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Title: From Limbo to Belonging: Participation through Physical and
Recreational Activities among Ukrainian Women under Temporary
Protection in Finland

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ABSTRACT

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 led to the activation of the European Union's Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), allowing millions of displaced Ukrainians to settle temporarily across Europe. While temporary protection (TP) provides immediate access to residency, employment, and social services, it also creates prolonged uncertainty about the future. Existing research increasingly recognises the role of sport in supporting the integration of forced migrants. Yet most studies focus on permanent settlement trajectories and overlook how temporary legal status, gender, and uncertainty shape participation. This thesis examines how Ukrainian women under temporary protection experience participation in physical and recreational activities in the Turku region of Finland and what these experiences reveal about social inclusion, belonging, and everyday life under TP. The study adopts a socio-legal mixed-methods approach, combining an analysis of international, European, and Finnish legal and policy frameworks with empirical research consisting of semi-structured interviews with service providers and a questionnaire completed by Ukrainian women under temporary protection. The empirical data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis.

The findings show that participation in sport provides opportunities for well-being, routine, social support, and community-building during prolonged uncertainty. At the same time, participation is constrained by interconnected structural and personal barriers, including language, childcare responsibilities, transport, financial costs, information gaps, and temporary legal status. Belonging does not emerge automatically through participation; rather, it develops through trust, familiarity, and socially safe environments, which in turn promote continued participation. The thesis concludes that integration under TP differs from standard integration trajectories. Participation alone is insufficient to help bring about inclusion unless supported by accessible, gender-sensitive, and socially supportive environments. The findings demonstrate that belonging is not only an outcome of participation but also a prerequisite for meaningful participation and long-term inclusion.

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The author used OpenAI and Grammarly to check coherence, text flow, and grammar; all research, analysis, and substantive writing are the author's own. The author also made use of an Åbo Akademi-recommended AI tool called Buzz Transcribe to transcribe the semi-structured interviews.

TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEAS	Common European Asylum System
CESCR	Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
CSO	Community Sports Organisations
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
EU	European Union
FSI	Finnish-Swedish Sports Federation / Finlands Svenska Idrott
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
IHRL	International Human Rights Law
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and Others
MIF	Migration Institute Finland
Migri	Finnish Immigration Service
MS	Member States
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TP	Temporary Protection
TPD	Temporary Protection Directive
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Research Context

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 triggered one of the fastest and largest displacement movements in Europe since the Second World War. Millions of Ukrainians fled their homes and sought protection across Europe.¹ Unlike many previous groups of forced migrants, Most Ukrainians received residence rights through the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD). Ukrainians received immediate access to residence, work, education, and social services without undergoing the ordinary asylum procedure.² While this mechanism provided rapid protection, it also introduced a particular form of uncertainty. As the title suggests, temporary protection (TP) is, by definition, temporary. Ukrainians who benefit from TP are therefore expected to rebuild their lives in host societies while simultaneously facing uncertainty about the duration and future of their stay.³ This tension raises important questions about integration. Traditional integration research often assumes that forced migrants move through a settlement trajectory that leads towards long-term residence and membership in society.⁴ However, beneficiaries of TP find themselves in a precarious and puzzling situation. While a state encourages them to participate in local communities, the labour market, and public life, their legal status remains inherently provisional.⁵ As a result, questions emerge regarding how belonging, participation, and social connections are experienced under conditions of uncertainty.

¹ United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, *Four Years On: Key Facts and Findings* (16 February 2026) < https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2026-02/2026-02-16%20HRMMU_Four%20Years%20On_fact%20sheet.pdf > accessed 27 June 2026.

² Throughout this thesis, "forced migrants" is used as an umbrella term for people compelled to leave their homes due to conflict, persecution, or other forms of coercion. Public and political discussions often use terms such as "refugee", "asylum seeker", and "migrant" interchangeably, which risks conceptual confusion, hides important legal and social differences, and risks misrepresenting the lived experiences of displaced people; see Olivier Bakewell, 'Research beyond the categories: the importance of policy irrelevant research into forced migration' (2008) 21(4) *Journal Refugee Studies*, 432-453. Individuals under TP are neither asylum seekers nor refugees under the Refugee Convention (RC) in the legal sense. Unless discussing broader literature on forced migration, this thesis refers to them as "Ukrainians under temporary protection" in line with Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons [2001] OJ L212/12.

³ Saara Koikkalainen and others, 'Unpacking the temporary protection of displaced people from Ukraine within the tightening migration governance in Sweden and Finland' (2025) 52(2) *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 427-446.

⁴ Blanca Garcés-Mascreñas and Rinus Penninx (eds), 'Integration processes and policies in Europe: Contexts, levels and actors' (IMISCOE Research Series, Springer Open 2016).

⁵ Koikkalainen and others (n. 3).

One area that has received increasing attention within integration research is sport, which can be divided into both physical and recreational activities. Sport is often portrayed as a low-threshold environment where newcomers can establish social contacts, develop language skills, improve health and well-being, and become involved in community life.⁶ At the same time, scholars caution against viewing sport as an automatic pathway to integration.⁷ Access to participation is shaped by structural, cultural, economic, and gendered factors that may facilitate or hinder involvement. Understanding how forced migrants or beneficiaries of TP experience sport, therefore, requires attention not only to participation itself, but also to the broader social and political contexts in which participation takes place.⁸

Much of the research that concerns sport, forced migration, and integration has been conducted in North-Western Europe, with scholarly output remaining relatively consistent over the past three decades, although it received renewed interest after the so-called “refugee crisis”.⁹ Despite this, studies focusing on Finland remain limited and often inaccessible to non-Finnish speakers.¹⁰ Therefore, a study conducted by the Migration Institute Finland (MIF) on the *inclusion of women from migrant backgrounds in sports* served as the foundation for this Master’s thesis.¹¹ Additionally, informal discussions with the researchers helped to identify emerging needs, barriers, and potential directions for further research. Notably, MIF highlighted a significant gap in research on sport-based integration for beneficiaries of TP, especially regarding how experiences of temporality and uncertainty shape participation. At

⁶ Tuomas Zacheus, ‘The Significance of Sport and Physical Activity During the Acculturation and Integration Process of Immigrants in Finland – The Experts’ View’ (2010a) 7(2) *European Journal for Sport and Society*, 155–166; Ramon Spaaij and others, ‘Sport, refugees, and forced migration: A critical review of the literature’ (2019) *Frontiers in sports and active living* 1, 47; Ramon Spaaij, ‘Refugee youth, belonging and community sport’ (2015) *Leisure Studies*, 34(3): 303–318, 304.

⁷ Fred Coalter, ‘Sport-for-change: Some thoughts from a sceptic’ (2015) 3(3) *Social inclusion*, 19-23; Reinard Haudenhuyse, ‘Introduction to the issue “sport for social inclusion: Questioning policy, practice and research”’ (2017) 5(2) *Social inclusion*, 85-90.

⁸ J Crawford and others, ‘A critical review of social exclusion and inclusion among immigrant and refugee women’ (2023) 2023(1) *Advances in public health*, 8889358; Sin Yi Cheung and Jenny Phillimore, ‘Gender and refugee integration: A quantitative analysis of integration and social policy outcomes’ (2017) 46(2) *Journal of Social Policy*, 211-230.

⁹ Sine Agergaard, *Rethinking sport and integration: developing a transnational perspective on migrants and descendants in sports* (London: Routledge, 2018); Enrico Michellini, *Sport, Forced Migration and the “Refugee Crisis”* (London: Routledge, 2023).

¹⁰ A substantial body of relevant research exists in Finnish but remains largely inaccessible to non-Finnish speakers; see, for example, works by Zacheus et al. (2012), Itkonen (1997), Berg and Kokkonen (2016), Junkala and Lallukka (2012), Kyllönen (2017), Lehtosaari (2010), Myrén (2003), and Karppi (2019), among others.

¹¹ Migration Institute of Finland, ‘*Mentor on the Move*’ (Research Projects). <https://siirtolaisuusinstituutti.fi/en/research/research-projects/mentor-on-the-move/> > accessed 15 March 2026; Monaliiku – Monikansallisten naisten hyvinvointi ja liikunta ry, ‘New MOTM Report on Literature Review & Questionnaires Published’ (11 November 2025) < <https://www.monaliiku.fi/mentoronthemove/news/new-motm-report-literature-review-q/> > accessed 2 June 2026.

the same time, many Finnish sources tend to conceptualize sport primarily as physical activity, often overlooking its inherent social dimension, which is present in both structured and recreational forms of participation.¹² This omission is particularly significant in light of recent findings from a survey conducted by the Finnish Ministry of the Interior. The survey indicates that many Ukrainians under temporary protection are considering long-term settlement in Finland, with only a very small proportion planning to return to Ukraine in the near future. For many, Finland is therefore not a temporary transit location but a potential destination. The findings further suggest that experiences of uncertainty and temporality, reported more strongly among women, shape decisions about long-term integration, while active participation in society, including education, employment, and organised activities, increases the likelihood of remaining in Finland.¹³ Altogether, these insights underline the importance of understanding sport as a socially embedded and relational space, where integration is actively negotiated under conditions of temporality and uncertainty.

These dynamics make Finland a particularly compelling context in which to examine the relationship between sport, temporality, and integration. On the one hand, Finland is characterised by high levels of sport participation, strong civil society organisations (CSOs), and a policy framework that emphasises inclusion and participation.¹⁴ On the other hand, recent years have been increasingly more restrictive in terms of migration and asylum policies, alongside growing political debates concerning migration, belonging, and welfare state sustainability.¹⁵ Consequently, newcomers are faced with a society that simultaneously encourages participation while placing increasing emphasis on control, responsibility, and conditional belonging. By late 2025, approximately 85,000 people had applied for TP in Finland. Many of whom applied under the TP mechanism rather than the standard asylum procedure. The majority of whom are women and children.¹⁶ For Ukrainian women under temporary protection, these developments create a unique social environment. Opportunities

¹² Only a rare few discuss both physical and recreational activities, see the work produced by scholars such as Myrén (1999) and Rönkkö (2020, 2023, 2024).

¹³ Government of Finland, 'Ukrainians in Finland who fled the war: their registration in municipalities of residence and their future plans – survey results' (Publications of the Finnish Government 2024) < [Ukrainians in Finland who fled the war: their registration in municipalities of residence and their future plans – survey results](#) > accessed 22 May 2026.

¹⁴ European Commission, Special Eurobarometer 525: Sport and Physical Activity (2022) < <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2668> > accessed 15 March 2026; European Institute for Gender Equality, *Gender Equality Index 2025: Finland Country Factsheet* (EIGE, 2025) < https://eige.europa.eu/modules/custom/eige_gei/app/content/downloads/factsheets/FI_2025_factsheet.pdf > accessed 15 March 2026.

¹⁵ Koikkalainen and others (n. 3).

¹⁶ Migri, *Statistics: International Protection Applications* (15 May 2026) < <https://statistik.migri.fi/index.html#applications/23330?l=en> > accessed 16 May 2026.

for participation exist, yet these are shaped by broader structures of temporality, uncertainty, and changing migration governance.

1.2 Aim and Research Questions

This study examines how Ukrainian women under temporary protection experience participation in physical and recreational activities and what these experiences reveal about broader processes of social inclusion, belonging, and everyday life under TP in the Turku region of Finland. Recreational activities such as music, language classes, and informal games are included alongside physical activities because forced migrants value any activity with a social dimension and typically participate in what's available rather than being selective. Ultimately, the purpose of activities is to fill time, create routine, and bring meaning to everyday life. In this sense, the function of the activity matters more than its specific form. Therefore, recreational activities often fulfil similar social and integrative functions and may provide more accessible and inclusive opportunities for forced migrants, particularly women.¹⁷ The following research questions are used to guide this thesis:

- 1) What barriers and motivations influence participation in physical and recreational activity among Ukrainian women under temporary protection?
- 2) How does liminality affect participation in physical and recreational activity among Ukrainian women under temporary protection?
- 3) In what ways does participation in physical and recreational activity contribute to experiences of social inclusion and belonging?
- 4) How do gender and other intersecting factors shape experiences of participation and integration?
- 5) How do service providers support the participation and integration of Ukrainian women through physical and recreational activities?

¹⁷ Maikel Waardenburg and others, 'Sport in liminal spaces: The meaning of sport activities for refugees living in a reception centre' (2019) 54(8) *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 938-956, 940; Mark Doidge, 'Sport and Social Justice for Refugees: Advocating for Leisure Activities as a Basic Human Need' in Stefan Lawrence, Joanne Hill, and Rasul Mowatt (eds), *Routledge Handbook of Sport, Leisure, and Social Justice* (Routledge 2024), 157-170.

1.3 Research Design and Structure of the Thesis

This dissertation adopts a socio-legal mixed-methods research design, combining a literature-based analysis with empirical data. It can, therefore, be divided into two complementary parts. The first establishes the legal, political, and theoretical framework, while the second examines the empirical experiences of Ukrainian women under temporary protection and the perspectives of service providers. It draws on both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources mainly include human rights treaties, EU legislation, Finnish law, soft-law instruments such as reports and general recommendations, and media sources, including official websites and news portals. Whereas secondary sources consist of academic literature such as journal articles, books, book chapters, and peer-reviewed research reports. Each source is chosen with a connection to forced migration, integration, gender, and the role of physical and recreational activities in the lives of forced migrants in mind. Following Spaaij's approach, this review also considers relevant published Master's theses and doctoral dissertations, given the niche nature of sports and forced migration.¹⁸

Chapters II and III provide the conceptual foundation for the study. **Chapter II** examines the legal and political framework that shapes governance of migration and integration through multi-level commitments across international, European, and national levels. The final section of this chapter, on sports, participation, and integration, serves as a bridge to **Chapter III**, which develops the theoretical framework underpinning the study. It introduces the concepts of social inclusion and exclusion, liminality, belonging, and integration, while also adopting an intersectional perspective to examine how gender, migration status, and other social positions shape participation. Together, **Chapters II and III** establish the analytical framework through which the empirical findings are interpreted.

This study combines literature-based research with empirical data collected through a questionnaire with Ukrainian women under temporary protection in the Turku region and semi-structured interviews with service providers in Southern Finland. Therefore, a detailed discussion of methodology and ethics, in relation to the empirical data, is provided in **Chapter IV**. This chapter outlines the research design and methodological approach. It explains mixed methods design, the data collection process, the method used to analyse the data, the ethical considerations associated with conducting research among forced migrants, and the limitations attached to this empirical data in more detail. To then move to **Chapter V**, which presents the

¹⁸ Spaaij and others (2019) (n. 6).

empirical findings in relation to the legal, political, and theoretical framework. It considers how participation in physical and recreational activities contributes to, or constrains, processes of participation and belonging among Ukrainian women under temporary protection in Finland. Finally, **Chapter VII** will provide a discussion and summary of the key findings of the thesis and indicate future avenues of research on the topic. The thesis concludes with the bibliography and a series of appendices containing supporting materials, including an analysis of the questionnaire data.

CHAPTER II: LEGAL AND POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 The Role of the State in Migration, Integration, and Sport

Migration, asylum, and integration policies have become increasingly politicised across Europe in recent decades. Growing polarisation over migration, the rise of far-right political rhetoric, and increasing concerns about border security and welfare-state sustainability have reshaped debates on belonging, participation, and social cohesion. In these debates, forced migrants are frequently positioned as objects of political concern, while civil society actors and human rights organisations continue to warn against the erosion of fundamental rights protections. This chapter outlines the legal and political frameworks that shape the governance of migration and integration. It highlights the multi-level nature of migration governance, in which the state operates across international, European, and national legal and political frameworks. While international and European instruments establish rights and guiding principles, their implementation depends largely on national and local contexts. In this regard, integration policies and institutional structures play a central role in shaping access to different areas of society. Sport, although often presented as a neutral or apolitical space, is likewise embedded within these governance structures and may reproduce broader patterns of inclusion and exclusion. Therefore, the final section of this chapter will create a bridge to the next chapter, situating the Finnish context within these interconnected frameworks to examine how access to participation is shaped in practice.

2.2 International Legal Framework

2.2.1 REFUGEE LAW

Prior to the twentieth century, there was no universally accepted legal definition of a “refugee.” Population movements certainly existed, but they were not governed by a coherent international legal framework. Instead, responses were ad hoc and largely dependent on state discretion. Hathaway traces how the international legal definition of “refugee” evolved between 1920 and 1950 through three phases.¹⁹ Each phase perceived a refugee reflecting the political and social conditions of its time. Firstly, the judicial phase, from 1920 to 1935, can be

¹⁹ James C. Hathaway, ‘The Evolution of Refugee Status in International Law: 1920–1950’ (1984) 33(2) *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, 348-380.

described as the collapse of empires and the rise of the nation-state, which created new categories of displaced persons. The increasing importance of borders and citizenship meant that refugees were understood as ‘a member of a group that has no freedom of international movement because its members have been effectively deprived of the formal protection of their government’.²⁰ During the social phase, from 1935 to 1939, refugeehood was reconceptualised as a broader social phenomenon, particularly in response to Nazism. Early international efforts, including the 1933 Refugee Convention, attempted to improve the legal status of refugees and introduced the principle of non-refoulement, though implementation remained limited. The state’s reluctance to accept refugees became evident. Providing protection was not only a humanitarian act but also a political signal, potentially encouraging further arrivals and placing pressure on other states to follow suit.²¹ This tension between solidarity and self-interest continues to shape refugee law. Lastly, during the individualist phase, from 1938 to 1950, refugeehood came to rest on the personal relationship between the individual and the State. Refugees were those whose political opinions, religious beliefs, racial identity, or personal circumstances placed them in incompatibility with their government.²²

The aftermath of the Second World War intensified the refugee crisis, with millions of displaced persons remaining in camps across Europe well into the 1960s. This situation highlighted the inadequacy of existing legal frameworks and created momentum for a more comprehensive and universal approach to refugee protection.²³ The result was the adoption of the 1951 Refugee Convention, which, for the first time, provided an individualised definition of a refugee and codified non-refoulement.²⁴ The Convention itself reflected the political realities of its time. It was initially limited by both temporal and geographic restrictions, focusing primarily on events occurring in Europe before 1951. Many European powers supported this Eurocentric approach, partly due to concerns about their colonial territories. Extending broader obligations risked encouraging individuals from colonies to seek asylum in Europe, thereby challenging existing imperial structures.²⁵ These limitations were later

²⁰ Hathaway (n. 19), 350.

²¹ Hathaway (n. 19), 357 and 367-368; non-refoulement holds that a refugee may not be returned to a territory in which they may face persecution, see Gunnell Stenberg, *Non-Expulsion and Non-Refoulement* (Lustus Forlag, 1989).

²² Hathaway (n. 19), 370.

²³ Liisa H. Malkki, ‘Refugees and Exile: From ‘Refugee Studies’ to the National Order of Things’ (1995) *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24, 495–523.

²⁴ Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (adopted 28 July 1951, entered into force 22 April 1954) 189 UNTS 137 (“Refugee Convention”).

²⁵ Lucy Mayblin, ‘Colonialism, Decolonisation, and the Right to be Human: Britain and the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees’ (2014) 27 *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 423-441; Malkki (n. 23), 502-504.

addressed by the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, which removed the temporal and geographic constraints and transformed the Convention into a more universal instrument.²⁶ Although the 1951 Refugee Convention does not explicitly frame integration as a core component of international protection, its relevance has grown over time. After the Second World War, displaced persons were generally expected to return home once conditions stabilised. However, in contemporary displacement contexts, return is often not possible due to protracted conflicts, ongoing human rights violations, or long-term instability in countries of origin.²⁷ This shift has made integration a central concern within refugee protection.

UNHCR Executive Committee has repeatedly emphasised this development through the use of “durable solutions”, which include local integration.²⁸ This is visible in ExCom Conclusion No. 104 (2005), which identifies local integration as one of the durable solutions and stresses the importance of access to employment, education, and social services, while ExCom Conclusion No. 93 (2002) highlights the need for host states to facilitate refugees’ participation in society.²⁹ Although this is soft law and therefore not formally codified in the Convention, it highlights how integration is essential to the protection framework. Furthermore, the socio-economic rights contained in the 1951 Convention, including access to work, education, housing, public relief, and freedom of movement, provide the legal foundation for integration. When effectively implemented in practice, these rights enable newcomers to rebuild their lives in host societies and participate more fully in social and economic life.³⁰

The 1951 Refugee Convention did not emerge in a legal vacuum, but rather reflects a gradual evolution in international law shaped by shifting tensions between humanitarian protection and state sovereignty. As Cantor argues and Hathaway, Malkki, and Mayblin show, migration is not a contemporary phenomenon, but an “ever-changing creature”. It has evolved through the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, regional agreements, and national laws, and it will continue to do so. Refugee law faces criticism and pressure for the refugee definition

²⁶ Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (adopted 31 January 1967, entered into force 4 October 1967) 606 UNTS 267 (“Refugee Protocol”); Malkki (n. 23), 501.

²⁷ UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2025* (27 June 2026) <<https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2026-06/global-trends-report-2025.pdf>> accessed 5 July 2026.

²⁸ Malkki (n. 23), 505; UNHCR (n. 27) 14.

²⁹ UNHCR Executive Committee, *Conclusion on Local Integration*, No. 104 (LVI) (2005); UNHCR Executive Committee, *Conclusion on Reception of Asylum-Seekers in the Context of Individual Asylum Systems*, No 93 (LIII) (2002).

³⁰ Refugee Convention (n. 24), arts. 17, 18, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 26; ExCom Conclusion No 104 (2005) (n. 29), para. (d).

itself and the state's willingness to host or integrate refugees, and these tensions fuel the narrative of a system that is "failing". However, one needs to recognize that refugee law is part of international law, and that international law too struggles with weak enforcement, non-binding cooperation, and political resistance.³¹ Refugee law continues to evolve, and integration has become an important part of this evolution.

2.2.2 INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

International Human Rights Law (IHRL) can be found in a variety of treaties, customary international law, declarations, resolutions, guidelines, principles, recommendations, and other instruments adopted at regional and national levels.³² The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, declared that human rights are the basic freedoms and protections every person has simply for being human. These rights apply to all, regardless of background, and are safeguarded by international law to ensure dignity, equality, and freedom.³³ While laws help enforce human rights that exist independently and cannot be taken away, only limited in specific cases, like lawful restrictions on liberty. All rights are interconnected, meaning the violation of one affects many others, often leading to fluctuations in human mobility and humanitarian issues.³⁴

Cantor observes that refugee law is no longer a self-contained field. Instead, it is becoming 'more entwined with other legal fields', especially human rights law, which raises fundamental questions about how the two bodies of law relate.³⁵ Fundamental human rights principles are crucial in the context and application of refugee protection in practice. These principles are embedded in IHRL and are essential for ensuring that forced migrants are treated with respect and fairness. Therefore, central to this framework is the principle of non-discrimination, as enshrined in both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

³¹ David James Cantor, 'The End of Refugee Law?' (2017) 9(2) *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, 203–211; Amishi Agrawal, 'The End of Refugee Law?' (UTokyo International Law Training and Research Hub, 22 February 2020, updated 20 November 2020) < <https://www.utokyointlaw.com/post/the-end-of-refugee-law> > accessed 7 May 2026. **Seminar speaker: Prof. David James Cantor**; James C. Hathaway, 'Refugees and Asylum' in Brian Opeskin, Richard Perruchoud and Jillyanne Redpath-Cross (eds), *Foundations of International Migration Law* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 177–204.

³² Alice Edwards, 'International Refugee Law' in Daniel Moeckli, Sangeeta Shah and Sandesh Sivakumaran (eds), *International Human Rights Law* (3rd edn, Oxford University Press 2018), 515–538.

³³ Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adopted 10 December 1948) UNGA Res 217 A (III) ('UDHR'), Art. 2.

³⁴ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Human Rights – A Basic Handbook for UN Staff* (1 October 2007) < <https://www.ohchr.org/en/publications/training-and-education-publications/human-rights-basic-handbook-un-staff> > accessed 7 May 2026; Edwards (n. ...).

³⁵ Cantor (n. 31), 205.

(ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Building on this, Cantor emphasises that non-discrimination is not merely an adjacent human rights principle but the core principle of refugee protection itself. As he notes, the refugee definition in Article 1A(2) is “rooted in a concept of heightened discrimination on the enumerated grounds”, a point that reveals how refugee status is fundamentally tied to protection against discriminatory harm.³⁶ These instruments require states to ensure that rights are guaranteed without distinction based on characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, social status, and other societal axes.³⁷ In the context of migration, this principle is particularly relevant, as forced migrant populations may face structural barriers that limit equal access to social and public life. In addition to civil and political rights, socio-economic rights play a crucial role in shaping opportunities for participation. The ICESCR recognises rights related to health, well-being, and participation in cultural life, which together form an essential foundation for social inclusion.³⁸

While physical and recreational activities may not be an immediate priority for individuals seeking safety, human rights frameworks nonetheless need to provide the conditions that enable participation. In this sense, human rights can be understood as a connective foundation that supports the equal enjoyment of health, well-being, and participation in cultural and social life, thereby indirectly enabling access to spaces such as sport. This is highlighted with General Comment no. 21 of the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), which provides that ‘culture, for the purpose of implementing Article 15 (1) (a), encompasses, inter alia, (...) sport and games’.³⁹ Di Marco critiques that sport’s value would be greater if it were recognised as a standalone right, given its continuous presence and significance throughout the human life course.⁴⁰ However, formal recognition of a “right to sports” currently seems out of reach, as it is regarded as an

³⁶ Cantor (n. 31), 209; Refugee Convention (n. 24), Arts. 1A(2), 3

³⁷ UDHR (n. 33), Arts. 2, 7; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (adopted 16 December 1966, entered into force 23 March 1976) UNGA Resolution 2200A (XXI) (‘ICCPR’), Arts. 2(1), 3, 26; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (adopted 16 December 1966, entered into force 3 January 1976) UNGA Resolution 2200A (XXI) (‘ICESCR’), Arts. 2(2), 3.

³⁸ ICESCR (n. 37), Arts. 12, 15

³⁹ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Right of everyone to take part in cultural life (Art 15(1)(a) of the ICESCR), General Comment No 21 (21 December 2009) UN Doc E/C.12/GC/21, paras 13, 16, 31, 36; UN General Assembly, Report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Alexandra Xanthaki: The right to participate in sports (7 August 2024) UN Doc A/79/299.

⁴⁰ Antonio Di Marco, ‘Conceptualizing the Right to Sport: Why Should Trivial Participation in Sport Be Regarded as a Human Right?’ in Vincent Boillet and others (eds), *Sports and Human Rights, Interdisciplinary Studies in Human Rights*, 10 (Springer, 2024) 313-344; Danielle Ireland-Piper and Kim Weinert, ‘Is there a ‘right’ to sport?’ (2014) 1(1) *Sports Law Governance Journal*, 1–24.

