



Nordic Council
of Ministers

Recommendations to Nordic policy
makers on integration by the

NORDIC MIGRANT EXPERT FORUM 2025–2027

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This publication is also available online in a web-accessible version at:
<https://pub.norden.org/nord2025-028>

INTRODUCTION

This publication presents 14 recommendations for improving the integration of migrants in the Nordic countries. The recommendations are divided into four categories: framing and foundation, structural domains, social and relational domains, and transformative practice. The recommendations have been developed by The Nordic Migrant Expert Forum 2025–2027, which consists of 16 experts on integration. All members were born outside the Nordic Region and have since settled in a Nordic country, providing the Forum with a unique combination of professional expertise and lived experience.

The Forum members have been appointed by the national ministries responsible for integration in the Nordic countries. Together they represent a broad knowledge base, with expertise in areas such as the labour market, education, social and health care, gender equality, democracy and citizenship, as well as issues related to segregation.

The Nordic Migrant Expert Forum has been established by the Nordic Council of Ministers as a platform for dialogue between policymakers and foreign-born residents in the Nordic Region. The Forum provides professional perspectives on what constitutes effective integration, and on how Nordic cooperation in this field can be strengthened. In this way, the Forum contributes to the implementation of the Nordic Council of Ministers' *Vision 2030*, with particular emphasis on the priority of creating a socially sustainable Nordic Region.



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DEFINE THE TASK

Toward a shared vision of integration

POLICY

Establish a shared Nordic understanding of integration that values participation, belonging, and the ability of all individuals to thrive while preserving their cultural identity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop a Nordic framework that defines integration as a two-way process rooted in equality, not assimilation.
2. Ensure integration policies reflect both structural indicators such as education and employment, and relational ones such as belonging, representation, and trust.
3. Promote collaboration across sectors to build consensus on inclusive and forward-looking goals for integration.

COMMENT

Without a shared vision, integration policies risk becoming fragmented or contradictory. A modern understanding must embrace diversity, support equal opportunity, and empower migrants to shape society rather than simply adjust to it. Defining the task is not about narrowing the path but about clarifying the purpose.

”

I believe that, despite our differences, it is vital for the Nordic countries to co-design and implement integration policies rooted in democratic values, strong civil society, and a shared regional vision for sustainable societies.

Ioannis Chatzopoulos



BUILD THE EVIDENCE BASE

Create comparable data across the Nordics

POLICY

Integration efforts must be guided by shared facts, not assumptions. The Nordic region lacks a coherent framework for measuring both structural outcomes and the lived experience of integration. We need data that reflects the full picture, including exclusion, belonging, trust, and representation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Create a Nordic-wide indicator system for integration that includes structural and relational dimensions.
2. Co-develop research methods with migrant communities to ensure relevance and legitimacy.
3. Encourage transparency and accessibility of data to enable dialogue and accountability.
4. Use data as a foundation for learning, adjusting, and improving integration strategies over time.

COMMENT

Without a shared vision, integration policies risk becoming fragmented or contradictory. A modern understanding must embrace diversity, support equal opportunity, and empower migrants to shape society rather than simply adjust to it. Defining the task is not about narrowing the path but about clarifying the purpose.

”

For me, building the evidence base across the Nordics means connecting fragments into one cohesive picture of our region, using high-quality, comparable data to ensure integration policies are guided by facts, not assumptions.

Minja Tea Dzamarija



- Foster multicultural ~~identities~~ identities
- understanding
- Create a better balance





EQUITY IN EDUCATION

Ensure inclusive and context-aware learning environments

POLICY

Education should be the foundation of equality, not a reproducer of disadvantages. All children and youth, regardless of background, must have equal access to inclusive, culturally aware, and high-quality education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Integrate intercultural competencies and anti-racism practices into teacher training.
2. Embed diverse narratives and histories into national curricula.
3. Ensure equitable access to early assessment, native language instruction, and differentiated support.
4. Monitor and counteract implicit bias in classroom dynamics and school policy.

COMMENT

A school that does not see its students will not be seen by them. Education must reflect the real lives and futures of all young people, not just the majority.

”

It is essential that policy-makers and educators embrace diversity as a strength, for only then may classrooms serve as inclusive learning environments in which all children are recognised, respected, and experience a genuine sense of belonging.

