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SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING
Department of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering



ESTONIAN ACADEMY OF ARTS
FACULTY OF DESIGN

MSc. Design and Technology Futures

**ENHANCING INTEGRATION AND LANGUAGE
PROFICIENCY: A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO
SUPPORTING UKRAINIAN REFUGEES IN
ESTONIA**

**INTEGRATSIOONI JA KEELEOSKUSE PARENDAMINE:
STRATEEGILINE LÄHENEMINE UKRAINA PAGULASTE
TOETAMISEKS
EESTIS**

MASTER THESIS

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Tallinn 2024

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Integratsiooni ja keeleoskuse parendamine: strateegiline lähenemine Ukraina pagulaste toetamiseks Eestis (in Estonian)

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2. Investigating the use and implementation of Co-design methodology to promote the successful integration of refugees into Estonian communities.
3. Develop a comprehensive design concept to improve integration, support, and Estonian language learning effectiveness for refugees.

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this thesis is the Ukrainian refugees who have left their home country due to the Russian-Ukrainian War and have sought refuge in Estonia. The study aims to explore how non-governmental organisation (NGO) services can assist these refugees in addressing their needs and improving their proficiency in the Estonian language, thereby facilitating their integration into Estonian society.

The author of the thesis is particularly interested in the experiences of these refugees and the complex challenges they face in their new environment. To this end, the study employs a co-design methodology, which involves working collaboratively with the refugees and other stakeholders to develop solutions that are tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of the refugees.

The culmination of this thesis results in a service design that prioritises refugees who have faced significant challenges and may be overlooked by Estonian society. The objective is to highlight the difficulties experienced by refugees who require assistance or have limited access to support systems. The proposed initiative, Crossroads, is a multifaceted support network, with a focus on fostering community, enhancing Estonian language proficiency, and improving communication through personalised approach.

An initiative founded on inclusivity, community, and clarity, provides a collaborative support network. It aspires to empower refugees from arrival to integration by combining digital and physical places to provide complete care. This idea, which is adaptable to local NGO organisations, expands current services to better serve refugees in need, therefore contributing to Estonia's more inclusive and supportive environment.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	5
CONTENTS.....	6
PREFACE.....	8
List of abbreviations and symbols.....	9
1.INTRODUCTION.....	10
1.1 Terminology.....	12
1.2 Limitations of the study.....	14
1.3 Chapter overview.....	15
2. BACKGROUND RESEARCH.....	17
2.1 Overview of Estonia's support for Ukrainian refugees.....	17
2.2 Volunteering within the refugee context in Estonia.....	18
2.3 The involvement and assistance provided by Estonian NGOs to refugees.....	19
2.4 Estonia's security needs, vulnerabilities, and risks concerning refugee assistance.....	22
2.4.1 Demographic challenges.....	22
2.4.2 Violence and labour exploitation among Ukrainian refugees in Estonia.....	23
2.4.3 Challenges related to Ukrainian refugee children and education.....	24
2.4.4 Healthcare needs and access for Ukrainian refugees in Estonia.....	25
2.4.5 The importance of language acquisition for refugee integration.....	26
2.4.6 Navigating Refugee Assistance in Estonia.....	27
2.5 Existing support for refugees for teaching the Estonian language.....	28
2.5.1 Inspiring refugee support programs and other enhancing language learning materials.....	29
2.6 Overview and analysis of the existing system.....	32
2.7 Background research conclusion.....	33
2.8 Research question.....	34
3. DESIGN FRAMEWORK.....	37
3.1 Theoretical frameworks in focus.....	37
3.1.1 Design thinking process.....	38
3.1.2 Co-design and Community centred design.....	39
4. METHODOLOGIES.....	43
4.1 Observations.....	43
4.2 Photography documentation.....	44
4.3 Literature analysis.....	44
4.4 Mapping.....	44
4.5 Qualitative semi-structured interviews.....	45
4.1.6 Co-design workshop.....	47
5. FIELD RESEARCH.....	48
5.1 Interviews, observations and photographic documentation.....	48
5.1.1 Volunteers and NGOs employees.....	48
5.1.2 Refugees.....	52
5.1.3 Governmental Agents.....	54

5.2 Conclusion of interviews and observations.....	55
6.DEVELOPMENT.....	59
6.1 Co-design workshop.....	59
7. CONCEPT: CROSSROADS.....	64
7.1 Present circumstances.....	64
7.2 Crossroads.....	64
7.3 Main features.....	65
7.4 Value creation.....	74
7.5 User journeys.....	76
7.6 Service blueprint map.....	79
7.7 Conclusion and discussion.....	79
SUMMARY.....	81
KOKKUVÕTE.....	82
LIST OF REFERENCES.....	83
GRAPHICAL MATERIALS.....	90
APPENDICES.....	91

PREFACE

As a practising designer, researcher, and humanitarian worker who assisted Ukrainian refugees during the Russia-Ukraine War in Estonia, the opportunity to witness the profound impact of service design interventions on community well-being and resilience has been invaluable. This experience has further solidified the belief in the power of design to address societal challenges and foster positive change.

The work was closely associated with the founders and volunteers of Mariupoli Sõbrad NGO, an organisation dedicated to helping refugees with transit through Estonia. Working with this team provided first hand insights into the needs and aspirations of those affected by the conflict. The service design projects undertaken involved co-designing with refugees and volunteers as the main method for creating services tailored to the specific requirements of individuals and families in need.

Additionally, I would like to express my gratitude to the Head of Human Trafficking program from the National Insurance Board, Sirle Blumberg, for the invaluable interview and provision of information. The insights and knowledge were instrumental in shaping the design of new services that can be applied to support refugees in their transition and integration process.

Overall, my previous work experience in the humanitarian field and the support of professionals have led me to explore how volunteers and other workers can benefit from co-designing. By actively involving stakeholders in the design and implementation of strategies, co-designing has proven to be instrumental in swiftly and effectively introducing new approaches within humanitarian contexts.

Keywords: Ukrainian refugees, Estonian language learning, social innovation, co-design, refugee integration, master thesis

List of abbreviations and symbols

- **CP** - Child protection
- **DV** - Domestic violence
- **GA** - Governmental agencies
- **GBV** - Gender based violence
- **IOM** - International Organization for Migration
- **NGO** - Non-governmental organisation
- **RRP** - Refugee Response Plan
- **UNHCR** - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- **WHO** - World Health Organization
- **GA** - Governmental agencies

1. INTRODUCTION

In the expanding social sciences discourse concerning the perceived decline of civic community, the breakdown of civil society, and the depletion of social capital, volunteering emerges as both a symptom of these negative trends and a potential tool for revitalization. Volunteering extends beyond personal engagement and the natural outcome of community dynamics; it frequently involves deliberate organisation and management, making it a subject amenable to policy making (Dekker & Halman, 2003, p. 1).

Volunteering is a multifaceted concept with varying tasks and activities across different organisations and sectors. It is a social construct defined by public perception, leading to diverse interpretations and definitions. The boundaries of volunteering are fluid, making it challenging to establish clear distinctions between what qualifies as volunteering and what does not. Consequently, the definition of volunteering remains elusive, posing limitations on the generalizability of research findings across numerous studies (Hustinx et al., 2010, p. 2-6). However, the essence of volunteering remains ambiguous. When exploring global definitions of volunteering or voluntary work, common threads emerge: it is not compulsory, it serves the greater good, whether for society at large or a specific organisation, it is unpaid, and often occurs within an organised framework (Independent Sector & The United Nations Volunteers, 2001, p. 9).

Recent social, economic, and political developments in Estonia have significantly influenced the volunteer sector, with the Russian-Ukrainian war emerging as a pivotal factor in these changes. The impact of the war has been particularly felt in the arrival of Ukrainian refugees and the broader demographic shifts within the country. Terje Trasberg, a leading analyst at Statistics Estonia, highlighted the unprecedented trends of 2022, marked by a record-low number of births juxtaposed with a notable influx of refugees. This shift underscores a unique moment in Estonia's demographic landscape, with the arrival of refugees contributing to a nuanced understanding of the evolving volunteer sector and its responses to changing societal needs (Statistics Estonia, 2023). Estonia has welcomed a substantial number of Ukrainian refugees since February 24, 2022, accounting for more than 3% of the Estonian population (UNHCR, 2023, p. 81). As of December 24, 2023, Estonia has received 50 592 applications for temporary protection, the vast majority of which were from Ukrainian residents (Estonian Police and Border Guard Board, 2023).

The demographic changes in Estonia since February 2022 have presented significant challenges for governmental social services, particularly due to the influx of displaced refugees requiring various essential services such as housing, transportation, medical care, work placement etc. (European Migration Network, 2022, p. 1-13). This situation has led to a heightened focus on NGOs in Estonia, prompting the enhancement of their programs to address these pressing needs. The efforts of these NGOs have been instrumental in bridging gaps within social services and improving the efficiency of emergency response initiatives in the country (UNHCR, 2023, p. 3-8). The evolving landscape of demographics has necessitated a collaborative approach involving governmental bodies, NGOs, and other stakeholders to effectively navigate and respond to the complex challenges arising from these demographic shifts (UNHCR, 2023, p. 82-83, 87-88, 91).

The Estonian government has identified three key priorities for its reaction to the refugee crisis in Ukraine: 1) ensuring the sustainability of public and state services for all; 2) providing appropriate conditions for refugees to achieve self-sufficiency and independence; and 3) creating conditions for refugees to integrate into Estonian society while maintaining ties to Ukrainian language and culture (UNHCR, 2023, p. 81).

Despite the widespread support, refugees continue to encounter a variety of obstacles in adequately supporting themselves and their families, even as government assistance programmes are strained to their limits. Consequently, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) collaborated with local NGO partners to establish the Refugee Response Plan (RRP) for Ukrainian refugees in Estonia, as detailed in a 2023 report (UNHCR, p. 1). In June 2023, the UNHCR-led inter-agency coordination platform interacted with the humanitarian partners involved in the RRP to examine their funding situation and its impact on their programs.

The latest funding assessment reveals that over half of the participating partners must modify their operations due to financial shortfalls, with local NGOs experiencing significant impacts. The sectors facing the most challenges include basic necessities, protection, livelihood, and economic integration. As of the second quarter, only 11% of the required US\$9,135M for activities in Estonia under the 2023 RRP has been secured (UNHCR, 2023, p. 2).

NGOs worldwide commonly encounter the challenge of limited financial and resource availability. Rather than directing efforts toward service delivery, these organisations

often invest significant time and resources in pursuing funding opportunities. The prevalence of short-term funding cycles poses obstacles to the development of sustainable strategies and restricts opportunities for subcontracting. To address financial constraints, NGOs frequently depend on volunteer and philanthropic contributions. However, an excessive reliance on volunteers or inadequate volunteer support may lead to volunteer burnout and high turnover rates (Phillimore et al., 2022, p. 25). When volunteers experience burnout, they are confronted with a challenging decision regarding their continued involvement with the organisation and the individuals they help. Some may find consolation in seeking support from peers facing similar challenges, which can help them persevere in their roles. Quitting, on the other hand, may appear to be a viable and simple alternative for volunteers who are overwhelmed by stress, since those who have reached their breaking point may find the situation unbearable. In high-pressure situations, a burned-out member may consider leaving the organisation entirely (Allen & Mueller, 2013, p. 7).

Another challenge is volunteer management within organisation's stemming from factors like inadequate understanding of organisational needs, difficulty in matching volunteers with suitable roles, preference for short-term commitments, and the increasing number of voluntary organisations spreading volunteers thin. Effective volunteer management demands strategic planning, clear communication, and tailored approaches to optimise their impact and enhance organisational effectiveness (Mikołajczak & Bajak, 2020, p. 104). The Estonian Refugee Council faced challenges in maintaining volunteer engagement and increasingly depended on employed staff to carry out projects and assist refugees, particularly during the lower occupancy rates experienced in 2023 following the onset of the war (V.Saareväli, personal communication, December 5, 2023). Despite active programmes in Estonia, many NGO stakeholders are still struggling to satisfy their demands.

1.1 Terminology

This thesis presents a set of terminology formulated by the author to characterise certain events and circumstances. To aid comprehension, a thorough list of key terminology and phrases is provided below, along with extensive explanations.

- **Volunteers** - Individuals who devote their time, effort, or talent to a cause without receiving monetary compensation. They serve voluntarily, with no apparent or implicit expectation of compensation, and frequently work for charitable organisations, believing that their acts help both others and

themselves. Volunteering refers to a wide range of activities, including direct service delivery, campaigning, governance engagement, self-help initiatives, and informal assisting activities (Ching Liu et al., 2017, p. 5, 9).

- **Volunteerism** - is a non-salaried service provided by individuals in different health and human care circumstances. It serves as a significant social platform facilitating the redistribution of social capital in numerous health and human service organisations globally. Volunteerism has progressed from the traditional form of voluntary labour at nonprofit social service groups to a widespread social phenomena manifested through many social vehicles (Ching Liu et al., 2017, p. 4-6).
- **Refugees** - In the scope of this thesis, the author is concentrating on Ukrainian refugees who have sought refuge in Estonia in 2022-2024 due to the Russian-Ukrainian war, which constitutes the largest refugee population in the country. However, it is important to note that Estonia also accepts refugees from other countries including: Russia, Belarus, Türkiye, Afghanistan etc. (Veronika Saareväli, personnel communication, 5 December, 2023)
- **Community** - According to Cambridge Dictionary the word "community" defines people who live in a particular area or are considered a unit because of their shared interests, social group, or nationality (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024).
- **Co-design** - is a collaborative method that involves stakeholders, such as citizens, in the design and implementation of public services. It improves service delivery by organising multiple stakeholders' joint value creation activities to address public concerns, with the overriding objective of establishing communities united by a common purpose. This strategy may emerge as both continuing efforts and temporary endeavours, and when combined with design approaches and shared aims, it has the ability to build unity among people who would not have normally come together but are motivated by a common goal (Selloni et al., 2023, p. 2, 15-16).
- **Community centred design** - is a design approach that focuses on meeting the needs and desires of communities while actively including them in the design process. This technique requires designers to understand the community, establish empathy for its members, participate in creative

collaboration with non-designers, and create solutions that are contextually and culturally appropriate for the people involved (Meroni et al., 2018, p. 16, 34, 41-42, 101).

- **Social innovation** - Social innovation entails developing new ideas, methods, and systems in cooperation with a variety of stakeholders to address social and environmental issues. It seeks to improve social outcomes by developing creative solutions that empower communities and promote inclusion, using technology and new goods or services. This strategy focuses on developing new models rather than simply treating symptoms, bringing together stakeholders from government, civic society, and the commercial sector to create good change (Selloni et al., 2023, p. 3, 5, 15).

1.2 Limitations of the study

To acknowledge transparency and credibility, this thesis includes theoretical and practical constraints. These restrictions might include a variety of factors that impact on the results of research. These include:

- **Limited Time** - The thesis had a defined time frame that constrained the depth and extent of the study. Recognising time constraints is critical to providing context for the research process. The study did not look at the long-term benefits of co-design and community based design on stakeholders involved with NGOs learning and experiencing outcomes. The focus was on the present situation in two local NGOs, Mariupoli Sõbrad and Estonian Refugee Council in Tallinn, Estonia.
- **Limited Access to Information** - Challenges in accessing specific institutions or individuals impeded the research process. Some individuals declined interviews due to scheduling constraints, while others questioned the relevance of their expertise to the research.
- **Conflict over Biassed Views** - Researchers' biases can impact data selection and interpretation, thereby compromising the study's neutrality. The author conducted interviews with stakeholders including: Ukrainian refugees, governmental agencies (GA), non-governmental agency employees and

volunteers. Some perspectives on the Russian-Ukrainian war may impact the collected data and be represented in the final design solution.

In conclusion, while this thesis has provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities of co-design and community-based design in the context of NGOs working with Ukrainian refugees in Estonia, it is critical to recognise the theoretical and practical constraints that have influenced the research findings.

1.3 Chapter Overview

This thesis consists of 7 chapters.

Chapter 1 - The introductory chapter discusses how NGOs and volunteers are actively engaged in addressing the surge of refugees, particularly focusing on aiding Ukrainian refugees in Estonia.

Chapter 2 - Background research chapter delves into a review of literature concerning professional support for refugees in Estonia provided by NGOs, governmental involvement, and the obstacles encountered by refugees. It formulates the research question that directs the inquiry.

Chapter 3 - The chapter outlines the design frameworks that were selected for this thesis.

Chapter 4 - The methodology chapter provides an overview of the research approaches and methods used to explore the various stakeholders involved and to conduct the field-based investigation

Chapter 5 - The chapter presents the findings and conclusions drawn from the field research, including the results gathered through interviews and observations conducted as part of the investigation.

Chapter 6 - The development chapter covers the key component: The co-design session. This co-design part describes the collaborative design session involving stakeholders who ideated and developed the solution for the concept.

Chapter 7 - The concept chapter presents and describes the final solution developed to address the needs of Ukrainian refugees living in Estonia. The Crossroads program as a final solution.

2. BACKGROUND RESEARCH

This chapter provides an examination of the research and discoveries within the realm of professional support and aid for refugees in the local Estonian context by NGOs. It offers insights into the existing specialised areas and initiatives organised by local entities, as well as the participation of governmental bodies to address the refugee crisis. The chapter's objective is to delve into the concept of volunteering within Estonia's cultural framework, including its societal significance, and conduct a comprehensive analysis of Estonia's security considerations, vulnerabilities, and risk factors in the context of refugee support.

2.1 Overview of Estonia's support for Ukrainian refugees

Estonia remains a destination for a significant influx of Ukrainian refugees, with a considerable number crossing the Russian border to access other EU nations or return to Ukrainian government-controlled areas (UNHCR, 2024, p.3). Over 50,000 refugees have enrolled for temporary protection, with approximately 32,000 individuals also receiving aid through various municipalities nationwide. Furthermore, more than 5,000 individuals who departed Ukraine before February 24, 2022, and did not qualify for temporary protection in Estonia have been awarded subsidiary protection via streamlined asylum processes (Statistics on Ukrainian War Refugees in Estonia, 2024).

Estonia in the Ukraine refugee response is focused on three key objectives: maintaining public and state services, enabling refugees to become self-reliant, and facilitating their integration into Estonian society while preserving their Ukrainian heritage. Despite refugees' desire to return home, ongoing conflict and infrastructure challenges in Ukraine make it unsafe for most to consider returning in the foreseeable future (UNHCR, 2024, p.3). The Estonian government identifies numerous significant objectives for assisting Ukrainian refugees, including rapid adaptation assistance, access to the labour market, social protection, healthcare, and education (Estonia's Aid to Ukraine, 2023). Estonia also provides temporary protection registration, including the right to study, work, receive health insurance and financial support for Ukrainian refugees (Temporary Protection, 2023).

Even with a unified and coordinated societal effort, refugees still encounter obstacles in achieving full self-sufficiency due to stretched government support. As a result, local Estonian NGOs offer structured humanitarian aid to refugees in need (UNHCR, 2024, p.3).

2.2 Volunteering within the refugee context in Estonia

Volunteering, as outlined by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and United Nations Volunteers in the 'Volunteerism and Legislation – a Guidance Note', encompasses three fundamental elements: Firstly, voluntary work is not primarily motivated by financial gain, although reimbursement of expenses and nominal payments may be permissible; Secondly, it is undertaken willingly, based on an individual's own choice; Thirdly, volunteering yields advantages for individuals beyond the volunteer themselves, acknowledging that while volunteering benefits others, it also significantly enriches the volunteers involved (Risak, 2019, p. 362-363, 368). In essence, volunteer activities are driven by altruism rather than monetary compensation and aim to benefit both others and the volunteers themselves.

The legal ramifications of volunteering in Estonia are distinguished by the lack of a distinct legal status for volunteers, as there is no legislative definition of volunteer status in the nation (UN Volunteers, 2022). However, several laws impact volunteering organisations, such as the Non-profit Associations Act, Foundations Act, Income Tax Act, Value Added Tax Act, Law of Obligations Act, Youth Work Act, Probation Supervision Act, Rescue Act, and Victim Support Act. Additionally, self-regulation concerning volunteering involves the code of ethics for Estonian non-profit organisations, established in 2002 (European Commission, 2011, p. 21-24). This indicates that within the context of Estonia, the regulation of volunteering is exclusively channelled through organisational structures, while individual or direct volunteering activities remain devoid of any formal regulatory framework.