“incomplete theorized right” at both the international and European levels, meaning that people may agree on a general principle but disagree completely on how to apply it in practice. There’s furthermore a sense of anxiety that formalizing the right to sport will inevitably lead to several other proposals for human rights.⁴¹

2.3 European Legal and Policy Framework

2.3.1 EU MIGRATION AND ASYLUM GOVERNANCE

The European Union, as one of the regional systems, has put human rights protection at the core of its activities. This is expressed in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union, which stipulates that ‘the Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity, and equality between women and men prevail’.⁴² The EU's commitment to human rights (often referred to as “fundamental rights” in EU documentation) is furthermore reflected in its institutions, policies, and legal framework. EU institutions play a role in ensuring the protection and promotion of human rights within the EU itself and across its member states. Furthermore, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which has the same legal status as the EU treaties, provides a comprehensive set of rights and principles that must be respected by all EU institutions and member states.⁴³

Despite this clear protective framework, the protection of human rights within the EU continues to face criticism, particularly in relation to asylum and migration governance. The EU attempted to harmonise protection standards and asylum procedures through the CEAS, introduced in 1999. It intended to do this through a series of directives and regulations which governed asylum procedures, reception conditions, established qualifications for protection, including whether someone is considered a beneficiary of TP and the rights attached under the TP mechanism, and lastly, it allocated a responsibility-sharing mechanism for examining claims.⁴⁴ Together, these instruments formed the legal framework governing asylum across the

⁴¹ Di Marco (n. 40)

⁴² Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union [2016] OJ C 202/13, Art. 2.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ European Commission, ‘Asylum in the EU’ (Migration and Home Affairs, 10 October 2025) < [Asylum in the EU - Migration and Home Affairs - European Commission](#) > accessed 10 May 2026; European Commission,

EU. However, CEAS faced shortcomings, including uneven implementation, different reception capacities and national asylum policies across MS. These weaknesses became increasingly visible with the rise in asylum applications in 2015, often referred to as the European “refugee crisis”, which exposed tensions surrounding solidarity, border management, and responsibility-sharing.⁴⁵ At the same time, research by de Vries and González Enríquez show how far-right narratives significantly influenced migration rhetoric across Europe, pushing mainstream parties toward more restrictive positions on irregular migration and border control.⁴⁶

As a response to this, the EU adopted a set of new rules in May 2024, known as the Pact on Migration and Asylum. The Pact reforms and partly replaces existing CEAS rules, but it simultaneously reflects the EU’s increasingly restrictive direction of migration governance.⁴⁷ It introduces directly applicable regulations, creating mandatory border procedures that are accelerated when the applicant is from a country with a low recognition rate. These procedures are carried out in detention-like facilities at external borders to ensure that the applicant only remains in place for a maximum of 12 weeks. All of the above ensure that not all those who seek asylum are granted access to EU territory.⁴⁸ Despite the title, the Pact focuses mainly on the internal dimension of asylum, whereas broader migration issues remain largely absent from the text. It is currently in a two-year implementation phase until June 2026.⁴⁹

The Pact has been widely criticized. CSOs have warned of the clear violation of human rights posed by the Pact, noting the likelihood of a lowering of protection standards for forced migrants.⁵⁰ The lack of transparency in receiving implementation plans has obstructed CSOs from arguing the content, which keeps them from advocating for stronger protection

Policy Plan on Asylum: An Integrated Approach to Protection Across the EU COM (2008) 360 final (17 June 2008).

⁴⁵ Catherine de Vries, ‘Understanding Europe’s turn on migration’ (Brookings, 7 May 2024) < <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/understanding-europes-turn-on-migration/> > accessed 10 May 2026; Carmen González Enríquez, ‘The EU Pact on Migration and Asylum: Context, Challenges and Limitations’ (Elcano Royal Institute, 28 May 2024) < [The EU Pact on Migration and Asylum: context, challenges and limitations](#) > accessed 10 May 2026.

⁴⁶ The Pact will be officially adopted on 12 June 2026, approximately three weeks before the submission deadline of this Master’s thesis, therefore, any changes will not be documented, *see Ibid.*

⁴⁷ European Commission (2025) (n. 44)

⁴⁸ de Vries (n. 45); Enríquez (n. 45)

⁴⁹ European Commission (2025) (n. 44)

⁵⁰ PICUM, ‘More than 160 Civil Society Organisations call on MEPs to vote down harmful EU Migration Pact’ (PICUM Blog, 13 February 2024) < <https://picum.org/blog/81-civil-society-organisations-call-on-meps-to-vote-down-harmful-eu-migration-pact/> > accessed 10 May 2026.

measures.⁵¹ Although the EU and its Member States remain bound by international refugee and human rights law, including the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, many observers fear that the practical outcome of the Pact may fall short of these obligations.⁵²

Important to distinguish from CEAS is that the Temporary Protection Directive (2001/55/EC) operates outside the regular asylum framework. The TPD was designed as an emergency protection mechanism for situations involving a mass influx of displaced persons, allowing individuals to receive immediate TP without undergoing the ordinary asylum procedure.⁵³ Although adopted in 2001, the TPD remained unused until its activation on 4 March 2022 following Russia's military invasion of Ukraine.⁵⁴ In 2025, the activation has been postponed to 4 March 2027, met by unanimous support, showcasing the EU's willingness to stand for the citizens of Ukraine.⁵⁵ The activation of the TPD marked a significant shift in the EU's response to forced displacement and introduced an additional protection category within the broader European migration framework. However, the TPD also exposes EU MS reluctance to commit to meaningful collective action in the broader refugee protection regime.⁵⁶

2.3.2 EU INTEGRATION FRAMEWORK

European integration policy has evolved over time and is shaped by historical, political, and geographical contexts.⁵⁷ During the 1990s, European states increasingly recognized that migration was not a temporary phenomenon. This assumption began to change as growing numbers of labour migrants settled permanently, migration motives became more diverse and no longer easily categorised, and North-Western Europe experienced increasing arrivals of

⁵¹ Migreurop, 'Access to the national plans for implementing the European Pact on Migration and Asylum: Inter-associative open letter to the European Commission' (31 January 2025) < <https://migreurop.org/article3343.html> > accessed 10 May 2026.

⁵² Refugee Convention (n. 24), Arts. 3, 16, 26, 31, 32, and 33; Refugee Protocol (n. 26), Art. 1.

⁵³ Directive 2001/55/EC (n. 2), art 2(a).

⁵⁴ European Commission, 'Temporary protection' (Migration and Home Affairs, 30 April 2026) < https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/asylum-eu/temporary-protection_en > accessed 10 May 2026; European Commission, *Communication from the Commission on Operational guidelines for the implementation of Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, and having the effect of introducing temporary protection* [2022] OJ C 126 I/1.

⁵⁵ Council of the European Union, 'EU member states agree to extend temporary protection for refugees from Ukraine' (13 June 2025) < <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2025/06/13/eu-member-states-agree-to-extend-temporary-protection-for-refugees-from-ukraine/> > accessed 17 May 2026.

⁵⁶ Simon Fink and Md Abdul Kader, 'Making EU refugee policy in 2001, applying it in 2022: Directive 2001/55/EC and its use in 2022' (2023) 1(1) Contemporary European Politics, 1-15

⁵⁷ Martin Hofmann and Lamiya Rzayeva-Ahmadli, 'Migrant Integration' in International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) (ed), *Migration Textbook* (2024), 325-358.

forced migrants. These developments opened up new debates on integration and social cohesion. In response, the EU recognized the need to facilitate integration and create integration policies.⁵⁸ In the first steps towards a coordinated approach, with the Tampere Programme (1999-2004), the EU assumed that if immigrants had equal rights and anti-discrimination protections, integration would happen naturally. However, this was deemed more difficult, and the EU came to understand that integration requires active intervention.⁵⁹

In 2004, the EU adopted the Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy (CBPs), defining integration as ‘a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States’.⁶⁰ This understanding reflects how integration extends beyond the adaptation of migrants alone, while also willing societies and institutions to adapt. More broadly, integration can be understood as: ‘the process of settlement, interaction with the host society, and social change that follows immigration’.⁶¹ It operates across micro-, meso-, and macro-levels and is experienced differently by newcomers and host societies.

Although the EU recognises the importance of strengthening integration mechanisms, primary responsibility for integration lies with the Member States. EU institutions can support, coordinate, and complement national efforts, but they cannot harmonise integration policies or impose binding standards. This competence structure gives Member States considerable discretion to shape their own integration models, priorities, and institutional arrangements. As a result, EU-level initiatives function mainly as guidance rather than obligation, and their implementation depends heavily on national political choices.⁶² This helps explain why integration policies vary significantly across Europe and why Finland retains broad leeway in designing its integration measures, including those related to sport, participation, and social inclusion.

Building on the CBPs, the European Commission adopted the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027, which expands on the first action plan that launched in 2016. It frames integration as a long-term, multi-dimensional, multi-actor process that extends beyond labour market participation and encompasses access to education, healthcare, housing, and social

⁵⁸ Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx (n. 4); Agergaard (n. 9); Hofmann and Rzayeva-Ahmadli (n. 57).

⁵⁹ European Council, *Presidency Conclusions: Tampere European Council, 15–16 October 1999* (15-16 October 1999); Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx (n. 4), 1.

⁶⁰ Council of the European Union, *Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the European Union* (Press Release, 19 November 2004) Council Doc 14615/04, para. 9.

⁶¹ Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx (n. 4), 11.

⁶² Council of the European Union (n. 55), para. 3, 4, 8(f).

participation. These dimensions are both indicators of integration and means of further promoting it.⁶³ The Action Plan also supports the objectives of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, particularly its focus on resettlement, integration, and inclusion (“building block no. 10”).⁶⁴ A multi-dimensional understanding of integration requires recognizing the wide range of actors involved - national authorities, municipalities, CSOs, employers, educational institutions, diaspora groups, and migrant or refugee communities - and the rights and responsibilities that accompany their roles. Integration, therefore, involves maintaining cultural identities while participating in shared social life and ensuring that the host society provides equal access and opportunities for all.⁶⁵

Importantly, the Action Plan acknowledges that integration outcomes are shaped by overlapping social identities and structural inequalities. In particular, women and girls with a migration background often face gender-specific barriers that require gender-sensitive responses.⁶⁶ Scholars argue that forced migrant women's gendered experiences took a long time before being recognized within migration and integration policies, partly due to the gender-blind nature of many legal and political frameworks. Teodorescu argues that a more strategic use of existing EU instruments, such as the Action Plan and the Gender Equality Strategy (2020–2025), could help address gender-specific barriers more coherently across Member States.⁶⁷

2.4 National Framework: Finland

Upon arrival in Finland, newcomers are introduced to a legal framework that links migration, integration, reception, and inclusion through a set of interconnected statutes that shape everyday encounters with the state. The Aliens Act (301/2004) regulates entry, residence, and removal, while the Reception Act (746/2011) governs the reception system of applicants for international protection, beneficiaries of temporary protection, and victims of human

⁶³ European Commission, *Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021–2027* COM (2020) 758 final (24 November 2020).

⁶⁴ European Parliamentary Research Service, *Implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum* (Briefing, 2025) PE 767.218; Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (n. 63).

⁶⁵ Yi Cheung and Phillimore (n. 8); Hofmann and Rzaeva-Ahmadli (n. 57); Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (n. 63).

⁶⁶ Loredana Teodorescu, ‘Women on the move: Understanding the female face of migration to develop targeted policies’ (2024) 23(1) *European View*, 55-63; Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (n. 63); Yi Cheung and Phillimore (n. 8).

⁶⁷ Teodorescu (n. 67).

trafficking.⁶⁸ The Integration Act (1386/2010) outlines the responsibilities of municipalities and the state in providing integration measures, from language training to employment services, alongside the Nationality Act (359/2003), which structures access to citizenship.⁶⁹ Anti-discrimination obligations stem from the Non-Discrimination Act (1325/2014) and the Act on Equality between Women and Men (609/1986), both of which set the standard for equal treatment in public services, employment, and education.⁷⁰ In 2015, Finland introduced two additional laws, namely the Act on the Promotion of Sports and Physical Activity (390/2015) and its accompanying Decree (550/2015), to promote equality, accessibility, and reduce disparities among individuals and groups participating in sport and physical activity.⁷¹ Recent reforms to the statutes show how the Finnish migration and integration landscape is increasingly becoming tighter. This will become apparent in the next two sections.

2.4.1 FINNISH MIGRATION AND ASYLUM FRAMEWORK

According to the Aliens Act (301/2004), asylum applications are examined by the Finnish Immigration Service (Migri). Under the ordinary asylum procedure, applicants first register with the police or border authorities and are directed to a reception centre while their case is processed. Migri conducts an asylum interview, assesses evidence, and determines whether Finland is responsible for examining the claim under the Dublin Regulation. A residence permit may be granted on grounds such as refugee status, subsidiary protection, humanitarian reasons, or situations where removal is not possible. Applications may be fast-tracked when considered manifestly unfounded, for example when the applicant comes from a country deemed safe or provides clearly implausible claims. Subsequent applications are only examined if genuinely new grounds for protection are presented.⁷² Unlike asylum seekers, beneficiaries of TP do not undergo the ordinary asylum procedure conducted by Migri. Instead, they receive residence

⁶⁸ *Aliens Act* (301/2004, as amended up to 389/2023, Finland); *Act on the Reception of Persons Seeking International Protection and on the Identification of and Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings* (746/2011, Finland).

⁶⁹ *Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration* (1386/2010, as amended by 681/2023, Finland); *Nationality Act* (359/2003, Finland).

⁷⁰ *Non-Discrimination Act* (1325/2014, Finland); *Act on Equality between Women and Men* (609/1986, Finland).

⁷¹ *Act on the Promotion of Sports and Physical Activity* (390/2015, Finland); *Decree on the Promotion of Sports and Physical Activity* (550/2015, Finland).

⁷² Migri, *Information for Asylum Seekers: Adults* (September 2024) < [https://migri.fi/documents/5202425/6165225/Information+for+asylum+seekers+\(en\).pdf/9d1880f1-5bf0-4d2e-999c-d519ba88eb30/Information+for+asylum+seekers+\(en\).pdf?t=1741360455804](https://migri.fi/documents/5202425/6165225/Information+for+asylum+seekers+(en).pdf/9d1880f1-5bf0-4d2e-999c-d519ba88eb30/Information+for+asylum+seekers+(en).pdf?t=1741360455804) > accessed 16 May 2026; *Aliens Act* (301/2004) (n. 69); *Reception Act* (746/2011) (n. 69); *Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 (Dublin III)* > which remains in force until the new Asylum and Migration Management Regulation is fully implemented.

rights more quickly under the TPD, which skips interviews, evidentiary assessments, and the Dublin system.

Finland's asylum landscape has been marked by relative stability, with yearly applications typically staying between 3,000 and 4,000. However, over the past decade, two developments disrupted this pattern. In 2015, 32,477 people sought asylum, primarily young men from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Somalia. This gendered imbalance, with over 80% of applicants being male, persisted in the years that followed, even as geopolitical contexts shifted. Iraq remained the most common country of origin between 2015 and 2021 (see **Table 1**). The picture changed again with the outbreak of the war in Ukraine: data in 2022 shows that Finland received 46,641 applications from Ukrainian nationals, this time with a higher proportion of women, many of whom applied under the TP mechanism rather than the standard asylum procedure (see **Table 2**).⁷³

Table 1: Number of Asylum Applications by Country of Origin 2015-2022 (Top 5 Countries) (Migri, 2026)

2015	Iraq 20,484	Afghanistan 5,214	Somalia 1,981	Syrian Arab Republic 877	Albania 762
2016	Iraq 1,247	Afghanistan 754	Syrian Arab Republic 602	Somalia 432	Eritrea 279
2017	Iraq 1,453	Syrian Arab Republic 744	Eritrea 435	Afghanistan 420	Russian Federation 405
2018	Iraq 1,556	Russian Federation 490	Somalia 371	Turkey 293	Afghanistan 284
2019	Iraq 1,431	Somalia 483	Turkey 388	Afghanistan 364	Russian Federation 336
2020	Iraq 1,111	Somalia 465	Afghanistan 364	Russian Federation 224	Turkey 152
2021	Iraq 612	Afghanistan 403	Somalia 316	Russian Federation 207	Turkey 142
2022	Ukraine* 1,805	Russian Federation 1,172	Iraq 652	Somalia 307	Afghanistan 251

⁷³ Migri (2026) (n. 16).

*The Directive remained unused until its activation on 4 March 2022 following Russia's military invasion of Ukraine.⁷⁴ Many Ukrainians who first applied for asylum in early 2022 in Finland later changed this to TP.⁷⁵

Table 2: Number of Temporary Protection Applications by Country of Origin (Ukraine) (Migri, 2026)

2022	46,641	In terms of the female/male ratio: Exact data on the number of women and men from Ukraine under temporary protection is not available. However, between 2022 and 2025, the number of applicants has been continuously higher among women than men. This discrepancy is slowly getting smaller.
2023	18,825	
2024	12,513	
2025	11,958	
2026 (01/01/2026-15/05/2026)	2,580	

These changing migration flows also reshaped political debates surrounding asylum and migration governance in Finland. Finland joined the EU in 1995 and adhered to the Refugee Convention and the Protocol in 1968. Due to its geographical location and restricted airflow from Russia, the arrival of forced migrants remained relatively low. However, the “refugee crisis” in 2015 caused the proportion of asylum rejections to rise from 16.4% in 2015 to 50.6% in 2016.⁷⁶ During this period, the Finnish government was internally divided over how to respond to the rapidly increasing number of asylum seekers. Tensions between parties increased: the National Coalition Party (centre-right) pushed for a more open, coordinated EU response, while the Finns Party (far-right) resisted accepting more asylum seekers. At the same time, Petteri Orpo, the Minister of the Interior (2015-2016), turned Prime Minister of Finland (since 2023) shared how increased migration flows could restrict freedom of movement and that it is therefore of the essence for Finland ‘to identify those [asylum seekers] that genuinely need assistance [...] and weed out those who may not have as great a need’.⁷⁷ Based on the political intentions and aims of the parties in the government, an action plan was published in late 2015 outlining immigration and asylum policies to control immigration and facilitate

⁷⁴ European Commission (2026) (n. 54).

⁷⁵ Migri, ‘Immigration in 2022: Russia’s attack on Ukraine had wide-ranging impact on immigration to Finland’ (Press release, 30 January 2023) < <https://migri.fi/en/-/immigration-in-2022-russia-s-attack-on-ukraine-had-wide-ranging-impact-on-immigration-to-finland> > accessed 17 May 2026.

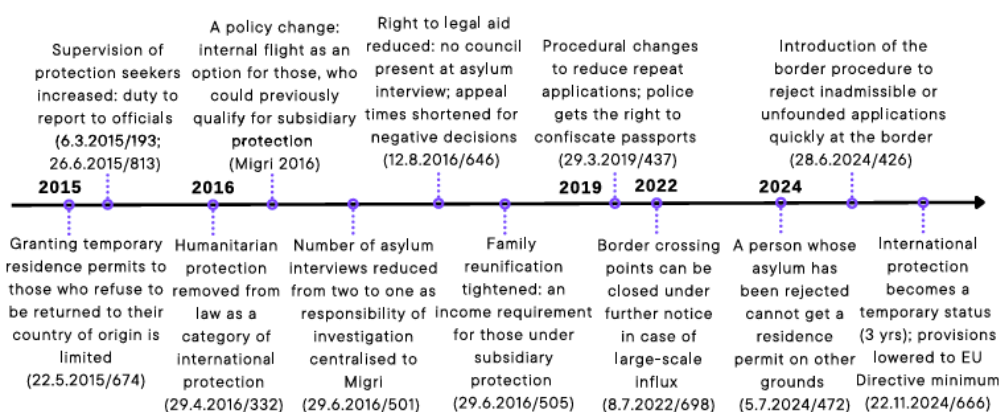
⁷⁶ Östen Wahlbeck, ‘To Share or Not to Share Responsibility? Finnish Refugee Policy and the Hesitant Support for a Common European Asylum System’ (2019) 17(3) Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies, 299-316; Migri (2026) (n. 16).

⁷⁷ YLE, ‘Interior minister rejects Soini criticism over refugee decision’ (26 August 2015) < <https://yle.fi/a/3-8255105> > accessed 17 May 2026.

smoother integration.⁷⁸ This was also around the same time that Sweden introduced border controls at the Danish border, which increased difficulty for protection seekers, mainly Iraqis and Afghans (see **Table 1**), to get to Finland. Seeking safety would from this moment forward only be possible via Russia.⁷⁹

A second disruption followed with Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. By late 2025, an approximate number of 85.000 people had applied for TP in Finland (see **Table 2**). Koikkalainen and colleagues note that 'Finland has taken in a greater proportion [of Ukrainians] relative to its population'.⁸⁰ This occurred while asylum and refugee policies in Finland got more restrictive. These include reforms to how applications and appeals are handled, stricter rules governing family reunification, reductions in the level of social benefits available to applicants, new limits on obtaining residence permits through alternative grounds for those who do not meet the criteria for international protection, and a more forceful approach to deportation and removal (see **Figure 1**).⁸¹ What sets Ukrainians apart from other protection seekers is, first, their legal route and speed of access to status. Ukrainians are allowed a residence permit and access to reception services without an individualised refugee status determination. Furthermore, based on the Finnish Welfare System, it has even chosen to extend protection to Ukrainians who fled shortly before 24 February 2022 (see **Table 1**) and to those already in Finland who could not return due to the war.⁸²

Figure 1: Finnish Legal Developments 2015-2025 (Koikkalainen and others, 2026)



*These are amendments to Ulkomaalaislaki 301/2004, except for 2022/698 which amended The Border Guard Act 578/2005. The laws can be accessed from <https://www.finlex.fi/>

⁷⁸ Government of Finland, *Asylum Policy Action Plan* (8 December 2015) < https://valtioneuvosto.fi/documents/10184/1058456/Hallituksen_turvapaikkapoliittinen_toimenpideohjelma_08122015+EN.pdf/3e555cc4-ab01-46af-9cd4-138b2ac5bad0 > accessed 17 May 2026.

⁷⁹ Wahlbeck (n. 77).

⁸⁰ Koikkalainen and others (n. 3).

⁸¹ Koikkalainen and others (n. 3), 434.

⁸² Government of Finland (2015) (n. 79); Koikkalainen and others (n. 3).

The latest legal development Finland's shift toward more restrictive migration governance. It emerged in July 2024, when Finland's President approved the Act on Temporary Measures to Combat Instrumentalised Migration⁸³ and limited the intake of asylum applications at the Eastern border under "exceptional and pressing" circumstances. This should lead to the protection of national security and keeping border operations functioning.⁸⁴ Migration scholars and CSOs, however, argue that the right-wing Finnish government is using a sense of national crisis to push through legislation that would severely restrict access to asylum at the Eastern border. Critics highlight that the proposed law would allow authorities to turn people away without processing their protection claims, in clear tension with Finland's constitutional guarantees, EU law, and the principle of non-refoulement (upheld by the 1951 Refugee Convention). The article frames this as a form of "shock doctrine", using public fear and the geopolitical context of Russia's war in Ukraine to normalise "exceptional and pressing" measures that undermine democratic scrutiny, due process, and human rights protections.⁸⁵ A further concern raised by Michael O'Flaherty, the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, is the influence that this legislation can have on other European countries facing similar political pressures. He warned that the law 'could set a destabilising precedent' at a time when the global asylum system is already under pressure and increasingly contested.⁸⁶ Although the Act is legally in force until December 2026, it has not yet been activated in practice.⁸⁷ That it remains unused despite being in force raises questions about how and when governments choose to activate exceptional measures, which will inevitably carry significant human rights implications. Furthermore, this Act does not bode well in the context of uncertainty in which beneficiaries of TP find themselves and can have a negative effect on feelings of belonging, stability, or good-settlement.

⁸³ Also known as the "Border Security Act", referred to by critics as a "pushback law".

⁸⁴ Ministry of the Interior, 'Finland enacts legislation to combat instrumentalised migration' (Press release, 16 July 2024) < <https://intermin.fi/en/-/finland-enacts-legislation-to-combat-instrumentalised-migration> > accessed 17 May 2026.

⁸⁵ Daniela Alaattinoğlu, Stephen Phillips, Dionysia Kang, Jaana Palander, Magdalena Kmak and Yulia Dergacheva, 'The right-wing shock doctrine at the Finnish-Russian border' (Global Voices, 26 March 2024) < [The right-wing shock doctrine at the Finnish-Russian border · Global Voices](#) > accessed 17 May 2026; Amnesty International, 'Finland: Emergency law on migration is a "green light for violence and pushbacks at the border"' (Press release, 10 June 2024) < <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/06/finland-emergency-law-on-migration-is-a-green-light-for-violence-and-pushbacks-at-the-border/> > accessed 17 May 2026.

⁸⁶ Michael O'Flaherty, *Letter to the Speaker of the Parliament of Finland* (Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, 11 June 2024) < <https://rm.coe.int/letter-to-the-speaker-of-the-parliament-of-finland-by-michael-o-flaherty/1680b06109> > accessed 17 May 2026.

⁸⁷ Ministry of the Interior, 'Validity of Border Security Act to be extended until 31 December 2026' (Press release, 18 June 2025) < <https://intermin.fi/en/-/validity-of-border-security-act-to-be-extended-until-31-december-2026-> > accessed 17 May 2026.

2.4.2 FINNISH INTEGRATION FRAMEWORK

One of the top priorities for the Finnish state has been and is the protection and continuation of the Nordic welfare state system. This holds that everyone should have access to certain social rights, such as healthcare, education, and income support. In return, citizens are expected to participate in the labour market and contribute to society through taxation.⁸⁸ Forced migrants are not exempt from this, and the Reception Act has been created with this universalist approach in mind. This was emphasized by the Ministry of the Interior in 2007, stating that ‘the beneficiaries of international protection and other persons are integrated in the same manner that is as uniform as possible, and the rights granted and services provided to them are mainly in line with the rights granted and services provided to other residents of the country’.⁸⁹ The underlying assumption is that successful integration enables forced migrants to participate in the labour market more quickly and eventually contribute to Finnish society and the welfare state.⁹⁰

Before the “refugee crisis”, Finland had a relatively hospitable understanding of integration. However, in the past decade, Finland has gradually tightened its immigration and border legislation, marking a shift to far-right anti-immigration politics. On 20 June 2023, Petteri Orpo formed a right-wing coalition, that will make decisions on behalf of Finnish society for the four-year governmental term.⁹¹ This far-right rhetoric reflects itself in migration and integration developments in Finland, and the idea behind the Nordic Welfare State System is slowly eroding. As Koikkalainen and colleagues state: ‘Since 2015-2016 [...] Finnish immigration policies have shifted from liberal and universal approaches to more selective and restrictive ones. Both countries have increasingly emphasised national security considerations and welfare-state sustainability over the individual rights of those seeking protection’.⁹² Kang similarly argues that integration policy has shifted from an “interactive development” involving multiple actors to an “individual process” in which integration is earned through obligations and responsibilities.⁹³

⁸⁸ Wahlbeck (n. 77); Koikkalainen and others (n. 3).

⁸⁹ Wahlbeck (n. 77)

⁹⁰ Tiina Sotkasiira and Lotta Haikkola, ‘The conflicting temporalities of immigrant integration in the Nordic welfare state of Finland’ (2025) 15(3) Nordic Social Work Research, 465-477; Koikkalainen and others (n. 3).

⁹¹ YLE, ‘Finland has a new government’ (20 June 2023) < <https://yle.fi/a/74-20037735> > accessed 17 May 2026.

⁹² Koikkalainen and others (n. 3).

⁹³ Dionysia Kang, ‘Living the Internalised Border: Lessons for Finland’s Updated Integration Act’ (TalkingRights, 21 February 2025) < <https://talkingrights.org/2025/02/21/living-the-internalised-border-finlands-integration-act/> > accessed 19 May 2026.