Sylvia Magnussen



PARTICIPATION MEANS POWER

**Make youth councils and democratic tools
meaningful**

POLICY

Youth with migrant backgrounds must be supported to move from consultation to real influence. Their experiences are not marginal; they are central to shaping a sustainable future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Diversify and fund youth councils, ensuring representation across ethnicity, gender, and residency status.
2. Include civic education and democratic skills in formal and informal learning spaces.
3. Support youth led initiatives with access to mentorship, funding, and decision-making platforms.
4. Remove institutional barriers that block young people from accessing political influence.

COMMENT

Inclusion means power. Youth cannot be expected to feel part of a society they are excluded from shaping.

A portrait of Rushy Rashid Højbjerg, a woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a blue blazer over a blue ruffled blouse. She is looking slightly to the right with a gentle smile. The background is a dark, textured blue.

”

Young people deserve more than a symbolic seat at the table. Real participation gives us the power to shape decisions that affect our lives. Through democratic empowerment and education, let's pass on the baton to future generations and secure our democracy.

Rushy Rashid Højbjerg

REPRESENTATION MATTERS

Embed diverse voices at all levels of decision-making

POLICY

Institutions, both public and private, should mirror the populations they serve. This means investing in long-term change in recruitment, retention, and narrative setting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Create pathways for minoritized professionals into leadership, boards, and decision-making roles across sectors.
2. Embed diversity targets and structural support within recruitment and development policies.
3. Diversify public communication, campaigns, and representation across industries.
4. Support safe spaces for professionals from underrepresented backgrounds to thrive and influence institutional culture.

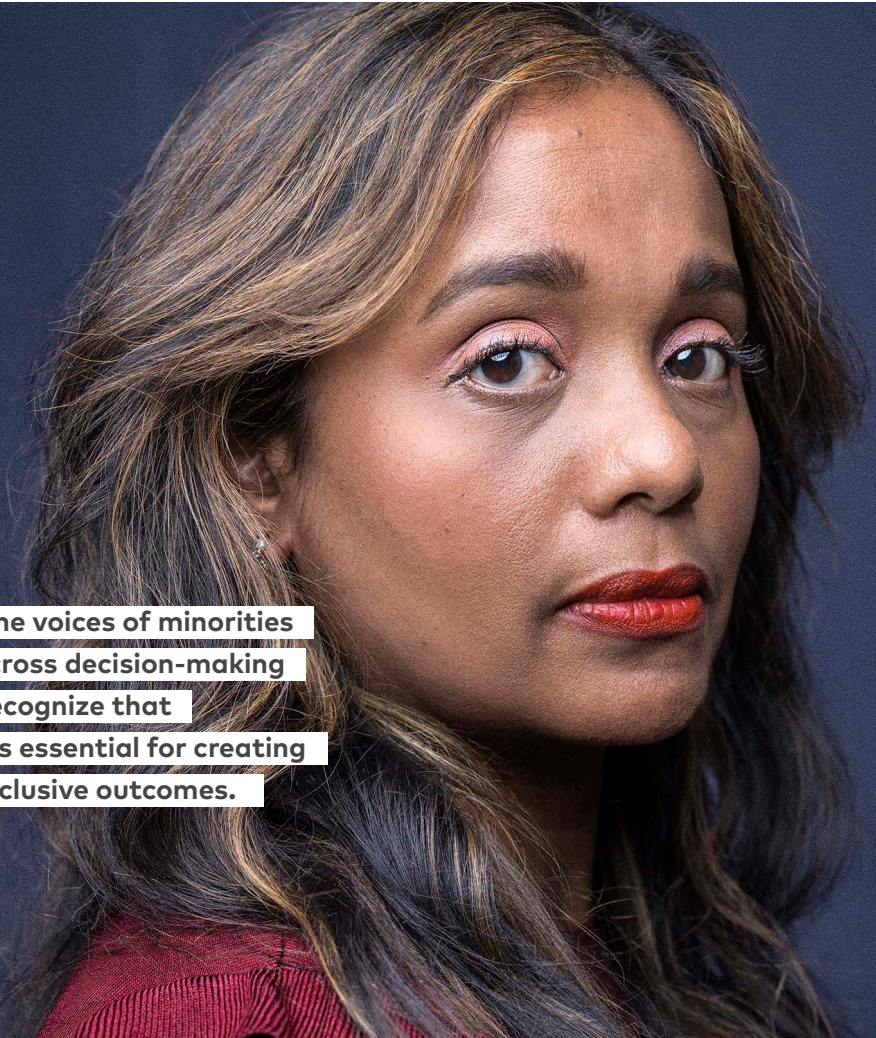
COMMENT

When people see themselves in power, they believe in it. Trust grows when leadership reflects the realities of those they serve.