During the interview with a board member (personal communication, March 21, 2024), from Mariupoli sõbrad, it was elucidated that the absence of a legal framework governing volunteering in Estonia posed obstacles to specific legal processes, notably in facilitating communication with members of the National Insurance Board. The discussion revealed governmental interest in fostering communication and collaboration, yet encountered challenges due to differing organisational procedures. National Insurance Board members adhered to bureaucratic protocols, while Mariupoli sõbrad frontline volunteers engaged in immediate humanitarian aid efforts with available resources. The divergent approaches led to communication difficulties when the NGO's frontline volunteers and National Insurance Board personnel collaborated,

underscoring the need for a defined legal status framework for volunteers to mitigate such issues.

Despite the fact that legal framework and definition is not presented, volunteering and the role of volunteer is widely discussed in the context of Estonian NGOs who are involved in the work with refugees as well as governmental agencies and the community itself. The Estonian community demonstrates active engagement in assisting refugees through a diverse range of activities and organisations (Kaldur, 2022).

2.3 The involvement and assistance provided by Estonian NGOs to refugees

This chapter provides analysis of how Estonian NGOs have been assisting refugees in response to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, known as the Russo-Ukrainian War that began on February 24, 2022. Estonia's numerous NGOs are actively providing organised assistance to Ukrainian refugees. To determine the most active NGOs and those offering significant aid, the author consulted UNHCR reports published between 2023 and 2024. These reports offer the most accessible information on the Estonian sector and are suitable for academic evaluation. The author recognizes the presence of multiple institutions offering assistance to refugees, but the emphasis was placed on accredited organisations collaborating with UNHCR (UNHCR, 2024), (UNHCR, 2023).

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, collaborates with partners in Estonia to safeguard and assist refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless individuals, advocating for their integration. Estonia's participation in the Ukraine Refugee Response Plan (RRP) will strengthen the government's efforts. The RRP, overseen by UNHCR and created by 14 humanitarian organisations in Estonia, outlines a comprehensive response strategy involving multiple sectors and partners to address the needs of Ukrainian refugees, including financial requirements for assistance (UNHCR, September 2023).

The Ukraine Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) was officially launched in Estonia on February 22, 2023, presenting a detailed strategy and funding framework for UNHCR and 14 partner organisations actively involved in supporting Ukrainian refugees. This initiative complements the government's response efforts and facilitates coordinated actions among various stakeholders. Regular monthly meetings among RRP partners promote collaboration. A strategic partners briefing held on June 14, 2023, at the British Ambassador's residence in Tallinn allowed RRP organisations to

engage with embassy partners, sharing updates on program achievements while highlighting ongoing needs and gaps in refugee assistance in Estonia (UNHCR, 2023). It is crucial to highlight that local NGOs had varying objectives when attending these meetings, with the primary focus being on securing financial assistance from the UNHCR. According to Aleksandra Averjanova, a board member of Mariupoli sõbrad NGO who attended these meetings, only a specific portion of these organisations received funding (personal communication, March 22, 2024). As a result, there were alterations in the participation of NGOs in the UNHCR meeting in 2024.

The table below outlines the participation of NGOs in the 2023 and 2024 meetings with the UNHCR organisation, detailing the specific areas of assistance they provide to refugees. It offers a broad overview of the aid categorised into sectors within the Estonian context.

Partner	Speciality sector	Year
UN Agencies		
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection (excluding CP & GBV) • Livelihoods and socio-economic inclusion 	2023-2024
International Organization for Migration (IOM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection (excluding CP & GBV) • Livelihoods and socio-economic inclusion • Health and nutrition • Basic needs 	2023-2024
World Health Organization (WHO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and nutrition 	2023-2024
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livelihoods and socio-economic inclusion 	2024
International NGOs		
e-Governance Academy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection (excluding CP & GBV) 	2024
National NGOs		

Eluliin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection (excluding CP & GBV) • Gender based violence protection 	2023-2024
Estonian Chamber of People with Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection (excluding CP & GBV) 	2023-2024
Estonian Food Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic needs 	2023-2024
Estonian Refugee Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection (excluding CP & GBV) • Education • Livelihoods and socio-economic inclusion 	2023-2024
Estonian-Swedish Mental Health and Suicidology Institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection (excluding CP & GBV) • Health and nutrition 	2024
Mariupoli Sõbrad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection (excluding CP & GBV) • Basic needs 	2023
Hands for Ukraine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection (excluding CP & GBV) • Health and nutrition • Basic needs 	2023-2024
Institute of Baltic Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livelihoods and socio-economic inclusion 	2023-2024
International House Tartu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livelihoods and socio-economic inclusion 	2023
Johannes Mihkelson Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livelihoods and socio-economic inclusion 	2023
Mondo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Livelihoods and socio-economic inclusion • Health and nutrition 	2024
Köömen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livelihoods and socio-economic inclusion 	2023
Ukrainian Cultural Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection (excluding CP & GBV) 	2023

SA Refugees Crisis Aid Fund	Ukrainian Psychosocial War	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Livelihoods and socio-economic inclusion • Health and nutrition 	2024
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Figure 1. *Organisations participated in the regional Refugee Response Plan in 2023-2024. Adapted from (UNHCR, 2023, p.93), (UNHCR, 2024, p.14). Modified by author.*

**NGOs that offer Estonian language education support and personalised 1-1 mentoring.*

The organisations highlighted in Figure 1 have had a significant influence on the humanitarian aid landscape in Estonia. Analysing them helps to pinpoint the primary specialty sectors they represent.

It is noteworthy that several NGOs in Estonia did not engage in the UNHCR Refugee Response plan. For example, the Estonian Red Cross, affiliated with the Red Cross EU, a prominent global humanitarian organisation and one of the largest non-profit social service networks in Europe, has the capacity to operate extensively across migration pathways (Red Cross EU, 2022). The Estonian Red Cross is engaged in a range of projects throughout Estonia, including offering first aid training, delivering psychological support, providing humanitarian assistance, and more (Eesti Punane Rist, 2023). The Estonian Red Cross has a strategic partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs from 2024 to 2026 for the project "Enhancing first aid skills and fostering collaboration with the international Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement." This partnership involves developing an action plan for implementing a comprehensive education system for first aid skills, conducting first aid training for various groups, establishing a network of organisations promoting first aid skills, and devising a rapid first aid teaching plan for crisis situations (Eesti Punane Rist, 2022).

2.4 Estonia's security needs, vulnerabilities, and risks concerning refugee assistance

2.4.1 Demographic challenges

The evolving security needs, vulnerabilities, and risks related to refugee assistance in Estonia are influenced by the country's relatively lower refugee numbers compared to

larger EU nations like Poland and Germany (European Union Agency of Asylum, 2024). Despite this, Estonia has the highest proportion of refugees among other countries (Situation Ukraine Refugee Situation, 2024), showcasing the significant impact of the crisis on the nation. A significant portion of Ukrainian refugees are women (49%) and children (32%), indicating distinct protection challenges for these demographics (Estonian Police and Border Guard Board, 2023). Estonia's ability to provide rapid and effective responses is commendable. However, persistent challenges require targeted focus and attention to ensure continued support for refugees in need. Consequently, the author of the thesis is directing attention towards pertinent issues relevant in the context of 2024 in Estonia.

2.4.2 Violence and labour exploitation among Ukrainian refugees in Estonia

Mothers accompanied by children face elevated risks of gender-based violence (GBV). Continuous initiatives are essential to inform refugees, as well as staff and volunteers engaging with them, about child protection issues and the risks associated with GBV (UNHCR, 2024, p 3). Human trafficking experts affiliated with the Social Insurance Board are tasked with arranging training sessions focused on victimisation-related topics to disseminate knowledge and offer courses to a diverse group of stakeholders engaged in refugee-related endeavours. In an interview, Sirle Blumberg, Head of Human Trafficking Service, noted that since the onset of the influx of Ukrainian refugees in April 2022, numerous Ukrainian women have been seeking counselling and accommodation due to experiences of domestic violence (DV). Financial assistance and access to services for victims are contingent upon the victim self-referring to the police. Before the police become involved, only limited assistance and psychological help are provided in accordance with Estonian legislation (personal communication, March 13, 2024). This situation presents a significant obstacle as victims are required to initiate legal proceedings to access assistance and oversight for their essential requirements. The inclusion of bureaucratic processes is inevitable and impedes the delivery of fundamental necessities and safeguarding measures. Simultaneously, while essential for obtaining protection and halting violence against the victim, these procedures introduce complexities and delays in the provision of support.

Blumberg highlights that Ukrainian refugees, irrespective of gender, face a significant threat of labour exploitation. Instances where Ukrainian men have engaged in construction labour only to be subjected to non-payment for their work (personal communication, March 13, 2024). Frequently, construction workers are assured payment upon completion of their tasks; however, upon finishing the work, the

individuals responsible for organising the job vanish, leaving the workers unpaid. This underscores the vulnerability of Ukrainian refugees to exploitation within the labour market, emphasising the urgent need for protective measures and support mechanisms to safeguard their rights and well-being.

Ollus and Jokinen (2024, p. 10-12, 98) conducted a study on human trafficking in Finland, focusing on Estonian and Russian-speaking migrants and refugees. Their research revealed that the primary challenge concerning human trafficking and the exploitation of migrant workers in the restaurant and cleaning sectors stems from the vulnerability of these individuals due to their irregular immigration status and language barriers. This susceptibility makes them easy targets for exploitation. The majority of migrant workers in these sectors hold low-paying, part-time positions with uncertain working conditions and hours. They often secure employment through intermediaries or subcontractors rather than direct employment, complicating their work arrangements and increasing their susceptibility to exploitation. Migrant workers encounter discrimination, substandard living and working conditions, and limitations on their freedom of movement. An additional factor influencing this situation is the acknowledgment by employers of the adaptability of migrant workers, leading to a preference for their employment. However, employers are also cognisant of the likelihood of migrant workers departing the country, resulting in the provision of temporary work opportunities that can be easily filled by other workers in the future. Women and individuals with inadequate documentation, limited understanding of local laws, or unresolved immigration statuses encounter increased difficulties in navigating these challenging circumstances.

2.4.3 Challenges related to Ukrainian refugee children and education

Women with dependent children experience obstacles in finding work and obtaining suitable employment due to restricted childcare facilities and housing shortages in regions with employment prospects (UNHCR, 2023, p. 83). In Estonia, participation in early childhood education is not mandatory, yet the responsibility lies with the local government to facilitate access if parents desire enrollment (*Ukrainian War Refugee: Education in Estonia*, 2023). Refugee women, especially single mothers, are compelled to seek employment, highlighting the vital requirement for readily available childcare services to facilitate their work commitments. Moreover, there is a notable need for structured schooling among Ukrainian refugee children in general, particularly as Estonia accommodates around 9,000 of these children within its educational system (UNHCR Nordic and Baltic Countries, 2023).

Estonia has the largest population of Ukrainian students within its local school system compared to any other European country. In numerous European nations, fewer than half of the Ukrainian student population who have been displaced are currently attending school (Kaldur, 2024). Estonia has implemented substantial measures to aid Ukrainian refugee children's education by expanding capacity in both general and vocational schooling to meet the increased student numbers. The Freedom School, emphasising Estonian language instruction and offering educational prospects to Ukrainian children, serves as a symbol of encouragement and assistance for those impacted by the conflict in Ukraine (Toome, 2022). The study on Ukrainian refugee children in Estonia highlights challenges such as war trauma, language barriers impacting school integration, and the need for psychological support and tailored language programs. The children emphasised the importance of emotional regulation and communication skills for building relationships and adapting to their new environment. Despite facing obstacles like dissatisfaction in specialised classes due to language barriers and mixed-age groupings, the children demonstrate resilience with family support and engaging in leisure activities. The study underscores the significance of psychosocial support, community engagement, and culturally sensitive mental health services for successful integration, emphasising the role of educators and policymakers in addressing these needs through evidence-based interventions (Toros et al., 2024, p. 5-6).

2.4.4 Healthcare needs and access for Ukrainian refugees in Estonia

According to IOM (2023) one of the top three needs identified by the participants was healthcare services (17%). A significant portion of the survey participants (19%, N=103) mentioned that their group or household included individuals with severe health issues or specific requirements, while the majority (81%) did not have anyone with serious health conditions in their group. More precisely, 73% of the respondents stated that within their group, including themselves, there was at least one person with a chronic illness or a severe medical condition. Furthermore, nineteen percent were accompanied by someone who had difficulty walking or climbing stairs. This was followed by individuals with visual impairments (13%), challenges in communication or understanding (7%), difficulties in memory or concentration (5%), hearing impairments, difficulties in self-care, and individuals with wounds or injuries (4% each) (IOM, 2023).

During an interview conducted with Anonymous from Mariupoli sõbrad NGO (personal communication, 15 January 2024), it was noted that a considerable amount of Ukrainian refugees sought assistance while passing through Estonia and made decisions on their destination country based on their health requirements. Those with chronic health issues frequently requested transportation arrangements to reach Germany, Finland, Sweden or Norway, anticipating superior medical care. The interview highlighted instances where specialised medical transport had to be arranged for refugees who were unable to walk or sit during travel. An NGO coordinated the assistance for these refugees who were simply passing through to register at their ultimate destination. Another group of Ukrainian refugees, already residing in Estonia but living outside Harjumaa, faced challenges accessing local hospitals due to their health issues. While the Estonian government offered medical transportation or taxi services on a limited basis, typically only once or twice, individuals were informed that they were responsible for arranging their own transport to medical facilities. Once more, these refugees received aid from an NGO that covered the costs of their medical travel expenses.

Displaced individuals, asylum seekers, refugees, recipients of subsidiary protection, and recipients of international protection have the right to receive no-cost emergency medical treatment in Estonia. Those possessing a valid residence permit and an Estonian personal identification number are eligible to request health insurance, which includes both general and specialised medical services. Dental services are included for individuals under 19 years of age. Women with health insurance can access complimentary midwifery services (Tervisekassa, 2022). Yet, intricate situations necessitating physical support and travel assistance are frequently unattended to by the Estonian healthcare system, with local NGOs stepping in to offer aid instead.

2.4.5 The importance of language acquisition for refugee integration

The author engaged with volunteers affiliated with Mariupoli sõbrad NGO, governmental agency representatives and Ukrainian refugees posing inquiries concerning the significance of language acquisition and its facilitative role in their integration into the host community. The unanimous response from all interviewees underscored the essential nature of learning the local language, emphasising its necessity for certain occupational roles that mandate proficiency in communication. Individuals granted temporary protection status are required to participate in a 100-hour A1-level Estonian language course and a mandatory adaptation session followed by the state exam. The government offers the A1 - B1 language courses at

no cost, available in both in-person sessions across various Estonian locations and online formats (Integration Foundation, 2024). Based on the analysis of local NGOs that work with refugees, as depicted in Figure 1, two of these organisations provide support in the form of Estonian language instruction, translation services, and general assistance. These NGOs offer language classes to Ukrainian teachers, language buddy programs, and translation services to help refugees navigate their new environment and communicate more effectively. NGOs such as the Refugee Council provide language buddy support, which involves mentoring refugees who require additional assistance beyond the council office (Estonian Refugee Council, 2024), Mondo offers assistance to Ukrainian teachers to facilitate their integration into the Estonian school system (UNHCR, December 2023).

Volunteer from Mariupoli sõbrad emphasised the critical nature of language study for establishing a systematic framework and fostering a sense of regularity (personal communication, March 10, 2024). He elucidated that guiding students in language acquisition and exam preparation not only instils a structured approach but also cultivates a sense of continuity, enabling individuals to envision and plan for their future. The Ministry of Interior advisor underscored the significance of offering Estonian language courses to refugees as a means to enhance their prospects of securing employment opportunities within Estonia (personal communication, March 28, 2024). During an interview with Veronika Saareväli of the Estonian Refugee Council, the significance of offering local Estonian language programs was highlighted. Nevertheless, she voiced apprehensions regarding the insufficiency of such language training initiatives, citing a persistent shortage in their availability (personal communication, December 5, 2023). Overall, Language holds significant importance for refugees and migrants, influencing their capacity to assimilate and engage with the local community effectively.

2.4.6 Navigating Refugee Assistance in Estonia

Estonian governmental services, known for their consistent provision of aid and support to refugees, are perceived as effective in their assistance efforts. Insights gleaned from interviews with three governmental agency workers underscore the importance of refugees seeking assistance from official channels to access necessary support. In an interview with an advisor from the Ministry of Interior (personal communication, March 28, 2024), it was highlighted that the preference lies in guiding individuals through official helplines such as 1247 and www.kriis.ee website, emphasising the avoidance of seeking help from unofficially unregistered sources. This caution stems from the absence of a legal framework defining volunteering in Estonia,

prompting governmental representatives to advocate for reliance on established and regulated avenues for assistance. Nevertheless, concurrently, governmental representatives demonstrate a readiness to engage in partnerships with NGOs based on structured initiatives designed to address significant challenges like human trafficking, GBV, DV, CP, and other critical concerns.

Interviewed representatives from NGOs acknowledge the significance of governmental agencies in assisting refugees but express a preference for addressing refugee issues independently to streamline time management and enhance practicality. While recognizing the necessity to cooperate with entities like the National Insurance Board, NGOs face challenges in structuring their involvement and understanding the rationale behind such collaborations, leading to miscommunication and misconceptions on both ends. Consequently, a key issue lies in fostering effective collaboration to access accurate official information from governmental bodies directly and ensure the active engagement of volunteers. It is essential to recognise the importance of governmental websites and helplines in supporting refugees; however, depending solely on readily available information may not always be adequate. Volunteers necessitate comprehensive training on issues like human trafficking and the accurate retrieval of information to effectively support refugees in need.

2.5 Existing support for refugees for teaching the Estonian language

The current methods in Estonia for teaching the Estonian language to adult refugees involve various initiatives and programs aimed at facilitating language learning and integration. Refugees can participate in language learning and adaptation programs for free, with Estonian language courses available through different channels which could be defined in categories:

- 1) *Estonian Language Courses:* Refugees can participate in language learning and adaptation programs for free, with Estonian language courses A1 - B1 levels available through the Unemployment Insurance Fund, Settle in Estonia and Integration Foundation (Integratsiooni Sihtasutus, 2024). The support programs are aimed at assisting only adult refugees who have already completed their formal education.
- 2) *Online Language Support:* The Ministry of Education and research published a list of online courses for discovering the Estonian language, with study

materials and teacher support available. These include: Keeleklikk, Keeletee, Üleilmakool (Global School), Opiq, E-Koolikott, Eesti keele lootskursus, Koolielu, Miksike, Speakly and other material from Eesti Keele Instituut, catering to both children and adults.

3) *Estonian language cafés*: The language cafés provide support for independent Estonian studies and a chance to practise the language. The list of cafes, The methodological guide and application process is organised and published by Integration foundation (*Estonian Language Cafés*, 2023).

4) *Museums offer Estonian language educational programmes*: Individuals learning the Estonian language from A2 level can sign up for free educational programs on cultural diversity offered by various museums across Estonia, including Vabamu, the Estonian Police Museum, TYPA Printing and Paper Art Centre, Narva Museum, and A. H. Tammsaare Museum in Vargamäe, as well as the Estonian Open Air Museum and the University of Tartu Museum. These programs aim to support adult learners with limited language skills by providing listening and reading tasks, simple group activities, and opportunities to communicate with each other in simple Estonian (*Seven Museums Already Offer Educational Programmes to Learn Estonian*, 2024).

In essence, these are the primary ways supported by government agencies to learn Estonian, helping refugees speak and pass exams from A1 to B2 levels. Additionally, private lessons and specialised programs offered by NGOs like Mondo MTÜ are available for educational specialists (Mondo MTÜ, 2024).

2.5.1 Inspiring refugee support programs and other enhancing language learning materials

Settle in Estonia

Settle in Estonia offers A1, A2 and B1 Levels Estonian Language Courses for refugees under temporary protection, lasting approximately three months. Participants can choose from morning, afternoon, or evening classes in various regions of Estonia. The course covers essential topics like politeness, introductions, family, daily activities, shopping, city navigation, health, and weather. Training methods include communication tasks, grammar and vocabulary games, and independent work. The course consists of two or three 45-minute lessons per school day, twice a week. Refugees must register through the website after receiving an email referral from the

Police and Border Guard Board. Completion of the course equips individuals with basic language skills and a positive attitude towards further learning. Funding for these courses is provided by the Republic of Estonia's Ministry of Culture, with additional free language training materials available.