This shift is reflected in the Government Integration Programme (2024-2027), led by Prime Minister Petteri Orpo. The programme frames integration not as a social process, but as a policy instrument to ensure economic participation, reduce public expenditure, and maintain social order. The programme's emphasis on "responsibility for oneself [first] and for each other [second]" embodies this obligation-based logic.⁹⁴ Recent legal reforms illustrate how integration governance in Finland is becoming more restrictive. One example is the changes to the Integration Act that entered into force on 1 January 2025, requiring Finnish municipalities to provide obligatory multilingual civic orientation courses as part of forced migrant integration programmes. These courses are designed to teach Finnish values, rights, responsibilities, and practical services, and are taught in a language participants understand. It is only for those who have a residence permit, meaning asylum seekers can not obtain these integration services while their applications are pending, but beneficiaries of TP can.⁹⁵ Instead, asylum-seekers are hosted elsewhere, often in reception or transit centres, where staff or partners provide residents with daily guidance and organise educational, social, or recreational activities.⁹⁶

At the same time, the reforms place substantial pressure on municipalities. Funding for integration training has been reduced while responsibilities have expanded. Municipal officials argue that the cuts, especially to language training, translation services, and municipal compensation for refugees, will weaken immigrants' chances of finding employment and may even make municipalities less willing to accept forced migrants in the future. Municipal officials warn that reducing support now is counterproductive, since integration training is proven to improve employment and tax revenue.⁹⁷ Sotkasiira and Haikkola's ethnographic work shows how structural pressures shape everyday integration encounters across Finnish municipalities. In their fieldnotes, one integration worker explains that: 'Integration involves many steps and stages, [...] obtaining employment follows the completion of the whole sequence of integration measures [...] the end goal of integration is to transfer clients from

⁹⁴ Government of Finland, *A Strong and Committed Finland, Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's Government* (Publications of the Finnish Government 2023:60, 20 June 2023) <[Government Programme - Finnish Government](#)> Accessed 19 May 2026; Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, *Government Integration Programme 2024–2027: Government Resolution* (Publications of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment 2025:4, 14 February 2025) <<https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/server/api/core/bitstreams/c754a37d-c346-41f5-9944-36db620ab96a/content>> accessed 19 May 2026.

⁹⁵ KEHA Centre, 'The Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration guides integration' (Integration.fi, 1 January 2025) <<https://kotoutuminen.fi/en/the-act-on-the-promotion-of-immigrant-integration-guides-integration>> accessed 19 May 2026; *Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration* (1386/2010, as amended by 681/2023, Finland).

⁹⁶ Reception Act 746/2011 (n. 69).

⁹⁷ YLE, 'Municipalities criticise government plans to cut integration training funds' (9 September 2024) <<https://yle.fi/a/74-20110327>> accessed 19 May 2026.

welfare to work, which is not easy or swift'.⁹⁸ This creates tension: the Finnish government expects forced migrants to enter the labour market quickly, but the actual integration pathway remains slow and linear. Smaller municipalities are particularly affected. Forced migrants might face longer waiting times for language courses and fewer resources to guide them through the system. Additionally, the authors note that Finland's limited ability to recognise qualifications obtained before displacement further slows integration, forcing many forced migrants to restart their educational or professional paths from the beginning.⁹⁹

For forced migrants who enter Finland through the ordinary asylum procedure, access to the welfare state and long-term residence is closely tied to "successful" integration. They must complete integration measures, participate in the labour market, and demonstrate self-sufficiency before becoming eligible for permanent residency.¹⁰⁰ The situation is different for beneficiaries of TP, they may work immediately, without the waiting periods that apply in the ordinary asylum procedure. Once they obtain a municipality of residence (usually after a year), they can transition into municipal welfare and integration services.¹⁰¹ At the same time, this access does not resolve the core challenge of temporality. For Ukrainians in Finland, the residence permit under TP is repeatedly extended in line with EU decisions; however, it does not automatically open a pathway to permanent residence or citizenship. Scholars describe this as a form of temporal governance, '[...] to control people's time but also use time as an instrument by which to exercise control'.¹⁰² A survey by the Finnish Government reveals that more than 50% of the 1,302 respondents feel a sense of uncertainty in relation to the temporary nature of their stay.¹⁰³

2.5 Sports, Participation, and Integration

Most of the research around sports and the promotion of social inclusion and integration is derived from North-Western Europe and gained momentum in the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁰⁴ Sports

⁹⁸ Sotkasiira and Haikkola (n. 91).

⁹⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁰ Government of Finland (2023) (n. 95); Koikkalainen and others (n. 3).

¹⁰¹ Government of Finland (2024) (n. 13); Koikkalainen and others (n. 3).

¹⁰² Melanie Griffiths, 'Epilogue: "Claiming Time" Special Issue' (2024) 25 *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 1231-1247, 1232.

¹⁰³ Koikkalainen and others (n. 3); Government of Finland (2024) (n. 13)

¹⁰⁴ Aggergaard (n. 9); Jasmijn Rana, 'Ladies-Only! Empowerment and Comfort in Gender-Segregated Kickboxing in the Netherlands.' (2017) In *Race, Gender and Sport: The Politics of Ethnic "Other" Girls and Women*, edited by A. Ratna and S. F. Samie, 148–169; Tuomas Zacheus, 'Liikunnan ja urheilun merkitys maahanmuuttajien kotoutumiselle' (2010b) 4(2) *Kasvatus & Aika*, 203–235.

in Europe were largely based on an assimilative understanding of integration, meaning that the newcomer or so-called “subject of intervention” had to adapt to mainstream values and norms in a society through participation in mainstream clubs. The word integration has, over the past two decades, become the preferred term over assimilation, thereby slowly steering from a unidirectional to a multidimensional approach.¹⁰⁵ For example, in Finland, this shift was reflected in the first adaptation of the Integration Act (493/1999), which formalised state responsibility for immigrant integration through two-way integration.¹⁰⁶ However, as becomes clear in the previous section, the migration and integration landscape in Finland has undergone many changes that have influenced this hospitality.

Finland is one of the most physically active countries in the EU. Among the Finnish population, physical and recreational activities are considered to hold great meaning, as more than 71% participate at least once a week, compared with 38% in the EU average. Interestingly, women (65%) are more active than men (57%), especially as they grow older.¹⁰⁷ Overall, a reason for this might be a progressive gender climate in Finnish sport.¹⁰⁸ Altogether, high national participation creates opportunities for the sports-related integration of forced migrants, as activities are varied and normalised to female participation. According to Zacheus, physical and recreational activities are believed to hold great meaning in the Finnish integration process, regarding language learning, labour participation, the accumulation of social and cultural capital, and overall physical and mental well-being.¹⁰⁹ Overall, this reflects itself among Nordic countries, where participation in voluntary organisations is seen as a pathway to social life, fostering belonging, shared purpose, and community engagement, while also contributing to democratic culture through members’ unpaid voluntary work.¹¹⁰ This highlights that the outcome largely depends on a state’s environment, vision, and political influences, which shape, restrict, or promote attention to sports-related integration. For example, sports-related integration has at times been misused by politicians to uphold the idea of social unity in the face of more complex issues of social division.¹¹¹ Still, states have a legal obligation to ensure

¹⁰⁵ Agergaard (n. 9); David Ekholm, Magnus Dahlstedt and Julia Rönnbäck, ‘Problematizing the Absent Girl: Sport as a Means of Emancipation and Social Inclusion’ (2022) *Community Sport for Social Inclusion* 164–179; Kristin Walseth and Kari Fasting, ‘Sport as a Means of Integrating Minority Women’ (2004) 7(1) *Sport in Society*, 109–129.

¹⁰⁶ Act on the Promotion of Immigrants’ Integration and Reception of Asylum Seekers (493/1999, Finland), repealed by Act 1386/2010 and therefore functioning as the predecessor to the current Integration Act.

¹⁰⁷ European Commission (2022) (n. 14); Zacheus (2010a) (n. 6).

¹⁰⁸ EIGE (n. 14).

¹⁰⁹ Zacheus (2010a) (n. 6); Zacheus (2010b) (n. 105).

¹¹⁰ Kristin Walseth, ‘Sport and Belonging’ (2006) 41(3–4) *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 447–464.

¹¹¹ Agergaard (n. 9).

equal access to sports, as sports are not just recreational but also a recognized site of identity, belonging, and cultural expression.¹¹²

While sport is an integral part of the formation of social integration, it cannot, however, ensure that a person attains full membership of a society. Therefore, Agergaard distinguishes an integration *within* or *through* sports, meaning that the acquisition of integration within sports refers to actual participation, while integration through sports refers to the means that participation provides when connecting it to other societal spheres, such as education, employment, or housing.¹¹³ Sport participation can therefore be regarded as a way towards better participation in society.¹¹⁴ In this sense, Agergaard defines sports-related integration as a multidimensional, relational social process shaped by power asymmetries and unfolding across micro-, meso-, and macro-levels, rather than as the one-way adaptation of migrants into a host society.¹¹⁵

To illustrate how integration *through* sport has been framed politically, this section looks at the EU's understanding of sport policy over the past two decades. Starting in 2007, the European Commission published the White Paper on the role of sports in the daily lives of EU citizens. This marks the first time the Commission has tackled sport or physical activity in a structured, cross-sectoral way, acknowledging its economic, social, and cultural importance for Europe. With this, the document aims to integrate sport into other EU policy areas, such as health, education, employment, and social inclusion, despite the EU's lack of competence over member states in this regard.¹¹⁶ The White Paper emphasizes that: 'Sport promotes a shared sense of belonging and participation and may therefore also be an important tool for the integration of immigrants. It is in this context that making available spaces for sport and supporting sport-related activities is important for allowing immigrants and the host society to interact together in a positive way'.¹¹⁷ It highlights the socially integrative nature of sport and implies that political support from the state, in the form of funding, would help realise sports-related integration.¹¹⁸ The adoption of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 formally introduced sport into EU primary law through Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

¹¹² UN Doc A/79/299.

¹¹³ Agergaard (n. 9), 18; Walseth and Fasting (n. 106).

¹¹⁴ Rana (n. 105), 150.

¹¹⁵ Agergaard (n. 9), 25.

¹¹⁶ European Commission, *White Paper on Sport* COM(2007)391 final (11 July 2007).

¹¹⁷ *Ibid* 7.

¹¹⁸ White Paper on Sport (n. 117); Agergaard (n. 9), 36.

(TFEU), providing the EU with a supporting and coordinating role.¹¹⁹ Meanwhile, various MS worked alongside the EU to promote sports-related integration, jointly creating the first Work Plan for Sport (2011-2014), culminating in the fourth and most recent version (2024-2027). Over the years, attention has shifted from a narrow focus on elite competition toward grassroots participation, health promotion, equality, and social inclusion.

The role of sport within wider migration and integration debates received renewed interest alongside growing political concern regarding forced migration, particularly following the 2015 European “refugee crisis”. This contributed to wider recognition, both in policy and research, of sport’s potential to support the health, well-being, social participation, and integration of newcomers and allow them to adapt quickly to mainstream society.¹²⁰ The growing emphasis on sport-for-integration emerged through both top-down and bottom-up processes. At the political level, EU institutions increasingly promoted sport as a tool for inclusion and social cohesion, while at the local level sport clubs and organisations adapted programmes and structures to accommodate newly arrived refugees.¹²¹

The European Commission’s *Mapping of Good Practices* report shows that sports-related integration programmes across EU member states vary widely but succeed when supported by targeted and sustainable government funding, positive societal conditions, programme ownership, and opportunities for cultural exchange, volunteering, and skills development.¹²² At the EU level, funding schemes were provided, for example, the European Commission implemented a series of Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions titled “Sport as a Tool for Integration and Social Inclusion of Refugees“. Despite its temporary nature, it helped support local sport organisations across EU MS in developing more inclusive sport activities for refugees, for example, the WELLcome project, led by Finlands Svenska Idrott (FSI), which is one of the interviewees for this research.¹²³ Additionally, through Erasmus+ Sport, the EU’s

¹¹⁹ Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union [2012] OJ C 326/47, Arts 6 and 165.

¹²⁰ Micheline (n. 9); Spaaij and others (2019) (n. 6); Aggergaard (n. 9).

¹²¹ Spaaij and others (2019) (n. 6); Enrico Micheline (n. 9), 45.

¹²² Christine Bertram and others, *Mapping of good practices relating to social inclusion of migrants through sport* (European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2016) < [Mapping of good practices relating to social inclusion of migrants through sport - Publications Office of the EU](#) > accessed 28 May 2026.

¹²³ European Commission, *Pilot Project/Preparatory Action: Sport as a Tool for Integration and Social Inclusion of Refugees* (PPPA-SPORT-2021-INCLUSION-REFUGEES) (EU Funding & Tenders Portal, 2021) < <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/pppa-sport-2021-inclusion-refugees> > accessed 15 May 2026; Finlands Svenska Idrott, ‘WELLcome – Wellbeing and Integration Through Sports’ (Finlands Svenska Idrott, 2024) < <https://idrott.fi/wellcome-in-english/> > accessed 15 May 2026.

primary funding mechanism, it also co-funded major initiatives such as Activity, Sport and Play for the Inclusion of Refugees in Europe (ASPIRE) and Integration of Refugees through Sport (IRTS).¹²⁴

Participation in physical and recreational activities is increasingly recognized as an important issue within both public health and social policy. International organizations such as the World Health Organization¹²⁵ and the European Union¹²⁶ often frame physical activity primarily as a health intervention, emphasizing its role in improving physical fitness and mental health. However, limiting the value of sport and recreational activities to health outcomes alone overlooks the broader social dimensions associated with participation. Bergsgaard builds on this, showing that engagement in sport and recreation generates both intrinsic and extrinsic benefits. Intrinsic benefits include enhanced individual well-being, enjoyment, a sense of belonging, and personal satisfaction. At the same time, participation yields a range of extrinsic benefits, including improved physical and mental health, greater social integration, and stronger community engagement.¹²⁷ Taken together, these benefits contribute to an expanding policy agenda in which sport and recreational participation are increasingly viewed as tools for governments and international institutions to pursue broader societal objectives. Yet, while sport may create opportunities for participation, belonging, and integration, access to these benefits is not experienced equally by all individuals. Social positions, institutional structures, and broader power relations influence who participates, under what conditions, and to what extent participation translates into inclusion. Understanding these unequal experiences, therefore, requires a closer examination of the concepts of social inclusion and exclusion, intersectionality, and temporality, which form the theoretical framework of the following chapter.

¹²⁴ European Commission, *Erasmus+: Supporting sport in the European Union programme for education, training, youth and sport 2014–2020: changing lives, opening minds* (Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Publications Office of the European Union 2014) < <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/b37e0515-8846-4b5b-8a95-10b2946069a9> > accessed 15 May 2026; Council of Europe, *ASPIRE – Sport migrant integration platform* (Sport Division) < <https://www.coe.int/en/web/sport-migrant-integration-directory/aspire> > accessed 15 May 2026; International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA), ‘MOVE Beyond: Integration of Refugees Through Sport’ < <https://irts.isca.org/movebeyond> > accessed 15 May 2026.

¹²⁵ OECD/WHO, *Step Up! Tackling the Burden of Insufficient Physical Activity in Europe* (OECD publishing 2023) < https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2023/02/step-up-tackling-the-burden-of-insufficient-physical-activity-in-europe_20fba4c9/500a9601-en.pdf > accessed 15 March 2026.

¹²⁶ Council Recommendation of 26 November 2013 on promoting health-enhancing physical activity across sectors [2013] OJ C354/1.

¹²⁷ Nils Asle Bergsgard, ‘Factors that determine the level of participation in sport and exercise—an analysis of public policy for sport and exercise in European countries’ (2025) 7 *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living* 1633869.

CHAPTER III: THE ROLE OF SPORTS IN INTEGRATION

3.1 Sport as a Site of Inclusion and Exclusion

Spaaij and colleagues conducted a literature review comprising 83 publications from 1996 to 2019 examining sport in relation to health promotion, integration, social inclusion, and the barriers and solutions to participation.¹²⁸ Interestingly, out of the grand number of publications, only one study, a Master's thesis, featured Finland as a case. A study that investigates the experiences of West African males with a forced migration background requesting asylum in Finland who are experiencing liminality. In this study, sports turned out to be an important social vehicle to counter isolation, rebuild social networks, and feel a sense of belonging within a liminal and uncertain time.¹²⁹ While insightful, the study reflects two important limitations. First of all, this study works exclusively with men. Second, this scholar leaves the reader with a positive impression that sports will inevitably contribute to the integration process. A narrative that continues to dominate much of the sport-for-development discourse today.¹³⁰

However, this chapter sets out to conduct a reality check. Sport is often portrayed as a universal social good. Ideally, it resembles a space that automatically contributes to broader goals such as public health, social cohesion, and community participation. In the late 2000s and early 2010s, sports were believed to be a neutral territory for newcomers to easily help facilitate integration, so-called "miniature societies".¹³¹ However, as Coalter argues, one must remain sceptical; sport is not a neutral activity.¹³² It can reinforce existing inequalities, as its rules, organizational structures, and dominant cultures are socially constructed in ways that privilege certain groups while marginalizing others, even when presented as fair or universal.¹³³ As Spaaij stated: 'any generalised claim that sport is a mechanism for "good settlement" is contentious because sport is not necessarily inclusive, but is also used to differentiate and exclude'. In other words, sport is a site where inclusion and exclusion operate

¹²⁸ Spaaij and others (2019) (n. 6)

¹²⁹ Uyi Osazee, 'Liminal belonging: West African male asylum seekers' narratives of the asylum experience whilst in Finland' (Master's thesis, University of Helsinki, 2011) <<https://helda.helsinki.fi/server/api/core/bitstreams/88479b68-ad4f-4136-9e4e-b0312f8dd2a8/content>>.

¹³⁰ Coalter (n. 7).

¹³¹ Walseth and Fasting (n. 106); Zacheus (2010a) (n. 6); Zacheus (2010b) (n. 105).

¹³² Coalter (n. 7).

¹³³ Agnes Elling, Paul de Knop, and Annelies Knoppers, 'The social integrative meaning of sport: A critical and comparative analysis of policy and practice in the Netherlands' (2001) 18(4) *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 414-434; Agnes Elling and Inge Claringbould, 'Mechanisms of inclusion and Exclusion in the Dutch sports landscape: Who can and wants to belong?' (2005) 22(4) *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 498-515; Haudenhuyse (n. 7), 86.

simultaneously.¹³⁴ Access to sport is, therefore, shaped by structural conditions, such as gender norms, socio-economic status, ethnicity, and cultural expectations. Whether sport becomes a space of belonging or marginalisation largely depends on how sports are organized, how a welcoming and inclusive environment is created, and how potential barriers for individuals and groups within the larger group are addressed.¹³⁵ These dynamics are particularly interesting when researching individuals or groups who are at risk of social exclusion and have fewer opportunities to participate in society, for example, women with a forced migration background, whose participation is mediated by intersecting social positions and experiences of displacement.¹³⁶ The following sections outline the key concepts that guide this research. They critically examine social exclusion, social inclusion, intersectionality, feelings of temporality, and integration, and explore how these concepts intersect with sport participation and the pursuit of belonging.

3.2 Understanding Social Exclusion and Inclusion Through Sport

The concept of social inclusion is, among critics, understood as a superficial concept that overlooks the role of social structures and power hierarchies. While social exclusion highlights how institutions and policies create barriers that marginalize certain groups and the individuals within them, social inclusion is often treated simply as the desired outcome.¹³⁷ However, social inclusion needs to be understood as a part of a deeper process of analysing inequality, so that the underlying structures that create exclusion become visible. This means that inclusion policies should not focus solely on integrating individuals into existing systems, but should also continually question and challenge the very structures that generate exclusion in the first

¹³⁴ Spaaij (2015) (n. 6), 304.

¹³⁵ Alison Doherty and Tracy Taylor, 'Sport and physical recreation in the settlement of immigrant youth' (2007) 31(1) *Leisure/loisir*, 27-55; Verena Lenneis, Sine Agergaard, and Adam B. Evans, 'Women-only swimming as a space of belonging' (2022) 14(1) *Qualitative research in sport, exercise, and health*, 37-52; Eva Rönkkö, 'Mukana ulossuljettuna—etnografinen tutkimus ulkomaalaistaustaisten naisten ohjatusta ryhmäliikunnasta' (Doctoral thesis, University of Jyväskylä, 2023) < <https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-39-9247-7> > accessed 15 May 2026; Coalter (n. 7); Doidge (n. 17).

¹³⁶ Elling, de Knop, and Knoppers (n. 134); Elling and Claringbould (n. 134); Micheli (n. 9); Spaaij and others (2019) (n. 6); Waardenburg and others (n. 17).

¹³⁷ Hel Spandler, 'From social exclusion to inclusion? A critique of the inclusion imperative in mental health' (2007) 2(2) *Medical Sociology*, 3-16; Ruth Levitas and others, *The Multi-dimensional Analysis of Social Exclusion* (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2007) < http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/publications/multidimensional.aspx > accessed 15 May 2026; Haudenhuyse (n. 7); Coalter (n. 7).

place.¹³⁸ By unpacking the mechanisms that produce exclusion, it becomes easier to see the limitations of inclusion-focused approaches, particularly in the context of sport.

To understand the relationship more clearly, Levitas and colleagues define social exclusion as a multi-dimensional and dynamic process in which individuals or groups are denied access to resources, rights, and participation in key areas of social life, due to structural inequalities and power dynamics. In this project, Levitas and colleagues identify 10 dimensions of social exclusion with the Bristol Social Exclusion Matrix (B-SEM), which cover all three aspects: resources, rights, and social relations and activities to which most people have access (see **Table 3**).¹³⁹ **Table 3** shows that if a crack appears in one or more dimensions, such as employment, education, housing, and civic life, it might create implications for an individual's quality of life, well-being, and future opportunities. Levitas and colleagues have coined this “deep exclusion”.¹⁴⁰ This multidimensional view is essential for understanding why barriers to sport participation cannot be separated from broader structural inequalities.

Table 3: Bristol Social Exclusion Matrix (B-SEM) – resources, rights, social relations, and activities (Levitas et al, 2007)

Category	Domains		
1) Resources	a) Material/economic resources	b) Access to public and private services	c) Social resources
2) Participation	a) Economic participation	b) Social participation	c) Culture, education, and skills
3) Quality of life	a) Health and well-being	b) Living environment	c) Crime, harm, and criminalisation

Those affected by “deep exclusion” are often in a vulnerable position. This is especially true for certain individuals and groups that are considered to have fewer opportunities to participate in society. As Elling states, “not everyone is and/or feels equally welcome everywhere”, particularly women and ethnic minorities, as well as lower socio-economic groups, elderly people, people with physical/mental impairments, LGBTQ+ individuals, and individuals with

¹³⁸ Coalter (n. 7); Doherty and Taylor (n. 136); Haudenhuyse (n. 7); Spandler (n. 138).

¹³⁹ Haudenhuyse (n. 7); Levitas and others (n. 138).

¹⁴⁰ Levitas and others (n. 138).

a migration background.¹⁴¹ According to Cuesta and colleagues, this unwelcomeness fluctuates as factors of exclusion shift over periods of time due to demographic, political, economic, and environmental changes, either positively or negatively. Furthermore, each country context differs and gives rise to different types of intersectional exclusion. An individual's religious, ethnic, or racial identity, or the combination of these identities, can give rise to social norms that affect a sense of belonging in society. More on this in the next section.¹⁴² For refugees and displaced communities, this unwelcomeness can be reinforced by structural and socio-economic conditions. Discriminatory laws may restrict access to political rights or welfare support, while broader economic circumstances, such as long-term unemployment, can deepen marginalisation and limit opportunities for participation in different spheres of society.¹⁴³

The relevance of social exclusion and inclusion is further reinforced by the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly through its commitment to "leave no one behind".¹⁴⁴ Although the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) do not explicitly adopt the language of social exclusion, it is implicitly addressed across multiple goals, such as poverty, inequality, participation, access to services, and rights. Paragraph 37 of the agenda highlights that sport is an important enabler of sustainable development, contributing to tolerance, respect, empowerment, health, education, and social inclusion. It positions sports as a multidimensional and interconnected resource to advance broader development and inclusion objectives. Yet it does not fully unpack the mechanisms that produce it.¹⁴⁵ This gap emphasizes that, despite being time-consuming, empirical studies and qualitative evidence are crucial to understanding the underlying social inequalities and power asymmetries that shape exclusion across different domains of life, including sport.¹⁴⁶

To understand how inclusionary practices can be valuable to "vulnerable groups", it should not be viewed as merely integrating individuals into existing systems, but also as questioning and transforming those systems. Sports are not one-size-fits-all; Fernández-Gavira and colleagues

¹⁴¹ Mike Collins and Reinhard Haudenhuyse, 'Social exclusion and austerity policies in England: The role of sports in a new area of social polarisation and inequality?' (2015) 3(3) *Social Inclusion*, 5–18; Elling and Claringbould (n. 134).

¹⁴² Jose Cuesta, Borja López-Noval, and Miguel Niño-Zarazúa, 'Social exclusion concepts, measurement, and a global estimate' (2024) 19(2) *PLoS ONE* e0298085 < [Social exclusion concepts, measurement, and a global estimate | PLOS One](#) >, 4-5.

¹⁴³ *Ibid* 4-5.

¹⁴⁴ UN General Assembly, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (25 September 2015) UN Doc A/RES/70/1, 1.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁴⁶ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Report on the World Social Situation 2016: Leaving No One Behind – The Imperative of Inclusive Development* ('UN DESA' 2016), 1-186, 22.

argue that effective sport-based inclusion cannot rely on a universal template but must instead adopt a comprehensive, adaptive intervention model that is sensitive to the heterogeneity of vulnerable groups. Each “vulnerable group” portrays distinct motives, barriers, social contexts, and policy outcomes that shape their engagement in sport. Therefore, interventions must align with both the substantive dimension, which holds the aim and content of activities such as health promotion, community-building, or skill development, as well as the procedural dimension, describing how activities are implemented, including adaptation to physical and mental abilities, schedules, cultural expectations, and available resources.¹⁴⁷ Thus, ideally, the sports provider must facilitate each “vulnerable group” with intentional, context- and group-sensitive approaches that respond to the needs, wishes, and experiences. Otherwise, sport risks reproducing the very exclusions that it is often assumed to alleviate.¹⁴⁸ Therefore, the next section turns to Bailey’s framework towards inclusive sport using Maxwell and colleagues’ implementation as an example of an approach to facilitate intentional, group-sensitive activities.

3.3 Understanding Social Inclusion Through Sports for Women with a Migration Background

Social inclusion can be framed according to Richard Bailey’s definition, developed specifically in the context of sport. Bailey divides social inclusion into four dimensions, which are (1) spatial (closeness, shared spaces), (2) relational (belonging, acceptance), (3) functional (skills and competence), and (4) power (agency, locus of control).¹⁴⁹ Bailey argues that each dimension independently does not create social inclusion, but that each depends on the others to function meaningfully. The foundation is the spatial dimension, which refers to the closing of the distance between different groups of people, which can be promoted by bringing together individuals from different social, cultural, and economic backgrounds.¹⁵⁰ However, do note that sport is observed and experienced differently depending on overlapping social identities.¹⁵¹

Maxwell and colleagues use Bailey’s social inclusion framework to detail the final three dimensions, specifically targeting women with a migration background, while applying it in

¹⁴⁷ Jesús Fernández-Gavira, Ángeles Huete-García, and Luisa Velez-Colón, ‘Vulnerable groups at risk for sport and social exclusion’ (2017) 17(1) *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 312-326.

¹⁴⁸ Fernández-Gavira, Huete-García, and Velez-Colón (n. 148); Doidge (n. 17).