”

By embedding the voices of minorities and migrants across decision-making processes, we recognize that representation is essential for creating equitable and inclusive outcomes.

Runa Preeti



EQUAL ACCESS, NOT PARALLEL PATHS

Ensure fair access to public services, activities, and institutions

POLICY

Access must be designed, not assumed. Young people and their families must be able to navigate public services, community programs, and systems based on rights without relying on prior knowledge, language fluency, or informal networks. Digital platforms and physical spaces must be built for inclusion from the start.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Audit services and programs to identify indirect exclusion, digital gaps, and cultural mismatches.
2. Develop accessible digital platforms in multiple languages that provide timely and relevant information, especially for parents and newly arrived families.
3. Embed inclusion requirements in sports, culture, youth, and education policies to ensure that shared spaces remain genuinely open.

4. Fund community-based outreach and support initiatives that bridge knowledge and access gaps in both urban and rural settings.

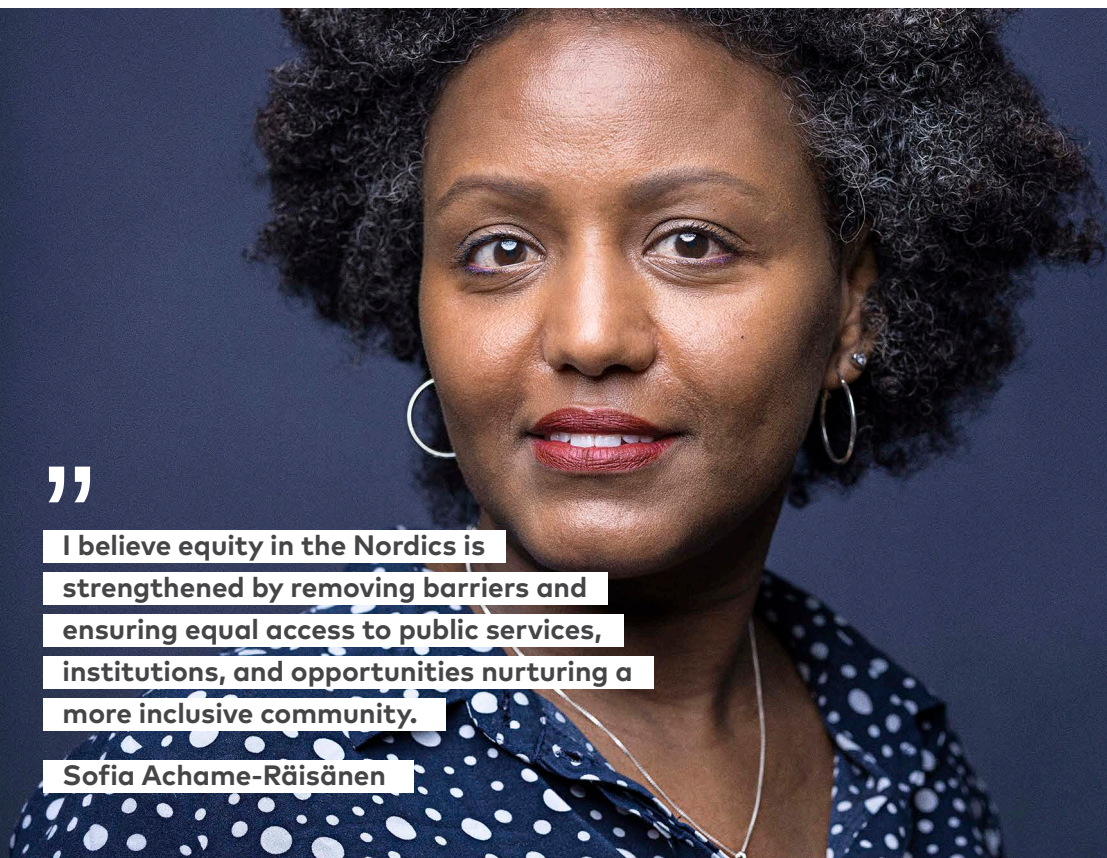
COMMENT

Parallel systems often reproduce unequal outcomes. True equality means making public life understandable and available to all in the right language, at the right time, through the right channels.