Refugee Education UK

The Refugee Education UK (REUK) Educational Mentoring Program is a volunteer-based organisation that engages mentors to assist young refugees aged between 14 and 25 in their academic pursuits within the United Kingdom. The program pairs these young refugees with trained mentors, who offer one-on-one support for an hour each week in local libraries or community centres. The mentors' role encompasses fostering the confidence, emotional well-being, and community connections of the young refugees, while providing tailored support that may not be feasible for educators due to capacity limitations. In some instances, this support includes assistance with homework, English language instruction, and guidance on further education opportunities.

The Refugee Education UK (REUK) Educational Mentoring Programme is a carefully crafted initiative aimed at facilitating the academic engagement and comprehension of young refugees, while simultaneously fostering their self-esteem and transferable skills. Additionally, REUK extends its support to Ukrainian refugee children and adolescents who have been compelled to flee their homeland due to the ongoing conflict, with the objective of restoring their hope for the future. The programme recognises the pivotal role of English language proficiency in successful integration and offers resources and assistance to aid refugees in acquiring the language. Furthermore, REUK's Education Welcome Project represents a recent initiative that seeks to address the educational and emotional requirements of any newly arrived refugee, irrespective of their background. The programme underscores the significance of a secure and hospitable environment for the successful integration of refugees and provides resources and support to facilitate their adjustment to their new communities (Refugee Education UK, 2024).

Co-design tool kit for refugees by Policy Lab

Project by Policy Lab that aimed to explore how resettled refugees can participate in language learning to support their integration into society. The project combined film ethnography and co-design to learn from and create solutions with refugees. To support refugees with limited English language skills, a co-design toolkit was developed and used during research visits. The toolkit was designed to enable refugees to share their experiences and ideas meaningfully, and it was tested and refined with former refugees to ensure its accessibility. The project highlights the importance of overcoming language barriers to make co-design more inclusive and effective in addressing the needs and experiences of refugees.



The ESOL Co-Design Toolkit in its box

Figure 2. *Co-design toolkit for ESOL lessons by Policy Lab (Wybrant & Langham, 2023).*

Kruts Language Cards – Estonian

The Estonian Language Cards are an educational tool designed to aid individuals in acquiring the Estonian language, with a focus on practical applications for everyday situations such as shopping and navigating unfamiliar areas. The cards contain a compilation of useful expressions and vocabulary, accompanied by engaging facts and information about Estonian culture, customs, and technology on the reverse side of each card. The cards are categorised by topic, including essentials, transportation, dining, and shopping, to facilitate efficient learning. The Estonian Language Cards are a valuable resource for those interested in learning the language and fostering connections with local Estonians during their travels (Kruts OÜ, 2024).



Figure 3. Estonian language cards (Kruts OÜ, 2024).

2.6 Overview and analysis of the existing system

System analysis plays a crucial role by pinpointing the needs of end-users and various stakeholders, while also tackling organisation challenges. This process enables the identification and assessment of potential solutions and their effects. A comprehensive analysis aids in crafting systems that are not only effective and efficient but also user-friendly (Alter & Browne, 2005). The evaluation of the existing system aimed to discern the effectiveness of initiatives, programs, and attitudes, highlighting successful aspects and areas needing attention and improvement.

The review of existing literature uncovered that the identified needs and gaps within the system are interconnected, making it impractical to isolate and address a single issue. Nonetheless, it is evident that actions can significantly influence the development of either positive or negative scenarios. The primary objective of this study is to examine the key findings and determine how to initiate a positive cycle, thereby enhancing the living standards of refugees in Estonia.

In order to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the system, it was essential to examine the events from various scenario cases, including the outcomes of inaction and the impact of cohesive social actions implemented systematically. This approach allowed for a thorough examination of the key findings and their presentation from multiple viewpoints, thereby facilitating the creation of a favourable scenario that could inform future interventions and strategies for addressing the complex challenges faced by the system.

The graphic presentation in Appendix 1 sheds light on the examination of the system and key insights, showcasing how positive developments instigate the cycle, while negative events trigger the adverse cycle. The analysis is split into two phases: The vicious cycle and the virtuous cycle. The vicious cycle shows how inadequately implemented integration leads to deprivation and hinders the living standards of refugees. The virtuous cycle, on the contrary, demonstrates how the Estonian government and society are contributing to the provision of equal rights, implementing educational initiatives, offering training and employment opportunities, resulting in improved cohesion and elevated living standards. Both cycles are influenced by key influences which include perception, community engagement, policy reforms, urban planning and leadership.

In summary, the analysis suggests that if the government and NGOs choose effective integration strategies, the refugee community will integrate successfully. However, if the Estonian government focuses on initiatives with poor integration, such as mandating the Estonian language exam without providing sufficient educational opportunities to prepare for and participate in language courses, it may lead to radicalization and intolerance within the refugee community (World Economic Forum & PWC, 2017, p.9-10).

2.7 Background research conclusion

The integration of Ukrainian refugees in Estonia is a multifaceted process that requires attention to various key areas to ensure their successful adaptation and inclusion in Estonian society. In conclusion, the primary requirements and areas necessitating enhancements in the context of 2024-2025, along with the progression of programs aiding refugees, are crucial. The challenges in safeguarding Ukrainian refugees, especially women and children, underscore the urgent necessity for targeted assistance to ensure their welfare and successful integration. Essential initiatives encompass language education, child protection, awareness of gender-based violence,

and measures to prevent labour exploitation, all pivotal in addressing the varied needs of refugees. Additionally, the delivery of healthcare services, educational opportunities, psychosocial support, and specialised programs for refugee children play a vital role in promoting effective integration and catering to the diverse requirements of displaced individuals.

One crucial aspect that stands out is the significance of learning the Estonian language for refugees' integration. The ability to communicate effectively in Estonian is essential for refugees to navigate daily life, access services, secure employment opportunities, and build relationships within the local community. Language proficiency facilitates practical aspects like shopping and transportation and also plays a vital role in fostering connections, understanding Estonian culture, and feeling a sense of belonging in the new environment.

The existing support systems in Estonia, such as free Estonian language courses offered through organisations like the Unemployment Insurance Fund, Settle in Estonia, and the Integration Foundation, are commendable initiatives aimed at assisting adult refugees in learning the language. These initiatives are vital in assisting refugees in developing language proficiency to successfully pass the compulsory Estonian language exam, as mandated by the state.

However, despite these positive steps, there are areas that require attention and improvement to enhance the support provided to Ukrainian refugees in Estonia. A significant aspect requiring attention is the provision and accessibility of Estonian language programs that prioritise speaking skills and offer personalised support. While existing initiatives offer valuable resources, there is a need to ensure that language courses are widely accessible, tailored to different proficiency levels, and responsive to the diverse needs of refugees, including those who have experienced trauma or face specific challenges in language learning.

2.6 Research question

How can volunteering contribute to the development of comprehensive and personalised services to address the diverse needs of Ukrainian refugees in Estonia, thereby promoting their successful integration?

Goals

- Focus this thesis on two primary groups: Ukrainian refugees and volunteers from NGOs, making them the central stakeholders throughout the study.
- Examine a range of strategies, including Co-design framework and Design thinking process, that expand cooperation among volunteers, foster empathy among them, and improve communication with refugees in need of assistance.
- Focus on implementing a strategy that promotes successful integration of refugees and enhances communication with the local population, thereby fostering better relationships and understanding in Estonian language.
- Concentrate on deploying personalised strategies to enhance the integration and inclusion of refugees in Estonia.
- Establish services that promote collaboration among Estonian local NGOs and governmental institutions to enhance cooperation.

Objectives

1. Investigate and implement diverse strategies, including design methodologies, to cultivate empathy, and improve communication with refugees in need of integration.
2. Develop and implement tailored individualised plans for refugees that consider the multifaceted nature of the challenges, ensuring comprehensive support and addressing their diverse needs.
3. Create and execute strategies to enhance proficiency in the Estonian language, aiding in effective communication and seamless integration within the local community.
4. Clarifying objectives for both Estonian NGOs and government organisations, thereby fostering a more effective and coordinated approach to volunteering.
5. Develop a sustainable volunteering community system that supports volunteers effectively without depleting emotional resources, while providing assistance to refugees.
6. Develop and implement a structured system that defines clear objectives, timelines, and scenarios for volunteer involvement, with the goal of boosting engagement.

Hypothesis

The implementation of a service that prioritises improving Estonian language proficiency for refugees through an individualised approach, facilitated by NGO members and the application of Co-design methodologies, will significantly enhance effective communication and integration of refugees into the local community in Estonia.

3. DESIGN FRAMEWORK

This chapter elucidates the theoretical design frameworks that were selected and analysed within the thesis.

3.1 Theoretical frameworks in focus

Various design frameworks were carefully selected and tailored at different phases of the design thesis. These chosen frameworks were specifically chosen for their adaptability for implementation and alignment with the needs of refugees. Certain frameworks were utilised across various timeframes and project stages. Figure 4. illustrates the methodologies under consideration and delineates the theoretical foundations upon which this research is built.

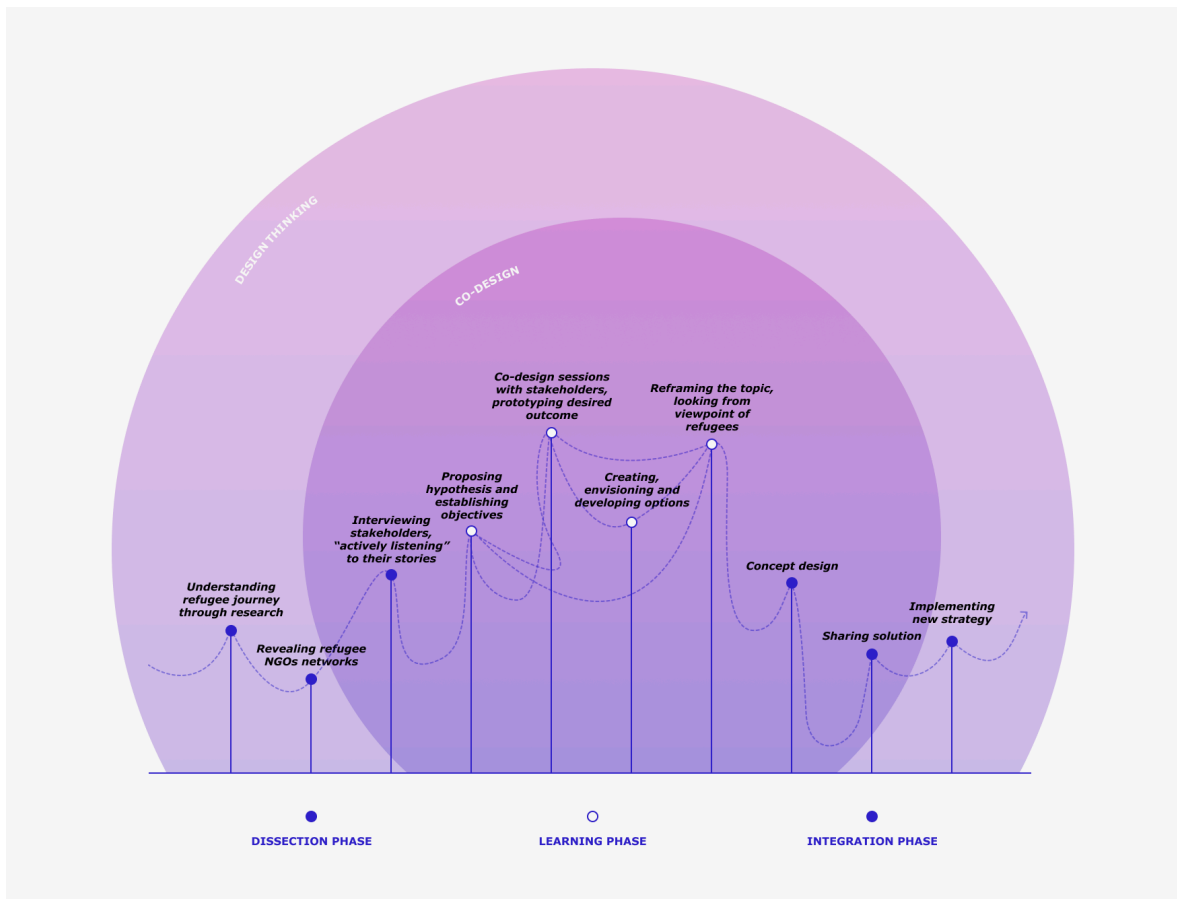


Figure 4. Methodologies and design frameworks used in this thesis. Created by author.

3.1.1 Design thinking process

Design thinking is a methodical and cooperative strategy aimed at identifying and innovatively resolving issues by employing methodologies and research techniques typically not associated with design, architecture, or engineering disciplines (Bender-Salazar, 2023, p. 2, 8, 19). Design thinking focuses on meeting the requirements of end-users of a product or service, a critical aspect in the social sector aiming to enhance the welfare of individuals and communities. Through close collaboration with clients and consumers, design thinking facilitates the emergence of impactful solutions organically, rather than through top-down imposition. Consequently, both businesses and nonprofits are increasingly adopting design thinking to create more effective and innovative responses to social challenges (Brown & Wyatt, 2009, p. 32-33). Design thinking promotes innovation by prompting individuals to envision solutions from the perspective of the end user and cultivate empathy towards them, leading to profound understandings of their unaddressed requirements (Brown, 2011).

Design thinking is a flexible and repetitive process with three to five stages. The author opted for the five phase framework recommended by the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford (Interaction Design Foundation - IxDF, 2016) to guide the design thesis and execute the design process.

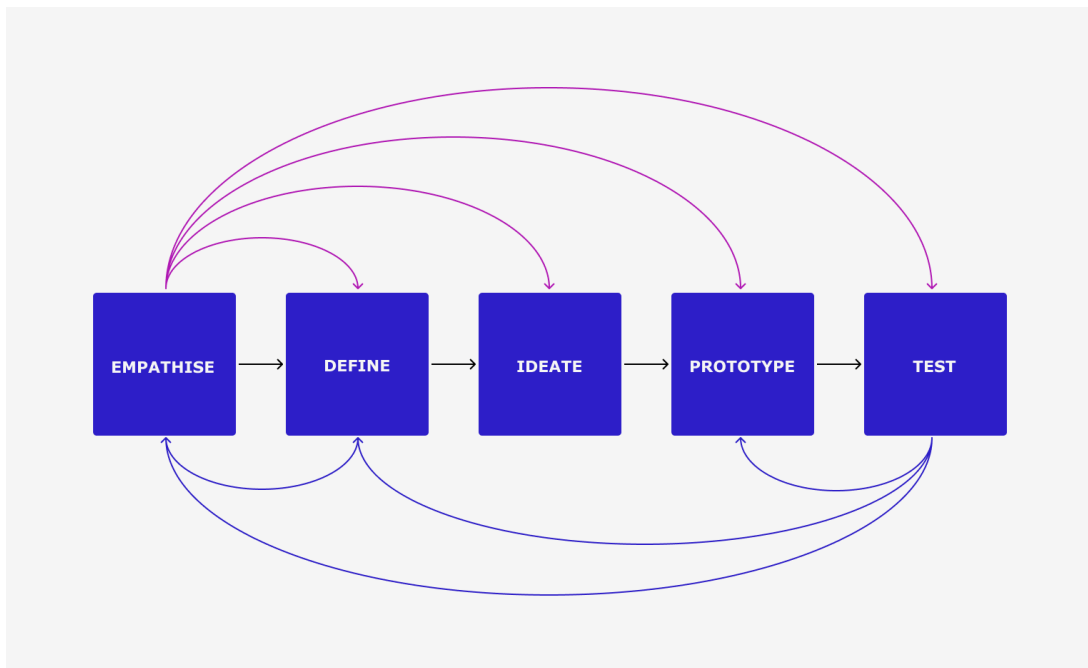


Figure 5. *The Design Thinking process, initial figure from The Hasso-Plattner Institute, modified by the author.*

Although beneficial for fostering innovation, the design thinking process has notable drawbacks that warrant attention. These include the process's time-intensive nature, the potential for human biases, a tendency to overly prioritise end-users over other stakeholders, difficulties in implementation due to organisational resistance to change, and the iterative and resource-intensive requirements of the methodology.

The Design Thinking process is a human-centred methodology that can be applied to address the needs of Ukrainian refugees in Estonia. The first stage, Empathise, involves understanding the experiences and needs of Ukrainian refugees in Estonia. This stage allows for a deep understanding of the challenges faced by Ukrainian refugees in their new environment, such as language barriers, cultural differences, and social integration. The second stage, Define, involves identifying the specific needs and challenges of Ukrainian refugees, allowing for a clear and concise problem statement to be created. The third stage, Ideate, involves generating creative and innovative solutions to the identified challenges. This stage encourages the exploration of various possibilities and the development of a range of potential solutions. The fourth stage, Prototype, involves creating a tangible representation of the selected solution. This stage allows for the testing and refinement of the solution, ensuring that it meets the needs of Ukrainian refugees in Estonia. The final stage, Test, involves evaluating the effectiveness of the solution in real-world scenarios. This stage allows for the collection of feedback and data, which can be used to refine and improve the solution over time.

3.1.2 Co-design and Community centred design

The distinction between co-design and community centred design lies in their respective focuses and methodologies. Co-design entails designing alongside community members as equal partners, ensuring their active participation from the outset to address their specific needs collaboratively. In contrast, community-centred design prioritises designing for the broader community, taking into account the collective values, behaviours, and requirements of the community as a whole. It aims to utilise the community as a source of knowledge and transformation, valuing their contributions throughout the design process to develop solutions that benefit the entire community (Meroni et al., 2018, p 17, 33, 40-41).

Utilising Anna Meroni's Collaborative Design Framework can bring substantial advantages, the framework highlights the importance of active collaboration among stakeholders, such as refugees, volunteers, and other involved individuals, to

collectively devise solutions that cater to the unique needs and difficulties encountered by the refugee community. Adhering to Meroni's methodology promotes a more inclusive and participatory design process, guaranteeing that the solutions created are not only efficient but also reflective of the refugees' experiences and aspirations. Consequently, co-design emerges as particularly salient in this specific scenario.

The co-design process entails establishing a stakeholder community that collaborates throughout the design process to guarantee the final outcome is significant, practical, and enduring. This process comprises four primary stages: initiation, exploration, collaboration, and implementation (Manzini, 2015, p. 93-110). The initiation stage includes problem and stakeholder identification, while the exploration phase entails collecting information and concepts to establish a mutual comprehension of the issue. During the collaboration phase, ideas undergo testing and prototyping via a participatory approach, and in the execution phase, solutions are incorporated into the community and assessed for efficacy. Combining design thinking and co-design can yield superior outcomes. Integrating co-design into the design thinking process enhances the creation of a digital artefact development process that is user-centred, efficient, and collaborative in terms of user experience.

The Actionable Collaborative Design framework is a methodology that furnishes designers with practical and actionable instructions for conducting extensive co-design initiatives across diverse platforms and contexts. This framework, an expansion of the collaborative design framework, seeks to render the framework more tangible and relevant to practitioners by supplying specific suggestions and focal points for each phase of the co-design process. The Collaborative Design Framework is elaborated by delineating the actions within the four resultant quadrants: "discovering and exploring options", "imagining options beyond the world as it is", "expanding and consolidating options", "creating, envisioning and developing options". The style of guidance in collaborative design can be either "active listening" - facilitating or "thought-provoking" - steering. "Active listening" encourages empathy and shared solutions, while "thought-provoking" stimulates critical thinking and imaginative responses. These approaches shape participant interactions and outcomes, with "active listening" fostering understanding and collaboration, and "thought-provoking" encouraging deeper engagement in a given topic and creative problem-solving. This structure enables practitioners to pinpoint their requirements and objectives at each stage and customise their approach accordingly. In essence, the Actionable Collaborative Design Framework presents a pragmatic roadmap and guidance for practitioners to interact with various stakeholders and develop impactful solutions that

tackle intricate societal issues (Meroni et al., 2018, p. 15, 38-40). Figure 4 illustrates the adapted The Collaborative Design Framework.

Co-design can encourage social innovation by incorporating different stakeholders in the development of new goods or services. This procedure contributes to ensuring that the finished product corresponds to the requirements and preferences of the end users and other parties involved (Manzini, 2015, p.23-24, p. 37-39). According to the Stanford Social Innovation Review, social innovation is defined as "a novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individuals." (Phills Jr. et al., 2008, p.36).