¹⁴⁹ Richard Bailey, ‘Evaluating the relationship between physical education, sport, and social inclusion’ (2005) 57(1) *Educational Review*, 71-90, 76-77.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid* 76-77.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid* 79.

practice.¹⁵² The relational dimension concerns the extent to which individuals experience belonging, acceptance, and recognition within a social setting. Relational inclusion for women was fostered through creating culturally sensitive and inclusive surroundings, such as gender-segregated training sessions, the use of female coaches, and the creation of socially safe environments. These practices helped women form social capital, develop trust, and experience a sense of collective identity. This strengthens feelings of comfort and legitimacy within the organisation.¹⁵³ The functional dimension concerns the development of skills, knowledge, and capacities that enable individuals to participate meaningfully and confidently. This was operationalised through access to sporting skill development, coaching and referee training, and leadership camps, which enhanced women's self-confidence, competence, and understanding of organisational processes. These opportunities supported personal development and enabled participants to extend their engagement beyond participation alone.¹⁵⁴ Finally, the power dimension addresses issues of agency, control over resources, and involvement in decision-making. Power inclusion was reflected in women increasingly taking on volunteer, coaching, and representative roles. In turn, this contributed to partnerships with external organisations and participation in broader community initiatives. Through these roles, women were able to influence organisational practices, expand social networks, and challenge dominant norms and stereotypes, demonstrating both individual and collective agency within and beyond the sporting context.¹⁵⁵ The considerations the CSO arranged and organized offer a sensitive perspective that can be valuable and applicable to women with a (forced) migration background.

3.4 Understanding Gender, Vulnerability, and Intersectionality

National and contextual factors shape migration rhetoric, and, as Cuesta and colleagues argue, this can either support or undermine individuals' experiences of social inclusion and belonging along different intersectional axes.¹⁵⁶ The concept of intersectionality was largely defined in the late 1980 and early 1990s. It challenges existing knowledge within and beyond academia,

¹⁵² Hazel Maxwell, Carmel Foley, Tracy Taylor, and Christine Burton, 'Social inclusion in community sport: A case study of Muslim women in Australia' (2013) 27(6) *Journal of Sport Management*, 467–481.

¹⁵³ Maxwell and others (n. 153); Bailey (n. 150); Agergaard (n. 9); Doidge (n. 17); Rana (n. 105); Lenneis, Agergaard and Evans (n. 136).

¹⁵⁴ Maxwell and others (n. 153); Bailey (n. 150); Rana (n. 105); Doherty and Taylor (n. 136); Lenneis, Agergaard and Evans (n. 136).

¹⁵⁵ Maxwell and others (n. 153); Bailey (n. 150); Doidge (n. 17); Rönkkö (n. 136); Rana (n. 105); Lenneis, Agergaard and Evans (n. 136).

¹⁵⁶ Cuesta, López-Noval and Niño-Zarazúa (n. 143).

critically sharing new ways of understanding social inequality. The authors Collins and Bilge urge the reader to combine inquiry and praxis, to view both as interconnected, which means that the reader studies how “race and ethnicity”, “gender”, “class”, “migration status”, “sexuality”, “disability”, “cultural expectations”, and other axes of social identity interact across individual lives, institutional arrangements, and legal doctrines, producing an inherent vulnerability and unequal protection. While also showing ways to bridge theory into practice.¹⁵⁷ Kimberlé Crenshaw conceptualised intersectionality in 1989 not as a “grand theory of everything” but rather a lens to see how power structures intersect, and a tool to help advocates, communities, and courts better address cases where traditional categories like race, gender, or class fall short. She warns, however, that the term is often diluted to “it’s complicated,” which can become an excuse for inaction rather than prompt structural change.¹⁵⁸

The interaction of gender, ethnicity, and migration status is particularly visible in sport participation. Carroll notes that ‘the combination of gender and ethnicity has a much greater effect on general participation in some groups than others [...] To be female and Bangladeshi, Pakistani, African, and Indian accentuates the difference in participation’.¹⁵⁹ When gender and ethnicity intersect with migration status, forced migrant women face what Crawford and colleagues describe as “additive features of disadvantage”.¹⁶⁰ These axes combined shape experiences across migration, settlement, and integration.

For women with a forced migration background, these inequalities manifest across several spheres of society.¹⁶¹ Structural, and personal barriers intersect to limit their opportunities for participation, inclusion, and integration. This includes restricted access to the labour market, where available work is often low-paid, low-skilled, or part-time, as well as barriers to education and healthcare, including mental health support.¹⁶² At the same time, discrimination, racism, and prevailing gender norms can further restrict access to resources and opportunities, while also limiting social networks. Family responsibilities, particularly

¹⁵⁷ Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality* (2nd edn., Polity Press, 2020); Lorena Sosa, ‘Beyond gender equality? Anti-gender campaigns and the erosion of human rights and democracy’ (2021) 39(1) *Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights*, 3-10.

¹⁵⁸ Kimberlé Crenshaw, ‘Intersectionality: More Than Two Decades Later’ (Columbia Law School News, 2017) Columbia Law School <[Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality, More than Two Decades Later | Columbia Law School](#)> accessed 9 April 2026.

¹⁵⁹ Bob Carroll, ‘Factors influencing ethnic minority groups’ participation in sport’ (1993) 16(1) *Physical Education Review*, 59-76.

¹⁶⁰ Crawford and others (n. 8).

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Yi Cheung and Phillimore (n. 8); Crawford and others (n. 8).

caregiving roles, may confine women more to the domestic sphere, reducing opportunities to engage in activities outside the home. Together, these factors contribute to economic and social exclusion, affecting access to language learning, social contacts, and broader processes of integration.¹⁶³ Bakewell argues that researchers tend to misunderstand that certain challenges, behaviours, or barriers are not exclusive to those with a forced migration background, simply because of a label, but might actually intersect with gender, ethnicity, education, length of residence, and more.¹⁶⁴

Despite these realities, much of the existing literature treats forced migrants as a relatively homogenous group, often overlooking gendered differences in access, participation, and sport outcomes.¹⁶⁵ Mohammadi highlights how experiences of war, displacement, and family separation affect the health, well-being, and social inclusion of newly arrived forced migrant women.¹⁶⁶ Trauma is created in the country of origin, reinforced during the journey, and exacerbated in the host country. Scholars argue that to ease the integration process, one must examine health, social participation, and access to services through a gender-sensitive, intersectional lens, as women face a greater risk of feeling excluded than men in host countries.¹⁶⁷

These insights are highly relevant when examining participation in sport and physical activity. Although research increasingly recognises the role of physical recreation in supporting migrant settlement and social inclusion, studies focusing specifically on refugees, asylum seekers, and beneficiaries of TP remain limited. Yet non-participation in sport is closely linked to broader patterns of social exclusion, particularly for women with forced migration backgrounds, low socio-economic status, or other vulnerabilities.¹⁶⁸ The relationship between sports and society operates across 'the macro (politics, media, economy), meso (sport organisations, reception centres, refugee sites), and micro (biographies, discrimination, conflict) levels'.¹⁶⁹ Across these

¹⁶³ Spaaij and others (2019) (n. 6); Crawford and others (n. 8); Yi Cheung and Phillimore (n. 8).

¹⁶⁴ Bakewell (n. 2); Spaaij and others (2019) (n. 6), 13.

¹⁶⁵ Spaaij and others (2019) (n. 6); Doidge (n. 17).

¹⁶⁶ Shahrzad Mohammadi, 'Social inclusion of newly arrived female asylum seekers and refugees through a community sports initiative: the case of Bike Bridge' (2019) 22(6) *Sport in Society*, 1082-1099.

¹⁶⁷ Silvia Sansonetti, *Female Refugees and Asylum Seekers: The Issue of Integration* (European Parliament, Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs 2016) PE 556.929; Konstantina Davaki, *The Traumas Endured by Refugee Women and Their Consequences for Integration and Participation in the EU Host Country* (European Parliament, Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs 2021) PE 691.875; Clemens Ley and others, 'Health, integration and agency: sport participation experiences of asylum seekers' (2021) 34(4) *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 4140-4160.

¹⁶⁸ Crawford and others (n. 8); Cuesta, López-Noval, and Niño-Zarazúa (n. 143); Mohammadi (n. 167); Walseth (n. 111).

¹⁶⁹ Michelini (n. 9), 27.

levels, sport and physical activity are not neutral spaces but structured by intersectional axes. Individuals experience inclusion or exclusion differently depending on overlapping identities.¹⁷⁰ Elling and Claringbould claim that ‘socialization, disposable income, accessibility of sporting facilities, normative and discriminating structures and cultures, and sporting [physical/mental] abilities and talent are interacting in/exclusionary factors that influence sport participation options among people with different social status positions’.¹⁷¹ As Michelini and Spaaij stress, examining the intersections that emerge from having a refugee background and other systems of inequality will yield a better understanding of sport and forced migration, as well as forced migrants’ well-being and integration in the long term.¹⁷²

Intersecting barriers can, in some cases, lead to self-exclusion, where individuals withdraw from participation not due to lack of interest but due to a desire not to belong. Hooks links this to subordination: feelings of misunderstanding, marginalisation, and a perceived lack of prospects can lead individuals to internalise dominant normative images of being inferior.¹⁷³ This internalisation can have material consequences. If equally qualified ethnic minorities or women repeatedly face limited opportunities for leadership or visibility in sports, many will eventually choose to change or abandon those ambitions. Inevitably, this means them to give in to both external and internal pressures.¹⁷⁴ For beneficiaries of TP, these intersecting inequalities may be further shaped by legal uncertainty and the temporary nature of their residence status.

At the same time, one must be cautious against treating the concept of “vulnerability” as a fixed or self-evident category. Although migration flows such as those in 2015 drew attention to the heightened risks faced by forced migrant women and girls, including exploitation, trafficking, discrimination, and violence, scholars warn against treating vulnerability as a fixed or inherent characteristic.¹⁷⁵ Standke-Erdmann argues here that EU migration governance often relies on narrow, bodily, and gendered understandings of “vulnerability” that reduce women to passive subjects and overlook how gender intersects with race, class, age, disability, and other societal axes. She further notes that although LGBTQ+ individuals are increasingly mentioned within

¹⁷⁰ Elling, De Knop and Knoppers (n. 134); Elling and Claringbould (n. 134); Bailey (n. 150).

¹⁷¹ Elling and Claringbould (n. 134), 498.

¹⁷² Michelini (n. 9); Spaaij and others (2019) (n. 6), 47.

¹⁷³ Bell Hooks, *Killing rage: Ending racism* (Henry Holt, 1995).

¹⁷⁴ Elling and Claringbould (n. 134), 500.

¹⁷⁵ Ariane Alam and others, *Migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls in Europe* (Institute of Political Studies, Strasbourg 2019); Madita Standke-Erdmann, ‘Intersectionality and refugee women: The shortcomings of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum from an intersectional perspective’ (2021) Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung European Union, 1-26; Teodorescu (n. 67).

policy frameworks, their experiences often remain insufficiently understood, while men are frequently assumed not to be vulnerable at all. If “vulnerability” is primarily framed as an inherent characteristic of particular individuals or groups, the Pact risks overlooking situational vulnerabilities created by border regimes, violence, and discrimination. Therefore, she says that yes, “vulnerability” is inherent to the human condition [...] [but] situational vulnerability can be caused or exacerbated by personal, social, political, economic, or environmental situations’.¹⁷⁶ Recognizing vulnerability as situational rather than inherent can similarly apply to how forced migrant women navigate sport, participation, and integration.

3.5 Understanding Liminality, Belonging, and Temporary Protection

The concept of liminality often finds itself in forced migration research. Early works understood liminality to be a process characterised by a transition, in which the subject gradually moves through three distinct phases: separation, transition, and incorporation.¹⁷⁷ First is separation, when individuals are detached from their previous role, identity, or community. For forced migrants, this can be symbolised by physically crossing a border or leaving home behind. While all three phases are relevant to forced migration experiences, this study attaches particular value to the second phase, the liminal or transitional phase, a period of in-betweenness where old identities no longer apply but new ones have yet to be formed.¹⁷⁸ Turner further developed the concept by emphasising waiting, uncertainty, and the loss of social status experienced during this period. Individuals in liminal spaces occupy a position between established identities and social roles, making belonging difficult to achieve.¹⁷⁹

Liminality is often experienced in spaces where individuals find themselves suspended between departure and settlement. An example of a liminal or transitional space is a reception centre, at times referred to as “total institutions”, hosting large numbers of individuals who are isolated from wider society for an indefinite period and whose daily lives are shaped by formal rules and expectations.¹⁸⁰ Liminality is, therefore, commonly associated with in-betweenness or a state of limbo. It emerges through the relationship between the individual and the spaces

¹⁷⁶ Teodorescu (n. 67); Standke-Erdmann (n. 177), 8.

¹⁷⁷ Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965).

¹⁷⁸ Waardenburg and others (n. 17), 940; van Gennep (n. 178), 11.

¹⁷⁹ Victor Witter Turner, ‘Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage’ in Louise Carus Mahdi, Steven Foster and Meredith Little, *Betwixt and Between: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation* (Open Court Publishing 1994).

¹⁸⁰ Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (New York: Double Day Anchor Books, 1961).

they inhabit, existing at ‘the boundary of two dominant spaces, which is not fully part of either’.¹⁸¹ Such conditions have significant consequences for well-being. Forced migrants have been reported to experience depression at twice the rate of the Finnish-born population and sleeplessness at one and a half times the rate.¹⁸² A full transition to a new country of residence is a long and emotionally demanding process that can take years or even decades.¹⁸³ Over time, an individual may gradually shift to the third phase, incorporation, in which they are readmitted into a social structure with a new status or identity. This signals a return to stability, a sense of self, and recognition.¹⁸⁴

Although liminality characterises many forced migration experiences, Ukrainians under temporary protection occupy a particularly distinctive form of state-produced liminality. Koikkalainen and colleagues use Bourdieu’s concept of temporal power to explain that the state can control the situation of TPD holders by controlling time. Much is unknown, rules keep shifting, timelines are unclear, extensions to the TPD are announced on a year-to-year basis, and long-term residence pathways remain uncertain. As a result, many Ukrainians face difficulties envisioning a future.¹⁸⁵ Within such circumstances, belonging becomes particularly important. Belonging can be understood as the feeling of being recognised, accepted, and connected to a social group or community, even when legal status remains uncertain. Despite the temporary nature of the protection regime, Finland has generally adopted a relatively accommodating approach towards Ukrainians. Beneficiaries of TP have access to reception services and healthcare, while those who obtain a municipality of residence gain broader access to welfare and integration services.¹⁸⁶ A recent report by the Ministry of the Interior states that out of the 1302 respondents, 51% considers settling down in Finland indefinitely.¹⁸⁷ These developments may increase opportunities for long-term settlement and belonging, despite the temporary nature of the protection status. One particular tool to smooth the integration process is through sports.

¹⁸¹ Karen Dale and Gibson Burrell, *The Spaces of Organisation and the Organisation of Space: Power, Identity and Materiality at Work* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 238.

¹⁸² Zacheus (2010a) (n. 6).

¹⁸³ Joseph Westermeyer, *Mental health for refugees and other migrants - Social and Preventive Approaches* (Springfield: Charles C Thomas Publisher, 1989); Zacheus (2010a) (n. 6).

¹⁸⁴ van Gennep (n. 179), 11; Waardenburg and others (n. 17), 940.

¹⁸⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Mediations* (California: Stanford University Press, 2000), 228; Koikkalainen and others (n. 3); Griffiths (n. 103); Council of the European Union (n. 55).

¹⁸⁶ Koikkalainen and others (n. 3).

¹⁸⁷ Government of Finland (2024) (n. 13).

Liminality often produces waiting, loss of status, and a lack of community, which shapes sport participation and the positive outcomes that it could yield regarding health and integration.¹⁸⁸ Several scholars have found that physical and recreational activities are an effective way for forced migrants to rebuild social networks and develop a sense of belonging. Physical and recreational activities help lift boredom, anxiety, and isolation by providing a social space for interaction and meaning to day-to-day life.¹⁸⁹ It can be regarded as a resource for forced migrants' personal development, as well as a restorative experience, especially for individuals who have experienced significant psychological hardship.¹⁹⁰ For some women, sports groups represent one of the few places in which feelings of safety, comfort, and belonging can be developed.¹⁹¹ Hooks further describes the availability of all-female sports groups as 'a symbolic space of familiarity, comfort, security, and emotional attachment,' which is devoid of the male gaze.¹⁹² Participation may further allow individuals to contribute to the design and organisation of activities, strengthening their connection to local communities and neighbourhoods.¹⁹³

However, participation does not automatically create belonging. Feelings of waiting, uncertainty, and temporality are known to affect forced migrants' motivation.¹⁹⁴ Zacheus highlights the value for newly arrived individuals to start a sports group on their own, as it helps diminish feelings of isolation and, in the long term, creates the confidence and skills to create a bridge to the native population.¹⁹⁵ Yet, Waardenburg and colleagues argue that liminality is experienced differently depending on intersecting identities and social positions. Axes such as gender, ethnicity, or language may hinder the acquisition of social capital and reduce opportunities for participation.¹⁹⁶ As discussed in the previous section, one possible consequence is self-exclusion resulting from experiences of subordination and marginalisation.¹⁹⁷ Examining both inclusion and exclusion critically, therefore, remains

¹⁸⁸ Ley and others (n. 168).

¹⁸⁹ Christine Steindl, Karen Winding, and Ulla Runge, 'Occupation and participation in everyday life: Women's experiences of an Austrian refugee camp' (2008) 15(1) *Journal of Occupational Science*, 36–42; Ulrike Burmann, Katrin Brandmann, Michael Mutz, and Ursula Zender, 'Ethnic identities, sense of belonging and the significance of sport: Stories from immigrant youths in Germany' (2017) 14(3) *European Journal for Sport and Society*, 186–204; Walseth (n. 111); Waardenburg and others (n. 17); Ley and others (n. 168).

¹⁹⁰ Walseth (n. 111); Waardenburg and others (n. 17); Ley and others (n. 168).

¹⁹¹ Maxwell and others (n. 153); Rönkkö (n. 136).

¹⁹² Bell Hooks, *Belonging: a culture of place* (Routledge, 2009), 213.

¹⁹³ Lenneis, Agergaard, and Evans (n. 136); Walseth (n. 111).

¹⁹⁴ Melanie Griffiths, 'Out of time: The temporal uncertainties of refused asylum seekers and immigration detainees' (2014) 40(12) *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 1991–2009; Waardenburg and others (n. 17); Ley and others (n. 168).

¹⁹⁵ Zacheus (2010a) (n. 6).

¹⁹⁶ Waardenburg and others (n. 17); Spaaij (2015) (n. 6).

¹⁹⁷ Hooks (1995) (n.174); Elling and Claringbould (n. 134).

necessary to understand how belonging comes about within liminal contexts and how sport may both challenge and reproduce existing inequalities.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ Haudenhuyse (n. 7); Levitas and others (n. 138).

CHAPTER IV: METHODOLOGY, LIMITATIONS, AND ETHICAL COMPLEXITIES¹⁹⁹

4.1 Data Collection

This dissertation adopts a mixed-methods approach to examine the role of sport and physical activity in the integration experiences of Ukrainian women under temporary protection in Finland. It combines qualitative and quantitative methods to capture the individual experiences and the organisation's perspectives. Access to participants and service providers developed gradually throughout the research process. Initial contact was established with the Migration Institute of Finland through Åbo Akademi University, which led to ongoing exchanges with researchers involved in the Mentor on the Move project. As the project evolves around the inclusion of migrant women in sport participation, these discussions provided an important entry point into the field.²⁰⁰ MIF contributed both to the identification of initial themes through existing literature and to the mapping of relevant stakeholders, including organisations, reception centres, and sports-based initiatives that worked or are working with Ukrainians under temporary protection. Data will be stored securely in accordance with Åbo Akademi guidelines. Personal data will not be archived beyond the project unless explicitly consented to.²⁰¹

4.1.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The qualitative component of the study consisted of semi-structured interviews conducted in mid-April with the following individuals/organisations. The first interview was conducted with a sustainability officer at FSI, the umbrella organisation for Swedish-speaking sports associations in Finland, whose work focuses on equality and inclusion in sport and includes collaboration with ENGSO EWS, a European non-governmental sport organisation. Between 2022 and 2024, FSI participated in the WELLcome project, a Finnish initiative that used sport to promote wellbeing, social inclusion, and integration among children and youth with a forced migration background, as well as Finnish citizens, with Ukrainians under temporary protection

¹⁹⁹ The author used OpenAI and Grammarly to check coherence, text-flow, and grammar; all research, analysis, and substantive writing are the author's own.

²⁰⁰ Migration Institute of Finland (n. 11); Monaliiku (n. 11).

²⁰¹ Office of the Data Protection Ombudsman, 'Impact Assessments' < <https://tietosuoja.fi/en/impact-assessments> > accessed 15 March 2026.

forming a significant share of participants.²⁰² The second interview took place at the reception centre in Pansio, Turku, with two employees. One works in guidance, counselling, and everyday support for clients and is involved in organising well-being activities. The other is a senior instructor responsible for advising clients on available services, including social and health services, reception allowance, and residential matters. Both interviewees described their work as helping clients navigate daily life and directing them to specialised staff when needed.²⁰³ The final interview was conducted with the project manager of Serene, a Turku-based organisation that has been running for 13 years. The organisation has long worked with refugees and others who have arrived in Finland involuntarily, initially through individual support and later through group-based activities. Serene focuses specifically on the mental health and well-being of forced migrant women and provides free counselling to residents of the Turku area.²⁰⁴

4.1.2 QUESTIONNAIRE

The quantitative component of the study consisted of a questionnaire in Ukrainian, which was developed with the assistance of a Ukrainian interpreter and distributed on 10 April.²⁰⁵ The questionnaire emerged following discussions with staff at the reception centre and the NGO Serene, both of whom had observed declining participation in leisure and recreational activities among female residents, particularly Ukrainian women. The questionnaire was, therefore, designed to explore the barriers, needs, preferences, and experiences associated with participation in physical and recreational activities and to generate insights that could support the work of these organisations. The initial research design envisaged two questionnaires: one targeting English-speaking asylum-seeking women and another targeting Ukrainian women who did not speak English. Following discussions with the reception centre, the study was narrowed to Ukrainian women under TP, as they represented the largest and most relevant target group for the research objectives.

²⁰² Interview 1 with Finland's Svenska Idrotts (Sustainability Officer) via Google Meet, 12 April 2026; Finland Svenska Idrott (n. 124).

²⁰³ Interview 2 with reception “transit” centre, Pansio, Turku (Guidance Counsellors & Activity Coordinators), face-to-face, 16 April 2026.

²⁰⁴ Interview 3 with the NGO Serene (Project Manager), face-to-face, 23 April 2026.

²⁰⁵ A Ukrainian female student under TP based in the Netherlands, currently studying European Studies, with academic and lived experience in migration and integration, who contributed to the questionnaire design and translation.

Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and respondents were free to skip any question. The questionnaire consisted of 23 questions organised into five sections: background information, past and current participation, experiences in Finland, needs and preferences, and final reflections. Although the questionnaire was initially developed in cooperation with the reception centre, many Ukrainian women under temporary protection reside outside reception facilities. Consequently, the questionnaire was also distributed through wider Ukrainian community networks in Turku. Following its distribution, several organisations from other parts of Finland expressed interest in receiving the study's findings. Distribution occurred in three stages. First, the reception centre shared the questionnaire with Ukrainian women living in the residence. Second, the NGO Serene disseminated it in two additional locations: (1) Varsinais-Suomen hyvinvointialue, the well-being services county covering South-West Finland, including Turku, established as part of the regional health and social services reform²⁰⁶ and (2) the International House Turku, an organisation offering a wide range of integration-focused counselling and guidance activities.²⁰⁷ Third, through the NGO Serene, I was connected with a project worker at the association FinFami, which provides information and free discussion support to individuals concerned about a loved one's mental health or substance use. Through e-mail correspondence, I quickly connected to her local Ukrainian community and network, which further supported the distribution over social media.²⁰⁸

The questionnaire remained open for exactly 20 days, closing on 30 April, and yielded a total of 26 responses. Due to the anonymous nature of the questionnaire, it was not possible to verify whether all respondents fully matched the intended target group. This limitation was acknowledged, but the data was nevertheless retained for analysis.

²⁰⁶ Wellbeing Services County of Southwest Finland, General Presentation 1–2024 (Varha 2024) < https://www.varha.fi/sites/default/files/2024-01/en-varha_yleisesitys_240124.pdf > accessed 10 April 2026.

²⁰⁷ City of Turku, 'Integration Services' < <https://www.turku.fi/en/integration-services/> > accessed 10 April 2026.

²⁰⁸ Varsinais-Suomen mielenterveysomaiset – FinFami ry, 'Etusivu' < <https://www.vsfinfami.fi/> > accessed 10 April 2026.

4.2 Reflexive Thematic Analysis Approach

The data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns of meaning, experiences, perceptions, and social processes.²⁰⁹ Both the questionnaire responses from 26 Ukrainian women under temporary protection and the interviews conducted with representatives from FSI, the reception “transit” centre in Pansio, and the NGO Serene complement one another. Whereas the questionnaire provides insight into perceived barriers, motivations, preferences, experiences of inclusion and exclusion, and participation patterns, the interviews provide an organisational perspective grounded in practice and help explain patterns emerging from the questionnaire data. Together, both datasets also offer strategies for increasing participation.

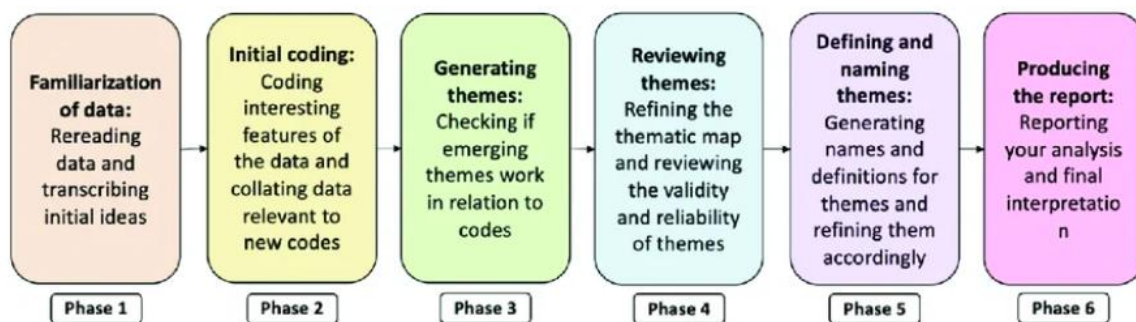
A key aspect of reflexive thematic analysis is reflexivity, meaning an awareness of my own assumptions, positionality, and theoretical commitments while remaining open to findings that may challenge my expectations. Following Braun and Clarke's six phases of analysis (see **Figure 2**),²¹⁰ I first familiarised myself with the data by reading and summarising the questionnaire responses (see **Appendices 2 and 3**), conducting and transcribing the interviews, and repeatedly reviewing the material. This process allowed me to become immersed in the dataset and identify recurring patterns. In phase two, I generated initial codes based on the datasets and frameworks, including concepts such as uncertainty, confidence, language barriers, women-only spaces, belonging, social networks, childcare responsibilities, trust, mental health, and financial barriers. These codes were then organised into broader themes during phase three. The initial themes were: (1) barriers to participation, (2) motivations for participation, (3) sport, belonging, and social inclusion, (4) gender-specific experiences and intersectionality, and (5) strategies for increasing participation. To support the analytical process, each theme was assigned a colour, and relevant questionnaire and interview material were grouped accordingly. During phase four, I reviewed the themes in relation to the entire dataset. This revealed areas of overlap and showed that some themes did not fully capture the experiences reflected in the data. In particular, experiences of uncertainty and temporality appeared consistently across respondents and emerged as a central feature shaping participation. As a result, several themes were refined and renamed during phase five. The final

²⁰⁹ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, ‘Using thematic analysis in psychology’ (2006) 3(2) *Qualitative research in psychology*, 77-101; Sirwan Khalid Ahmed and others, ‘Using thematic analysis in qualitative research’ (2025) 6 *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health* 100198.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

themes became: (1) living in limbo: participation in times of uncertainty, (2) structural and personal barriers to participation, (3) sport as a resource for well-being and stability, (4) trust, familiarity, and social safety, (5) gendered experiences of participation, and (6) creating an environment for participation. The final phase involved producing the analysis and organising the findings around these themes. To illustrate the emergence of themes, the text is accompanied by evidence in the form of quotes from interviews and questionnaire responses. Because the identities and roles of interviewees and questionnaire respondents have been thoroughly described in the methods section, the analysis refers to them directly in the text, and no footnotes are used for this purpose. For a detailed overview of the questionnaire, the reader should refer to **Appendices 2 and 3**.