”

I believe equity in the Nordics is strengthened by removing barriers and ensuring equal access to public services, institutions, and opportunities nurturing a more inclusive community.

Sofia Achame-Räsänen



ADDRESS YOUTH VULNERABILITY

Break the cycle of crime and exclusion

POLICY

Across the Nordic region, too many young people from migrant backgrounds are disconnected from education, work, and society. Some are drawn into crime, others disappear into silence. Behind these outcomes are not individual failures, but systemic ones, including school exclusion, family breakdown, untreated trauma, and a sense of not being wanted. Prevention must be firm, early, and rooted in legitimacy. Reintegration must offer a real alternative to rebellion

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Launch targeted cross sector prevention programs in areas with high youth exclusion and exposure to crime.
2. Establish early intervention teams that include schools, youth workers, social services, and police with shared responsibility.
3. Fund second chance pathways focused on education, employment, and peer-based community reentry.

4. Confront school-based exclusion, family level violence, and masculine identity pressure as key structural drivers.
5. Engage youth directly in designing what safety, belonging, and opportunity look like on their terms.

COMMENT

Exclusion does not happen overnight. It builds when institutions look away, when schools punish without understanding, when young people are not seen as worth investing in. The answer is not blame, but legitimacy and leadership. Young people must be held to standards, and so must the systems around them.



”

I encourage all stakeholders, decisionmakers and grown-up people to support the cultivation of social ecologies of belonging that will allow our youth in the Nordics to flourish and thrive as active and responsible citizens.

Juan Camilo Roman
Estradaote





THE PRESSURE PILLAR

Support youth navigating conflicting expectations

POLICY

Second-generation youth often carry the weight of two worlds. At home, they may face strong cultural and moral expectations. In society, they encounter norms, judgements, and silent demands to assimilate. This constant balancing act creates pressure that can affect mental health, belonging, and self-confidence. Integration policies must acknowledge and address this invisible load.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Introduce culturally sensitive mental health services in schools and community spaces that are safe and trusted.
2. Train youth workers and educators to recognize and respond to identity related stress, loyalty conflicts, and emotional overload.
3. Fund youth led initiatives that provide room for self-expression, reflection, and identity exploration.