Design for social innovation embraces strategies like "living lab" and "open innovation," the initiative involves working together to develop and test new ideas for future living. Its goal is to actively contribute as a critical and creative force in today's

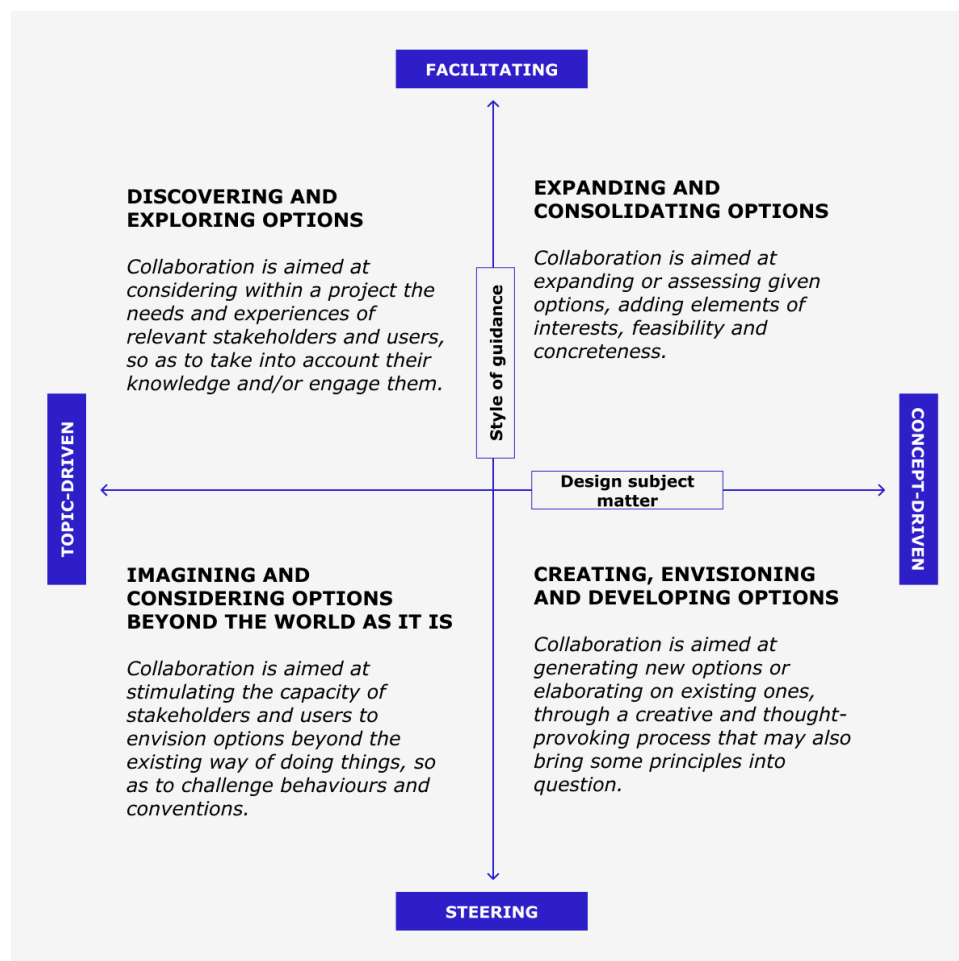


Figure 6. The Collaborative Design Framework original figure by Anna Meroni et. al (2018). Modified by author.

environment, driving sustainable change amidst the ongoing social and environmental transitions (Manzini & Cipolla, 2019). Social innovation has the potential to address critical societal issues through the facilitation of inclusive and collaborative innovation processes (Meroni et al., 2018, p. 21).

Therefore, social innovation can be achieved by incorporating a collaborative design framework into the process of creating design solutions specifically tailored for refugees. The benefit of incorporating co-design is its potential for future application in identifying and addressing system gaps, enabling a comprehensive examination of the issue from multiple perspectives.

The term co-design has encountered challenges due to its frequent misuse by local authorities and developers, who label basic consultation activities as co-design without engaging in true co-creation or collaboration. As a result, there is a need for a clearer definition of co-design processes and guidelines on conducting them ethically and authentically, ensuring genuine community involvement in decision-making. Derived from legal principles for fair consultation, six ethical principles guide co-design processes: (1) initiation prior to decision-making, (2) provision of necessary information and skills, (3) community comfort with timing, (4) community decision-making authority, (5) respect for local identities, and (6) emphasis on collective advantages. These principles, informed by legal precedents and global public participation standards, form the foundation for ethical co-design practices (Sendra, 2023, p.9-10).

4. METHODOLOGIES

The chapter on methodology in this thesis provides a comprehensive overview of the research and elucidates the specific methodologies employed. Methodology is essential in research as it guides researchers in conducting studies systematically and in an organised manner, ensuring the reliability and validity of the results. It also facilitates the comparison of findings across studies and promotes transparency, ultimately enhancing the credibility of research outcomes (Tomiya et al., 2009, p. 548)

4.1 Observations

In qualitative research, observation is described as "collecting data using one's senses, especially looking and listening, in a systematic and meaningful way." It is described as the "foundation of all research methods" in the social and behavioural sciences. This data collection approach entails watching social situations and gathering information that is not always readily evident (Smit & Onwuegbuzie, 2018, p.1).

During the course of the study, the researcher adopted dual forms of observation while collaborating with volunteers and engaging in conversations with refugees, namely physical shadowing, which involved accompanying individuals in person, and digital shadowing online, which entailed observing their activities in virtual spaces.

Online observation offers advantages such as direct researcher participation in the event under study, enabling analysis and evaluation of challenging behaviours or fields through internet platforms and the virtual presence of the researcher can lead to reduced participant influence compared to physical presence (Bíro et al., 2014, p.53).

Physical observation is a valuable research tool due to its ability to capture practices as they occur, potentially unveiling information that practitioners may not have disclosed in interviews, overlooked, or deemed insignificant. Observing actions and practices can also shed light on underlying values, which can be analysed using techniques like thematic analysis of observation protocols or texts. Furthermore, integrating observation with interviews or shadowing can boost the effectiveness of this research method (Espedal et al., 2022, p.69).

4.2 Photography documentation

Photography documentation can enhance interviews by providing a reference point for researchers to delve deeper into discussions, evoke memories, and prompt reflections. Participants often share insights about both the visible and invisible elements in the photos. This method allows researchers to access dimensions of participants' lives that may otherwise remain hidden. Photography is particularly valuable for exploring habitus and is a collaborative process in dialogic research approaches (Cleland & MacLeod, 2021, p.230, 235). Visual methods in qualitative research enhance data analysis by providing an alternative visual language to interpret findings. Researchers use basic framing questions to deconstruct discursive realities, prioritise visualisation, and analyse both text and image for connections and discrepancies (Ayala & Koch, 2019, p.8, 11).

In the present investigation, the researcher implemented a photographic documentation technique to meticulously capture the activities of the Mariupoli sōbrad volunteers and to document the narratives of participating refugees.

4.3 Literature analysis

The literature review is a fundamental aspect of theses and dissertations, intricately linked to other sections. This critical review is vital for assessing existing research, pinpointing areas needing further exploration within a specific field, and establishing the problem's context (Debora F.B. et al., 2019, p.1-2, 5). A literature review on refugee issues helps gather essential information from academic and grey literature to identify gaps, trends, and best practices in refugee resettlement and integration (Phillimore, et al., 2022).

4.4 Mapping

Mapping in an academic context refers to the process of analysing and visualising scholarly literature to understand connections between publications, authors, funders, and keywords within a specific field or discipline. It involves systematically searching, collecting, and reviewing relevant studies to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge on a topic, identify gaps in the literature, and inform future research directions (Cooper, 2016, p.76-77). Mapping can assist researchers in identifying research gaps, visualising the research environment, saving time by giving

an overview of relevant studies, improving cooperation among researchers, and informing decision-making (de Abreu, 2023).

The author employed mapping techniques to group information gathered from interviews, volunteer shadowing, and observations to identify patterns and deficiencies in the services offered. Diagrams are effective for synthesising diverse information sources like facts, ethnographic research, brainstorm ideas, user feedback, needs, insights, and design challenges. Organising information into clusters systematically, prove to be a valuable method during the design process, especially when dealing with a large volume of varied data (Friis & Yu, 2022).

4.5 Qualitative semi-structured interviews

The objective of the qualitative semi-structured interviews is to collect viewpoints through personal interactions and interviews with stakeholders. Utilising interviews offers advantages such as directing the interview towards particular subjects or domains to ensure the acquisition of pertinent data, all the while permitting adaptability to encourage dialogue. Furthermore, these interviews enable researchers to obtain comprehensive and elaborate responses as participants are given the liberty to expand on their experiences (Rabionet, 2011, p. 1-4).

Moreover, the interviews facilitated the collection of perspectives on the accessibility of services offered to refugees, identifying those that are readily available and pinpointing the services that are most lacking for refugees. Moreover, community members actively involved in providing assistance expressed their sincere perspectives on their future volunteer aspirations. The researcher further conducted interviews with refugees who had resettled in various European nations to obtain diverse viewpoints and to contrast them with the services provided in Estonia, thereby aiming to identify potential gaps or areas for improvement in the local context. The obstacles highlighted during the interviews, along with the insights gained, were incorporated into the development of the design concept.

The interviewer adhered to predetermined questionnaires and topics delineated in Appendix 3. Interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders, each interviewee was requested to sign a consent form delineated in Appendix 2., as sensitive topics were discussed, and they were given the option to withdraw before a designated deadline.

List of interviewees

Members of Mariupoli Sõbrad NGO

1. Aleksandra Averjanova, Board member, interviewed online, duration time: 60 min
2. Board member 2, interviewed online, duration time: 60 min
3. Co-founder, interviewed in person, duration time: 60 min
4. Volunteer 1, interviewed online, duration time: 90 min
5. Volunteer 2, interviewed online, duration time: 60 min
6. Volunteer 3, interviewed online, duration time: 60 min

Refugees

7. Refugee 1, acquired temporary protection in Estonia, interviewed online, duration time: 60 min
8. Refugee family 2 (2 people), acquired asylum in Ireland, interviewed online, duration time: 60 min
9. Refugee family 3 (14 people), acquired asylum in Finland, interviewed online and in person, duration time: 120 min
10. Refugee family 4 (2 people), acquired temporary protection in Estonia, interviewed online, duration time: 60 min
11. Refugee 5, acquired international protection in Estonia, interviewed online, duration time 60 min

Estonian Refugee council

12. Veronika Saareväli, Head of Counselling programme, interviewed in person, duration time: 60 min

British Red Cross

13. Harry Scott-Trimble, former Lead Designer, interviewed online, duration time 60 min

Social Insurance Board

14. Sirle Blumberg, Head of Human Trafficking Service, interviewed online, duration time: 90 min

Ministry of Interior

15. Advisor, interviewed online, duration time: 60 min

Ministry of Justice

16. Advisor to the Criminal Policy Department, interviewed online, duration time: 60 min

4.1.6 Co-design workshop

Co-design revolves around the concept of diverse individuals coming together to collaborate in the design process, aiming to address significant societal issues by incorporating a wide range of perspectives. This approach is seen as highly promising in tackling pressing challenges (Selloni et al., 2023, p.18). In co-design workshops, participants engage in creative processes of crafting, where intentional ambiguity is embraced to cultivate avenues for creativity, self-expression, and dialogue. The acts of creating, narrating, and embodying are seen as interrelated, harmonious actions within the codesign process (Sanders & Stappers, 2014, p.3-5).

The author arranged and led one co-design workshop. The sessions were held through video calling tools and using Miro boards, as some of the participants were located overseas. Following the interview sessions, co-design workshops were scheduled, enabling participants to possess prior knowledge of the discussed subjects and navigate the workshops effectively. These sessions were utilised for conceptualization of the services, gathering insights from diverse perspectives, and collecting feedback. Conversations encompassed stakeholder considerations, identification of service gaps, emergency preparedness strategies, necessary tools and services for refugees, and evaluation of design solutions to determine essential requirements.

5. FIELD RESEARCH

This section presents an examination of the compiled research derived from both scholarly sources and practical fieldwork conducted by the author. The primary objective of this section is to employ diverse research methodologies to scrutinise the system across multiple dimensions. In this segment of the dissertation, an examination of the interviews, co-design workshops, observations, and photographic documentation obtained during field research is presented. The objective of this subsection is to distil the insights, aggregate them, and progress towards a conclusion, assessing their alignment with the initial hypotheses.

5.1 Interviews, observations and photographic documentation

The data collection procedure consisted of conducting semi-structured interviews with stakeholders, which took place between the months of December 2023 and April 2024, with the interviews being executed in either a face-to-face manner or through digital video conferencing tools.

5.1.1 Volunteers and NGOs employees

A total of eight individuals, comprising volunteers and employees from Mariupoli sõbrad, Estonian Refugee Council, and British Red Cross organisations, were interviewed. These interviews illuminated the distinct operational approaches of various organisations in Estonia and the United Kingdom in the context of serving refugees.

The interview with Veronika Saareväli (personal communication, December 5, 2023), the Head of the Counseling Program at the Estonian Refugee Council, was executed on-site at their primary facility. The objective of the interview was to understand the operational modus of the NGO and identify the most successful programs in terms of integration and assistance to refugees. The most significant insights gleaned from this interview revealed that the Council primarily focuses on aiding refugees who have opted to settle in Estonia and seek employment or entrepreneurial opportunities, necessitate support in liaising with governmental entities, and require additional counselling services. It is noteworthy that the Estonian Refugee Council largely depends on its employees, as they encounter challenges in recruiting volunteers and engaging them in aid efforts. The interviewee highlights the importance of building trust with refugees, ensuring they feel acknowledged and supported. Challenges in

refugee work include emotional impact and limitations in changing the past. Trust-building is key, achieved through positive interactions. Saareväli suggested improvements like localised spaces, better government collaboration, enhanced language programs, and individualised plans for refugees. The Head of the Counselling Program values Estonian language proficiency, daily activities, and free time in refugee integration. The interview offers insights for designing a better integration environment for refugees. The Estonian Refugee Council, a highly reputed NGO within Estonia, has cultivated collaborative relationships with GAs, international, and local NGOs, attributable to its esteemed standing.

The interview with Harry Trimble (personal communication, April 9, 2024), the former Lead Designer from British Red Cross, was inspiring in a sense to see how services could be taken to the next step and developed for end users as well as the employees and volunteers of the NGO. His input has been crucial in forming the Red Cross' Emergency Response product team. Trimble shared his experiences and lessons learned over the past two years. He emphasised the importance of designing services close to the problems they aim to solve, working closely with frontline experts, and delivering tangible results before pushing for organisational reforms. Trimble also highlighted the need for more software developers to support service design and the importance of the internet as the operating model for the Red Cross. He stressed the need for patience, sustainable growth of the design community, and recognizing that design and management are different skills. Trimble's insights provide valuable guidance for organisations aiming to improve their service design and digital transformation efforts. Harry Trimble has been documenting his work journey in blog and provided public access to his mappings which depict Mapping ER Services.

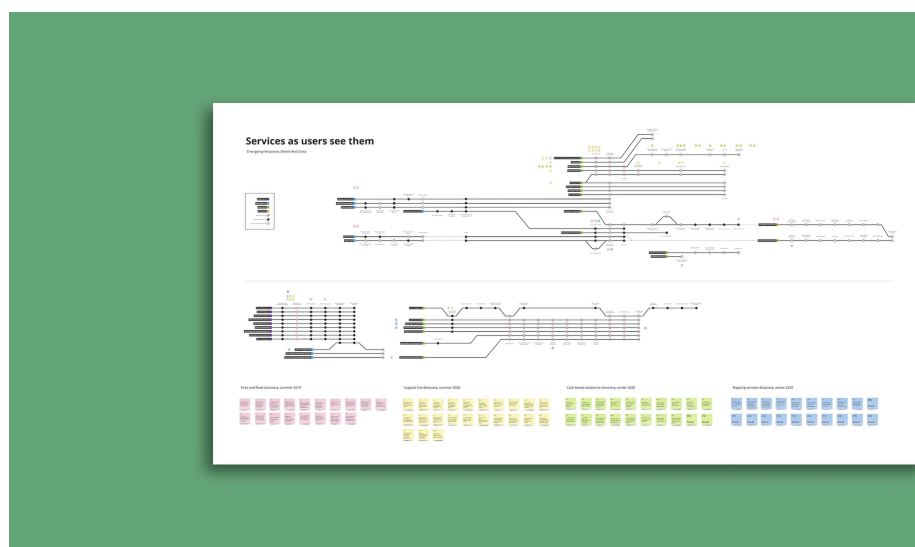


Figure 7. *Services as users see them. Original image by Harry Trimble (2021).*

The interviews with volunteers and founders of Mariupoli sõbrad were predominantly conducted online, with only one interview conducted face-to-face. A total of seven individuals were interviewed, including one refugee who joined the Mariupoli sõbrad NGO post-settlement in Estonia.

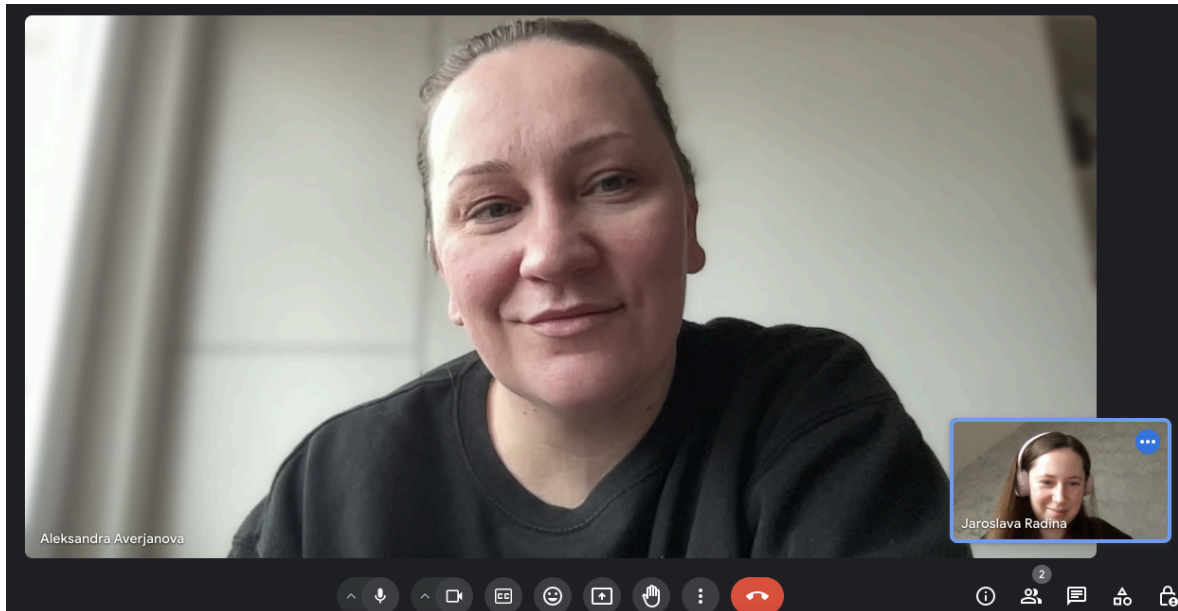


Figure 8. *Mariupoli sõbrad* volunteer and board member. Screenshots made by the author.

Moreover, observations were conducted of Mariupoli sõbrad volunteers at the Tallinn Bus Station to comprehend the strategies utilised by front-line volunteers in aiding refugees arriving in Tallinn. A small group of volunteers, comprising 2-4 individuals, provided on-site assistance at the Tallinn bus station (Volunteer 1, personal communication, March 10, 2024). The researcher contributed on-site assistance at the Tallinn bus station, collaborating with volunteers to facilitate communication between Ukrainian refugees and Social Insurance Board employees, ultimately enabling their temporary accommodation in Tallinn. This experience entailed providing counsel to families, disseminating Estonian SIM cards for communication, and supplying tickets. By combining physical observation and online involvement, the researcher gained a comprehensive understanding of the process involved in assisting transit Ukrainian refugees and the development of services to address their needs.

The author engaged in online observation and shadowing of volunteers within the Mariupoli sõbrad organisation through various Telegram messenger chats. Access to these chats was granted by members of the organisation. The chats were categorised

by specific themes and included volunteers assigned to different activities. In total, the author identified 25 distinct chats, each dedicated to specific tasks, where volunteers received instructions on procedures and were guided on submitting information promptly. The crucial chats handled tasks such as arranging accommodation and tickets, facilitating international communication with volunteers in European countries, managing financial transactions, providing official news updates, and hosting a chat for family curator volunteers responsible for communicating with families.

