mis võiks olla selle organisatsiooni veebilehel?*

Would you take part in the activities of the organisation? Why or why not? - *Kas Sa osaleksid selle organisatsiooni tegevustes? Miks jah/ei?*

Would you like to tell us something else that we have not yet asked about? - *Kas on veel midagi millest Sa tahaksid rääkida, mille kohta me ei ole veel küsinud?*

Estonian Associations in Finland

As compiled by Tuglase Selts. More information can be found at:

<http://soomest.fi/index.php?id=14>

Eesti Arstide Selts Soomes
www.estdoc.eu

Eestikeelse Hariduse Selts
www.eestikeelsehariduseselts.fi

Eesti Lastering
www.eestilastering.fi

Helsingi Eesti Akadeemiline Klubi
heaklubi.fi

Helsingi Eesti Laululapsed
www.laulustuudio.fi

Eesti Selts ry Lappeenranta-Imatra
yhdistykset.ekarjala.fi/eesti

Mikkeli Eesti Klubi
mikkeliieestiklubi.wordpress.com

Segakoor Siller
www.siller.fi

Suomi Uutena Kotimaana ry [in Facebook](#)
Tampere Eesti Klubi
www.eestiklubi.fi

Turu eestlaste klubi (tegusteb Varsianais-Suomi Viro-keskuse osana)
eestlasteleturus.blogspot.fi

Turu kandi eestlased ja ingerisoomlased

Facebook
Eestikeelne kogudusetöö Helsingis
www.helsinginseurakunnat.fi/eesti