4. Support intergenerational conversations and mentorship programs that ease tension and build mutual understanding.

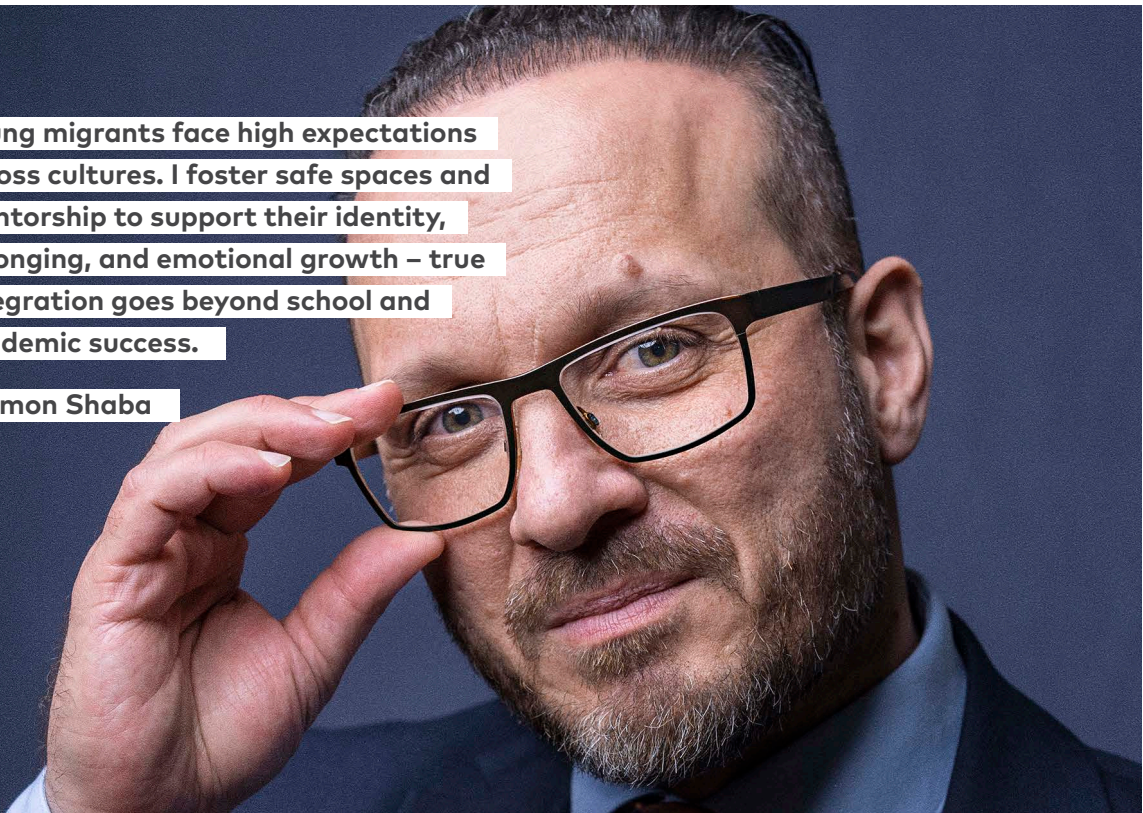
COMMENT

The pressure young people face is often unspoken, but it shapes every decision they make. We must stop asking them to choose between their family and their future, or between faith and belonging. Our task is not to lighten their identity, but to lift the weight.

”

Young migrants face high expectations across cultures. I foster safe spaces and mentorship to support their identity, belonging, and emotional growth – true integration goes beyond school and academic success.

Sermon Shaba



IDENTITY AND BELONGING

Make space for multiple identities and complex roots

POLICY

Belonging is not about fitting in. It is about being accepted as you are. Young people with migrant backgrounds often carry layered identities shaped by language, heritage, religion, and experience. These are assets, not complications. Yet in many social and institutional spaces, this complexity is either ignored or treated as a barrier. Integration must celebrate multifaceted identity, not erase it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Support schools and youth spaces to actively work with identity, belonging, and representation in everyday life.
2. Fund cultural and artistic initiatives that reflect diasporic narratives, multilingual realities, and spiritual heritage.
3. Address public and policy narratives that equate national belonging with conformity or erasure.

4. Involve young people in co-creating environments where it is safe to be whole.

COMMENT

Too often, young people are asked to choose between parts of themselves. Between what feels true and what feels accepted. When we make space for full identities, we do not just support individuals, we build a society where everyone can belong without leaving anything behind.

”

Identity and belonging mean making space for multiple identities and complex roots, ensuring everyone feels included and connected, by embracing language, culture, and community to ensure everyone feels seen, valued, and connected.

Jassin Rezai



COMBAT EVERYDAY RACISM

Address structural and internalised forms of exclusion

POLICY

Racism is not always loud. It shows up in low expectations, unfair treatment, silences, and skewed outcomes. Many children and young people from migrant backgrounds experience racism daily, whether in school, on the street, or in contact with public institutions. Addressing racism requires naming it, measuring it, and building lasting accountability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Make anti-racism education and training mandatory in all institutions working with children, youth, and families.
2. Establish national monitoring systems that track experiences and effects of discrimination.
3. Fund campaigns and local storytelling projects that expose the everyday realities of racism.
4. Involve affected communities in developing and evaluating anti-racism strategies and standards.

COMMENT

Racism creates silent damage. It undermines trust, opportunity, and mental well-being. Young people should not have to prove their worth to be treated fairly. Naming racism is the first step toward removing it. The second is making sure it is never allowed to hide again.

”

To dismantle everyday racism, we must transform the systems (at all levels) that divide us, heal and restore dignity in everyone so that we can recognize our shared humanity.

Sarifa Moola-Nernæs



INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE

Strengthen connection between generations as a resilience strategy

POLICY

Families carry deep knowledge, memory, and moral grounding. But they are also shaped by migration, change, and loss. Generational gaps can become sources of misunderstanding, silence, or conflict, especially when youth feel they must choose between values. Strengthening intergenerational trust builds resilience not only in families but in entire communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Support safe spaces where parents and young people can speak openly about expectations, change, and identity.
2. Fund community-based programs that explore cultural heritage, life transitions, and value formation.
3. Train professionals to understand and navigate intergenerational dynamics in education, counselling, and family support.