The volunteers are instrumental in identifying necessary improvements to the system, as they are often the first to recognize such needs. During interviews with Mariupoli sõbrad volunteers, many expressed that assisting individuals who have experienced trauma can be challenging, and providing temporary aid can be difficult due to the limitations of such support. However, all interviewees acknowledged the significance and necessity of the help provided. A crucial insight gained from these interviews was the importance of maintaining volunteer services to facilitate the initial settlement process for refugees. A significant revelation was the volunteers' desire for structured and organised work within a defined timeframe, to prevent overexertion and burnout. Volunteers recognize their crucial role and may find it challenging to disengage from assisting refugees, often leading to burnout. This state frequently results in volunteers' reluctance to return to their positions after experiencing burnout.

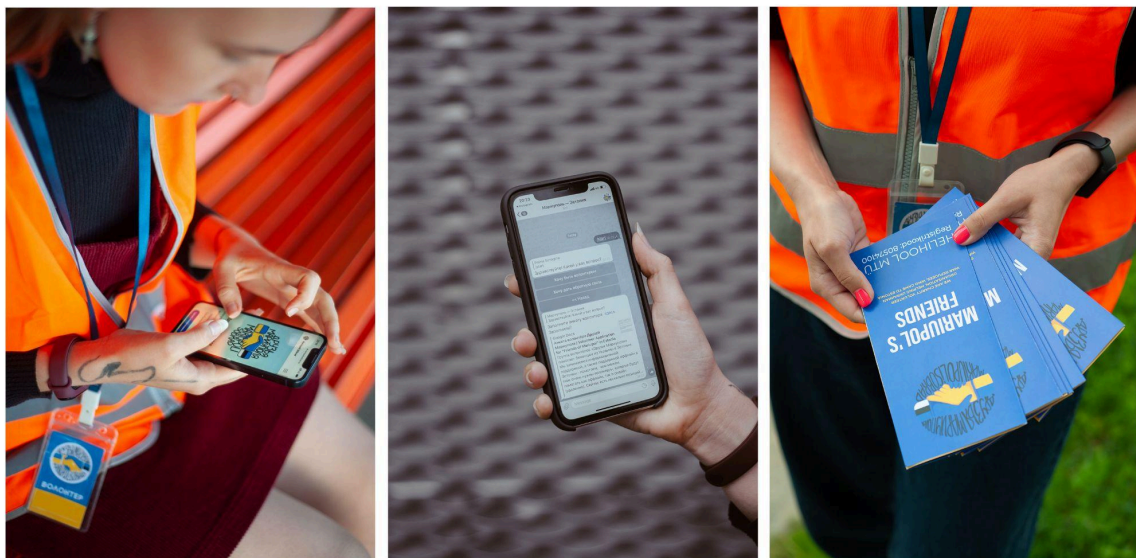


Figure 9. *Mariupoli sõbrad front line volunteers at Tallinn Bus Station. Photographs made by the author.*

5.1.2 Refugees

The primary aim of the interviews with refugees, predominantly conducted via an online video call platform, was to determine the services they had accessed and identify any potential service gaps. The author selected four refugee families and individuals whose experiences encapsulated the challenges and valuable insights of those who opted to remain in Europe and pursue an integration path. The refugees were primarily based in Estonia, with exceptions of a family of fourteen seeking asylum in Finland and another family of two in Ireland. To ensure comprehensive data collection, the family of fourteen was interviewed both in person and online. The interviews aimed to shed light on the experiences of refugees navigating integration processes in their new European homes.

1st Refugee

The interviewee, a Ukrainian refugee in Estonia, who obtained temporary protection, expressed overall satisfaction with the services and government response, despite initial accommodation challenges (personal communication, April 9, 2024). The refugee, with a background in Asian and African studies, found Estonian language learning successful but difficult due to unique features and scarcity of free courses. Crediting their rapid advancement in A1 language courses to independent study with KEELEKLIK prior to their arrival. Additionally, he took part in integration courses offered by Settle in Estonia, which he found to be highly beneficial. Employment and university enrollment were achieved with ease. The refugee's interaction with local organisations has been positive, with a notable mention of the Niina 2 centre for refugees. However, the refugee highlighted the need for assistance in job search and housing. The refugee's suggestions for improving the situation for refugees in Estonia include enhancing general principles and rules, daily processes, programs for attracting new volunteers, new forms of assistance for refugees, and preparedness for emergencies. The refugee expressed interest in having more diverse options for learning Estonian and enhancing educational services overall.

2nd Refugee

After leaving the Russian Federation and acquiring international protection in Estonia due to the war, the Ukrainian refugee, who had resided in Russia for six years, found housing and employment relatively quickly (personal communication, April 8, 2024). She secured a job through the Ministry of Education and received assistance from

Settle in Estonia, including integration courses and essential information. However, she faced difficulties in learning Estonian and enrolling in language courses due to restrictions associated with her international protection status. She was unable to join a course provided by the Integration Foundation, and other courses offered by Settle in Estonia were conducted during work hours, making it challenging for her to participate due to her job commitments. The refugee highlighted that evening courses are highly sought after among refugees, but enrollment is challenging due to high demand. Due to legal requirements to pass the Estonian language, she had to hire a personal teacher to begin learning. The refugee expressed that having more options and flexible methods for language courses on the Estonian market would be beneficial for refugees seeking to enhance their language skills.

3rd Refugee family

During an interview, a displaced person recounted their individual journey of relocating to Ireland with their spouse, following the loss of their home due to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine (personal communication, April 6, 2024). Initially, they sought temporary protection at the Citywest refugee centre, where they were interviewed by law enforcement officials. Subsequently, they were transferred to the city of Sligo, where they secured a rental unit with the assistance of volunteers. The refugee emphasised the significance of language instruction and integration initiatives in aiding refugees. Local vocational institutions provide complimentary language courses, staffed by a combination of volunteers and employees. Although these classes are accessible, attendance is not compulsory, thereby granting refugees the autonomy to decide their participation. Consequently, classes are infrequently attended, with only half the seats occupied. Moreover, refugees have the flexibility to select the frequency of their classes, with alternatives ranging from twice to five times a week. Despite encountering obstacles in securing employment and housing, as well as extended waiting periods for medical consultations, the refugee remains hopeful about their future in Ireland and expresses gratitude for the support received thus far.

4th Refugee family

The narrative presented in the text recounts the experiences of three related families consisting of fourteen refugees, accompanied by two Cane Corso dogs and a Maine Coon cat, who collectively traversed multiple countries, including Russia and Estonia, before ultimately reaching Finland. Their journey culminated in their resettlement in

Järvenpää, Finland, where they pursued employment or educational opportunities, with children attending local schools and expressing enthusiasm for Finnish classrooms (personal communication, April 6, 2024).

The Finnish language was identified as challenging, yet some refugees managed to acquire proficiency after a year, enabling them to communicate with native Finns. While language courses are not mandatory, some refugees opt not to attend them. The refugees' journey to Finland was fraught with challenges, but over time, they managed to establish themselves and integrate into society. Certain refugees secured employment in sectors such as cleaning services, manicure work, and construction, while others opted to further their education by enrolling in professional schools. The government provided housing and financial assistance, and consultations were available through the municipality, with the option of using a translator if necessary. The refugees expressed gratitude for the help they received and were proactive in seeking ways to integrate into their new community.



Figure 10. *Refugee family in the backyard of the Dzingel hotel in May 2022. Photograph made by author.*

5.1.3 Governmental Agents

The author interviewed various stakeholders, including Sirle Blumberg, Head of Human Trafficking Program, to gather different perspectives for future design purposes. The

interviews aimed to understand how NGOs and government agencies can collaborate effectively to help refugees. Specifically, the author interviewed government agencies to learn about the support they offer, the challenges they face, and how they perceive the needs of refugees. Sirle Blumberg discussed her role in the Victim Support and Prevention Services Department of the Social Insurance Board, where she helped refugees and victims (personal communication, March 13, 2024).

Sirle Blumberg, who has been in the field for 20 years, emphasised the importance of being trauma-sensitive and avoiding judgement when working with victims, regardless of their background. The social worker highlighted the diverse range of victims, including refugees from various countries such as Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, with 80% of them being Russian speakers. From 2022 to 2024, there was an increase in domestic violence cases among Ukrainian refugee women seeking shelter and protection. The interview also touched upon the importance of trust-building, which can be a lengthy process, and the need to be patient and understanding when working with victims. The social worker mentioned successful strategies in combating human trafficking, such as ongoing projects with schools and training programs, and the importance of collaboration with various partners, including labour inspectorates, the police, and businesses.

During the interview, it was noted that a specialist in Human Trafficking was engaged in providing guidance to hotel staff to help them identify potential signs of individuals at risk or involved in human trafficking. While Blumberg's expertise lies in assisting victims, she actively participates in supporting refugees, recognizing their vulnerability. In 2022, she visited locations like the Dzingel hotel to offer guidance to Ukrainian refugees arriving by bus. Sirle Blumberg also referenced her collaboration with colleagues, including those from the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Justice, who emphasized the significance of government officials' involvement and the necessity for NGOs to work together to effectively aid refugees and address communication challenges (Advisor, personal communication, March 28, 2024), (Advisor to the Criminal Policy Department, personal communication, April 3, 2024).

5.2 Conclusion of interviews and observations

Mapping

The author of the study conducted an in-depth examination of the most noteworthy findings and crucial insights derived from interviews with refugees who sought asylum

in Estonia and other stakeholders. While each refugee's experience is distinct, those who opt to reside in Estonia undergo comparable procedures. Appendix 4 illustrates the refugee's path from their pre-arrival situation in Estonia to their eventual integration into society, synthesising information from interviews, literature analysis, and observational data. This thorough mapping not only illustrates the refugee's journey but also emphasises the essential role of NGOs in delivering aid and programs. Furthermore, it emphasises critical areas that necessitate focused attention, thereby highlighting the importance of continued development and support from both governmental bodies and NGOs.


<div>  Key findings </div>			
COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT AND INTEGRATION INITIATIVES	LANGUAGE SUPPORT AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS	JOB SEARCH ASSISTANCE AND HOUSING SUPPORT	STRUCTURED VOLUNTEER WORK AND SUPPORT SERVICES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refugees want accessible information or where they are already looking Refugees need methods to relieve stress and trauma, but many won't actively seek help Some refugees require additional assistance from volunteers to complete everyday tasks Refugees want to retain privacy and dignity while receiving help, yet this often does not happen NGO provide mental support programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refugees prefer to refer to NGOs which support their mother tongue and obtain help from people they can empathise with Learning Estonian is mandatory for refugees, but they face long delays before they can start taking language courses NGO provide programs, education and opportunities for integration Provided language courses are not enough to start speaking Estonian 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refugees can be displaced for long period of times, left isolated and unable to do daily routines NGOs offer counselling services, provide basic needs and food Refugees intending to come to Estonia face challenges related to accommodation, financial support, and psychological well-being Community support and businesses desire to aid refugees, however there may be challenges with time frames and the efficiency of support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GAs may be challenged in executing responsibilities such as emergency planning, identifying those requiring assistance, and arranging accommodation for refugees GAs don't know who is in need or what their needs are as refugees don't know how to follow instructions and reach help NGOs and GAs need to provide updated information and contacts to refugees Local NGOs still experience operational problems due to lack of funding GAs require special training to deal with refugee influx Frontline volunteers endure burnout because they are overworked, undertrained, and unsupported

Figure 11. *Key insights from Appendix 4. Mapping of refugees arriving in Estonia and undergoing the process of settlement*

Figure 11 illustrates the Key findings from the Appendix 4, which were grouped in four main themes which require attention for future development and focus area. The key finding and mapping helped to form the conclusion and analysis of interview findings.

Conclusion: analysis of interview findings

The interviews conducted with refugees, volunteers, NGO employees, and governmental agents have provided valuable insights into the challenges and successes of refugee integration in Estonia. These interviews have shed light on critical

areas that necessitate focused attention and development to enhance services for refugees seeking asylum and settlement in Estonia.

Key Areas Requiring Attention and Development:

1. Language Support and Education Programs:

- The interviews highlighted the importance of enhancing language support environments and providing diverse options for learning Estonian. Refugees expressed challenges in accessing language courses due to restrictions and scheduling conflicts. Therefore, there is a need for more flexible methods and evening courses to accommodate the diverse needs of refugees seeking to improve their language skills.

2. Job Search Assistance and Housing Support:

- Refugees emphasised the need for assistance in job searches and securing housing. While some refugees found employment relatively quickly, others faced obstacles in accessing job opportunities and suitable housing. Improving general principles, daily processes, and programs for attracting new volunteers can enhance job search support and housing assistance for refugees.

3. Structured Volunteer Work and Support Services:

- Volunteers play a crucial role in facilitating the initial settlement process for refugees. However, volunteers expressed the need for structured and organised work within defined timeframes to prevent burnout. Providing clear guidelines, support systems, and opportunities for skill development can help volunteers effectively assist refugees without experiencing exhaustion.

4. Comprehensive Support and Integration Initiatives:

- Comprehensive support services are essential to address the challenges faced by refugees, including prolonged displacement, isolation, and daily routine difficulties. Developing individualised plans, enhancing language programs, and collaborating with governmental entities can improve the

integration process and ensure refugees receive the necessary support to rebuild their lives in Estonia.

In conclusion, the interviews underscore the significance of continuous development and support from both governmental bodies and NGOs to address the multifaceted needs of refugees. By focusing on improving language support, job search assistance, volunteer structures, and comprehensive support services, Estonia can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for refugees seeking to integrate into society successfully.

6. DEVELOPMENT

The developmental section centres on the co-creation phase and advancement of services for refugees and key stakeholders within the refugee community. This developmental process enables the delineation of the requisite structure, content, and exclusions within the services.

6.1 Co-design workshop

The Co-design workshop employed in this project was inspired by the Massive Codesign framework, as outlined in the publication "Massive Codesign: A Proposal for a Collaborative Design Framework" (Meroni et al., 2018).

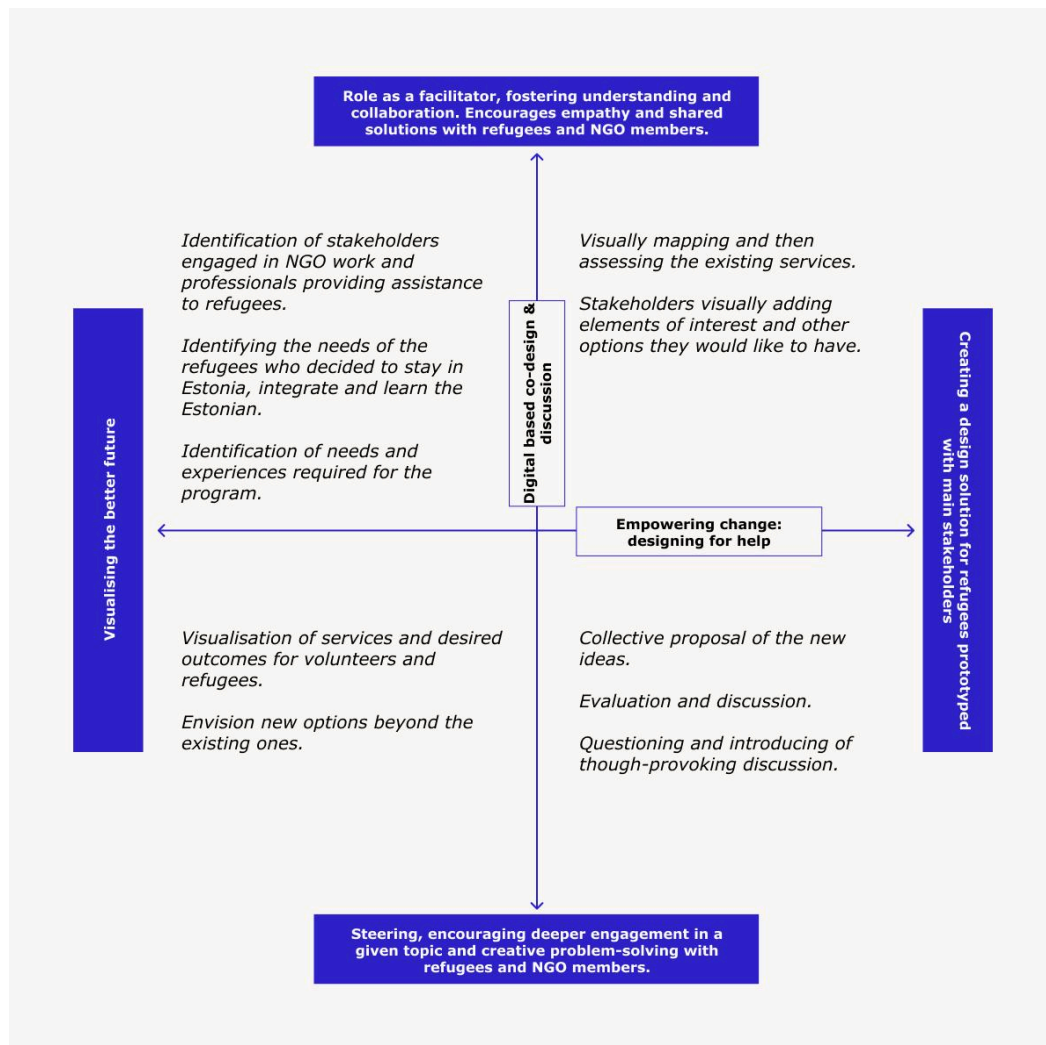


Figure 12. Adapted The Collaborative Design Framework for Co-design workshop "Estonian language for Ukrainian Refugees" (Anna Meroni et. al ,2018). Modified by author.

Title of the co-design activity: "Estonian language for Ukrainian Refugees" - Co-design workshop which was held after the interviews with participants.

Aim: The objectives of this session were to prioritise, improve, and validate the findings from the interviews and establish the preferred scenarios for learning Estonian language.

Participants: Two Ukrainian refugees, who have been residing in Tallinn, Estonia since 2022, were interviewed earlier to gain insights into their experiences and perspectives on learning the Estonian language. Additionally, a volunteer who is proficient in teaching English online to Ukrainian refugees based in the UK and actively supporting the Mariupoli sõbrad NGO also participated in the interviews.

Style of guidance: Employing a *Steering* approach. The author facilitated the workshop and the attendees were all active stakeholders who had previously interviewed related to the topic.

Design subject matter: *Topic-driven*. Input of the workshop were the insights gathered from the interviews, summary of the literature review and research question of the thesis. The participants were granted a 15-minute introduction to become acquainted with the summaries from the research thesis.

The subject matter of the workshop was the prioritisation and enhancement of essential integration services for refugees in Estonia, with a particular focus on aligning these services with the proficiency of the Estonian language. The workshop is designed to evaluate different scenarios of implementing a service that emphasises improving the Estonian language proficiency of refugees through an individualised approach. The aim was to assess how the service could be supported by NGO members.

Scenarios which were selected for discussion by participants:

- Advancement in Estonian language skills for ongoing education
- Estonian language proficiency for improved employment opportunities
- Mastering the Estonian language for a fulfilling life and successful integration
- What can Estonian language learning look like?

Design Thinking Process stage: Ideate. During the initial segment of the gathering, the objective was to create and broaden the range of potential scenarios. The latter part of the session was dedicated to choosing the most favoured scenario and delving deeper into visualising and detailing what the process of studying the Estonian language could look like.

Environmental set-up: The workshop was held online in the Miro board with prepared in advance boards. The language of the discussion was Russian.

Duration: 15 April 2024, Duration time 4 hours. The co-design session took place on Monday evening from 4pm - 8pm.

Description of the process: The Co-design activity was divided into 5 parts

- Refresh of the topic a topic (1);
- Identification of the stakeholders, roles and rules (2);
- Visualisation of the preferred scenarios (3);
- Evolution and development of the chosen scenario (4);
- End discussion and highlighting of the main points (5)

The co-design session began with a 15-minute introduction to the main needs of refugees living in Estonia, followed by the active part of the session. The focus shifted to identifying key stakeholders involved in working with refugees and understanding their influence on refugees and support systems.

The subsequent activity, deemed crucial, involved a visualisation component in the Miro board. The board involved using sticky notes with access to a stock imagery website for visualisation of the preferred scenarios (Pexels, 2024). Participants were prompted to articulate why they believe the Estonian language is essential and compulsory to learn, and to illustrate potential learning methods to facilitate language acquisition. This task aimed to discern the refugees' preferred learning methods and explore ways to support them. By visually representing their ideas, participants could share their perspectives on language learning and engage in discussions about the most effective strategies for improving their language skills. The selected approach was "steering," aimed at guiding participants to investigate alternative learning opportunities beyond traditional methods, such as those offered by Settle in Estonian and Integration Foundation courses.

