



Become part of **a new community**

Support for integration

The objective of the Red Cross is for everyone moving to Finland to feel welcome. The Finnish Red Cross wants immigrants and local people to get to know each other and work together to create a home district that takes different cultures into account.

In addition to a new culture, anyone moving to Finland will encounter a new language and everyday life. At least in the beginning, new arrivals may need support in integrating in society. Branches may assist in this by organising different activities. Through integration activities, branches also have the opportunity to encourage immigrants to join the Red Cross.

The activities should serve local people as well as possible: you should not start organising homework clubs if they are already operating in the area. For example, if there is no international meeting point yet, setting up a meeting point may be a good idea! You should consider what kind of activities would best complement local services and what kind of activities are in demand. You should also contact local immigrant associations and invite people who are enthusiastic about new activities to participate already in the planning stage.

This brochure describes the key Red Cross volunteer activity models supporting integration and gives ideas for their implementation.

Become a friend to an immigrant

Through the Red Cross's friend activities, newcomers can meet new people, grow their social networks and have the opportunity to practise Finnish or Swedish. Meetings with a friend will ease feelings of loneliness in a new place. A new place to live will feel more like home when you have a friend.

Volunteer friends will help immigrants learn more about Finnish society and the activities of the Red Cross. Reciprocally, friends get to meet new people who have moved to Finland from abroad. A friend can e.g., show the newcomer around town, try out a new hobby with them or discuss shared interests.

How to get started:

- If there is a need to introduce friends to immigrants in your area, please contact the district. District employees will help you get started.
- Your branch may organise a Course on friend activities and Supporting integration training. At the same time, it is worth considering how to encourage people with immigrant backgrounds to participate in the activities of the branch.

Language-learning clubs

When you practise a language in a safe environment where it is OK to make mistakes, enthusiasm for using the language increases. Daily life will become easier when you are able to read price tags when shopping, for example. Even a little bit of practice will encourage you to stop and have a brief chat with a neighbour.

The purpose of language-learning clubs is to provide a flexible opportunity to practise Finnish or Swedish in everyday situations as well as help immigrants meet new people and grow their networks. Language-learning clubs can meet in e.g., a library. You can discuss everyday matters and help participants with language course homework in low-threshold language-learning club meetings.

Language-learning clubs serve as additional support for participants of language courses provided by the authorities and help learners practice their skills.

How to get started:

- If there is a need for a language-learning club in your area, please contact the district. Together, you can plan the launch of club activities.
- Gather a team of suitable size to run the operation and select a couple of coordinators from within the team.

Homework clubs or homework help

Anyone can need help with schoolwork sometimes. Being able to complete homework increases study motivation, self-confidence and opportunities for further education. Homework clubs and homework help sessions will help children, young people or adult students in completing their homework after class. The clubs are open to anyone in need. Together, difficult tasks and other problems can be solved faster!

Clubs for children and young people also include play and crafts, even though the main purpose is to do schoolwork. Clubs for adults, on the other hand, also provide the opportunity to check in on each other and talk about current events.

How to get started:

- Determine whether there is a need to set up a homework club in cooperation with local schools. If you decide to start a club, contact the district office.
- Gather a team of suitable size to run the operation and select a couple of coordinators from within the team.
- Ask the branch for games, crafts equipment and toys or discuss whether it would be possible to get them as donations.

International meeting point

An international meeting point is an open meeting place for people with different backgrounds. There, you can meet new people and get to know your new home district. A meeting point provides experiences and information in a fun environment and makes the new neighbourhood feel more like home. You can play board games, throw parties and arrange themed evenings at the meeting point. You can have a picnic together in the summer and go ice-skating in the winter.

The meeting point may be the first step towards participating in the diverse activities of the Red Cross. That is why it might be a good idea to introduce local Red Cross activities there. If possible, you can also serve some snacks or drinks at the meeting point.

How to get started:

- Discuss the launch of activities in the branch. The district will support you in planning.
- Think about how the activities are to be marketed and how accessible the activities are from the perspective of the target group. Leave room for the participants' own wishes in the planning process; the participants may well be involved in the planning and implementation of the activities themselves.

Everyday support

Everyday support helps newcomers with managing their daily lives by helping them settle in in their own homes and learning more about the services and people in their new living environment. Many of the things that are obvious to us may seem strange to those who have just moved to Finland. How do you book the laundry room? How do you defrost the freezer or sort your recycling? What services does the local library offer? What are everyman's rights? A newcomer may need help with things like these. With help from Everyday support, all these things will become familiar and daily life can run smoothly.

The purpose of Everyday support is to support early integration, but it is also suitable for anyone who needs it.

How to get started:

- Find out if there is a demand for Everyday support in your area. Discuss starting Everyday support activities with the district.
- Choose the contact persons for Everyday support. The activity needs a volunteer in charge with preferably a working pair.
- Invite new volunteers to join and provide Everyday support training.
- Agree on cooperation with the municipality and/or reception centre and draft shared ground rules for the activity. Also cooperate with other local operators.

Camp activities

We organise camps to provide immigrants with experiences in Finnish nature, first aid training exercises and fun activities – and language immersion, of course! Shared experiences will help families to get to know each other and the volunteers. Making new friends comes naturally around the campfire.

The sky is the limit when it comes to the types of camps that can be organised: family camps, youth camps, children's camps, women's camps, men's camps... Everyone has the chance to learn new skills, get to know their new homeland, meet new people, and have unforgettable experiences at camps.

How to get started:

- Start planning your camp well in advance and ask your district for help. Camps generate costs and it is advisable to think ahead and draft a cost estimate.
- You should make sure that there is enough time to reserve a campsite, recruit and familiarise camp counsellors, market the camp and register participants. Planning the camp programme, allocating areas of responsibility and various acquisitions will also take some time.

Starttipaja and integration platform

Integration activities offered by the authorities and associations are often separate. However, both parties have the same objective: the successful integration of immigrants into their new environment. What if the different operators worked together, learning from each other?

The integration platform is a tool for bringing the integration operating models of regional organisations and authorities together. The platform helps organisations and authorities work together to determine which integration activities are already offered by municipalities, which of them could benefit from cooperation, and what kind of activities may be needed to supplement municipal services. This streamlines support for integration and ensures that immigrants have the best prerequisites for integration.

How to get started:

- Find out if there is a need to fill in or update the integration platform in your area, or if it has already been done.
- Organise a Starttipaja workshop and invite parties interested in supporting integration to discuss local opportunities for activities. The district will provide practical instructions for organising the Starttipaja workshop.