4. Promote public narratives that honor both continuity and transformation across generations.

COMMENT

When dialogue breaks down, disconnection grows. But when generations listen to each other, they do more than share stories. They build continuity, adaptability, and mutual strength. Intergenerational connection is not just cultural preservation. It is future building.

”

The home is where the identity, values, and narratives of the new migrant generation are first shaped, and by strengthening families across generations, we build stronger, more resilient communities.

Ann Marie Cunanan



CULTURAL PARTICIPATION FOR ALL

Open the door to expression and belonging

POLICY

Culture is not a luxury, it is a basic condition for identity, connection, and confidence. Yet many young people and families from migrant backgrounds are shut out from full participation. Financial barriers, lack of representation, and unspoken norms of exclusion prevent equal access. Cultural participation must be recognized as a central pillar of integration, not an optional extra.

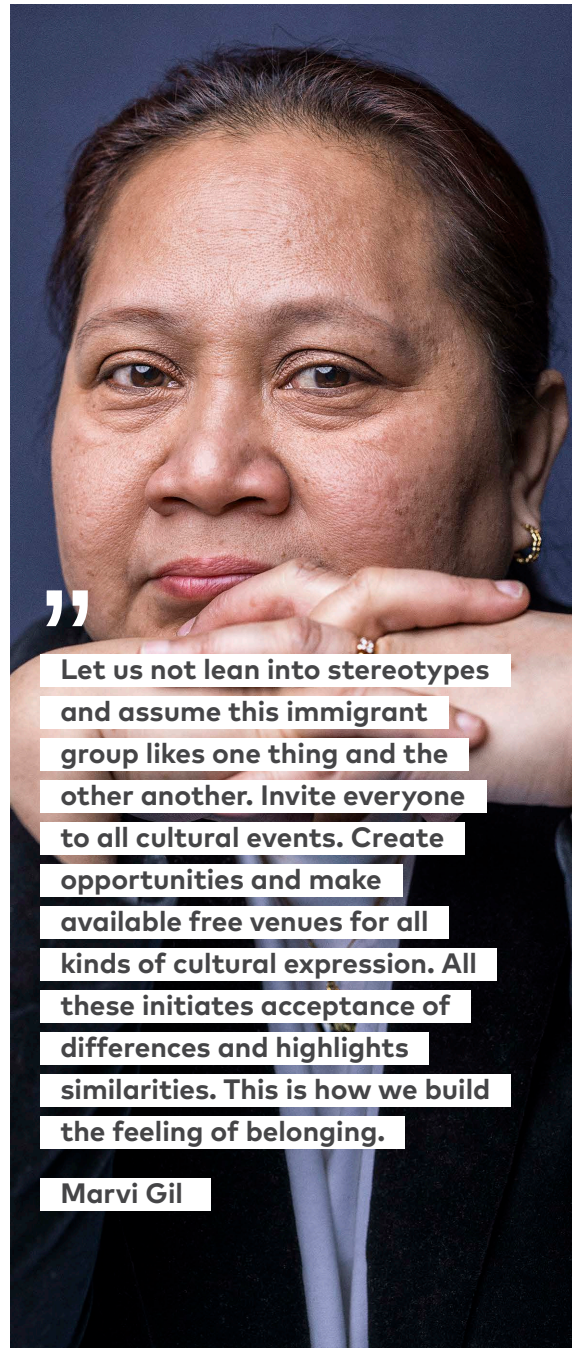
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Support access to music, theatre, dance, literature, and visual arts regardless of income, status, or language.
2. Ensure public institutions reflect and invite diverse cultural narratives, artists, and leadership.
3. Expand funding for grassroots and community-based projects that foster expression, creativity, and recognition.

4. Build partnerships between schools, municipalities, and cultural platforms to reduce access barriers and promote inclusion.

COMMENT

When cultural spaces are closed, the message is clear that this is not for you. But when young people can see their stories, sounds, and ideas in public life, they gain more than visibility. They gain dignity, confidence, and a deeper sense of belonging.



”

Let us not lean into stereotypes and assume this immigrant group likes one thing and the other another. Invite everyone to all cultural events. Create opportunities and make available free venues for all kinds of cultural expression. All these initiates acceptance of differences and highlights similarities. This is how we build the feeling of belonging.