Figure 2: Braun & Clarke's Reflexive Thematic Analysis – Phases (adapted from Braun and Clarke, 2006; Ahmed and others, 2025)



4.3 Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of Åbo Akademi University. Research involving forced migrants requires particular sensitivity, as participants may have experienced displacement, uncertainty, loss, or other challenging circumstances. Ethical considerations therefore shaped both the design and implementation of the research, ensuring that participation remained voluntary and that participants' anonymity, privacy, and well-being were protected throughout the study.²¹¹

As research on sports and forced migration has expanded over the past decade, so too have the ethical responsibilities placed on scholars working in this field. However, several scholars have identified how limited the discussion of ethics often remains in the study of sports and forced migration, arguing that many studies reduce ethics to brief statements about institutional approval or informed consent, even though ethical challenges in this field are both

²¹¹ Åbo Akademi University, *What is research data? – Research data management for students* (24 March 2026) < <https://libguides.abo.fi/researchdatastudents> > accessed 29 March 2026.

necessary and complex, and have long been central to debates in refugee and forced migration studies.²¹² Research ethics in sports and forced migration studies should therefore extend beyond procedural requirements and require continuous reflection on the relationships, power dynamics, and forms of knowledge produced through research.²¹³ To support more sustained ethical engagement, this section draws on the framework developed by Leinonen, Lyytinen, Tiilikainen, and Kmak, who conceptualise ethics as an ongoing process rather than a single procedural step. According to them, ethical considerations emerge throughout all stages of research and encourage researchers to critically examine issues of access, participation, representation, and responsibility.²¹⁴ The following sections reflect on the ethical considerations that emerged throughout the study, with particular attention to participant recruitment, informed consent, researcher positionality, representation, and the potential consequences of knowledge production.

4.3.1 INFORMED CONSENT, ANONYMITY, AND DATA PROTECTION

The Finnish National Board on Research Integrity decided in 2019 that those who participate in interviews must consent orally for the data to be used for research purposes. This sets out certain requirements. All participants received an information sheet and provided informed consent before participation. Participation was voluntary, and participants could withdraw at any stage without consequence.²¹⁵ For the interviewer and author of this Master's dissertation, this holds that consent can be withdrawn as easily as it is given, although data already collected before withdrawal may still be used in accordance with ethical guidelines. To be best prepared, I used a template given by Åbo Akademi for obtaining informed consent and made some personal changes (see **Appendix 1**). Additionally, a privacy notice was sent to persons interviewed or participating in questionnaires when personal data is collected. Either directly, meaning the author takes note of the name, makes a picture, or records a voice, as well as

²¹² Ramón Spaaij, Carla Luguetti and Nicola De Martini Ugolotti, 'Forced Migration and Sport: An Introduction' (2022) 25(3) *Sport in Society* 405–417; Spaaij and others (2019) (n. 6); Doidge (n. 17).

²¹³ Johanna Leinonen, Eveliina Lyytinen, Marja Tiilikainen, and Madgalena Kmak, 'Ethics of Studying Forced Migration: Critical Questions to Consider' (21 December 2020) *Liikkeessä yli rajojen*. < <https://liikkeessaylirajojen.fi/ethics-of-studying-forced-migration-critical-questions-to-consider> > accessed on 29 March 2026; Spaaij and others (2019) (n. 6); Doidge (n. 17).

²¹⁴ Leinonen and others (n. 214).

²¹⁵ Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK, *The Ethical Principles of Research with Human Participants and Ethical Review in the Human Sciences in Finland* ("TENK" 2019) < https://tenk.fi/sites/default/files/2021-01/Ethical_review_in_human_sciences_2020.pdf > accessed on 29 March 2026, 9-10.

indirect information, for example, occupation and workplace.²¹⁶ The author completed a template describing the methods of data collection and the reasoning behind using personal data for the research project.

In the privacy notice, a paragraph was added on the AI tool used to transcribe and process the data securely. The author made use of an Abo Akademi-recommended AI tool called Buzz Transcribe. The ICT team at Abo Akademi has carried out an impact assessment on Buzz, an open-source transcription tool based on OpenAI's Whisper model.²¹⁷ Buzz processes all audio files locally on the computer, which makes it suitable for research involving personal or sensitive interview data, provided that users follow all data protection guidelines.

This directly ties to the last requirement, namely, acquiring informed consent for the processing of personal data, which applies throughout the entire research design. The legal basis has been established; the author has obtained the participant's consent, but it is now key to formally document the process, as it might contain sensitive information such as ethnic origin, health-related information, political or religious views, etc. Therefore, this requirement adds a layer to the other two requirements presented by Abo Akademi.²¹⁸ At Åbo Akademi, this requirement is fulfilled through the official privacy notice template. For my research, participants received this notice together with the added statement: *'I hereby consent to my personal data being processed in accordance with the information in this privacy notice'*. Consent was then documented either through a signed paper copy or, when appropriate, through a reply email. These signed, or digital records, are stored securely alongside the research material as part of the project's data management protocol.

Consultation with Åbo Akademi's Research Ethics Board confirmed that a formal ethical review was not required because the study did not address sensitive topics and participation remained voluntary. An assessment would only be necessary if required by external partners, such as the reception centre, in order to permit data collection. In such cases, the supervisor may submit an application accompanied by the necessary documents, including a research plan, consent form, data privacy notice, and data management plan.

²¹⁶ TENK (n. 216), 14-16.

²¹⁷ Åbo Akademi University, *Regulation on the Use of Artificial Intelligence at Åbo Akademi University* (25 February 2025) (PDF, SharePoint) accessed 29 March 2026; Åbo Akademi University, *Procedure for Using AI Tools in Research, Teaching and Studies* (25 February 2025) (PDF, SharePoint) accessed 29 March 2026.

²¹⁸ TENK (n. 216), 12-14.

4.3.2 RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY AND POWER ASYMMETRIES

The process of access and recruitment raised questions concerning power relations between the researcher and participants. Research involving forced migrants often contains inherent asymmetries, as participants may occupy more vulnerable social, legal, or economic positions than the researcher. As a student working at the intersection of sports, human rights, and forced migration, my approach to this topic is informed by an academic and personal interest in issues of inclusion, gender, and social justice. At the same time, I do not share the lived experience of forced migration, nor do I have a personal background as a forced migrant or beneficiary of TP. This places me in an external position in relation to the participants and the broader context of displacement examined in this study. At the same time, I conducted this research as a newcomer to Finland. Having lived in five different countries, I have repeatedly experienced the process of adapting to unfamiliar social environments, institutions, cultural norms, and sports environments. While these experiences differ fundamentally from forced migration and should not be equated with it, they encouraged a heightened awareness of local structures and everyday practices. This awareness informed a reflexive approach to the research process and encouraged caution in interpreting participants' experiences.

Several measures were taken to minimise power imbalances throughout the study. A female interpreter, who herself has experienced displacement and later obtained refugee status in the Netherlands, assisted where necessary to reduce linguistic and cultural barriers. In addition, questionnaire distribution occurred through partner organisations rather than direct recruitment by the researcher. This approach allowed participants to engage with the study through trusted intermediaries and reduced the likelihood that the researcher would be placed in a situation that would require answering sensitive or potentially distressing questions that might harm the ethical nature of the research.

4.3.3 POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS OF THE RESEARCH

This thesis aims to contribute not only to academic and policy discussions but also to provide practical insights for service providers working in the fields of sport, integration, and migration. By examining the experiences of female Ukrainians under temporary protection, the research seeks to support the development of more accessible and meaningful opportunities for participation. Although participants may clarify or elaborate on their statements during interviews, they do not directly control the final analysis. The same applies to the questionnaire:

open-ended questions are provided, but respondents choose whether and how to answer. Nevertheless, the overarching aim of this research is to offer a platform for those involved in the sport and integration process. The intention is not to weaken participants' image but to empower them and strengthen their sense of agency. This study hopes to raise awareness around gender-specific barriers that shape sport participation and, consequently, the integration process for women under TP. At the same time, the research has acknowledged the potential risks of oversimplifying or misrepresenting complex lived experiences. These risks are mitigated through careful ethical planning in previous sections.

4.4 Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged in relation to the empirical data. First, the study is based on a relatively small sample consisting of 26 questionnaire responses and semi-structured interviews with representatives from three organisations. Establishing contacts and building relationships with relevant stakeholders is a time-consuming process, and the limited timeframe for completing this Master's thesis constrained the scope of data collection. A deadline was therefore set for questionnaire participation to ensure there was sufficient time for data analysis. Similarly, the interview component was also limited to a small number of organisations to ensure enough time for transcription and analysis. Furthermore, the sample of Ukrainian women under temporary protection is relatively small, but should be interpreted as exploratory and context-dependent rather than statistically representative or generalisable to all. Second, while the study combines questionnaire data with qualitative interviews, the interview component primarily reflects organisational perspectives rather than the lived experiences of Ukrainian women themselves. However, the questionnaire allowed participants to elaborate on their experiences through open-ended responses if interested. Due to ethical complexities and time constraints, the research was not able to conduct additional qualitative interviews with Ukrainian women under temporary protection, although this could have generated richer and more nuanced insights into their experiences of participation, belonging, and inclusion. Third, participation in the questionnaire was voluntary and relied on distribution through partner organisations and community networks. This creates the possibility of self-selection bias, as individuals who choose to participate may differ from those who do not. Respondents may have been more socially engaged, more interested in physical activity, or more connected to local support structures than the wider population of Ukrainian women under temporary protection. Fourth, the study is geographically limited to the Turku region.

Opportunities for participation, available support services, organisational networks, and local integration practices may differ across municipalities. As a result, the findings may not reflect experiences in other parts of Finland. Finally, language and translation posed methodological challenges. Although the questionnaire was translated, reviewed, and supported by a Ukrainian-speaking individual when necessary, some nuances of meaning may have been lost or altered during translation and interpretation. This is quite normal in multilingual research involving participants and researchers who do not share a common first language.

CHAPTER V: RESULTS – PARTICIPATION, BELONGING, AND INCLUSION IN PRACTICE

5.1 Lives in Limbo: Participation in Times of Uncertainty

The role of uncertainty and prolonged waiting first emerged during the interview with the reception centre. The interviewees repeatedly described how residents, including Ukrainians under temporary protection, often live in a “state of limbo,” which can affect their willingness and ability to participate in activities and make longer-term plans. According to the interviewees, the first 6 months at the reception centre are characterized as the “honeymoon phase”. During this period, residents tend to have a more positive outlook on the future and show great willingness to participate in a broad range of activities. However, as time passes, uncertainty regarding your time and stay increases. The reception centre distinguishes between two different states of waiting. While Ukrainians under temporary protection enjoy a more secure legal status than many asylum seekers and are aware of the benefits and opportunities available to them, they nevertheless remain uncertain about when, or under what circumstances, they may eventually return home. One interviewee explains, *‘this stress and anxiety start to consume daily life.’* As many Ukrainians have now surpassed the initial “honeymoon phase”, this prolonged uncertainty may increasingly affect their motivation to participate in activities.

This uncertainty appears to manifest itself in a particularly interesting way. One of the employees describes a recurring discrepancy between expressed interest and actual participation. Many residents register for activities but later withdraw without informing staff. Although respondents often react positively to proposed activities, they do not always attend. These patterns were observed across a variety of initiatives, including well-being workshops organised by NGO Serene, yoga sessions, swimming courses, women's groups, and discussion groups. While the exact reasons remain unclear, the reception centre links this phenomenon to prolonged waiting and uncertainty about the future. In other words, participation is not simply determined by the availability of activities but may also depend on whether individuals feel sufficiently settled to commit to them.

The interview with NGO Serene further deepened this understanding, but linked it more to the psychological consequences of living in a prolonged state of uncertainty. The interviewee explained: *‘For me, the state of limbo is the uncertainty of whether it is possible, or whether I*

want, to stay in this country [...] it can feel like your life is split into two pathways. That kind of situation can affect motivation, routines, and commitments, because it's harder to fully settle into something when you're not sure where you will be.' Unlike many other groups with a forced migration background, Ukrainians often occupy a unique position within this state of limbo. The interviewee described how TP allows many Ukrainians to maintain connections to both Finland and Ukraine simultaneously. They may travel back to Ukraine to visit relatives, access services, or attend medical appointments, while continuing to reside in Finland. This creates what the interviewee described as a dual-country experience, allowing Ukrainians to "ride both wagons" despite the ongoing war. At the same time, Ukrainians are often aware of the relative advantages and opportunities associated with their legal status compared to other displaced populations. Interestingly, the interviewee also observed that Ukrainians tend to participate less frequently in certain activities or, when they do participate, often remain within their own social circles rather than mixing extensively with other groups.

The questionnaire strongly supports the relationship between liminality and participation. Many respondents described their lives in Finland as "on hold," "temporary," "uncertain," or "insecure". These feelings repeatedly emerged as barriers to participation, not necessarily because women explicitly reject activities, but because uncertainty creates this lack of motivation, confidence, and the ability to think long-term. When asked to describe their current situation in Finland, 50% of respondents reported feeling as if they were in a waiting process and unable to plan, while 23.1% described their situation as uncertain. Furthermore, 65.4% of respondents stated that their situation feels temporary or uncertain "a lot." Only 7.7% described themselves as feeling settled and stable. The findings are particularly significant considering that 92.3% of respondents have already been living in Finland for more than one year, which allows one to believe that the explanation by the reception centre regarding a "honeymoon phase" might not be as far-fetched from the truth. **Respondents 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25** all directly connected uncertainty to reduced willingness or ability to participate. Sports participation should therefore not be viewed as isolated from migration status. It is deeply tied to emotional stability and the ability to imagine a future.

At the same time, the relationship between liminality and participation is not linear. While uncertainty was often described as a barrier, the responses also revealed important variations in how women respond to prolonged instability. For some respondents, uncertainty appeared paralyzing and contributed to withdrawal from physical and recreational activities.

Respondent 13 is a particularly good example of this dynamic, stating: *'I don't see much meaning in anything anymore.'* Her response suggests that prolonged instability can lead not only to disengagement in sports but also to social participation more broadly. Other women, however, appeared to use participation as a coping mechanism with uncertainty. **Respondent 18** illustrates this contrasting perspective. Although she also described her situation as insecure and uncertain, she argued that *'the more uncertain the situation is, the more important it is to engage in activities to overcome depression.'* Both experiences show that uncertainty does not automatically lead to non-participation.

Rather, the findings suggest that liminality interacts with a range of other factors that shape participation experiences, such as mental health, confidence, social support (e.g., a familiar person, a friend, or a social connection), financial stability, and previous sporting habits. All appear to influence how women respond to uncertainty and whether they ultimately participate in activities. The "state of limbo," therefore, functions less as a single barrier and more as an underlying condition that shapes many other aspects of everyday life. This is the reason for creating a standalone section dedicated to liminality. These interconnected factors will be explored in-depth in the following sections.

5.2 Structural and Personal Barriers to Participation

While uncertainty poses an important barrier to participation experiences, respondents also identified a range of other structural and personal barriers that influence their ability to engage in physical and recreational activities. Importantly, these barriers do not affect all women in the same way. Someone's previous sporting experiences appear to play a significant role in shaping how women navigate barriers after displacement.

Respondents who were physically active in Ukraine often attempted to continue participating in Finland, even when barriers existed. However, many experienced a decline in frequency or stopped participating altogether. **Respondents 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 17, 25, and 26** all reported participating regularly in Ukraine but became less active or stopped altogether in Finland. Several explanations emerge repeatedly throughout the data set, including financial costs, lack of information, language barriers, discomfort, distance, and lack of confidence. Yet there are important exceptions. **Respondents 3, 4, 14, 16, and 18** continued participating actively despite facing obstacles. These women are important to mention because they demonstrate that barriers do not affect everyone equally. **Respondent 14** is particularly striking

because she speaks neither English nor Finnish, experiences strong feelings of temporality, yet continues to participate in sports multiple times a week. Her case challenges the assumption that language barriers automatically prevent participation. Instead, it suggests that motivation, personal agency, and access to informal support networks may sometimes compensate for structural barriers.

Among all barriers identified, financial barriers emerged as the most common. According to the questionnaire, 59.1% of respondents identified finances as a barrier to participation, making it the most frequently reported obstacle. Cost appears as a barrier across almost every respondent, regardless of age, participation level, or language ability. Even women who are motivated and socially engaged still report finances as a limiting factor. These findings are further underscored by the fact that 84.6% of respondents identified free or affordable activities as the single most important factor for improving participation. Financial barriers, therefore, appear to be a foundational constraint, affecting women's ability to access activities regardless of their motivation to participate.

Beyond financial barriers, respondents also identified a range of practical barriers related to time, transport, and caregiving responsibilities. According to the questionnaire, 27.3% of respondents reported a lack of time as an obstacle, while 22.7% identified distance and transportation issues as barriers. In addition, 23.1% expressed a need for access to borrowed sports equipment. These findings are supported by observations from the reception centre, where employees repeatedly highlighted the practical challenges many women face when attempting to participate in activities.

Particular attention was given to the situation of women with caregiving responsibilities. One employee explains, many activities are difficult to attend for *'Single parents who rely on childcare to participate in activities but who face constraints due to the responsibilities of a mother.'* Limited resources mean that the reception centre is unable to provide childcare during recreational activities. Instead, activities for women and children are scheduled simultaneously. One employee explained that *'At the moment we are only able to provide childcare for the duration of appointments with authorities [e.g., Migri].'* Transportation further strengthens these difficulties, particularly when mothers must travel with younger children and organised transport is unavailable. Interestingly, caring responsibilities were not strongly present in the questionnaire data. Although 38.5% of respondents reported caregiving responsibilities, only 7.7% identified childcare availability as something that would improve participation. One

possible explanation is that many respondents care for older children who require less direct supervision. Nevertheless, caregiving responsibilities still indirectly influence participation by reducing available time, flexibility, and emotional energy. **Respondent 2** demonstrates this particularly clearly through the combination of language studies, childcare responsibilities, and adaptation processes, leaving little room for leisure activities.

Language barriers emerged as another foundational theme throughout both the interviews and questionnaire responses. During the WELLcome project, language was identified as one of the most significant challenges affecting participation and communication. The project, which ran between 2022 and 2024 and aimed to support sports participation among Ukrainians under temporary protection, relied heavily on cooperation among local sports clubs and associations, the municipality of Turku, and the reception centre in Pansio.²¹⁹ According to FSI, the reception centre played a crucial role in recruiting participants and facilitating communication with newly arrived Ukrainians. However, language differences frequently complicated these efforts. As one interviewee explained: *‘Many of the Ukrainian participants did not understand Finnish nor English, but many of the employees at the reception centre could not speak Ukrainian, so that was a huge barrier.’* Similarly, an employee at the reception centre noted that multilingual participation sometimes made group activities difficult because *‘participants spoke different languages, which made it harder to create a flowing conversation.’* Although interpreters could help overcome these barriers, limited budgets often make this impossible. Consequently, some residents participate without fully understanding instructions or conversations taking place around them.

The questionnaire findings support these observations. According to the survey, 45.5% of respondents identified language barriers as negatively affecting participation. However, the data also suggests that language barriers extend beyond practical communication difficulties. Emotional confidence appears equally important. Some respondents with limited Finnish language skills still participate actively, while others with English proficiency remain uncomfortable joining activities. This suggests that language ability alone does not determine participation. Rather, language barriers appear closely connected to confidence, fear of embarrassment, and feelings of social insecurity. **Respondent 12** captures this when stating: *‘I’m not confident in myself.’* This observation connects to another barrier identified by the reception centre staff: self-exclusion. Unlike financial or transportation barriers, self-exclusion

²¹⁹ Finlands Svenska Idrott (n. 124).

often remains largely invisible to practitioners. The interviewees described situations in which individuals avoid participating because they lack confidence in their abilities, worry about their language skills, or feel uncomfortable entering unfamiliar environments. As a result, participation may be restricted not only by external circumstances but also by internal perceptions and feelings of insecurity.

Closely connected to language and confidence is the issue of information access. Respondents primarily reported discovering activities through social media (71.4%) and friends (52.4%), indicating that participation opportunities are largely communicated through informal and digital channels. While these methods are effective for many participants, they may unintentionally exclude individuals with lower levels of digital literacy or weaker social networks. Older respondents, particularly those aged 46 and above, appeared more dependent on friends, community contacts, or reception centre staff for information. **Respondents 8 and 12** explicitly reported difficulties finding information about available activities. These findings suggest that participation opportunities may exist in practice, yet remain inaccessible to certain groups because information does not reach them effectively.

Finally, the interviews also identified barriers operating at the organisational level. According to the NGO Serene, Ukrainians are often geographically dispersed across Finland, including in rural areas, making outreach and regular participation more difficult. The interviewee explained that *‘Ukrainians are often more spread out across the country, including in more rural areas [...] This also makes it harder to reach them and can influence how regularly they participate in activities.’* Beyond geographical challenges, organisations themselves face limitations. One interviewee describes the field of recreational and wellbeing activities as highly dependent on short-term project funding. While many initiatives prove successful, limited funding often prevents their continuation. As one interviewee noted, *‘that lack of continuity makes it harder to build something stable or long-term.’* Such constraints demonstrate that barriers to participation are not only experienced by individuals but also by the organisations attempting to facilitate participation.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that participation is shaped by a complex interaction between structural and personal barriers. Financial constraints, transportation difficulties, caregiving responsibilities, language barriers, limited information access, and organisational challenges all influence participation opportunities. At the same time, these barriers do not operate uniformly. Individual confidence, motivation, previous sporting experiences, and

access to social support appear to mediate how barriers are experienced and dealt with. Participation, therefore, cannot be understood solely as a matter of access; it is shaped by the interaction between structural conditions and individual circumstances.

5.3 Sports as a Resource to Well-Being and Stability

While the previous section explored the barriers that may limit participation, the findings also demonstrate why physical and recreational activities remain important to many Ukrainian women under temporary protection. Across both the questionnaire and interviews, sports and recreational activities are consistently described as sources of well-being, routine, stress relief, and personal stability. Participation, therefore, extends beyond physical exercise and often serves broader social and psychological functions within the context of displacement.

Previous sporting experiences appear to play an important role in shaping current participation patterns. According to the questionnaire, 73.1% of respondents participated in physical or recreational activities while living in Ukraine. Among these women, 70% reported participating multiple times a week. However, participation rates declined following migration. In Finland, only 57.7% of respondents reported currently participating in physical or recreational activities, indicating a decrease of 15.4%. Overall participation frequency in Finland remains relatively low. While 34.6% of respondents reported not participating in activities at all, another 30.8% reported participating only occasionally. Only 7.7% reported participating more than four times a week. These findings support observations made by the reception centre, where one employee explained that a previous connection to sports or physical activity often makes it easier for individuals to resume participation after migration. If sports have not previously been part of a person's life, participation may feel less relevant or accessible. **Respondents 11 and 23** are particularly important in this regard, as neither expressed a strong interest in sports before migration and remained largely uninterested after arrival in Finland. Inclusion should therefore be understood as creating opportunities rather than imposing behavioural expectations. A service provider may provide a motivational push to persuade participation in sports, while keeping in mind that non-participation should not automatically be interpreted as exclusion. Participants should take part on their own merits.²²⁰

²²⁰ Coalter (n. 7); Doidge(n. 17).

The questionnaire also provides insight into the types of activities women prefer to engage in. Yoga and Pilates emerged as the most popular activities, practised by 61.5% of respondents. Walking and running followed closely at 50%, which may partly reflect their affordability and accessibility. Swimming ranked third, with 46.2% of respondents reporting participation. Group-based exercise classes, such as Zumba and aerobics, as well as gym training, were each practised by 38.5% of respondents. Biking was reported by 30.8% of respondents and appears to serve both recreational and practical purposes, although participation is naturally limited to those with access to a bicycle. Team sports, including football and volleyball, were the least common activities, with only 15.4% of respondents reporting participation. This may suggest that activities requiring previous experience, greater commitment, or integration into existing groups present a higher threshold for involvement. Several respondents also mentioned dancing as a preferred activity, while one respondent highlighted knitting as an important recreational pastime.

Although participation patterns vary considerably, one of the most consistent findings throughout the data set is the relationship between participation and mental health. Respondents repeatedly connect participation in activities to improved well-being, increased confidence, reduced loneliness, and emotional stability. The questionnaire findings reinforce this observation. Among respondents who felt that participation contributed to their sense of social inclusion, 68.2% connected participation to improved mental health, while 45.5% associated activities with increased self-confidence. Many respondents, therefore, view sports and recreational activities not merely as leisure, but as psychosocial coping mechanisms within displacement contexts. Participation often provides routine, distraction from uncertainty, emotional release, and opportunities for rebuilding confidence. The reception centre similarly observed positive effects on residents' overall well-being. As one employee explained: *'In something as simple as a board game class, people are laughing, they're having fun, and the atmosphere is very light.'* Activities were frequently described as a form of escape or temporary relief from everyday stress. This observation is particularly significant within the reception centre context, where residents often spend extended periods sharing kitchens, bathrooms, and other communal spaces with people they did not previously know. As one interviewee noted, there is sometimes an assumption that reception centres function like temporary accommodations, *'but the reality is that residents stay put for an extended period.'* Recreational activities, therefore, provide not only enjoyment but also opportunities to temporarily step away from the pressures of everyday life. Furthermore, it allows residents to make connections,

making the extended stay in a reception centre more agreeable. At the same time, the findings reveal an important paradox. Mental health frequently functions both as a motivation for participation and as a barrier to participation. Several respondents described depressive feelings, emotional exhaustion, and lack of motivation as factors that limited their ability to engage in activities. **Respondent 22** explicitly stated: *‘I feel depressed most of the time.’* This illustrates how sports participation may function as a response to emotional distress while simultaneously becoming more difficult precisely because of that distress. Participation is often most needed when individuals feel least capable of engaging.

The interview with NGO Serene provides further insight into this tension. The interviewee describes how many displaced individuals experience mental overload and a lack of psychological capacity to cope with it all. These pressures are often reinforced by structural expectations. Contemporary Finnish integration policies increasingly emphasize labour market participation, self-sufficiency, and personal responsibility.²²¹ As a result, many newcomers feel pressure to secure employment as quickly as possible. For those seeking family reunification, additional income requirements may further intensify this pressure. According to the interviewee, in these circumstances: *‘taking care of oneself, learning the [Finnish] language, or focusing on long-term well-being, can easily become secondary priorities.’* The interviewee noted that this situation may be particularly challenging for women and single mothers, who often carry additional caregiving responsibilities. Consequently, a lack of mental space may directly influence participation rates, even when opportunities are available.