In the subsequent stage, the selected scenarios were explored and debated with the participation of the previously identified stakeholders. This process aided in gaining a

more profound understanding of the chosen strategy and making the most suitable choice for the future. This step involved converging.

The final stage consisted of a discussion and summary of the chosen preferences. This phase entailed examining the effectiveness of the chosen scenarios, and the group members agreed on the best developed ideas.

Boundary objects - tools and prototypes:

The most important boundary objects involved the previously gathered information from the interviews which was presented in the Miro board. This included the Mapping of refugees arriving in Estonia and undergoing the process of settlement which is presented in the Appendix 3. and the Key insights from Figure 9. The participants were surprised by the massive gathering of the insights and this was made for the effect of entering a "room of new possibilities", an experimental space in which new things were imaginable.

The "Practice boards" were unveiled for the purpose of mapping. Each board contained a concise description of the case, including a title, brief definition, key question, and offering.

To stimulate conversation, "Evaluation notes" were made available to the participants, consisting of a collection of sticky notes in various colours for expressing opinions, which could be affixed to the case study boards to indicate their level of interest.

A "Polarity map" was utilised to facilitate the conversation on best practices, featuring a graph with two intersecting axes that created four distinct areas for participants to provide feedback.

Final output:

The culmination of the session was the compilation of the desired attributes for future services aimed at teaching the Estonian language to facilitate integration. This included:

- The necessity of access to courses that enable participation in mandatory Estonian language exams.
- The design of courses tailored for adult participation.
- The implementation of trauma-sensitive teaching approaches towards refugees, emphasising a non-blaming attitude.
- The promotion of open-mindedness among teachers in understanding the unique circumstances of refugees.

- In certain cases, the facilitation of learning environments that enable refugees to participate alongside their children is provided.
- The establishment of a zero-tolerance policy for intolerance among teachers working with refugees.
- Providing dedicated, secure study environments for learning the Estonian language means finding a safe place to hold sessions, not in a cafe or participant's accommodation.
- The encouragement of 1-1 sessions or smaller groups of 2-3 people to enhance participation and language practice.
- The promotion of active participation from all learners to facilitate language acquisition.
- The focus on interactive classes or meetings that emphasise speaking rather than passive observation.
- The preference for in-person meetings over online platforms to enhance communication.
- The integration of games, debates, orientations, and presentations in the Estonian language curriculum.
- The recognition of refugees' preference to learn the language with native speakers.
- The provision of personalised learning approaches that allow refugees to select topics relevant to their needs, such as studying or working.

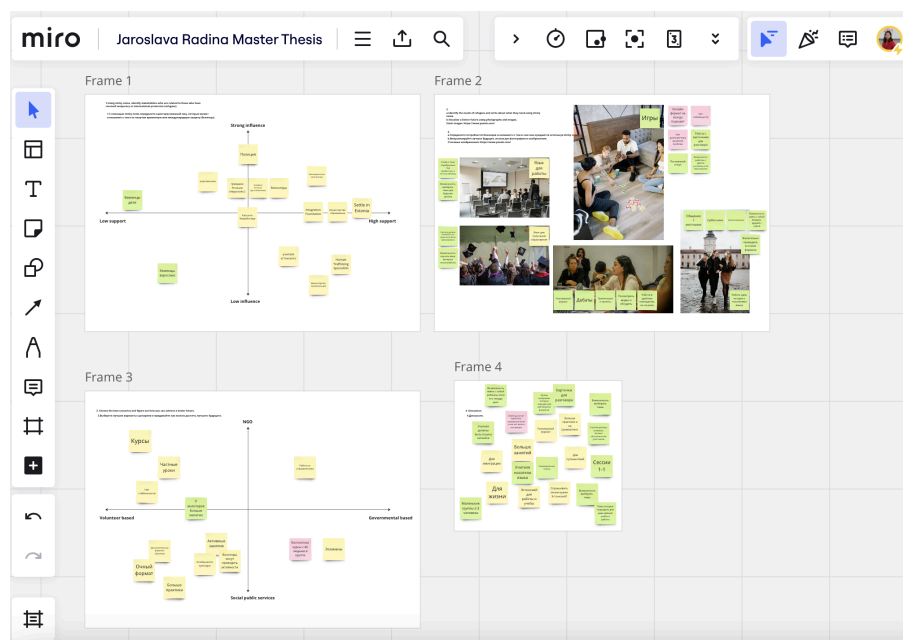


Figure 13. Co-design session screenshot Miro board made by author. Appendix 5 includes the detailed version.

7. CONCEPT: CROSSROADS

7.1 Present circumstances

Estonia is currently in a phase where the majority of Ukrainian refugees have successfully obtained asylum status, secured accommodation, employment, and access to education, facilitating their settlement (Kaldur, 2024). However, the next crucial step involves the implementation of an adaptation program aimed at facilitating integration to a higher level, particularly through proficiency in the Estonian language. Presently, existing free language courses offered by various institutions are insufficient in terms of quantity, availability, and resources to adequately meet the needs of approximately 33 000 of adult refugees in Estonia. According to the Integration Foundation and Settle in Estonia, they are currently offering 560 places for beneficiaries of temporary protection at the A2 and B1 language levels from April to September 2024 (Integratsiooni sihtasutus, 2024). However, the demand for learning Estonian among 10,000 refugees far exceeds the available capacity (Veronika Saareväli, personal communication, December 5, 2023). At the same time, all individuals holding temporary or international protection status in Estonia are required to successfully complete Estonian language exams at the A1 level in order to continue residing in the country (Settle in Estonia, 2024). With a significant number of these refugees arriving in Estonia after February 24, 2024, it is highly likely that many will require Estonian language training ranging from the A2 to C1 levels. This training is crucial to improve their prospects for employment, integration, and enhanced communication. The Estonian government's implementation of mandatory Estonian language exams for accessing certain job opportunities, along with restrictions on non-Estonian native speakers, suggests a deficient integration program. This approach could potentially lead to the exclusion, alienation, and intolerance of Ukrainian refugees.

7.2 Crossroads

The proposed solution, Crossroads is a specialised Estonian language program that prioritises spoken language skills and communication development for the purpose of the adaptation in Estonia. It caters to individuals with temporary and international protection seeking to explore opportunities in education, employment, everyday life and help to prepare for Estonian language exams. The program offers a safe and personalised learning environment where participants engage in one-on-one sessions

with volunteer speakers. Volunteer speakers prepare personalised plans with the help of professional linguists and teachers, to meet the needs of the refugees.

The program's name, "Crossroads," reflects its design concept. It represents a place where volunteers who want to practise teaching Estonian and refugees converge, despite their potentially different backgrounds and paths. Though their directions may vary, they share the common purpose of moving forward and progressing in their lives. The Crossroads program serves as a meeting point, where these diverse individuals can come together, learn from one another, and work towards their personal advancement.

7.3 Main features

The system encompasses the key components which include physical infrastructure, personalised plan, data management, computational processes, stakeholders involvement and value generation.

Crossroad studio

Crossroads Studio is a specialised facility purposefully designed to provide a secure and conducive environment for practising Estonian language skills. The studio features an open indoor layout that is strategically planned to accommodate multiple small groups simultaneously, while still maintaining privacy when necessary. This unique setup allows both refugees and their assisting volunteers to concentrate on their customised learning plans and practise the specific subjects they have chosen to focus on, without external distractions or interruptions.

The Crossroads Studio is a versatile space designed for 1-on-1 language practice sessions between refugees, volunteer tutors, and Estonian language instructors. With a capacity to accommodate up to 20 individuals, the studio is equipped with essential facilities, including printers for producing language learning materials, suitable surfaces, and comfortable seating arrangements, creating a conducive environment for effective language learning and practice.

In addition to one-on-one sessions with volunteers, small groups of 5-10 individuals will convene to learn Estonian through engaging activities such as games, debates, presentations, and organised excursions. This format will offer participants the chance to practise Estonian in a more informal setting, allowing them to test their language skills in a free-form environment.

A convenient online booking system has been introduced to manage access to the Crossroads Studio. This system enables users to view the studio's availability in real-time, allowing refugees to choose the most suitable meeting times based on the schedules posted by volunteers. Volunteers can input their available time slots and identify themselves within the system, while refugees can then book a preferred time slot and access the studio accordingly. When entering the studio, stakeholders will not need a physical key; instead, they will only need a code, allowing for flexibility in meeting hours. The reservation system is crucial for documenting the hours dedicated to learning Estonian and maintaining accurate records.

Crossroads acknowledges and respects the individual situations of the refugees, demonstrating a willingness to be flexible. For instance, if mothers need to bring their children along, the facilities are accommodating and permit this arrangement.

Personalised plan

At the start of the program, each refugee participant will work with program staff to create a personalised learning plan. This plan is based on the information provided in the application process which is presented in Appendix 6. The application includes a series of questions designed to identify the key features and preferences the refugee is seeking in their Estonian language education.

The questionnaire helps determine:

- The refugee's current level of Estonian proficiency
- Their primary reasons and goals for learning Estonian
- Specific topics they wish to practise and discuss during one-on-one sessions
- Any special circumstances or accommodations needed
- Their intended duration of participation in the program

Since the learning process relies heavily on speaking practice and interactive activities, the questionnaire is instrumental in preparing the volunteer tutors to effectively support each refugee's unique needs and goals. Furthermore, the application data facilitates matching refugees with the most appropriate volunteer tutors based on common interests, learning preferences, and goals. Volunteers will review the applications and select the candidates they feel equipped to support individually. If further assistance is needed to pair candidates, a staff member will assist in facilitating the matching process.

The chosen learning topics will identify the specific areas where language improvement is needed and learning is required. These topics will be shared with volunteers in advance for preparation. With the aid of AI tools like ChatGPT and Perplexity, volunteers will create Estonian language speaking cards in the Crossroad studio for conversational practice. The program will receive the selected topics and a request to create a 100-word (or more) speech practice lesson tailored to a specific level of proficiency in Estonian. This approach will enable volunteers to efficiently create and prepare materials for speaking activities.

Estonian language instructors will mentor volunteers on preparing for speaking sessions with refugees. This guidance will enable volunteers to enhance their teaching experience. The methodology is grounded in resources provided by the Integration Foundation, which are freely accessible for download by anyone (Ilves & Kingisepp, 2020).

Data management

The Crossroads program collects and stores key participant information in a centralised data layer to facilitate personalised learning plans and track progress. By consolidating this data in one place, the Crossroads program can analyse it to monitor effectiveness, identify areas for improvement, and make data-driven decisions to enhance the learning experience for refugees. The data layer is designed with robust privacy and security measures to protect participant information while enabling authorised personnel to access and utilise the data to support the program's objectives. This information is available to authorised staff members, volunteers, and educators participating in the program.

The data layer include following:

- *The User profiles* contain detailed information about refugees, derived from their personalised plans based on the questionnaire. Progress tracking and assessment involve monitoring refugees' program progress, attendance, language proficiency levels, and performance in Estonian language exams to assess program effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. Feedback and evaluation entail collecting input from refugees and volunteers to enhance the program and improve the learning experience

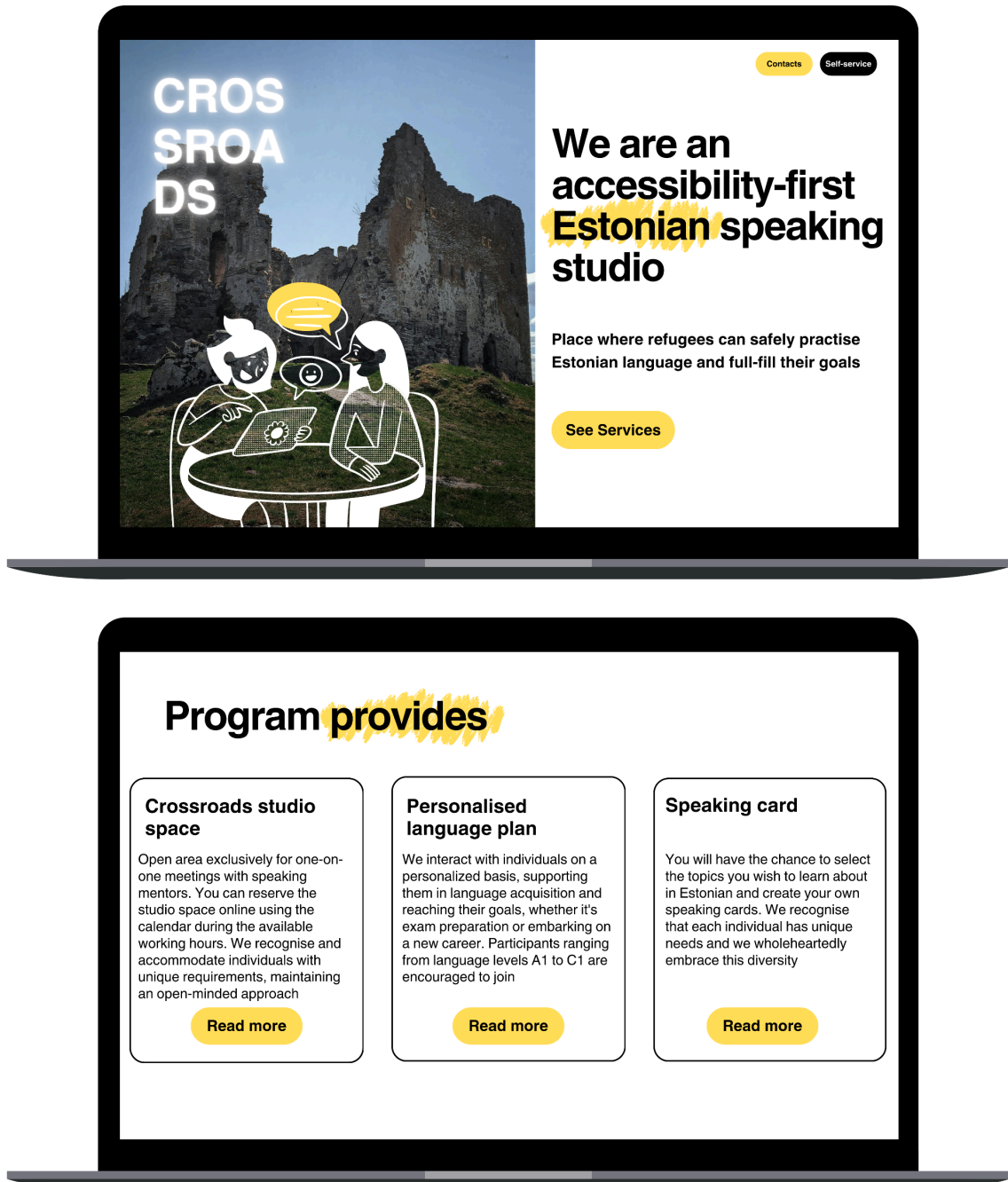
- *The Volunteer profiles* contain information about the volunteer tutors, including their names, level of Estonian language proficiency, the date they began volunteering, availability, and a record of the hours they have contributed. This data is crucial for matching refugees with the most suitable volunteer tutors based on shared interests and learning preferences. The volunteer profiles enable the program to effectively pair refugees with tutors who can best support their unique needs and goals in learning Estonian
- *Booking and scheduling data* contain real-time availability of the Crossroads Studio, volunteer time slots, and refugee bookings. This data will ensure efficient use of the studio and facilitate the scheduling of one-on-one sessions and group activities
- *Language learning materials* contain a database of Estonian language speaking cards created with the aid of AI tools like ChatGPT and Perplexity. This data will provide volunteers with the necessary resources to prepare for speaking sessions with refugees
- *Integration with external resources* contain links to resources provided by the Integration Foundation, which are freely accessible for download by anyone. This data will ensure that the program methodology is grounded in established resources and best practices

Analysis of the collected data

The data collected from refugees and volunteers must be processed using Google-based tools, such as Google Sheets and Google Analytics, before being incorporated into the system. This information will then pass through multiple filter layers to provide real-time visibility, detect applications requiring processing, and align with volunteers' preferred schedules for future planning. This crucial step involves volunteers in the system, allowing them to manage it independently with the support of mentors if necessary. Volunteers will input their availability information through Google Sheets, which will be processed and displayed on the website. Once a refugee books a meeting, both parties will automatically receive email notifications regarding the scheduled time. This automated process enables efficient management of the system.

Crossroads website and application process

The Crossroads website serves as an intermediary between the user and the underlying database, enabling users to interact with Crossroads' features and services through dedicated user interfaces.



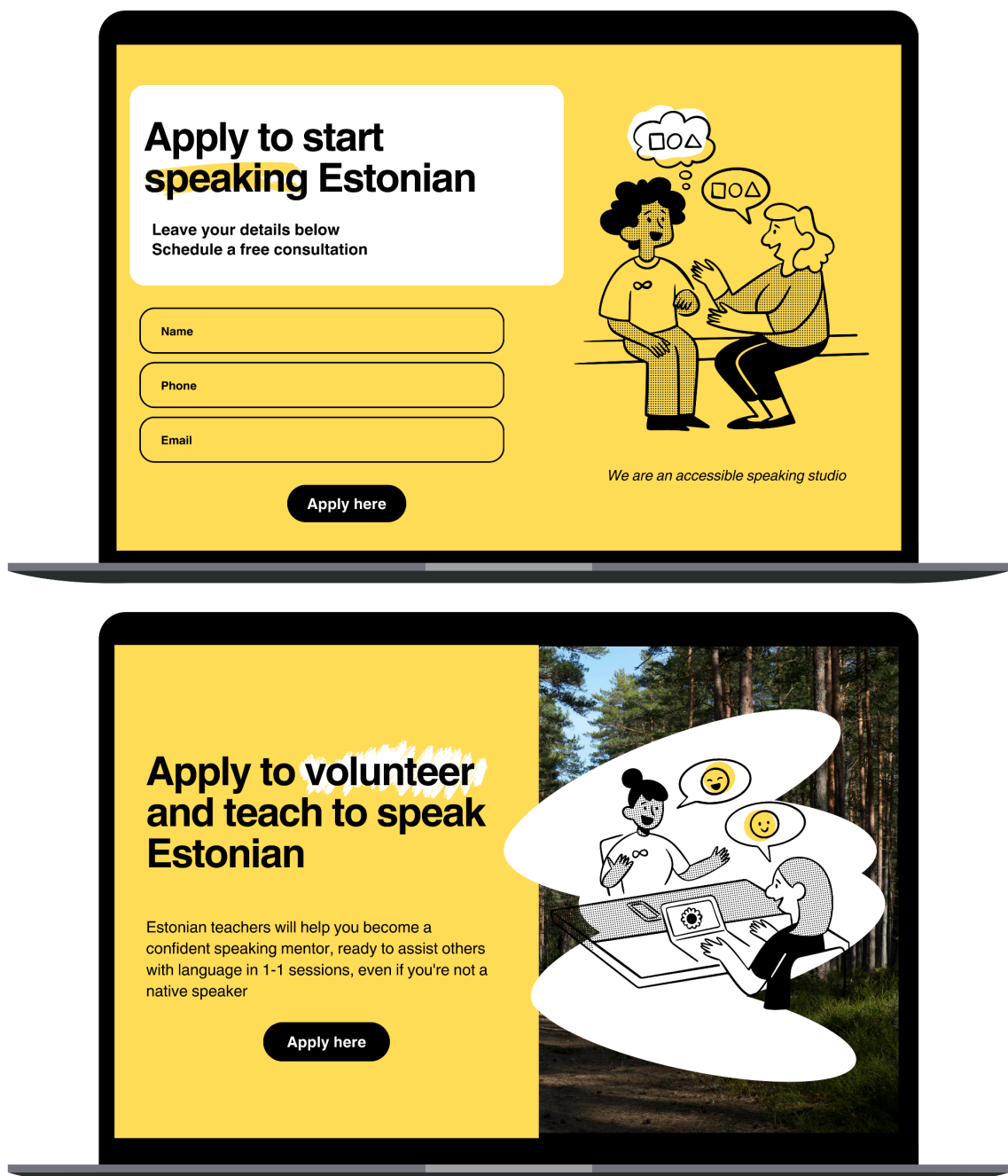


Figure 14. *Crossroads website mockup landing page with access to application processes. Created by author.*

The Crossroads web platform serves as the central nexus for two key stakeholder groups: refugees seeking to augment their Estonian language proficiency and volunteers interested in participating as conversational mentors. By streamlining the registration process, the website enables both cohorts to readily access the program's comprehensive suite of services and resources. For refugees, the web interface

provides a user-friendly application mechanism to enrol in the Crossroads language learning initiative. Correspondingly, volunteers are afforded the ability to seamlessly apply and register themselves as speaking mentors through the website's intuitive interface.