Marvi Gil





REDEFINE SOCIAL INCLUSION

Integration should not reproduce majority logic

POLICY

Social inclusion is too often defined by how well migrants adapt to the majority. This reinforces a narrow and outdated understanding of participation. Inclusion must be mutual, recognizing different worldviews, cultural values, and contributions. Systems must learn to reflect the realities of the full population, not expect people to shrink themselves to fit in.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Co-create definitions of social inclusion with migrant communities, especially youth.
2. Review public institutions and services to identify where majority norms are presented as universal.
3. Promote public narratives and learning environments that treat pluralism as a shared asset.
4. Equip professionals with tools to critically reflect on assumptions embedded in practice.

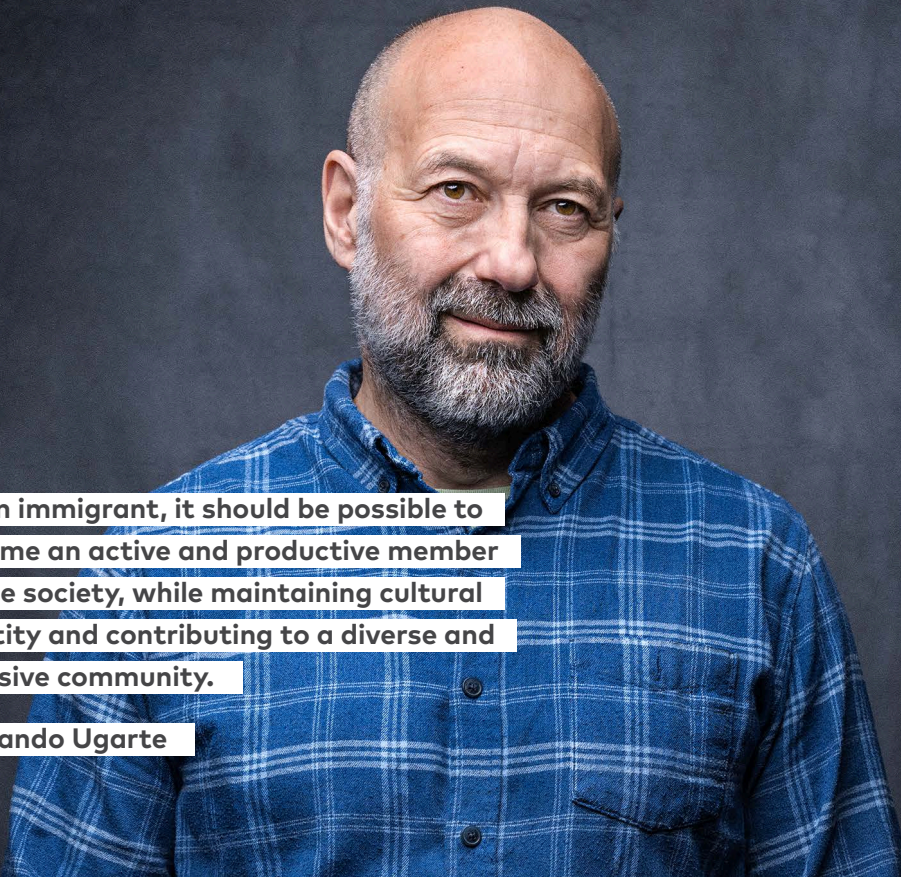
COMMENT

Inclusion is not about asking people to become less of who they are. It is about building structures that are strong enough to hold difference. True belonging is not silent. It is visible, proud, and mutually shaped.

”

As an immigrant, it should be possible to become an active and productive member of the society, while maintaining cultural identity and contributing to a diverse and inclusive community.

Fernando Ugarte



RECOGNISE MIGRANT LEADERSHIP

Let those affected lead the shaping of laws and policies

POLICY

Migrant communities are too often invited to participate only at the final stage as validators, not as designers. But those closest to the issues are also closest to the solutions. Integration strategies will remain incomplete until migrant leadership is present from the beginning, with real influence and decision-making power. Leadership is not about visibility alone. It is about shaping direction, priorities, and accountability.