Nevertheless, the interviews consistently emphasize that well-being and self-care remain the number one priority for people to participate in activities. Participants generally have a basic understanding of the connection between physical activity and mental health. The NGO Serene observed that many women recognize that maintaining their own well-being enables them to better support others, particularly family members who depend on them. This perspective appeared especially relevant among women with caregiving responsibilities. Participation therefore serves not only individual needs but also supports women’s ability to fulfil other roles and responsibilities within their families and communities.

The datasets also highlight the importance of creating opportunities that are accessible and meaningful for newcomers. Beginner-friendly activities have been effective in lowering the barriers to participation. Previous sporting experience cannot be assumed, and some individuals

²²¹ Kang (n. 94); Government of Finland (2023) (n. 95).

may not have received encouragement to engage in physical activity earlier in life. According to FSI, beginner-level activities should remain accessible for an extended period so that participants can gradually observe a change in their confidence, well-being, and physical health. One of the stronger arguments that FSI put forward is that sports reduce stress, alleviate anxiety, improve confidence, and provide meaningful leisure opportunities. Participation, therefore, becomes valuable not only because of the activity itself, but because it creates opportunities for personal growth, social interaction, and emotional recovery.

Taken together, the findings suggest that sports and recreational activities function as important resources for well-being and stability during displacement. While participation rates may decline following migration and numerous barriers remain present, women who engage in activities repeatedly describe benefits that extend far beyond physical health. Sports provide routine, confidence, emotional relief, and opportunities for self-care in circumstances often characterised by uncertainty and change. Participation, therefore, emerges not simply as a recreational choice but as a meaningful resource for navigating everyday life under TP.

5.4 Belonging through Trust, Familiarity, and Social Safety

Throughout the questionnaire and interviews, social relationships emerged as one of the more prominent factors influencing participation. While previous sections went over uncertainty and practical barriers, the findings suggest that participation is often shaped by whether women feel socially comfortable entering an activity in the first place. In this sense, belonging is not merely an outcome of participation but a prerequisite. Across all data sets, respondents and interviewees emphasize the importance of trust, familiarity, and social safety as opportunities for engagement. For example, the reception centre previously observed that positive participation experiences often encourage future participation. According to the interviewees, activities that create enjoyment, familiarity, and positive social interactions leave residents more willing to participate again. These experiences contribute not only to recreation but also to a broader sense of normality and belonging in everyday life. A familiar person, a friend, or an existing social connection often makes participation feel less intimidating and helps newcomers navigate unfamiliar environments.

The questionnaire findings strongly reinforce this observation. **Respondents 5, 9, 14, 15, 17, 22, and 26** all identified familiarity as something that would improve participation. More broadly, a total of 42.3% of respondents reported that having a familiar person present would

increase participation and engagement in activities. In many cases, women already receive information about activities through friends and acquaintances, suggesting that informal social networks function as important bridges into participation spaces. At the same time, the absence of these networks can become exclusionary. **Respondent 5** illustrated this particularly well. Although she learns about activities through a friend, the friend does not participate herself, which discourages her from attending. Awareness alone, therefore, appears insufficient. The findings suggest that women are considerably more likely to commit to activities when accompanied by someone familiar, particularly during first-time participation. Participation, in this sense, appears to be social before it is physical.

This emphasis on familiarity and trust is also evident in the interviews. FSI repeatedly highlights the importance of recruiting a trustee, intermediary, or bridge person to facilitate participation.²²² According to the interviewee, newcomers are often hesitant to join unfamiliar organisations, particularly when they are simultaneously navigating the psychological consequences of displacement and war. She explains: *‘The war might have faced them with psychological constraints; it is important to create trust early on.’* A bridge person can help lower barriers by explaining local rules, practical expectations, and unfamiliar procedures. Something as seemingly straightforward as changing rooms, sports clothing, or shower facilities may create uncertainty for newcomers who are unfamiliar with Finnish sporting environments. Reflecting on the WELLcome project, the interviewee would have wished to have committed to more direct relationship-building, arguing that *‘FSI should have gone to the reception centre and presented themselves.’*

The importance of trust-building also emerged strongly during the interview with NGO Serene. Rather than expecting individuals to participate solely because opportunities are available, Serene actively works to establish relationships before participation occurs. The interviewee explained: *‘Instead of expecting people to come to us based on motivation alone, we go to places where people already are.’* This approach involves repeated visits to partner organisations, including language schools and community groups, allowing trust to develop gradually over time. The NGO Serene functions here as what could be described as a bridge organisation, connecting individuals with participation opportunities while simultaneously creating social support structures. Participation is therefore not only understood as an act to

²²² Different organisations use different names for this role, and the exact tasks can vary slightly. However, the core purpose remains the same: to serve as a reliable link that makes participation easier and more comfortable.

engage in activities, but also as an opportunity to build trust, share experiences, and establish meaningful social connections.

Once these social connections are established, participation can contribute to broader experiences of belonging and integration. Several interviewees described sports and recreational activities as effective tools for creating social networks, whether among fellow Ukrainians or between newcomers and members of the local Finnish community. FSI has run multiple projects with an emphasis on activities that are open to both Finnish residents and individuals with a migration background. A clear example of how participation can represent a form of two-way integration. As the interviewee explained, *'expecting newcomers to adapt to unknown norms is not the way to go.'* Instead, meaningful inclusion requires opportunities for interaction, mutual learning, and relationship-building between different groups. According to FSI, the individual's experience should be valued over a sense of community, but paired with being part of the community, that is how you move towards successful integration and have a higher likelihood of long-term participation.

The experiences of **respondents 3 and 4** provide particularly strong examples of this process. Both respondents are under the age of 29, physically active, socially connected, and describe themselves as relatively stable and well-adapted in Finland. Their experiences help illustrate how participation can evolve into broader processes of inclusion and belonging. **Respondent 4** an especially interesting case, because she explicitly links sports participation to social capital, belonging, language learning, confidence, and mental well-being. Her observation that sports gradually became "fun" demonstrates that participation is not always rooted in existing passion for physical activity. She writes, *'It wasn't easy at first, as I wasn't really into sport or sporting events back in Ukraine. But as time went on, I got into it, and it became much easier and even fun.'* Rather, enjoyment and commitment may develop over time through repeated positive experiences, social reinforcement, and personal choices. Her experience suggests that integration through sport is often gradual, relational, and experiential rather than immediate.

Taken together, the findings suggest that participation is deeply embedded within social relationships. Trust, familiarity, and social safety appear to influence whether women feel comfortable engaging in activities, particularly during the initial stages of participation. At the same time, participation itself creates opportunities to develop new social networks, strengthen feelings of belonging, and foster meaningful connections with others. Belonging, therefore, operates both as a condition for participation and as one of its most significant outcomes. This

relationship becomes particularly important when considering how participation is shaped by gendered experiences and responsibilities, which will be explored in the following section.

5.5 Gendered Experiences of Participation

The findings suggest that participation cannot be understood solely through the lens of migration status. Instead, opportunities and barriers are shaped by a combination of overlapping identities and life circumstances, including gender, caregiving responsibilities, legal status, educational background, migration experiences, language abilities, and family situations. Across the interviews, participants repeatedly emphasised that experiences of inclusion and exclusion emerge through the interaction of these different factors rather than from any single characteristic alone.

This perspective was particularly present in the interview with NGO Serene. The interviewee stressed the importance of adopting an intersectional approach when examining participation among people with a migration background. She cautioned against reducing differences solely to nationality or migration status, explaining that *'differences come from a combination of factors like legal status, education, and context, rather than just nationality on its own.'* The interviewee further notes that migration experiences themselves vary considerably. Some individuals have experienced multiple episodes of displacement across generations, while others have only recently encountered forced migration. As a result, experiences of adaptation, trauma, and participation differ significantly between individuals. The findings, therefore, suggest that participation cannot be explained through nationality alone but must be understood within broader social and personal contexts.

One of the most visible gendered dimensions of participation concerns caregiving responsibilities. According to the NGO Serene, responsibilities related to childcare, family support, and maintaining transnational family relationships often take priority over personal well-being and participation in activities. These responsibilities are frequently carried by women and may be further intensified by the challenges associated with displacement and adaptation to a new society. As discussed in the previous section, caregiving responsibilities do not always appear directly in participation statistics, yet they often shape how women allocate their time, energy, and emotional resources. Participation, therefore, takes place within a broader context of competing responsibilities that may limit opportunities for self-care and leisure.

Beyond practical responsibilities, the interviews also highlight the importance of social comfort and psychological safety within participation environments. NGO Serene observed that women-only spaces often provide an atmosphere that promotes trust-building, relaxation, and confidence in ways that mixed-gender settings do not always achieve. The interviewee describes that this is both visible in material and emotional ways. Women may feel more comfortable choosing clothing that suits their preferences, whether that involves wearing a hijab or exercising in shorts. At the same time, facilitators observed that participants who initially appeared physically tense often became noticeably more relaxed over the course of women-only activities. These observations suggest that women-only environments may serve functions beyond cultural or religious accommodation. Rather than being primarily about separation, they appear to foster trust, familiarity, and psychological safety. Particularly crucial for women who navigate displacement, uncertainty, or previous traumatic experiences. Additionally, the interviewee also noted that the gender of facilitators and interpreters can influence participation experiences, affecting both comfort levels and willingness to engage in activities.

Similar observations emerged in the interview with FSI, where gender was consistently discussed alongside other social identities, including migration status, religion, language, and family expectations. The interviewee emphasised the importance of female leaders, coaches, and role models within sports settings. According to FSI, role models can come from different age groups, ethnic backgrounds, and sporting experiences, but they should all share the ability to demonstrate that participation is possible and accessible. The interviewee also highlighted how girls and women often face different expectations regarding sports participation than boys and men. This can become apparent from a young age and influence sports participation in later life. As she explained, *'girls are encouraged to study more and sport less.'* Family expectations, therefore, play an important role in shaping opportunities for participation.

To illustrate this better, the interview described a previous initiative she worked on called Girls Can, which made use of a bridge person to build trust between families and programme organisers.²²³ The bridge person, herself a Muslim woman, explained local rules, outlined safety principles, addressed practical concerns, and reassured parents about the activities. Through this process, families became more comfortable allowing girls to

²²³ Finland's Svenska Idrott, *Girls Can!* < <https://idrott.fi/girls-can> > accessed 2 July 2026.

participate. The example shows how participation is often influenced not only by individual motivation but also by family expectations, cultural norms, and the availability of trusted intermediaries.

The questionnaire findings support the importance of gender-sensitive approaches, although the results reveal a more nuanced picture than might initially be expected. Ukrainian women at first did not express a strict preference regarding participation in mixed-gender or women-only activities. Indeed, 76.9% reported having no preference regarding who they participate with. However, this finding should be interpreted carefully. Respondents who do not currently participate in activities also answered this question and may therefore have limited experience with sports environments in Finland on which to base their experiences. The preferred location of participation provides additional context. Many respondents reported feeling most comfortable participating at home (42.3%) or in private facilities (38.5%). Public institutions, such as swimming pools and outdoor gyms, were selected by 19.2% of respondents, while 11.5% reported participating in activities organised within reception centres. The high proportion of home-based participation may partially explain why many women reported no strong preference regarding participation alongside men or women, as exercising at home reduces interaction with others altogether.

When respondents were asked more specifically about inclusive solutions, however, gender-sensitive environments became considerably more important. Among respondents who answered questions related to inclusion and participation, 73.3% identified women-focused activities as valuable, while 40% highlighted the importance of female coaches or instructors. In addition, 26.7% expressed interest in activities specifically designed for women with a forced migration background. These preferences appear to be connected less to religion or conservatism than to comfort, confidence, safety, and emotional security. Several respondents specifically requested women-only spaces combined with female instructors, including **respondents 9, 10, 12, 24, and 25.**

At the same time, the findings suggest that gender alone does not fully explain participation preferences. The reception centre observed that participation rates do not necessarily increase simply because activities are organised exclusively for women. Instead, one employee suggested that participation might be higher in activities specifically designed for Ukrainian women, where participants share a common language and cultural background. This observation is particularly relevant given earlier findings regarding TP status and social positioning within reception-centre environments. The interviewees suggested that some

Ukrainians may feel hesitant to participate in mixed groups that include asylum seekers with different migration experiences and legal statuses. **Respondent 14** further reinforces this observation through her expressed interest in activities specifically organised for women from a similar ethnic background. This finding highlights that inclusion does not always begin through immediate interaction with the majority society. In some cases, participation may first occur within culturally familiar environments that provide emotional security, confidence, and a sense of shared understanding. Such environments can function as important stepping stones toward broader participation and social engagement.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that participation is shaped by the intersection of gender with a range of other social factors. Caregiving responsibilities, family expectations, migration experiences, language, legal status, and cultural background all influence how women experience participation opportunities. While women-only environments, female role models, and culturally familiar spaces can help create feelings of comfort and safety, the data suggest that gendered experiences of participation are ultimately rooted in broader processes of trust, belonging, and social inclusion.

5.6 Creating an Environment for Participation

Across all three interviews, participation was consistently described as something that develops gradually rather than through a single intervention. Rather than viewing inclusion as an immediate outcome of attending activities, interviewees emphasised the importance of creating environments that allow individuals to build confidence, familiarity, and trust over time. Participation was therefore understood as a process that unfolds on a step-by-step basis that requires active support from organisations, communities, and institutions.

One interviewee from the reception centre compared this process to “unpeeling an onion”, where each layer represents a step further into society. She explains: *‘Activities allow the clients to adapt and integrate into Finnish society. The way I view it is like this: your room, your corridor, the “house” (reception centre), the area surrounding the reception centre (Pansio, Turku), and then the municipality of Turku. This is how first impressions start, and through all the weekly activities, events, or one-time excursions organized by the reception centre, you expand this lens with which you view (Finnish) society.’* From this perspective, physical and recreational activities function as stepping stones that allow residents to become familiar with their surroundings and develop confidence in navigating new social environments.

Participation is therefore not viewed as an isolated event but as a part of a broader process of social inclusion.

Creating such opportunities requires extensive cooperation between organisations. The reception centre repeatedly emphasised that many of its activities depend on partnerships with local organisations, volunteers, sports providers, and municipal actors. These collaborations make it possible to organise activities that would otherwise exceed the centre's own resources. In some cases, support takes the form of informal arrangements, such as access to municipal facilities or cooperation with local sports initiatives. The findings therefore suggest that participation opportunities are often produced collectively rather than by any single organisation acting alone.

A recurring recommendation across the interviews concerns the importance of trust-building through intermediary figures and bridge organisations. FSI strongly advocated for the use of bridge persons who can establish trust between participants and sports providers. Such individuals help explain local rules, practical expectations, and organisational procedures while simultaneously providing a familiar point of contact. This all embodies the usage of effective communication, which should be adapted to the target audience through multilingual materials, direct contact, audio messages, interpreters, and face-to-face interactions whenever possible. Building trust early in the process was repeatedly identified as a prerequisite for long-term participation.

The WELLcome project provides a practical example of this approach. One of the strengths highlighted by FSI was the project's continuous co-design process, which relied on surveys, interviews, participant feedback, and advisory group input. As the interviewee explained: *'FSI asked for feedback, and based on that, the following activities were created.'* This feedback process not only informed future activities but also helped sports clubs become more aware of barriers that participants may encounter. She further emphasised the importance of female leaders, instructors, and role models who actively participate alongside the target group. Whether embodied in a bridge person, a coach, or a community leader, these roles were viewed as particularly valuable when implemented with a long-term vision rather than through short-term interventions.

The findings also highlight that creating opportunities is not sufficient if information about those opportunities does not reach participants. Throughout the study, communication emerged as both a facilitator and a barrier. Participation opportunities may technically exist, yet access

to information remains uneven. As discussed previously, communication often relies heavily on social networks, digital platforms, and language skills. As a result, participation processes may unintentionally privilege individuals who are already socially connected, digitally literate, or linguistically confident.

The reception centre repeatedly stressed the importance of understanding what participants actually want rather than simply increasing the number of available activities. Although questionnaires are regularly used to gather feedback, interviewees acknowledged that participation remains inconsistent despite substantial communication efforts. Staff actively send reminders, use encouraging language, and promote activities through multiple channels. However, the findings suggest that communication alone cannot overcome deeper barriers such as uncertainty, lack of confidence, or competing responsibilities. Increasing participation, therefore, requires understanding the motivations and circumstances that shape individual decision-making.

A similar participant-centred approach was described by NGO Serene. Rather than expecting individuals to seek out activities independently, Serene actively visits existing community spaces such as language schools and educational programmes. As the interviewee explained: *‘Instead of expecting people to come to us based on motivation alone, we go to places where people already are.’* These repeated visits help establish trust and create long-term relationships with partner organisations. In this way, Serene functions as a bridge organisation that connects individuals to participation opportunities while simultaneously fostering social support networks. Participation is therefore understood not merely as attendance at an activity but as a means of building relationships, trust, and shared experiences.

The practical design of activities also emerged as an important factor influencing participation. NGO Serene deliberately organises nature walks, discussion groups, workshops, excursions, and art-based activities that are language-free, child-friendly, and flexible. Flexibility is particularly important, as participation remains voluntary and individuals are free to leave whenever an activity feels emotionally or physically overwhelming. Such approaches acknowledge the diverse needs and circumstances of participants while reducing pressure to commit beyond their current capacities. These activities are made possible through extensive collaboration with municipalities, reception centres, educational institutions, and other CSOs, again highlighting the importance of partnership-based approaches.

While the interviews identified numerous strategies to increase participation, they also revealed concerns about the long-term sustainability of these efforts, particularly in the current country climate. The reception centre expressed uncertainty about the future availability of reception services and integration-related activities. Particular concern was raised regarding proposed legislative amendments connected to the implementation of the EU Migration and Asylum Pact. The proposal to reduce or eliminate certain reception-centre activities may limit opportunities for participation, language learning, and social inclusion among asylum seekers and individuals under temporary protection. As integration measures formally begin only after a residence permit has been granted, many individuals may remain in a prolonged "pre-integration limbo".²²⁴ It also discusses a possible reduction or cancellation of reception services to generate savings. However, at the moment, there does not seem to be substantial proof that reception services increase costs.²²⁵ The interviewees worry that the limited funding they receive will affect both staff and the residents, fuelling uncertainty as services that support everyday life and integration may no longer be available in the same way. These concerns are particularly important as this chapter shows that participation is closely related to stability, trust, and sustained support.

Taken together, the findings suggest that participation is most likely to occur when supportive environments are intentionally created. Trust-building, effective communication, participant involvement, flexible activity design, collaboration between organisations, and long-term institutional support all contribute to creating conditions in which participation becomes possible. Rather than viewing participation as an individual responsibility alone, the findings indicate that successful inclusion depends on the broader environments and structures that enable people to engage, connect, and belong.

²²⁴ Eduskunta Riksdagen, Hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle EU:n muuttoliike- ja turvapaikkasopimuksen muodostavien säädösten täytäntöönpanemiseksi (HE 20/2026 vp), 132-133.

²²⁵ *Ibid* 179-180.

CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Over the course of writing this research, the broad topic of sports, forced migration, and integration turned into something more complex and nuanced than initially anticipated. Sport shifted from being the object of study to a lens through which participation under TP can be understood. So rather than focusing on physical and recreational activities alone, the study came to focus on the wider environment that surrounds TP - from legal, social, to personal, and organisational experiences. Participation emerged not as a simple matter of individual choice or through the number of available activities, but as something connected to legal status, well-being, social networks, organisational support, and the broader policy environment. Sports are not just sites of leisure, but as spaces in which the lived experiences of beneficiaries of TP become visible. The empirical data helped to understand the agency of Ukrainian women under TP and the experiences of participation through both structural and personal barriers. What initially appeared as a question of “access” soon turned into a question of *conditions*. Conditions shape whether participation becomes possible.

The concluding discussion draws together the legal, political, and theoretical frameworks with the empirical findings, which include the three semi-structured interviews and questionnaire. Following Braun and Clarke’s reflexive thematic approach, the purpose is not to repeat the findings presented in the results section, but to interpret them in relation to broader literature and the central research question.²²⁶ Rather than discussing each research question separately, the discussion is organised around the thematic patterns that emerged across the study. Altogether, the interpretation of the findings will tie back to the research questions used to guide this study.

6.1 Discussion

6.1.1 TEMPORARY PROTECTION IS A FORM OF LIMINALITY THAT BOTH CREATES AND UNDERMINES PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES

Across this study, TP creates a distinctive form of liminality, an in-between condition, that simultaneously opens opportunities for participation but also discourages participants from long-term engagement.²²⁷ Migration and integration are not new phenomena, yet in

²²⁶ Braun and Clarke (n. 210); Ahmed and others (n. 210).

²²⁷ Waardenburg and others (n. 17); van Gennep (n. 178); Dale and Burrell (n. 182).

contemporary forced migration contexts is increasingly characterised by prolonged displacement, restrictive migration governance, and uncertainty surrounding the future.²²⁸ Within this context, beneficiaries of TP find themselves in a complicated situation. Beneficiaries of TP, in comparison to other groups with a forced migration background, can be regarded as more privileged in terms of having access to relatively extensive rights and access to services. Yet the temporary nature of their residence makes life uncertain, which affects plans for the future.

The empirical material shows that this uncertainty is not only tied to legal status but also present in everyday life. Participants describe their lives as temporary, uncertain, and “on hold”.²²⁹ Although TP in Finland grants access to work, education, healthcare, and reception services, offering in some ways a more lenient approach than other European countries, for example, through the provision of equal healthcare to Finnish citizens and TP holders.²³⁰ These rights alone do not translate into feelings of stability or long-term belonging. Instead, many women questioned whether it was worthwhile to invest in activities, relationships, language learning, or community life when they remained unsure how long they would be able to stay. In this sense, TP shapes not only legal but also the emotional capacity to participate. The uncertainty surrounding the future becomes a barrier in itself.

This observation aligns with emerging scholarship on TP. Koikkalainen and colleagues (2026) argue that TP is increasingly understood not just as an emergency humanitarian response, but as part of a broader shift in multi-level migration governance. The notion of protection is becoming more conditional and temporality sits centre stage. Schultz’s vision that a ‘future returnee is the new refugee’, shows that protection will be offered, but preferably with possible departure in mind.²³¹ With the TPD now extended to 2027, Finland’s role becomes more elusive. This raises the question of whether Finland continues to function as a transit space or is gradually becoming a destination for beneficiaries of TP. This underlines the paradox of TP. On the one hand, TP enables rapid access to safety and participation opportunities, while on the other hand, TP undermines long-term integration.

²²⁸ UNHCR (n. 27).

²²⁹ “*Participants*” here refer to both the interviewees and the respondents to the questionnaire. For documentation, observations, and analysis to the questionnaire, all can be found in **Appendices 2 and 3**.

²³⁰ Koikkalainen and others (n. 3).

²³¹ Jessica Schultz, ‘An End to Asylum? Temporary Protection and the Erosion of Refugee Status’ in C M Jacobsen, M-A Karlsen and S Khosravi (eds), *Waiting and the Temporalities of Irregular Migration* (Routledge 2021), 170-185, 172.

Yet, the relationship between liminality and participation is not linear. While uncertainty discouraged some respondents from engaging in activities, others actively used physical and recreational participation as a way to cope with loneliness, emotional distress, and the psychological weight of waiting. These women are particularly significant because their participation was not driven by confidence or stability, but by a need to create routine, preserve well-being, and regain a sense of control. Their experiences demonstrate that uncertainty does not automatically lead to withdrawal. Instead, it interacts with mental health, confidence, social relationships, and previous sporting experiences in ways that produce diverse responses. A second observation made shows that beneficiaries of TP do not appear as passive recipients of migration and integration policies. Women negotiate, adapt, resist, and reinterpret individual circumstances. Some withdraw from organised activities, while others confront structural and personal barriers head-on. This resonates with Agergaard's understanding of integration as a dynamic, relational process shaped by both agency and structure.²³² It also suggests that the so-called "state of limbo" created by TP is not just a condition that lingers in the background. TP actively shapes how barriers such as finances, motivation, confidence, future planning, and willingness to participate are experienced. Thus, temporality is visible through all other findings.

6.1.2 STRUCTURAL AND PERSONAL BARRIERS AFFECT EACH OTHER IN TANDEM, RATHER THAN OPERATING IN ISOLATION

Across the frameworks and the empirical material, structural barriers, such as financial costs, language barriers, transport, and organisational resources, and personal barriers appear as recurrent obstacles to participation among forced migrant populations.²³³ Yet, the findings of this study show that structural barriers alone are not the whole problem to participation. What matters is not only whether opportunities exist, but whether individuals feel able, confident, informed, and supported enough to use them.

Participants described how personal circumstances influenced structural opportunities in tandem. Confidence, mental well-being, previous experiences of sport, age, family responsibilities, and informal networks often determined whether women felt capable of joining activities. This means that barriers are not experienced the same, but rather filtered

²³² Agergaard (n. 9).

²³³ Yi Cheung and Phillimore (n. 8); Crawford and others (n. 8).

through intersecting social positions and different life situations.²³⁴ For example, several respondents with limited Finnish or English skills nevertheless remained physically active, drawing on previous sporting experience or supportive networks. Meanwhile, others with stronger language abilities avoided organised activities due to low confidence, uncertainty, or limited awareness of available opportunities. This pattern was particularly visible among older respondents, who often lacked informal networks and struggled with digital platforms, making it harder to access information even when activities were technically available. [!!!] Previous sporting experience played an extensive role. Women who had an established relationship with sport tended to perceive activities as more accessible and familiar, making it easier to continue participation after migration. Those without such experience often viewed organised activities as intimidating or difficult to enter. This suggests that participation does not necessarily improve when removing practical barriers, but might be tied to a fear of the unknown, identity, and history.

The interviews further reveal that organisations face parallel challenges. Although service providers are aware of both the structural and personal barriers affecting participation, their ability to respond is often limited by funding constraints, staff shortages, and short-term project cycles. Interviewees expressed frustration that successful initiatives frequently end once project funding expires, even when they have demonstrated clear benefits for participants. As a result, organisations must repeatedly rebuild trust, partnerships, and participation from the beginning, rather than being able to invest in long-term relationships and sustainable programmes. Ironically, this recurring instability shows that uncertainty is experienced by both the interviewees and Ukrainian women under TP. This indicates that increasing participation requires more than removing practical barriers or making more activities available. It requires environments in which women have the confidence, support, and stability to engage. This calls for sustained investment not only in affordable and accessible activities, but also in the organisations and professionals who facilitate them. Without stable structures and adequate resources, even well-designed initiatives risk becoming temporary interventions that fail to create meaningful pathways towards inclusion. Participation becomes possible when structural conditions and personal circumstances are addressed together. Then, the broader environment surrounding participation determines whether physical and recreational activities become spaces of belonging or reproduce existing forms of marginalisation.

²³⁴ Collins and Bilge (n. 158); Elling, De Knop and Knoppers (n. 134); Elling and Claringbould (n. 134); Crawford and others (n. 8); Cuesta, López-Noval, and Niño-Zarazúa (n. 143); Waardenburg and others (n. 17).

6.1.3 BELONGING IS NOT SIMPLY AN OUTCOME OF PARTICIPATION; RATHER, BELONGING IS PRESENT BOTH BEFORE, THROUGH AND AFTER PARTICIPATION

Throughout both the frameworks and the empirical results, physical and recreational activities are an important resource for well-being, social inclusion, and integration. Respondents associated participation with improved mental health, increased confidence, greater routine, stress relief, and opportunities for meaningful social interaction. In this study, physical and recreational activities function as more than opportunities for exercise alone. They provide spaces in which individuals can rebuild everyday routines, expand social networks, and develop a sense of stability in the face of uncertainty characterised by TP.²³⁵ At the same time, the findings challenge one of the underlying assumptions within sports-for-integration literature, namely that belonging naturally develops through participation. Belonging often begins *before* participation takes place and continues to evolve *through* and *after* engagement. Across the interviews and questionnaire responses, women repeatedly described trust, familiarity, and social safety as essential pre-conditions for joining activities. Many felt more comfortable attending activities when accompanied by someone they knew, introduced through trusted social networks, or supported by organisations with whom there was already an established relationship. Participation, therefore, did not begin with entering a sports hall or community centre. It began earlier, with feeling safe, confident, and supported enough to take that first step.