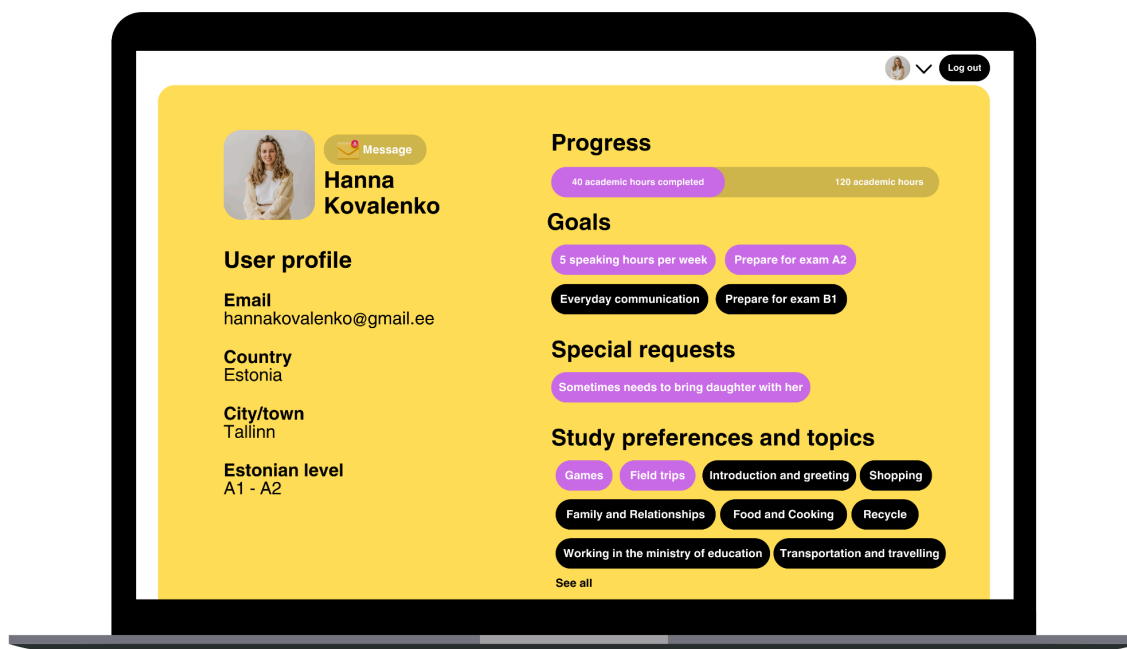


Figure 15. Mock up of refugee profile with depiction of study preferences. Created by author.

The Crossroad platform will provide users with access to a personalised profile featuring a tailored plan. Within this profile, individuals can track their progress, monitor completed study hours, and ascertain the remaining workload. Additionally, the profile will showcase both current and future goals, facilitating goal management. A dedicated section for special requests is integrated to streamline organisation, enabling volunteers to prepare in advance. Furthermore, users' study preferences and topics of interest will be highlighted, enhancing the visibility of relevant subjects for the individual in question.

Users will have the ability to book appointments through the website, in addition to creating a profile. This feature automatically records speaking hours and allows users to monitor their progress on their profile page. The calendar is designed with two key stakeholders in mind: speaking mentors and users participating in the speaking meetings. The sidebar enables users to edit themes and track the progress of covered

topics. If certain topics are discussed too frequently, the system will provide suggestions for alternative discussion topics to include in the next booking experience. Speaking mentors will need to specify their available hours, so that users can book appointments accordingly. This ensures that both mentors and users can effectively coordinate and make the most of their speaking practice sessions.

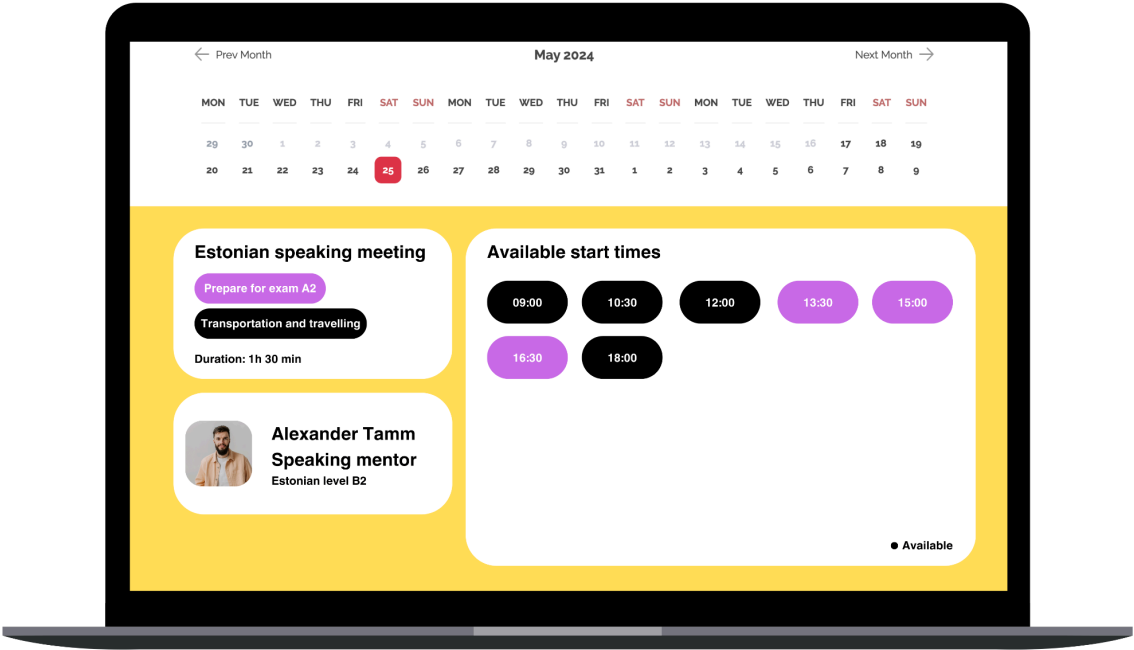


Figure 16. Crossroads booking system for booking appointments with speaking mentors. Created by author.

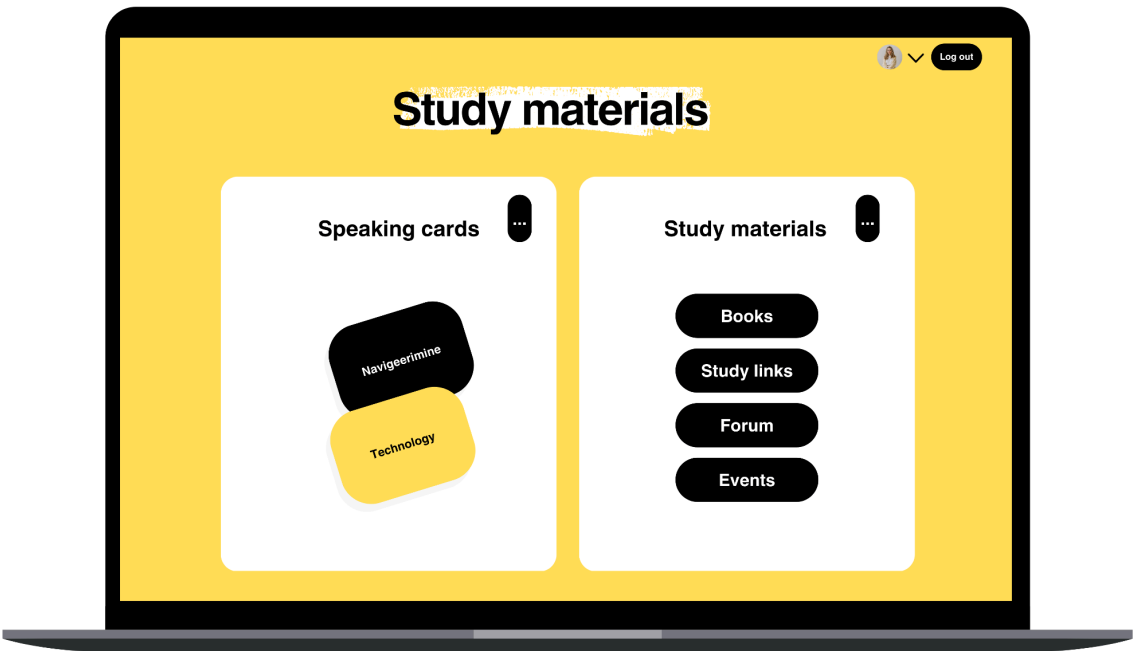


Figure 17. *Crossroads mock up page which contains access to study materials for the speaking meetings.*

The study resources are accessible post-registration and are segmented into two main components. The first part comprises speaking cards that can be printed at the Crossroads studio through available printers. These cards consist of default topics commonly used in daily conversations, as well as topics generated over time with AI recommendations, along with a clear template for personalising the cards. The second part includes study materials for both speaking mentors and participants sourced from the Integration Foundation. Additionally, this section offers online links to educational games for learning Estonian and information from other NGOs aimed at assisting refugee members. To address challenges faced by refugees without access to computers or smartphones, links to NGOs providing second-hand technology devices are provided. These links also offer referrals to psychological support services. Furthermore, the second part features a forum for communication, question-posing, and sharing speaker presentations, along with a section dedicated to events and a blog for news updates.

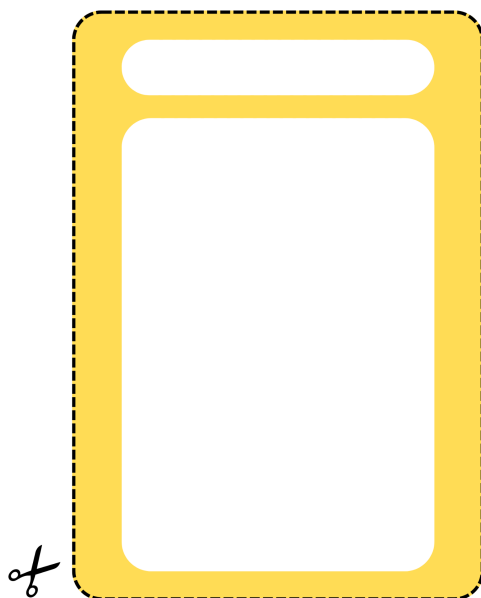
Speaking cards

The concept of incorporating speaking cards into the Crossroads speaking course was derived from suggestions made during co-design sessions and observations conducted by the researcher. The researcher noted that refugees employed as cashiers in food stores often affixed handwritten Estonian words on their desks to facilitate communication with customers. These improvised notes contained greetings and frequently used phrases to address customer inquiries. This observation served as an impetus for integrating speaking cards into the course curriculum, as it highlighted the practical need for accessible language tools to support refugees in their daily interactions and professional settings.



Figure 18. *Speaking cards with personalised topics and words which were generated with Perplexity AI.*

When communicating in a non-native language, it can be challenging to generate new vocabulary during practice sessions. Additionally, non-native speakers may wish to explore certain topics but lack the necessary words to do so effectively. The speaking cards aim to address these challenges by providing opportunities to enhance conversations and learn new terminology. To facilitate faster retention of new words,



speakers will be encouraged to actively create their own cards, either by printing or handwriting them on paper. This approach requires speakers to invest effort in the learning process, but it also allows for customization based on individual needs and preferences. Furthermore, the provided forum enables users to share their experiences and the cards they have created with the community. This collaborative aspect fosters a supportive learning environment where speakers can learn from each other's contributions and expand their linguistic repertoire. The templates for the speaking cards will be available to download from the website under the speaking cards section.

Figure 19. *Empty speaking card template created for customisation.*

7.4 Value creation

The Crossroads program is designed to generate value for its users and participants by offering tangible solutions that cater to their needs. The value created by the program can be assessed through the perceived user value, which encompasses the benefits and satisfaction derived from the services provided. As a NGO, Crossroads does not aim to generate revenue or charge for its services, instead focusing on facilitating adaptation and integration for a broader societal impact. The primary activities that create value for both refugee participants and volunteer speaking mentors include:

Language transition

The ability to communicate proficiently in multiple languages offers individuals a wide array of advantages, shaping their worldview and opening doors to various life opportunities, including housing, employment, education, and social connections. For refugees and asylum seekers who have faced challenging life circumstances, the pursuit of opportunities often involves acquiring new language skills, such as Estonian in the context of Estonia. The Crossroads program is designed to support asylum seekers and refugees in beginning to learn a new language and practice speaking it. This program serves as a crucial transition point where participants can start developing their language skills in preparation for life in a new country.

Mentorship support for volunteers

In the Crossroads program, volunteers will be mentored by experienced Estonian educators to prepare for interactions with refugees. They will be guided on conducting these meetings, navigating study materials provided by the Integration Foundation, and honing their teaching skills. This initiative offers a valuable entry point for individuals interested in teaching, particularly for non-native speakers looking to volunteer and contribute to community support efforts. Participants can also enhance their language proficiency through this experience, benefiting from personalised guidance in one-on-one teaching sessions facilitated by skilled teachers.

Co-creation materials

The Crossroads program aims to foster a collaborative learning environment where participants, including speakers and mentors, are encouraged to co-create educational resources tailored to their practical needs and experiences. One such approach is the utilisation of speaking cards, which serve as a medium for participants to develop and share their self-generated learning materials. Furthermore, the establishment of a Crossroads studio provides a platform for participants to disseminate their co-created content and explore new topics of interest. To facilitate this interactive process, a dedicated forum has been created to support ongoing discussions and knowledge exchange among the program's participants.

Safe environment

Asylum seekers and refugees frequently find themselves in precarious situations, facing heightened vulnerability and exposure to potential harm. The Crossroads studio provides a safe haven where participants can engage in language practice without fear

of discrimination based on their nationality, gender, or political affiliations. Mutual respect among participants is emphasised as a critical aspect of the program, fostering an inclusive environment. Refugees require a consistent, dedicated space for learning, unlike ad hoc or random locations. The Crossroads studio will serve as a reliable and welcoming space that offers a sense of stability and belonging for refugees to pursue their educational goals.

Inclusivity

Individuals who have been displaced by conflict frequently encounter challenging life circumstances, including disabilities and financial hardships, necessitating assistance in navigating intricate challenges. The Crossroads program offers access to specialised professionals whom participants can consult for support. This underscores the program's focus on facilitating one-on-one meetings to address the multifaceted needs of refugees effectively.

Personalisation

Customization plays a pivotal role in service design, particularly when catering to vulnerable segments of society. Refugee speakers necessitate individualised care, a goal achievable through tailored engagement and the development of personalised strategies. The primary advantage of a personalised program lies in the flexibility it offers for learning the Estonian language at a self-determined speed, alleviating concerns about missing classes. A tracking mechanism enables the documentation of study hours dedicated to Estonian language acquisition, culminating in the attainment of a certification upon completion of 120 hours. This certification aligns with European standards, ensuring its recognition and validity.

7.5 User journeys

In order to understand how Crossroads work the user journeys were created.

Participant learner speaker

The stakeholder's journey, as outlined in Appendix 7, is illustrated through a theoretical persona, Hanna Kovalenko, a refugee woman in her late thirties, who relocated to Tallinn in April 2023. Hanna, employed as a cashier at a prominent food retail chain, fled Mariupol with her 7-year-old son and her husband in his forties,

compelled by the loss of their residence amid the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Upon arrival, she secured temporary protection for her family and engaged in a mandatory adaptation program, subsequently enrolling in A1-A2 Estonian language courses. Hanna is cognizant of her desire to further her Estonian language proficiency, considering the option of utilising complimentary language courses offered by the Integration Foundation Programme. Recognizing the necessity to enhance her conversational abilities for potential advancement within her current workplace, she seeks to elevate her speaking skills. Hanna explores opportunities at the Integration Foundation and discovers the option to enrol in the Crossroads program, which features flexible registration without set deadlines.

The stakeholder journey map illustrates Hanna's enrollment in the Crossroads program and the subsequent development of a personalised plan. This plan enabled her active participation in speaking sessions and facilitated the articulation of her future goals aimed at enhancing her Estonian language competency. The map provides a visual representation of Hanna's progression through the program, highlighting key touchpoints and milestones along her journey to improve her language skills and advance her career aspirations.

Volunteer speaking mentor

The volunteer speaking mentors are key participants in the Crossroads programs, as illustrated in the journey of Alexander Tamm outlined in Appendix 8. Alexander, a resident of Tallinn with a Russian-speaking background, has diligently improved his Estonian language skills to a level ranging from B2 to C1 over the past year. While aspiring to become a ceramics instructor and educate students in the future, he lacks teaching experience in Estonian. Seeking guidance from professional educators within the Crossroads program, Alexander aims to develop a program plan and enhance his pedagogical skills. The journey highlights the collaborative support provided to volunteers like Alexander as they engage with refugees and educators in the program. Additionally, it is suggested that individuals with a proficient level of Estonian, particularly at B1-B2 or higher, could join the volunteer pool. These individuals, who may have completed Integration Foundation programs and seek to expand their language skills, could also be motivated by personal reasons to teach, fostering a beneficial exchange where they continue their language journey while supporting others.

Estonian language teacher

The Estonian instructors within the program play a crucial role in aiding volunteers as they get ready for speaking sessions, ensuring they follow a structured educational framework. These teachers offer instructional support and are willing to arrange individual meetings as required. Volunteer mentorship stands out as a key value proposition generated by the program, with teachers and linguists playing significant roles. Furthermore, the Estonian teachers will curate and refine educational resources for the Crossroads website to maintain its relevance and coherence. These teachers are hired as employees within the program to fulfil these responsibilities.

Crossroads employees

The Crossroads program employs a mix of volunteers and hired staff to ensure its effective operation. Administrative personnel are hired to manage participant inquiries, process applications, and recruit new volunteers for the program. This division of responsibilities aims to prevent the Estonian teachers from being overburdened with administrative tasks, allowing them to focus on their core duties. Additionally, the program recognizes the need for software developers and data analysts to refine and automate processes related to the Crossroads website, ensuring its smooth functioning and data-driven decision making. All staff members of the Crossroads program will be mandated to participate in training courses organised by human trafficking specialists from the National Insurance Board. The purpose of these courses is to equip staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to identify potential signs of human trafficking and recognize individuals who may be in dangerous situations, ensuring a proactive and supportive response.

Stakeholders outside the Crossroads:

NGO's

Non-governmental organisations are pivotal in addressing gaps in social services by facilitating assistance for refugees. Partnering with NGOs such as the Refugee Council can be advantageous in engaging key stakeholders within the Crossroads program and potentially receiving referrals. Details about various NGOs and their contact information will be accessible on the Crossroads website, enabling participants to easily locate and connect with additional support networks.

Governmental Agents

Governmental authorities must be informed about the presence of Crossroads to establish it as a reputable organisation. Hence, the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Research, Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Social Insurance Board, Integration Foundation, Settle in Estonia, and other relevant government agencies involved in promoting Estonian educational initiatives will be notified about Crossroads. Of particular significance are the Integration Foundation and Settle in Estonia, as they offer essential information to individuals seeking international and temporary protection.

7.6 Service blueprint map

A service blueprint is a visual depiction that illustrates the entire service delivery process, detailing the activities at each stage performed by different roles (*Service Blueprint*). This schematic mapping offers a comprehensive view of the user's interactions and the behind-the-scenes tasks essential for delivering a holistic service experience.

The Crossroads blueprint map, displayed in Appendix 9, charts the journey of a refugee involved in the program, receiving support from a volunteer for speech practice, culminating in the successful completion of the Estonian exams and transitioning to new objectives. It outlines how participants will be notified about field trips and the process for changing speaking mentors, ensuring Crossroads is ready for any anticipated changes. Furthermore, this blueprint details the engagement of staff members with users and defines their roles. It also explains the utilisation of different digital tools and platforms to illustrate how services will be enhanced.

In general, blueprint maps enable revisiting and adjusting designs to ensure a coherent and logical progression from the viewpoint of key stakeholders.

7.7 Conclusion and discussion

Ukrainian refugees holding temporary or international protection status in Estonia should have access to services that elevate their quality of life to the same level as Estonian citizens. Educational opportunities and language courses, particularly in Estonian, are fundamental entitlements for these individuals. However, Estonia's integration and adaptation services have consistently faced challenges, including insufficient staffing and a lack of government initiatives aimed at providing adequate training opportunities for non-Estonian speakers to fully integrate into society.