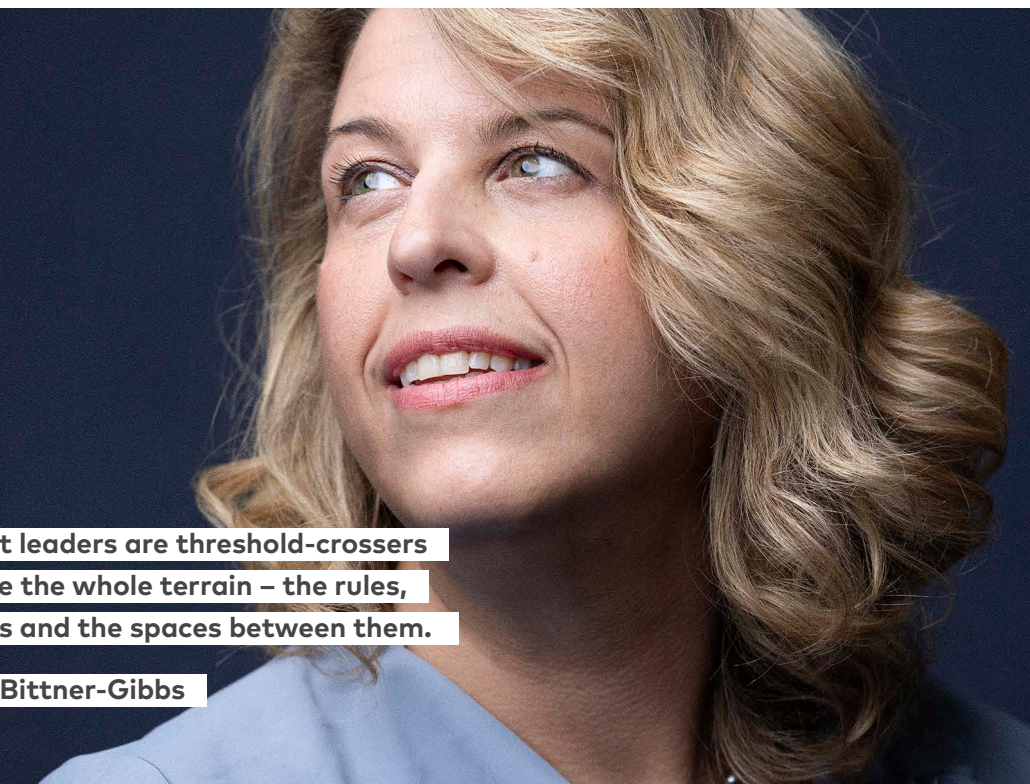
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Include migrants and descendants in strategic bodies, lawmaking processes, and program design with full voting power.
2. Move beyond tokenism by embedding migrant leadership in governance structures and budget decisions.
3. Fund leadership development initiatives for youth with migrant backgrounds across public, private, and civil society sectors.

4. Recognize lived experience as a form of professional expertise in recruitment, evaluation, and public communication.

COMMENT

Leadership is not granted through invitation alone. It emerges when systems are willing to share power. If integration is to succeed, the voices shaping it must include those who have lived its realities.

A close-up portrait of a woman with blonde, wavy hair, looking upwards and to the left with a slight smile. She is wearing a light blue top. The background is dark and out of focus.

”

Migrant leaders are threshold-crossers who see the whole terrain – the rules, realities and the spaces between them.

Alyssa Bittner-Gibbs



Gäst
Alyssa Bittner-Gebbs
Gästgruppen - Gäst - Gäst - Veranstalter - Center

CONCLUSION

INTEGRATION AS SYMBIOSIS

These recommendations are not isolated suggestions. They form a connected ecosystem of insight, care, and action. Integration is not about fixing parts. It is about designing a whole where everyone has a place, a voice, and a future. Whether we speak of education, parenting, mental health, or leadership, the success of each depends on the strength of all. The next generation is already here. Our task is to make the systems around them worthy of their presence through a symbiosis of values, structures, and shared responsibility.



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Recommendations to the Nordic policy makers on integration

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The Nordic Migrant Expert Forum contributes to the Nordic Council of Ministers' Vision 2030 and especially to the priority of creating a socially sustainable Nordic Region.

The Nordic Council of Ministers

The Nordic Council of Ministers is the official body for inter-governmental co-operation between Åland, Denmark, Finland, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

In 2019, the Nordic prime ministers presented a vision of the Nordic Region as the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030. The work of the Nordic Council of Ministers is designed to pursue that goal by making the Nordic Region green, competitive and socially sustainable.

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