The dynamic align closely with the work of Lenneis and colleagues (2022), who show that a lack of social networks can discourage participation while participation itself simultaneously creates opportunities to establish new relationships.²³⁶ The findings of this study suggest that these processes reinforce one another. Identity, trust, and belonging are therefore not simply outcomes of participation but also conditions that make participation possible. This observation further supports Bailey's conceptualisation of social inclusion, particularly the relational dimension, which emphasises the importance of interpersonal relationships and social support.²³⁷ Women who lacked confidence, trusted relationships, or supportive networks often remained excluded from opportunities despite expressing an interest in participating. On the other hand, those who entered activities through trusted intermediaries or existing social

²³⁵ Most of the sources used in this study emphasize this, see Zacheus (2010a) (n.); Zacheus (2010b) (n. 105); Mohammadi (n. 167); Burrmann and others (n. 190); Walseth (n. 111); Waardenburg and others (n. 17); Ley and others (n. 168).

²³⁶ Lenneis, Agergaard, and Evans (n. 136)

²³⁷ Bailey (n. 150); Maxwell and others (n. 153).

networks were often better able to overcome other barriers, including language difficulties and unfamiliarity with Finnish sporting environments.

The findings also reinforce the argument that sport should not be regarded as inherently inclusive. As Coalter, Spaaij and Rönkkö, argue, physical and recreational activities possess the potential to facilitate both inclusion and exclusion depending on how they are organised and experienced.²³⁸ The experiences of the participants clearly illustrate this distinction. Women-only spaces, female instructors, culturally familiar environments, beginner-friendly activities, and supportive social relationships all contributed to experiences of comfort, confidence, and inclusion. Inclusion, therefore, emerged not only from the activity itself but from the social environment surrounding it.

This places considerable importance on the organisations facilitating participation. Throughout the interviews, both FSI and NGO Serene emphasised that participation begins long before the activity itself. Through outreach, trust-building, participant-centred programme design, and sustained relationships with communities, these organisations actively reduce the uncertainty associated with joining unfamiliar environments. Rather than expecting newcomers to participate independently, they recognise that meaningful participation often requires guidance, encouragement, and continuity. This observation also resonates with the reception centre's experiences, where familiarity and repeated engagement were found to increase participants' willingness to return to future activities.

In this study, sports-based integration appeared to depend less on the number of activities and more on the quality of relationships formed through those activities. The strengths lies in the social dimension, rather than performance or outcomes. This relational aspect is particularly important for newcomers and beneficiaries of TP and appears to determine whether participation becomes a meaningful experience of belonging or another reminder of exclusion.

²³⁸ Coalter (n. 7); Spaaij (n. 6); Rönkkö (n. 136).

6.2 Conclusion

Research on sports, forced migration, and integration remains limited in Finland, only a few were accessible in the English language. After a discussion with MIF and a thorough review of their research work on *inclusion of women from migrant backgrounds in sports*, this thesis identified a new angle examining participation among Ukrainian women under temporary protection.²³⁹ Finland currently hosts more female Ukrainians than male, which shaped the decision to focus the questionnaire on this group. The findings of this study show that access does not automatically produce participation. European and Finnish integration frameworks often assume that once newcomers gain access to services, activities, and institutions, participation will naturally follow. Yet the experiences of respondents reveal to be far more complicated. Structural and personal barriers intersect to shape whether participation becomes possible. These barriers are filtered through overlapping identities and social positions, which means that participation cannot be understood without acknowledging the diverse circumstances in which women navigate life under TP.

Broader integration expectations also competed with participation itself. Many women prioritised employment, language acquisition, administrative obligations, and family responsibilities, tasks that carry immediate consequences for their future in Finland. In this sense, participation in physical and recreational activities often became secondary, not because it lacked value, but because everyday life under displacement demanded constant negotiation. Current Finnish integration reforms place increasing emphasis on labour market participation, self-sufficiency, and personal responsibility.²⁴⁰ Yet the findings suggest that integration consists of more than employment outcomes alone. Behind policy indicators are individuals attempting to rebuild everyday life while coping with displacement, uncertainty, and adaptation. These individuals are not just in need of opportunities, but trust, inclusive environments, and social safety. Legal protection can grant the right to participate, but it does not automatically translate into belonging. Physical and recreational activities are important, but do not inevitable lead to good settlement.²⁴¹ However, when organised in inclusive and responsive ways, sport can become a space where participation, well-being, and belonging emerge together. The social dimension to sports is, therefore, valued over performances and outcomes.

²³⁹ Migration Institute of Finland (n. 11); Monaliiku (n. 11).

²⁴⁰ Kang (n. 94); Government of Finland (2023) (n. 95).

²⁴¹ Spaaij (2015) (n. 6).

6.2.1 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

One limitation of this study is the timing of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, officially adopted on 12 June, just 3 weeks before the thesis deadline. As a result, there was insufficient time to analyse its implications for sports, forced migration, and integration in Finland. Future research could build directly on this gap, examining how the Pact reshapes national policy environments and participation opportunities for beneficiaries of temporary protection. Longitudinal studies, ethnographic fieldwork, participant observation, or participatory action research would be particularly valuable in capturing how participation evolves over time and across shifting policy landscapes. Another limitation concerns the questionnaire. Due to time constraints, it remained open for only twenty days. Despite this short window, organisations responded positively, and the number of responses (26) suggests genuine interest among Ukrainian women under temporary protection. Questionnaires are a useful tool, especially given the large number of Ukrainians residing in Finland. However, qualitative interviews would allow for deeper exploration of personal experiences, motivations, and barriers. Ethical considerations required full anonymity, which meant it was not possible to verify respondents' backgrounds or understand their reasons for participating. Future studies could incorporate mixed methods, country comparisons, or build partnerships with organisations to facilitate more in-depth, ethically grounded data collection.

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INTERVIEWS

Interview 1 with Finland's Svenska Idrotts (Sustainability Officer) via Google Meet, 12 April 2026.

Interview 2 with reception “transit” centre, Pansio, Turku (Guidance Counsellors & Activity Coordinators), face-to-face, 16 April 2026.

Interview 3 with the NGO Serene (Project Manager), face-to-face, 23 April 2026.

CHAPTER VIII: APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Informed Consent Form

Åbo Akademi University requires that all individuals who participate in research provide their informed consent. Before deciding whether to take part, please read the following information carefully. It explains the purpose of the study, what your participation involves, and how your data will be handled.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. If you agree to take part, you will be asked to provide your consent by signing at the end of this document (or by giving oral consent at the start of the interview, if applicable).

1. I freely and voluntarily consent to be a participant in this research to be conducted by **Cathelijne de Groot**, student in the **European Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation** at Åbo Akademi University, and supervised by **Viljam Engström**. I understand that the interview may be audio-recorded with my consent and that I can request the recording to be stopped at any time.

2. I have been informed of the broad aim of this research study. This study examines how sport-based initiatives in Finland shape the experiences of participation and inclusion among refugee and asylum-seeking women. I have been told what is expected of me and that my contribution should take no longer than **30–60 minutes** to complete (for interviews).

I have also been informed that there are no direct risks associated with participation, although some questions may relate to personal or professional experiences. I understand that I am free to skip any question I do not wish to answer. The potential benefit of this research is to contribute to a better understanding of how sport and recreational activities can support inclusion and well-being.

3. I have been told that my responses will be anonymised. My name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in any report subsequently produced by the student. Any use of identifiable information will only occur with my explicit additional consent.

4. I also understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary, and I may withdraw from it at any time without giving any reasons for it and without any negative consequences. I do not have to answer any particular question or questions I do not want to

answer. If at any time during the interview, I feel unable or unwilling to continue, I am free to leave. Discontinued participation in the research does not prevent the use of research data that has already been gathered.

5. I have been informed how the processing of personal data is done (see attached data protection notice). The collected material will be processed solely by the researcher for the purpose of this Master's thesis. The data will be stored securely and anonymised. The material will not be shared with third parties and will be deleted after the thesis is completed, unless otherwise agreed.

6. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the interview and the research, and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I have read and understand the above and consent to participate in this study. My signature is not a waiver of any legal rights. Furthermore, I understand that I will be able to keep a copy of this consent form for my records.

Participant's Signature Date

I have explained and defined in detail the research procedure in which the respondent has consented to participate. Furthermore, I will retain one copy of the informed consent form for my records.

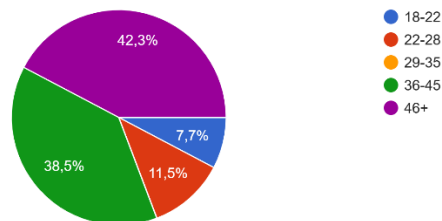
Student's Signature Date

Appendix 2: Questionnaire Answers and Observations

Section 1: Background

1. Age [26 responses]

Bik
26 antwoorden



Observation: 80.8% of the respondents to the survey are above the age of 35. Nobody between the ages of 29 and 35 has responded to the survey. This means that the remaining 19.2% constituted of respondents between the ages of 18 and 29. Respondents below the age of maturity were not considered for this questionnaire.

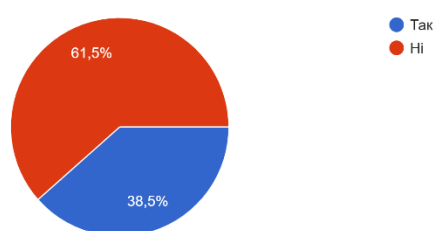
2. What languages do you speak? [26 responses]

Respondent 1: Ukrainian, Russian	Respondent 14: Russian, Ukrainian
Respondent 2: Russian, Ukrainian, Spanish, basic English, and beginner Finnish	Respondent 15: Russian, Ukrainian
Respondent 3: Ukrainian, Russian, English	Respondent 16: Ukrainian, Russian
Respondent 4: Ukrainian, Russian, English, and Finnish	Respondent 17: Ukrainian, some Finnish
Respondent 5: Ukrainian, Finnish, Russian	Respondent 18: Finnish (B1)
Respondent 6: Ukrainian, English (Russian)	Respondent 19: Russian, Ukrainian, Finnish
Respondent 7: Ukrainian, Russian, English, and Finnish (B1)	Respondent 20: Ukrainian, Russian, English, Finnish (A2.2)
Respondent 8: Ukrainian, Russian, beginner Finnish	Respondent 21: Ukrainian, Russian, English
Respondent 9: English, Ukrainian, Russian, and some Finnish	Respondent 22: Ukrainian, English, Russian, Finnish
Respondent 10: Ukrainian, English, and Russian	Respondent 23: Ukrainian and Russian

Respondent 11: Ukrainian – native; Russian – native; English – B2; Finnish – B1.1 Respondent 12: Russian, Ukrainian, some English, and Finnish Respondent 13: Russian, Ukrainian	Respondent 24: Ukrainian, Russian, Finnish Respondent 25: Ukrainian, Russian, Finnish Respondent 26: Ukrainian and a little Finnish
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3. Do you have caregiving responsibilities (e.g., children, elderly family members)? [26 responses]

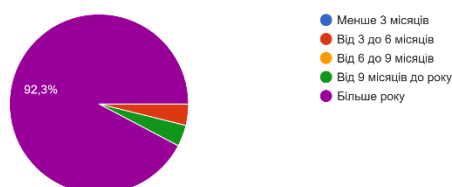
Чи маєте Ви обов'язки з догляду (наприклад, за дітьми або літніми родичами)?
26 antwoorden



Observation: 61.5% of the respondents said not have any caring responsibilities in Finland, whereas the other 38.5% does. The latter directly correlates with a lack of childcare, obstructing the way to, as a caregiver, participate in activities. However, none of the respondents encountered a lack of childcare as a difficulty in sports participation. Furthermore, only 7.7% out of the 38.5% addressed the availability of childcare as a solution to participation. One reason could be that the children in this case are already significantly older and therefore no longer in need of care. Then again, those who do have caregiving responsibilities but do not participate in sports felt no need to list barriers and thus opted out of this question.

4. How long have you been staying in Finland? [26 responses]

Як довго Ви перебуваєте у Фінляндії?
26 antwoorden



Observation: 24 out of 26 (92.3%) respondents have been in Finland for longer than a year.

5. What kind of physical or recreational activities do you enjoy? Please choose all that apply. [26 responses]

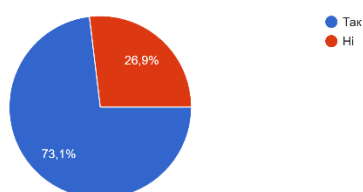
Observation: Among the respondents, yoga/pilates are the most well-liked practiced forms of exercise (61.5%). Walking/running deserves a second spot (50%). This seems logical as it is both an affordable and suitable mode of exercise for many. The sport with the third highest participation rate is

swimming, with 46.2% of the respondents taking part. After that, the respondents prefer group classes (e.g., Zumba, aerobics) with 38,5%, the same for training in a gym. Closely after we find biking (30.8%). Biking is an easy mode of transport and suitable for exercise. However, this is only available for those who have a bike. Of the respondents, team sports (e.g., volleyball and football) were placed last with a total of 15.4%. This could be because, without any previous experience, it might feel more difficult to get involved in team sports. In addition, three respondents named dancing, and one person said they enjoy knitting.

Section 2: Past & Current Participation

6. Did you take part in any physical or recreational activities back in Ukraine? For example: walking groups, gym, sports, dance, yoga, etc. [26 responses]

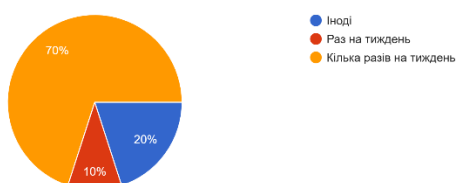
Чи брали Ви участь у фізичних або рекреаційних активностях в Україні? (наприклад: спорт, танці, йога, тренажерний зал тощо)
26 antwoorden



Observation: Most of the respondents said to have engaged in physical or recreational activities in Ukraine, amounting to a total of 73.1%. The latter 26.9% did not.

7. If yes, how often did you participate? [20 responses]

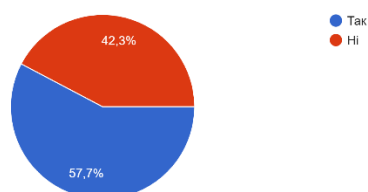
Якщо так, як часто?
20 antwoorden



Observation: Only those who said yes in the previous question answered this question: 70% responded to carry out physical or recreational activities multiple times a week, whereas the other 30% said to do it every once in a while or even once a week.

8. Do you take part in any physical or recreational activities in Finland? [26 responses]

Чи берете Ви участь у фізичних або рекреаційних активностях у Фінляндії?
26 antwoorden



Observation: In the host country, only 57.7% of the Ukrainian women report participating in physical and recreational activities. This constitutes a total of 15.4% decrease in participation.

9. How often do you participate in activities in Finland (such as sports, hobbies, community events, or other group activities)? [26 responses]

Як часто Ви берете участь у заходах у Фінляндії (таких як спорт, хобі, громадські події або інші групові активності)?
26 antwoorden



Observation: Overall, Ukrainian female representation at activities in Finland is relatively low. 34.6% of the respondents say not to participate in any activities, and 30.8% notes to participate only once every so often. Big jump to a total of 11.5% for those who participate once a week. Closely after follows 15.4% participates 2-3 times a week in activities. The remaining 7.7% is for those who train more than 4 times a week.

Section 3: Experiences in Finland

10. Where do you join activities in Finland? [26 responses]

Observation: In terms of location, it seems that many Ukrainian women feel most at ease in a home environment (42.3%) or private facility (38.5%). Public institutions such as swimming pools or outdoor gyms come third (19.2%), and those who are currently living at the reception centre have voted to participate there (11.5%). One person wrote down to go to her community centre for activities. A total of 8 respondents report not participating in any activities (30.8%). In relation to the previous question on whether the respondent participates in activities in Finland, the percentage has gone down.

11. How have you received information about possible activities in Finland? [21 responses]

Observation: Respondents find available activities mostly through social media (71.4%) or through friends (52.4%). Something that starts to take shape is that the most effective communication outreach method is social media or mouth-to-mouth. This opens up possibilities for the different actors at work within Finland's sport and integration scheme. It highlights the potential of strengthening online capacities. Other respondents came across activities via the reception centre (9.5%) or found something themselves. Two respondents use the space to share that information on activities is very difficult to find anywhere.

However, do take in mind that the questionnaire was distributed within a reception and community centre, via social media (Instagram, Telegram and Facebook), and at the municipality.

12. Have you experienced any difficulties or challenges after joining a sport or physical exercise in Finland? Please choose all that apply. [22 responses]



Observation: Based on the interview with the reception centre, some barriers were highlighted, such as the lack of childcare support. This does not show itself in the answers yielded in the questionnaire.

Instead, financial constraints (59.1%) and language barriers (45.5%) have been highlighted as having the biggest impact on sports participation. As well as a lack of confidence or skills (27.3%), which seems to affect participation rates and is equally placed beside lack of motivation (27.3%) and a lack of time (27.3%). Closely after follows distance to location and lack of transport opportunities (22.7%) and discomfort (13.6%). Two respondents have expressed having health problems (9.1%).

Only one person (4.5%) has reported experiencing racism or discriminatory remarks as a barrier. In regard to inclusive premises, one has voiced concern over the lack of suitable conditions for women (e.g., locker rooms) (4.5%).

13. Would it be okay for you to explain why this experience was negative? [open answer]

7 responses

14. How would you describe your current situation in Finland? [26 responses]



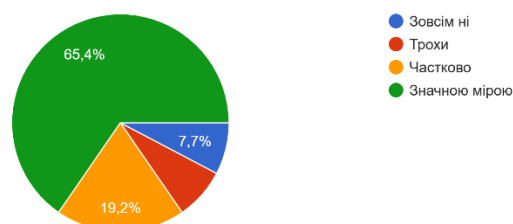
Observation: When asked to describe their current situation in Finland, 50% of the respondents explained feeling as if in a waiting process, which causes them to be unable to plan ahead. 23.1% says to feel uncertain about their situation. This shows that liminal belonging and this so-called “state of

limbo” seem to play a big role in the lives of Ukrainian women. Remember that many of the respondents have been in Finland for more than a year. 15.4% responds to feel somewhat settled, but still adjusting, and a mere 7.7% feels settled and stable.

The reception centre noted how the first 3-6 months are considered the “honeymoon phase”. The respondents to this questionnaire have surpassed that.

15. To what extent do you feel your current situation in Finland is uncertain or temporary? [26 responses]

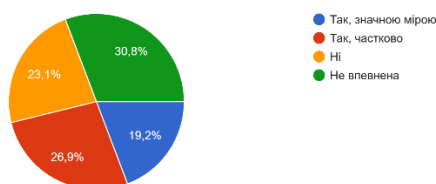
Наскільки Ви відчуваєте свою ситуацію у Фінляндії як тимчасову або невизначену?
26 antwoorden



Observation: To re-emphasize the previous question, I asked the respondents to what extent their current situation in Finland feels uncertain or temporary. 65.4% of the respondents answered with a lot, 19.2% with to a certain extent, and 7.7% with a little. The same two respondents as in the previous question have answered to feel no trouble at all.

16. Does your current situation (e.g., waiting for decisions, uncertainty about the future) affect your ability to participate in activities? [26 responses]

Чи впливає Ваша поточна ситуація (наприклад, очікування рішень або невизначеність) на можливість брати участь у активностях?
26 antwoorden



Observation: A very divided response: 30.8% responds not know whether their current situation (e.g., waiting for decisions, uncertainty about the future) affects their ability to participate in activities. 23.1% clearly states that no, it does not have an effect. 26.9% responds yes to some extent, and the rest (19.2%) says to feel the effects a lot.

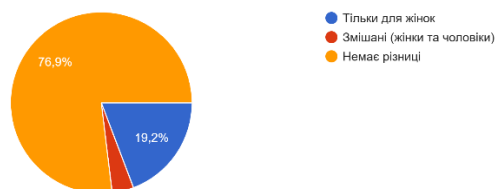
17. Would you mind explaining in what way? [open answer]

8 responses

Section 4: Needs and Preferences

18. With whom do you prefer to partake in activities? [26 responses]

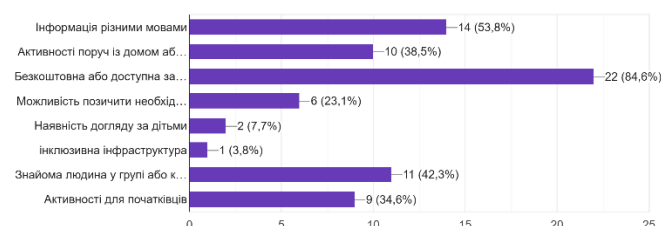
Які активності Ви б віддали перевагу?
26 antwoorden



Observation: Most of the Ukrainian women (76.9%) do not have a preference with whom to do activities. Part of the reason for this could be that most women have responded to doing activities at home (42.3%). 19.2% responds to prefer activities solely with women. Only 1 respondent answers to prefer activities with both men and women (mixed).

19. Which of the following factors would improve your participation or engagement in physical and recreational activities? Please choose all that apply. [26 responses]

Які з наступних факторів покращили б вашу участь у фізичних або рекреаційних активностях? (оберіть усі варіанти)
26 antwoorden



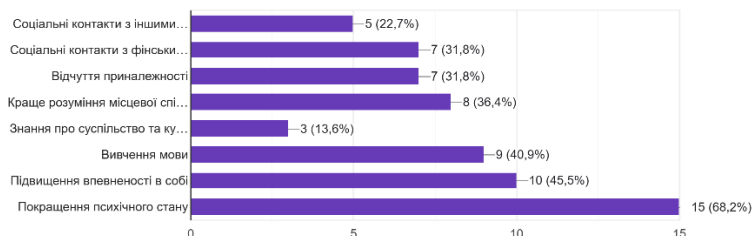
Observation: Perceived solutions to barriers are mostly reliant on free and affordable participation (84.6%). Second, it is important to have information in different languages available (53.8%). Closely after, female respondents highlight the need for a familiar person on location (42.3%). Both activities closer to home (38.5%) and activities that are beginner-friendly (34.6%) are placed quite close to one another. Some respondents voice the need to borrow the necessary equipment (23.1%). Interestingly, the availability of childcare is not expressed as a grave concern (7.7%). Only one person responds to a need for more inclusive facilities (3.8%). I already thought that inclusive facilities might not necessarily spark attention. Therefore, the next question addresses it slightly differently.

20. If you chose inclusive facilities, what kind of inclusive solutions would be valuable to you? Please choose all that apply. [15 responses]

Observation: Moving up from 1 to a total of 15 respondents: inclusive facilities would be useful for the respondents if activities are focused on women (73.3%), if there's a female coach or instructor present (40%), or if the activity is designed for women with a forced migration background (26.7%). Only one respondent highlighted the need for activities for women with the same ethnic background (6.7%).

21. Has participation in physical or recreational activities helped you feel more integrated and included in this country? [22 responses]

Чи допомогла Вам участь у фізичних або рекреаційних активностях відчувати себе більш інтегрованою в цьому суспільстві? Якщо так, яким чином? (оберіть усі варіанти)
22 antwoorden

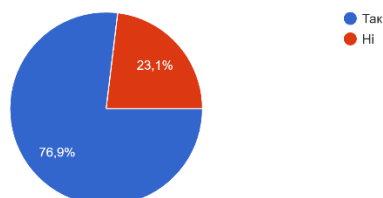


Observation: For most respondents, the benefits of sports participation as a tool for integration are mostly translated to personal development: mental health (68.2%), increased self-confidence (45.5%), and language learning (40.9%). Third, respondents start to consider the importance of cultural capital: a better understanding of the local community (36.4%) and then the larger societal culture (13.6%). Third, respondents connect with social capital: social contacts with other Ukrainian women (22.7%), but preferably with Finnish women or the rest of the local community (31.8%). For some, it has helped in feeling a sense of belonging (31.8%).

Section 5: Final Thoughts

22. Would you like more information about activities? [26 responses]

Чи хотіли б Ви отримувати більше інформації про доступні активності?
26 antwoorden



Observation: The percentage not participating in activities is around 30%. Those interested in receiving information about activities is 76.9%. The other 23.1% does not want to receive information.

23. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences or wishes regarding activities? [open answer]

7 responses

Appendix 3: Questionnaire Individual Respondent Analysis

Respondent 1 The only respondent who has been in Finland between 3 and 6 months. Is the feeling of liminality higher among those who have surpassed the “honeymoon phase”, in other words, the first 3-6 months? Unfortunately, the questionnaire does not yield an answer, as 24 out of 26 respondents have surpassed the honeymoon phase and have already been in Finland for over a year.	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) She’s 46+ and converses in both Russian and Ukrainian. She does not have any caregiving responsibilities. Her arrival can be considered recent; she’s been living in Finland for between 3 and 6 months now. Interested in walking/running, cycling, Group classes (e.g., Zumba, aerobics), swimming, yoga/pilates, and team-based activities (e.g., volleyball and football). Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9) Back in Ukraine, she on occasion participated in sports activities. However, here in Finland, she says not to participate in physical or recreational activities. She only attends community gatherings once a week at the reception centre. Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) She’s been made aware of these activities via social media and the reception centre. This has not presented her with any difficulties. Turning to feelings of temporality, she notes to feel settled in, but is still trying to get used to the situation. Life in Finland feels, to a large extent, temporary or uncertain. She finds it hard to answer the question of whether these feelings affect the opportunity for her to participate in activities. Section 4: Needs and Preferences (Questions 18-21) If she participates in an activity, it can be with both men and women. However, what’s important to her is that it’s free or affordable. It has to be noted that all activities are free of charge at the reception centre. She notes that participating in activities has made her feel more integrated in Finnish society because of the mental health benefits.
Respondent 2 [!!!] Social media has been one of the most effective tools in reaching out to Ukrainian women. Does she not know how to use it, maybe? Do her caregiving responsibilities take away from private rest and leisure time? The only respondent who’s been here between 9 months and a year.	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) She’s 46+ and can converse in multiple languages, namely Russian, Ukrainian, Spanish, Basic English, and Basic Finnish. She notes having caring responsibilities and has currently been staying in Finland for between 9 months and a year. Physical and recreational activities of interest to her include walking/running and swimming. Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9) She participated in physical and recreational activities often in Ukraine, but stopped with it all together upon arrival in Finland. She’s interested but has a hard time figuring out what kind of opportunities are available to her. Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) She describes her current situation as partially adapted, but still getting used to it. Her life feels quite temporary and uncertain at the moment. Still, she replies that this does not have an effect on her opportunity to participate in activities, which implies it’s a deliberate choice. She explains: <i>“After language school, I don’t even have time to think about any activities. Children also cannot engage in any hobbies. The city of Turku partially pays for children’s hobbies, but we have not yet moved to the municipality, and I do not understand what is needed to partially compensate for the payment of children’s hobbies. If the children are busy after school, maybe I will have time for myself.”</i> This, however, shows it is not completely out of the question to participate in physical or recreational activities, but that language learning and childcare affect her opportunities.

