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Volunteering as an information provider to the immigrant population





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Summary

This is the third and final report in the research project to evaluate the grant scheme for voluntary organisations' dissemination of government information to the immigrant population during the pandemic. The report aims to provide a summary of experiences, present principled discussions and highlight learning points.

The starting point is three different approaches to the role of voluntary organisations: that they can assume a democratic role – as a forum for discussion and a channel for political influence; that they can assume the role of service provider – by offering new and alternative measures not provided by the public sector, or as a supplement to public services; and that they can play an integrating role by building a community within the organisation and/or acting as a bridge to society at large. The role of voluntary organisations is illuminated through these theoretical perspectives, through voluntary organisations' experiences with information dissemination during the pandemic, and how the role of voluntary work is understood from both governmental and organisational perspectives.

Based on the three interim reports, the conclusion is that there are five learning points that the authorities should consider in their ongoing cooperation with voluntary organisations when providing the immigrant population with information – both during crises and otherwise.

Volunteers' dissemination of information about the pandemic to the immigrant population was a supplement that was introduced because the information from central and local government was not reaching the entire population. Meanwhile, voluntary organisations were informing the authorities of their experiences with the target groups. However, such dialogue requires points of contact with the authorities and this varies between organisations. The *first learning point* is therefore to ensure that dialogue with the authorities about experiences from information dissemination is possible. The *second learning point* is that the authorities must ensure that there is *one* public body responsible for translating information from the authorities and interpreting services. Experiences described in this and other research projects emphasise that translations must be quality assured and messages tailored to the target group – and that volunteers should have a role in this. This ensures quality, clarity and simplicity, which builds trust in the message. The *third learning point* is the importance of maintaining the contact between authorities and volunteers outside times of crisis. This is particularly important for the mutual understanding of roles. The *fourth learning point* is to discuss public grant arrangements in light of experiences from the pandemic. A key reason for using organisations in information dissemination is that they are trusted by their target groups. Trust does not come automatically; it is built by organisations and it can also be torn down. Therefore, volunteers must not only consider whether to engage in measures for which public grants are given but also how this should be done. The authorities, for their part, have a responsibility to facilitate a dialogue about how information and services can affect the target groups' trust in volunteers. This is the *fifth learning point*.

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