	Section 4: Needs and Preferences (Questions 18-21) What would help her is to have free or affordable activities ensured to her, and that there is an option to receive childcare . Despite this, she is happy with the language classes as it has helped her integrate into Finnish society.
	Section 5: Final Thoughts (Questions 22-23) She would love to receive some more information (for now, from the reception centre). She notes: <i>"Many thanks to the ladies from the Turku Red Cross. If possible, could you please organise an information session in the hall of residence on leisurely activities for both children and adults: what is available, where it can be found, and what exactly is required to obtain a Busti for children staying at the reception centre. Thank you!"</i>

Respondent 3 [!!!] Respondents 3 and 4 are the only ones who have described feeling stable and adapted to the living situation here in Finland. Both respondents are below the age of 29 and work out more than 4 times a week.	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) Age 22-28, speaks Ukrainian, Russian, and English , has caregiving responsibilities . She has been in Finland for over a year . Interested in group classes, swimming, and yoga/pilates.
	Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9) She did sports often in Ukraine and continued this trend in Finland, participating in physical and recreational activities more than 4 times a week . She's been made aware of these activities via social media and her friends , and participates mostly at private facilities (e.g., gyms, studios) and at home (e.g., online workouts or home exercise).
	Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) This person has a lot of experience with participating in activities in Finland. The barriers listed are critically chosen. This is reflected in the number of boxes chosen, as well as in the overall percentage for each box. She listed a lack of appropriate facilities (e.g., changing rooms), financial constraints, transportation/distance, language barriers, and experiences of racism or discrimination . She says to feel very stable and adapted to her situation in Finland, and therefore, she has not experienced any issues participating in activities.
	Section 4: Needs and Preferences (Questions 18-21) Activities would be even more desirable if free or more affordable, if there were childcare available, if there were a familiar person in the group or club, and if there were activities for beginners. Physical and recreational activities have given her social contacts with Finnish women and the local community, a sense of belonging, and a better understanding of the local community .
	Section 5: Final Thoughts (Questions 22-23) She would like to receive more information on sports activities.

Respondent 4 [!!!] Respondent 4 is the ideal example of why sports could	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) Age 18-22 ; she speaks Ukrainian, Russian, English, and Finnish . She does not have caring responsibilities and has been here now for longer than a year . Interested in many different activities, namely group classes, yoga/pilates, team sports, gym, and she personally added a new category, "dancing" .
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work as a tool for integration.	Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9) Back in Ukraine, she used to participate at least once a week, but here in Finland, it has gone up to 4 or more times a week. These notes that Finland has had a positive effect on her sports participation. The locations that particularly piqued her interest include private facilities and at-home workouts. Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) She has figured out about these activities through social media and friends. However, she did encounter some barriers in participating, for example, financial difficulties, lack of time, distance, lack of skills and confidence, lack of motivation, and language difficulties. She writes: <i>"It wasn't easy at first, as I wasn't really into sport or sporting events back in Ukraine. But as time went on, I got into it, and it became much easier and even fun."</i> She says to feel stable and adapted to Finnish society, but does acknowledge feeling like her time here is temporary and uncertain. This affects her ability to participate in activities at times. Section 4: Needs and Preferences (Questions 18-21) Something that would help her feel more at ease while participating in activities is information in different languages, activities closer to home, no or little financial costs, a familiar person on location, and beginner-friendly activities. She's the first respondent to say to feel more at ease with a female coach or instructor. In terms of benefits to integration, she highlights them all. Sports have given her social capital, cultural capital, a sense of belonging, personal development (e.g., language learning), and improved mental health.
Respondent 5 Not having a friend/someone familiar to do activities with can be a reason not to participate.	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) Age 36-45, speaks Ukrainian, Russian, and Finnish, has caregiving responsibilities. She has also been in Finland for over a year. Interested in walking/running, cycling, group activities, swimming, and the gym. Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9) She used to be very active in Ukraine, but upon arrival in Finland, this has decreased to every once in a while. Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) She's been made aware of these activities via social media and friends. However, the friend who makes her aware of these activities is not one to participate in activities, which causes her not to go herself. She feels relatively settled, but part of her is still getting adjusted. Despite responding a bit doubtfully before, she does say that she does not feel like her time here is temporary or uncertain. Section 4: Needs and Preferences (Questions 18-21) She prefers activities that are mixed (men and women). Something that would improve her participation is information in different languages, activities closer to home, free or relatively affordable prices, and a familiar person on location. She's the first to prefer activities that are designed for women. Physical and recreational activities have helped her gain self-confidence.

	Section 5: Final Thoughts (Questions 22-23) She would like to receive information moving forward.
Respondent 6	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) Age 36-45; she speaks Ukrainian, Russian, and English. She has no caregiving responsibilities and has been in Finland for longer than a year. Interested in one activity, namely, swimming.
	Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9) She used to participate in activities back in Ukraine several times a week. Moving to Finland, she stopped doing activities altogether. The reason for this is that she feels uncomfortable.
	Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) Her situation in Finland right now is described as insecure, and she feels like her life right now is quite temporary and uncertain. This has had a huge impact on her ability to participate in physical and recreational activities.
	Section 4: Needs and Preferences (Questions 18-21) She says that maybe if activities were free or more affordable, it would be different.
Respondent 7	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) Age 36-45; she speaks Ukrainian, Russian, English, and Finnish (B1). She has caregiving responsibilities and has been in Finland for longer than a year. Interested activities include walking and running.
	Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9) She used to participate in activities back in Ukraine several times a week. Moving to Finland, this dropped down to less than once a week. If she does choose to do an activity, it is an at-home workout.
	Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) She learns more about activities through social media, but still highlights barriers to participation, including a lack of motivation and knowledge of opportunities, as well as distance. In terms of liminality, she notes feeling on hold and unable to plan towards a steady future. Therefore, her time in Finland is considered largely temporary and uncertain. This has a huge impact on her participation in activities.
	Section 4: Needs and Preferences (Questions 18-21) She says that if activities are closer to home or more affordable, it might incentivize her to participate more. She also highlights to feel more comfortable if the activity is solely aimed at women. Whenever she chose to participate in an activity, it helped her increase confidence and improve her mental health.
	Section 5: Final Thoughts (Questions 22-23) She would like to receive more information!

Respondent 8 Social media plays a big role in today's digitalized society to inform others about upcoming activities. However, it seems that respondents above the age of 46+ are less aware of sports activities. Does this have to do with a lack of understanding of social media? How do we make sure that everyone has an equal chance to participate in the integration process if the process appears to happen through online channels? (see respondents 8 and 12)	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) Age 46+; she speaks Ukrainian, Russian, and Finnish (A2). She has no caregiving responsibilities and has been in Finland for longer than a year. Interested in activities such as biking, swimming, and yoga/pilates.
	Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9) She used to participate in activities back in Ukraine several times a week. Moving to Finland, she stopped doing activities altogether. If she does choose to do an activity, it is an at-home workout.
	Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) She is not aware of any of the activities that are on offer. Reasons for doing at-home workouts are because of a language barrier, health problems, and because she's not aware of what's available. She would describe her current situation as insecure, and life in Finland feels quite temporary and uncertain. This affects her motivation to participate in activities.
	Section 4: Needs and Preferences (Questions 18-21) Her motivation to participate would improve if there were more information in different languages, no costs involved, and it were close to home. She adds that she'd feel more comfortable if she could choose from a range of activities solely targeting women. Whenever she did participate in activities, it helped her gain social capital (e.g., Ukrainian and Finnish women/local community), language learning, and improved her mental health.
	Section 5: Final Thoughts (Questions 22-23) She would love to receive more information!

Respondent 9	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) Age 36-45; she speaks English, Ukrainian, Russian, and some Finnish. She has caregiving responsibilities and has been in Finland for longer than a year. Interested activities include biking, swimming, and yoga/pilates.
	Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9) She used to participate in activities back in Ukraine several times a week. Moving to Finland, she stopped doing activities altogether.
	Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) She learns about available activities solely through her friends. She would describe her situation in Finland as insecure, and her life is quite temporary or uncertain. All combined, she'd like to participate in activities, but feels like this "state of limbo" affects her willingness to participate in activities.
	Section 4: Needs and Preferences (Questions 18-21) She would like to do activities designed for women, but to do that, she would like: information in different languages, not too high costs, the ability to borrow necessary equipment, a familiar person on-site, and activities offered for beginners.

	She stresses that inclusive premises are important, and she'd like to have activities for women, a female coach or instructor, and activities designed for women with a forced migration background. Whenever she decided to do an activity, it made her feel more integrated. It offered her a sense of belonging, cultural capital (better understanding of the local community), language learning, personal development (increased self-confidence), and improved mental health.
	Section 5: Final Thoughts (Questions 22-23) She'd like to receive more information!

Respondent 10 A limitation: Certain respondents note to speak English, but do not indicate a level. However, the answers show that these levels of English are not at all times sufficient to attend sports classes.	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) Age 46+; she speaks Ukrainian, Russian, and English. She does not have caregiving responsibilities and has been in Finland for longer than a year. Interested activities include the gym and yoga/pilates.
	Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9) She used to participate in activities back in Ukraine several times a week. Moving to Finland, she stopped doing activities altogether.
	Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) She learns about activities via social media, but due to a language barrier, she finds it difficult to participate. She described her current situation as on hold and unable to plan for the future. This raises feelings of uncertainty and temporality, which influence her motivation to participate in activities.
	Section 4: Needs and Preferences (Questions 18-21) She'd like to be presented with activities aimed at women, and information needs to be available in multiple languages. Whenever she participated in activities, it made her feel more integrated. It provided her with social capital (contacts with Finnish women and the local community), cultural capital (better understanding of the local community), a sense of belonging, and language learning.
	Section 5: Final Thoughts (Questions 22-23) She'd like to receive more information!

Respondent 11 If a person had no interest in doing sports/joining activities before and does not show interest in doing that now in the host country, then we should not necessarily view that as a bad thing.	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) Age 18-22; she speaks Ukrainian, Russian, English (B2), and Finnish (B1). She does not have any caregiving responsibilities and has been in Finland for longer than a year. Interested activities include walking/running.
	Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9) In Ukraine, she did not participate in any activities. This hasn't changed now that she's in Finland.
	Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) In terms of her current situation, she feels like her life is on hold and unable to plan for the future. This has a huge impact on her feelings of temporality and uncertainty regarding her stay in

	Finland. She is not sure if this influences the fact that she does not participate in activities, but it seems unlikely. If she were to participate in activities, she'd like to do it with women-only, and it would help her if there were a familiar person on location.
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Respondent 12 She's not aware of the free or less expensive sports opportunities in Finland. Social media is a medium that could help her figure this out, but it seems that the older the respondents are, the less social media is used.	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) Age 46+; she speaks Russian, Ukrainian, a bit of English, and Finnish. She has caregiving responsibilities and has been in Finland for longer than a year. Interested in activities such as walking/running, swimming, yoga/pilates, and the gym.
	Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9) She used to participate in activities back in Ukraine several times a week. Moving to Finland, she continues this trend, participating in activities 2-3 times a week. She does this mostly at private facilities.
	Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) She learns about these activities through her friends. However, some of the difficulties she has experienced are that there are not enough separate classes for women, expensive, and language difficulties. She highlights the costs as a reason why participating in sports here in Finland has been negative. She described her current life in Finland as on hold and unable to plan for the future. This has a huge impact on her feelings of temporality and uncertainty, and her ability to participate in activities. As a reason, she notes: <i>"I'm not confident in myself."</i>
	Section 4: Needs and Preferences (Questions 18-21) She highlights the benefit of classes for women only with female coaches and instructors. Activities for women with a forced migration background would also be valuable. Her participation would improve if there were more information in different languages, activities close to home, and if they were to be less expensive. Activities have helped her improve her mental health.
	Section 5: Final Thoughts (Questions 22-23) She would like to receive more information! She wishes: <i>"Clearer communication moving forward and more activities organised within Ukrainian communities".</i>

Respondent 13 Out of all respondents, this person is clearly the most mad at the system. However, she's also a good example of a person's own	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) Age 46+; she speaks Ukrainian and Russian. She does not have any caring responsibilities and has been living in Finland for longer than a year. She prefers recreational activities such as "knitting".
	Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9) Back in Ukraine, she never participated in anything. This is the same here in Finland. She argues that she hasn't been able to find anything because there is no information.

critical engagement and willingness. She argues that there is no information; this is factually untrue, but she might not be able to navigate this information. Therefore, one has to think of ways to make that easier.	Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) Reasons not to participate in activities are the financial costs and a lack of motivation. She feels that her time in Finland is very temporary and uncertain, but she's not sure if this affects her opportunity to participate in activities. She notes: <i>"Uncertainty — no job, no studies, so I feel discouraged. I don't see much meaning in anything anymore"</i>. Section 4: Needs and Preferences (Questions 18-21) What would help is if activities were offered for women only, information is accessible in multiple languages, free of charge or not too expensive, and if activities for beginners are offered. Additionally, she adds that she'd like to have activities with other women with a forced migration background. Past activities have helped her integrate through language learning and improving her mental health.
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Respondent 14 This respondent shows that 'where there's a will, there's a way' and contradicts respondent 13. Despite not being able to speak both English and Finnish and experiencing a heightened sense of temporality, she continues to participate in many activities. She's the first and only woman to vote for activities for women with the same ethnic background.	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) Age 36-45; she speaks Ukrainian and Russian (NO English or Finnish). She has no caregiving responsibilities and has been living in Finland for longer than a year. Interested in all activities. Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9) She used to participate in activities back in Ukraine several times a week. Moving to Finland, she continues this trend, participating in activities 2-3 times a week. Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) She undertakes these activities at public facilities (e.g., municipal gyms, swimming pools), private facilities (e.g., fitness clubs, studios), and at-home workouts. She learns about these activities via social media and friends. Some of the difficulties to participate are financial, distance, and language. She describes her situation in Finland as on hold and unable to plan for the future. This heightened sense of uncertainty influences her participation in activities on a daily basis. Section 4: Needs and Preferences (Questions 18-21) She would like to have more activities solely for women. Furthermore, solutions to perceived barriers in activities include information in different languages, activities closer to home, free or affordable participation, inclusive premises, and a familiar person on location. For her, inclusivity means that activities are women-friendly and that certain activities are solely for women with the same ethnic background (i.e., Ukrainian). Integrating into Finnish society has been easier due to participation in activities, as it has improved social capital with other Ukrainian women and personal development in terms of mental health and self-confidence. Section 5: Final Thoughts (Questions 22-23) She'd like to receive more information!
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Respondent 15 Those who respond NOT to have English or Finnish language skills might state this out of shyness, as they might think it's not that good.	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) Age 46+; she speaks Russian and Ukrainian (NO English or Finnish). She does not have any caregiving responsibilities and has been staying in Finland for longer than a year. Interested in activities such as walking/running, group classes, and yoga/pilates.
	Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9) She rarely participates in any activities in Ukraine. This trend continues in Finland. If she does participate in any, it's at public facilities or at-home workouts.
	Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) She learns about these activities through her friends. However, the perceived barriers for her include financial and language strain. She describes her current situation in Finland as on hold and unable to plan for the future. This has a huge impact on feelings of temporality and uncertainty, but whether this has an effect on her participation in activities remains unclear.
	Section 4: Needs and Preferences (Questions 18-21) Factors that would improve participation include information in different languages, activities closer to home, free or affordable participation, the ability to borrow the necessary equipment, and a familiar person on location. Whenever she does choose to do an activity, it helps her connect with social contacts, both Ukrainian and Finnish women.
	Section 5: Final Thoughts (Questions 22-23) She would like to receive more information!

Respondent 16 Sports in a societal context; the environment matters to the extent that its inhabitants participate in sports. Finland outranks many European countries in terms of sports participation. Does this affect newcomers upon arrival in Finland? Respondents 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 16 describe feeling partially adapted or settled in Finland.	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) Age 46+; she speaks Ukrainian and Russian. She has no caregiving responsibilities and has been living in Finland for longer than a year. Interested in activities such as group classes, swimming, yoga/pilates, and gym.
	Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9) Back in Ukraine, she did not do any sports, whereas here in Finland, she now participates in activities 2-3 times a week.
	Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) She participates in activities at the reception centre and at private facilities. She's made aware of these activities through social media, friends, and the reception centre. Barriers faced include financial and language difficulties, lack of skills or confidence, and time. She describes her situation as partially adapted, but still getting used to. However, she does acknowledge that her time here is largely temporary and uncertain.
	Section 4: Needs and Preferences (Questions 18-21) Solutions to perceived barriers would include information in different languages, free or affordable participation, and a familiar person on location.

Of these respondents, 3 report participating in sports more than 3 times a week, and 2 have been in Finland for less than a year.	She notes that participation in activities has helped her feel more integrated through social contacts with Finnish women and connections to the local community, better knowledge about society and culture, language learning, increased self-confidence, and improved mental health. Section 5: Final Thoughts (Questions 22-23) She'd like to receive more information!
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Respondent 17 10 respondents have highlighted that they often participated in activities in Ukraine, and have either stopped altogether, moved to Finland, or only continue to work out occasionally. 8 out of 10 respondents highlight that "being in a state of limbo" is a major contributor to non-participation.	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) Age 46+; she speaks Ukrainian and a little bit of Finnish. She does not have caregiving responsibilities and has been living in Finland for over a year. Interested activities include biking, group classes, and yoga/pilates.
	Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9) Back in Ukraine, she participated in activities several times a week. However, here in Finland, this has stopped altogether. If she does participate in any (on a rare basis), it is at home.
	Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) Reasons for this include financial strain and a lack of skills and confidence, not enough knowledge on where to go, and discomfort. She feels like her life here in Finland is on hold, which makes her unable to plan a future. This has a huge impact on feeling temporary and uncertain. She says this has had an effect on her opportunity to participate in activities.
	Section 4: Needs and Preferences (Questions 18-21) Solutions to these barriers include free or affordable participation, the ability to borrow the necessary equipment, a familiar person on location, and activities for beginners. Activities have helped her better understand the local community, increase her self-confidence, and improve her mental health.
	Section 5: Final Thoughts (Questions 22-23) She'd like to receive more information!

Respondent 18 She's the second person to express an interest in dancing. I believe both Serene and the reception centre do not offer these activities. A sense of belonging might be affected when the 'state of limbo' is greater. How can you ever truly	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) Age 36-45; she speaks Ukrainian and Finnish (B1). She has caring responsibilities and has been living in Finland for over a year. Interested in group classes (e.g., dancing) and yoga/pilates.
	Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9) In Ukraine, she participated in activities multiple times a week. Here in Finland, she continues the trend with 2-3 times a week.
	Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) She participates in these activities at public and private facilities, as well as at home. She learns about these activities via social media and friends. The only barrier she mentions is facing financial difficulties. She says: <i>'I still can't afford to do activities like dancing as often as I'd like.'</i>

belong somewhere when you feel insecure in the host country? Use quote	She notes feeling insecure about her current situation in Finland. This has a huge impact on her feelings of temporality and uncertainty. However, she does not think these feelings have an influence on her participation in activities. She has this strong belief: <i>‘The more uncertain the situation is, the more important it is to engage in activities to overcome depression.’</i>
	Section 4: Needs and Preferences (Questions 18-21) Solutions to barriers include free or affordable participation and the ability to borrow the necessary equipment. Things that have helped her participate and increase the integration process include social contacts with Finnish women and a better understanding of the local community, how Finnish society and culture work, language learning, and improve mental health.
	Section 5: Final Thoughts (Questions 22-23) She’d like to receive more information!

Respondent 19	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) Age 36-35; she speaks Russian, Ukrainian, and Finnish. She does not have any caregiving responsibilities and has been living in Finland for over a year. Interested activities include yoga/pilates.
	Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9) Back in Ukraine, she used to participate in activities once a week. Here in Finland, this is only occasionally. Depending if she comes across something via social media.
	Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) Reasons to not participate include financial strain, lack of motivation, discomfort, and insufficient knowledge of opportunities available. She describes her situation here in Finland as, to a large extent, temporary and uncertain, but it does not have an effect on her opportunity to do sports.
	Section 4: Needs and Preferences (Questions 18-21) A solution to her barriers listed include free or affordable participation and activities for beginners. Whenever she does participate in activities, it helps her feel a sense of belonging, and it improves her mental health.
	Section 5: Final Thoughts (Questions 22-23) She’d like to receive more information!

Respondent 20 Mothers with caregiving responsibilities often feel a stronger need to learn	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) Age 36-45; she speaks Ukrainian, Russian, English, and Finnish (A2.2). She has caregiving responsibilities and has been living in Finland for over a year. Interested activities include biking, swimming, yoga/pilates, and the gym.
	Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9)

Finnish. There could be several reasons for this. First, they may wish to set a positive example for their children by demonstrating the importance of language learning. Second, acquiring Finnish allows them to communicate more effectively with people in their children's everyday environment, such as teachers, other parents, and classmates. Finally, when children are young, families are more likely to settle more permanently, as frequent relocation can be disruptive to a child's development and integration.	Back in Ukraine, she did not participate in any sports. Here in Finland, she now participates in sports once a week, either at a public or private facility.
	Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) She learns about these activities via social media and friends. Her time in Finland is experienced as on hold and unable to plan a future. This has a huge impact on feeling temporary and uncertain. However, it does not have an effect on her participation in activities.
	Section 4: Needs and Preferences (Questions 18-21) Solutions to barriers could include free or affordable participation and the ability to borrow the necessary equipment.

Respondent 21 The third person to add dancing. The power of dancing and music in the integration of newcomers?	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) Age 46+; she speaks Ukrainian, Russian, and English. She has caregiving responsibilities and has been staying in Finland for over a year. Interested activities include group classes, and she personally added 'dancing'.
	Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9) In Ukraine, she occasionally participated in activities. This has not changed in Finland. When she participates in anything its at a community centre.
	Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) She learns about these activities through social media. As a barrier, she writes to have a lack of time and energy to participate. She notes that if she could, she would love to participate more. She describes her life in Finland right now as on hold and unable to plan a future. This has a huge impact on feeling a sense of temporality and uncertainty. She notes that this has an effect on her willingness to participate in activities. She describes her feelings through learning the Finnish language: <i>'At first, I wanted to learn Finnish, but now I don't always think it's necessary.'</i>
	Section 4: Needs and Preferences (Questions 18-21)

	She says that information in a variety of languages would be a solution to barriers. Her sole purpose in joining activities is to learn the Finnish language .
	Section 5: Final Thoughts (Questions 22-23) She'd like to receive more information!

Respondent 22 Most respondents say not to have a preference for women-only activities over mixed. She notes that activities improve her mental health and make her feel more integrated into Finnish society, but states that feelings of temporality and uncertainty obstruct her motivation to actually go.	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) Age 36-45; she speaks Ukrainian, Russian, English, and Finnish . She has no caregiving responsibilities and has been staying in Finland for longer than a year. Interested in activities such as walking/running and the gym.
	Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9) She occasionally participated in activities in Ukraine. This has not changed in Finland. When she participates in activities, it is at private facilities.
	Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) She notes that she found the facility herself. ' <i>I saw a gym, I entered it</i> '. Some of the issues that she encountered are the distance to the gym, lack of skills or confidence, and lack of motivation . She describes her situation in Finland as insecure, which has a huge impact on her feelings temporarily and uncertainty. This has caused her to lose motivation to go to the gym. She notes: ' <i>I feel depressed most of the time</i> '.
	Section 4: Needs and Preferences (Questions 18-21) A solution to these perceived barriers includes activities closer to home, a familiar person on location, and activities that are beginner-friendly . Her main focus right now is to improve her mental health and feel more integrated.
	Section 5: Final Thoughts (Questions 22-23) She'd like to receive more information and clearer communication!

Respondent 23 This respondent shows how when you were never interested in the first place in attending activities, there is not all of a sudden a need for it in a new country of arrival. This questionnaire does not mean to push for change, but rather to see if change could work for the individual.	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) Age 46+; she speaks Ukrainian and Russian. She has caring responsibilities and has been in Finland for over a year . Interested activities include walking and running.
	Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9) In Ukraine, she never used to do any activities. However, here in Finland, she now does one activity a week at home.
	Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) She finds these activities on social media . She highlights one barrier, which is a lack of motivation . She describes her situation in Finland right now as on hold and unable to plan a future . This has a huge impact on her life and feelings of temporality and uncertainty. This lack of motivation comes from these feelings .
	Section 4: Needs and Preferences (Questions 18-21)

	What would help her overcome these barriers is information in different languages, activities closer to home, free or affordable participation, and activities for beginners. She also notes how having female coaches or instructors might improve inclusivity. Sports have helped her feel more integrated, mainly due to personal development: self-confidence and mental health.
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Respondent 24	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) Age 36-45; she speaks Ukrainian, Russian, and Finnish. She has no caregiving responsibilities and has been in Finland for over a year. Interested activities include walking/running and yoga/pilates.
	Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9) She has never participated in activities in both Ukraine and Finland, because of financial strain and a lack of time.
	Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) She describes her situation in Finland right now as on hold and unable to plan a future. This has a huge impact on her life and feelings of temporality and uncertainty. This has affected her ability to participate in activities.
	Section 4: Needs and Preferences (Questions 18-21) Solution to barriers: it needs to be more affordable or free. Also, she would appreciate there being activities for people with a forced migration background with female coaches and instructors. Whenever she did participate in activities, it helped her gain social contact with other Ukrainian women, a sense of belonging, and increased self-confidence.
	Section 5: Final Thoughts (Questions 22-23) She'd like to receive more information!

Respondent 25	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) Age 22-28; she speaks Ukrainian, Russian, and Finnish. She does not have caring responsibilities and has been living in Finland for over a year. Interested activities include walking/running, biking, swimming, team sports, and training in the gym.
	Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9) Back in Ukraine, she participated in physical and recreational activities several times a week. However, here in Finland, this has gone down to less than once a week.
	Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) She participates in activities either at a public or private facility, which she learns about via social media and friends. Perceived barriers include financial and language strain, a lack of time, and a lack of skills or confidence.

	She describes her situation in Finland right now as on hold and unable to plan a future. This has a huge impact on her life and feelings of temporality and uncertainty. This has affected her ability to participate in activities.
	Section 4: Needs and Preferences (Questions 18-21) Solutions to perceived barriers include information in different languages and free or affordable participation. It would also help to have activities solely for women with female coaches and instructors.
	Section 5: Final Thoughts (Questions 22-23) She'd like to receive information!

Respondent 26 Many highlight learning activities through friends. Maybe a buddy programme (community sponsorship programme, but for sports) would work in helping them commit to activities. A buddy includes anyone that a person perceives as a close friend, either met within a reception or community centre, or externally. However, this can only be made possible if participating locations have the capacity to fund or host this additional group of people.	Section 1: Background (Questions 1-5) Age 22-28; she speaks Ukrainian and a bit of Finnish. She does not have caregiving responsibilities and has been in Finland for over a year. Interested activities include walking/running, yoga/pilates, and training in the gym.
	Section 2: Past & Current Participation (Questions 6-9) Back in Ukraine, she participated in physical and recreational activities several times a week. However, here in Finland, this has gone down to less than once a week.
	Section 3: Experiences in Finland (includes liminality) (Questions 10-17) She participates in activities at the reception centre, private facilities, and at home. She learns about these activities through social media. Barriers include financial and language strain, a lack of time, a lack of skills or confidence, and health problems. She describes her stay in Finland as insecure, and she realizes this is because her situation is temporary and uncertain. However, this is not the reason she does not participate in activities.
	Section 4: Needs and Preferences (Questions 18-21) A solution to perceived barriers includes information in different languages, activities closer to home, free or affordable participation, the ability to borrow necessary equipment, a familiar person on location, and activities for beginners that are aimed at women. Participation in activities had a positive influence on personal development: self-confidence and mental health.
	Section 5: Final Thoughts (Questions 22-23) She'd like to receive more information!