While integration is a prolonged and continuous process, it does not imply that adaptation initiatives intended to improve living standards should be neglected. Assuming that the majority of refugees will depart Estonia once the Ukrainian-Russian war concludes is speculative, as many displaced individuals desire to reside in Estonia permanently after being compelled to flee the conflict. Currently, over 50,000 refugees are residing in Estonia, a reality that cannot be disregarded.

Consequently, programs like Crossroads, which offer structured support for language learning and integration, are crucial for empowering refugees and ensuring their successful settlement in Estonia. The narratives of refugees residing in Estonia, combined with the author's observations, significantly influenced the final design, resulting in a meaningful impact. This initiative holds promise for integration into NGO organisations dedicated to supporting refugees in Estonia.

While the author employed codesign and co-design methodologies in the Crossroads program, challenges arise when transitioning co-design from academia to practical settings. Motivating individuals to engage in co-design sessions for creating valuable designs outside academic environments can be challenging, influenced in part by Estonian cultural norms. It is noteworthy that co-design originated in Italy, where community gatherings and opinion-sharing are highly valued.

If this project is implemented immediately, it has the potential to commence with approximately 50 volunteers, each taking on 2-3 students, enabling 100-150 refugees to participate in the initial months of operation. The project is scalable and has the potential to expand by opening additional studio spaces. Currently, Settle in Estonia is offering approximately 560 places for refugees, indicating the project's potential to double the number of participants. While this represents a significant step forward, it is a long way from reaching the 33,000 refugees in need. Nevertheless, any progress in this direction is better than none, and the Crossroads initiative demonstrates a promising approach to supporting refugee integration in Estonia.

SUMMARY

Estonia is confronted with a notable demographic challenge in managing the refugee crisis, with Ukrainian refugees already representing 3% of the total population, necessitating focused attention on their distinct needs and circumstances. Amidst the challenges faced by refugees in 2024-2025, ensuring the successful integration and well-being of Ukrainian refugees, especially women and children, is paramount. Vital initiatives encompass language education, child protection, combating gender-based violence, and implementing measures to prevent labour exploitation, all crucial in addressing the diverse requirements of refugees. A primary necessity for refugees is mastering the Estonian language to enhance their quality of life, access job opportunities, and engage with the local community. However, obstacles like limited access to free Estonian courses and the mandatory Estonian exam pose integration challenges.

The proposed service initiative, Crossroads, aims to tackle these hurdles by offering an Estonian language program that combines digital and physical elements to provide comprehensive support for refugees. This initiative entails collaborating individually with volunteer language mentors to boost proficiency in Estonian, enhance communication via tailored strategies, and offer to co-design educational materials. Crossroads is designed to be adaptable to local NGOs, enabling the expansion of services to better cater to refugees in need.

In summary, this study underscores the significance of strategic approaches in supporting refugee adaptation and language proficiency. Through collaboration with NGOs and the utilisation of co-design methodologies, tailored solutions can be developed to address the unique challenges faced by refugees. The Crossroads initiative serves as a blueprint for Estonian NGOs to enhance their services and foster more inclusive services.

KOKKUVÕTE

Eesti seisab silmitsi märkimisväärse demograafilise väljakutsega pagulaskriisi lahendamisel, kus Ukraina pagulased moodustavad juba 3% kogurahvastikust, nõudes keskendunud tähelepanu nende erilistele vajadustele ja olukorrale. 2024-2025 aastal seisavad pagulased silmitsi mitmete väljakutsetega. Ukraina pagulaste, eriti naiste ja laste eduka integreerumise ja heaolu tagamine on ülioluline. Olulised algatused hõlmavad keeleõpet, lastekaitset, soolisele vägivallale vastu astumist ja meetmeid tööjõu ärakasutamise ennetamiseks, kõik olulised pagulaste mitmekesiste vajaduste rahuldamiseks. Pagulaste jaoks on peamine vajadus eesti keele valdamine nende elukvaliteedi parandamiseks, töövõimaluste kasutamiseks ja kohaliku kogukonnaga suhtlemiseks. Siiski tekitavad takistused nagu piiratud juurdepääs tasuta eesti keele kursustele ja kohustuslik eesti keele eksam integratsiooniprotsessis väljakutseid.

Pakutud teenusealgatus Crossroads püüab neid takistusi ületada, pakkudes eesti keele programmi, mis ühendab digitaalsed ja füüsilised elemendid, et pakkuda pagulastele põhjalikku tuge. See algatus hõlmab individuaalset koostööd vabatahtlike keelementoritega, et suurendada eesti keele oskusi, parandada suhtlust läbi kohandatud strateegiate ning pakkuda hariduslikke materjale. Crossroads on kavandatud kohandatavaks kohalikele vabaühendustele, võimaldades teenuste laiendamist, et paremini teenindada vajaduses olevaid pagulasi.

Kokkuvõttes rõhutab see uuring strateegiliste lähenemisviiside olulisust pagulaste kohanemise ja keeleoskuse toetamisel. Koostöös vabaühendustega ja kooskujundamismeetodite kasutamisel saab välja töötada kohandatud lahendusi, et lahendada pagulastele omaseid väljakutseid. Crossroadsi algatus toimib eeskujuks Eesti vabaühendustele nende teenuste täiustamisel ja kaasavamate teenuste edendamisel.

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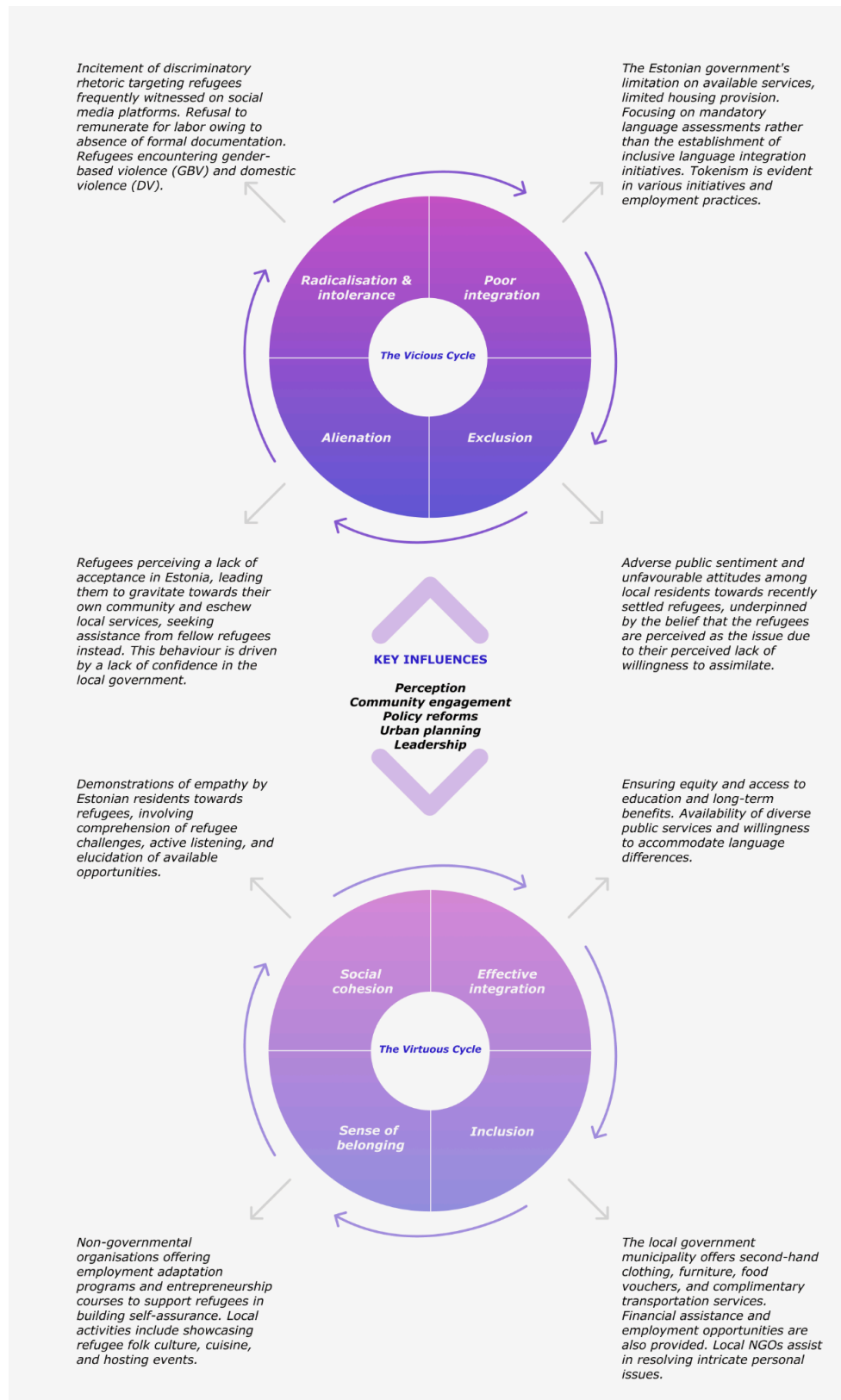
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GRAPHICAL MATERIAL

Figure 1. Organisations participated in the regional Refugee Response Plan in 2023-2024.....	20
Figure 2. Co-design toolkit for ESOL lessons by Policy Lab.....	31
Figure 3. Estonian language cards.....	32
Figure 4. Methodologies and design frameworks used in this thesis.....	37
Figure 5. The Design Thinking process.....	38
Figure 6. The Collaborative Design Framework.....	41
Figure 7. Services as users see them.....	49
Figure 8. Mariupoli sõbrad volunteer and board member.....	50
Figure 9. Mariupoli sõbrad front line volunteers at Tallinn Bus Station.....	51
Figure 10. Refugee family in the backyard of the Dzingel hotel in May 2022.....	54
Figure 11. Mapping of refugees arriving in Estonia and undergoing the process of settlement...56	56
Figure 12. Adapted The Collaborative Design Framework for Co-design workshop.....	59
Figure 13. Co-design session screenshot Miro.....	63
Figure 14. Crossroads website mockup landing page with access to application processes.....	70
Figure 15. Mock up of refugee profile with depiction of study preferences. Created by author...71	71
Figure 16. Crossroads booking system for booking appointments with speaking mentors.....	72
Figure 17. Crossroads mock up page which contains access to study materials for the speaking meetings...73	73
Figure 18. Speaking cards with personalised topics and words which were generated with Perplexity AI.....	74
Figure 19. Empty speaking card template created for customisation.....	74

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Analysis of the current system and key insights.



Appendix 2. Interview consent form template

Design and Technology Futures
Tallinn University of Technology and Estonian Academy of Arts
U06-402, Ehitajate tee 5, 19086 Tallinn, Estonia
Jaroslava Radina - Msc Design and Technology student

e-mail: info@designtechfutures.eu
student e-mail: jaradi@taltech.ee



The purpose of the consent form is both to make sure that a participant has understood the main points about taking part in the research and for there to be a record of their consent. The form should be written in language that is easy to understand. The participant should be given a copy of the completed form and the researcher should retain the signed original.

Consent to take part in [Empowering change: Designing for people]

Purpose of Study: Focus on approaches to improve the working environment for volunteers who aid refugees and provide them with tangible solutions through design methods. The purpose of this interview is to obtain insights and the most significant information from working front-line volunteers and industry specialists which will help in the establishment of improved services for those who assist people in need.

Please initial each
box if you agree
with the
statement

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet version dated 10.03.2024 for the above research. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

Yes/No

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any point [until **10/04/2024**], without giving any reason.

Yes/No

I understand who will have access to personal data provided, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.

Yes/No

I understand the extent to which I could be identifiable from any publications.

Yes/No

[If applicable] [Optional:] I consent to being [audio/ video] recorded.

Yes/No

[If applicable] [Optional:] I consent to having my photo taken.

Yes/No

[If applicable] I understand how [audio recordings/ videos/ photos] will be used in research outputs.

Yes/No

[If applicable] Use of quotations: Please indicate your preference (select *one* option):

- a) I do not wish to be quoted. **or**
b) I agree to the use of quotations in research outputs if I am not identifiable. **or**
c) [If appropriate] I agree to the use of direct quotations, attributed to my name, in research outputs.

[If applicable] I give permission for you to contact me again to clarify information.

Yes/No

I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.

Yes/No

I agree to take part.¹

Yes/No

[If applicable] **Optional:** I agree that my personal contact details can be retained in a secure database so that the researchers can contact me about future studies.

Yes/No

¹ In certain projects researchers may want to add an additional statement: [I hereby assign to the researcher all copyright in my contribution for use in all work stemming from this project and future projects.]

Name Surname

XX/XX/20XX

Name of participant

Date

Signature

Jaroslava Radina

Date² XX/XX/20XX

Name of researcher

Signature



consent

² To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant. Once this has been signed by both parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form. The original signed and dated consent form should be kept with the project's main documents, which must be kept in a secure location.

Appendix 3. Interview questionnaires for semi-structured interviews

A.3.1 Questionnaire for Human trafficking specialists

INTRODUCTION

I am Jaroslava Radina, an EKA + TalTech MSc student in Design and Technology Futures, specializing in enhancing the working environment for volunteers assisting refugees by implementing tangible solutions using design methodologies. The aim of this interview is to gather valuable insights and essential information for my thesis field research, from active stakeholders engaged in refugee assistance, with the goal of enhancing services for individuals providing aid to those in need. **If you wish this interview to be anonymous, please specify before the start.** I am interested in your honest opinion, and this information will not be shared with a third party.

1. Warm - up questions

- Have you been interviewed by students before?
- Tell me a little bit about yourself
 - How old are you?
 - Where are you from?
 - What is your profession?

2. Person's profile and interests, status, affiliations etc.

- How long have you been working here?
- How did you come to work in the Social Insurance Board? What other jobs have you had before?
- Have you studied for this profession?
- In what positions have you worked in the Social Insurance Board before?

3. Daily practices, prison as a working environment

- Tell me a little bit about your role and responsibilities within the Victim Support and Prevention Services Department?
- What does your ordinary day at work look like?
- (If worked elsewhere before..) How would you compare these jobs? What makes work in the Social Insurance Board different?
- What do you value the most in your work?/ What do you find most rewarding about your work?
- What are the most difficult parts or situations in your work?

4. Employees relationship with victims

- How would you describe the different types of victims you have here?
 - How do they behave?
 - How were they victimized?

- Some other features - age, education, how long they have been here, membership in a subculture, etc.
- Do you have a different approach for refugee victims?
- What are the relationships between victims/refugees and human trafficking specialists who are responsible for the contact? What does it depend on?
- What does the quality of the relationship depend on?
- How could trust be achieved when working with victims/refugees?
- What have been the biggest lessons for you while working here that have affected your opinion or relationships with victims/refugees?
- How often do you think about the reasons why a victim has ended up in these circumstances?
- How often do you feel at risk or not safe at work?

5. Victim Support and Prevention Services Department as a program

- How effective is the Victim Support and Prevention Services Department system, in your opinion?
- Which kind of victim support, programs and compensations do you offer?
- Which partnerships or collaborations have been instrumental in your work?
- Tell me about successful strategies in combating human trafficking. What is working well in terms of prevention? Which tools do you use to achieve it?
- Which aspects of your work have made you evaluate the values of life in a different way?
- How has it affected your health (including mental health)?

6. Needs, expectations, recommendations (most important block in your interview - take/save time for it, decrease other parts if necessary)

- What could be improved in the workflow when it comes to the working routine?
- What do you think needs to change? (help to open up the discussion)
 - general principles and rules
 - the daily processes
 - the environment
 - the equipment: computers, programs etc.
- When you think about the daily life of victims/refugees here:
 - Which programs or projects work well?
 - What needs to change and why? (specify if needed)
 - ☐ Daily activities etc
 - ☐ Free time
 - ☐ Working/ studying
 - ☐ Family relationships

- ☐ Food
- ☐ Security

- What could be done here more or differently that would help the victims/refugees to integrate into society?
- What are some effective victim support programs or strategies you have come across in other countries that could be beneficial for improving services in your current role? / What could the Estonian system learn from other countries?

7. Tipping point, the shift, the realization

- How has contact with victims/refugees shaped you as a person, and if at all?
- What motivates you to work here?
- Is there anything you would miss about work when you leave?
- What would make you stop working in your position?
- Do you think differently about victims/refugees than you did before you started working in your position? How?
- What has been the most thought provoking or frightening thing You have seen while involved in work?

A.3.2 Questionnaire for volunteers

INTRODUCTION

My thesis subject as an EKA + TalTech Msc Design and Technology Futures student focuses on approaches to improve the working environment for volunteers who aid refugees and provide them with tangible solutions through design methods. The purpose of this interview is to obtain insights and the most significant information from working front-line volunteers, which will help in the establishment of improved services for those who assist people in need. **If you wish this interview to be anonymous, please specify before the start.** I am interested in your honest opinion, and this information will not be shared with a third party.

1. Warm-up questions

- How did your day start?
- Have you been interviewed before?
- Do you know what our project is about [give a short summary if needed]
- Tell me a little bit about yourself:
 - How old are you?
 - Where are you from?
 - What is your profession? What are you doing outside volunteering?

2. Person's profile and interests, status, affiliations etc

- How long have you been volunteering here?
- How did you come to volunteer in an organization? What other volunteering experiences have you had before?
- Have you completed any professional courses or training to volunteer? Which professional skills are you using to work in this organization?
- What roles have you had in this organization?

3. Daily practices, volunteering and training

- Tell me a little bit about your role and responsibilities within the organization?
- What does your v volunteering day look like?
- (*If has volunteered elsewhere before..*) How would you compare these volunteering experiences? What makes it different from other places?
- What do you find most rewarding about it?
- What are the most difficult parts when it comes to working with refugees?

4. Volunteer relationship with refugees

- How would you describe the different types of refugees you have here?
 - How they behave
 - How they communicate/cooperate with volunteers
 - Some other features - age, education, how long they have been in Estonia, membership in a subculture, etc.

- What are the relationships between refugees and workers? What does it depend on?
 - How would you describe a good relationship?
 - How would you describe a bad relationship?
 - What does the quality of the relationship depend on?
 - How could trust be achieved?
- How do you think the refugees would describe you?
- What have been the biggest lessons for you while working here that have affected your opinion or relationships with refugees?
- How often do you think about the reasons why a person has ended up in a vulnerable position?
- What are the reasons behind misunderstandings with the refugees?
- How often do you feel at risk or not safe?
- How do you handle and manage conflicts or complicated situations?
- How could the same situation be handled?

5. Charity organization questions

- How effective is the charity organization you are volunteering for, in your opinion?
- How is a charitable organization improving the lives of refugees?
- How has volunteering affected you personally?
- What has volunteering here taught you that you had no idea about before?
- Which aspects of your working experience have made you evaluate the values of life in a different way?
- How has it affected your health (including mental health)?
- Can and what could the rest of society take over/learn from volunteering?

6. Needs, expectations, recommendations (most important block in your interview - take/save time for it, decrease other parts if necessary)

- What could be improved in the workflow when it comes to the working routine?
- What do you think needs to **change?** (*help to open up the discussion*)
 - general principles and rules
 - the daily processes
 - the environment - rooms, facilities etc
 - the equipment - computers, programs etc
- When you think about the **daily life of refugees** here:
 - Which programs or projects work well?

- What needs to change and why? (*specify if needed*)
 - Estonian language
 - Daily activities etc
 - Free time
 - Working/ studying
 - Family relationships
 - Food
- What could you do here more or differently that would help the refugees to integrate into society?
- What are good examples of charity organizations and programs from other countries that you have heard of? /What could the Estonian system learn from other countries?

7. Tipping point, the shift, the realisation

- How has contact with refugees shaped you as a person, and if at all?
- Satisfaction with volunteering:
 - What motivates you to volunteer here?
 - Is there anything you would miss about volunteering when you leave?
 - What would make you stop volunteering?
- Do you think differently about refugees than you did before you volunteered? How?
- What has been the most thought provoking or frightening thing You have seen while volunteering?

Appendix 4. Mapping of refugees arriving in Estonia and undergoing the process of settlement

<https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVKVWQis=/>

Refugees arriving in Estonia and undergoing the process of settlement

Estonian NGOs' activities are charted through a combination of interviews, literature review, and research focusing on individuals with displacement experiences

■ Key findings

◆ NGO work that is already done within Refugee Response Plan (RRP)

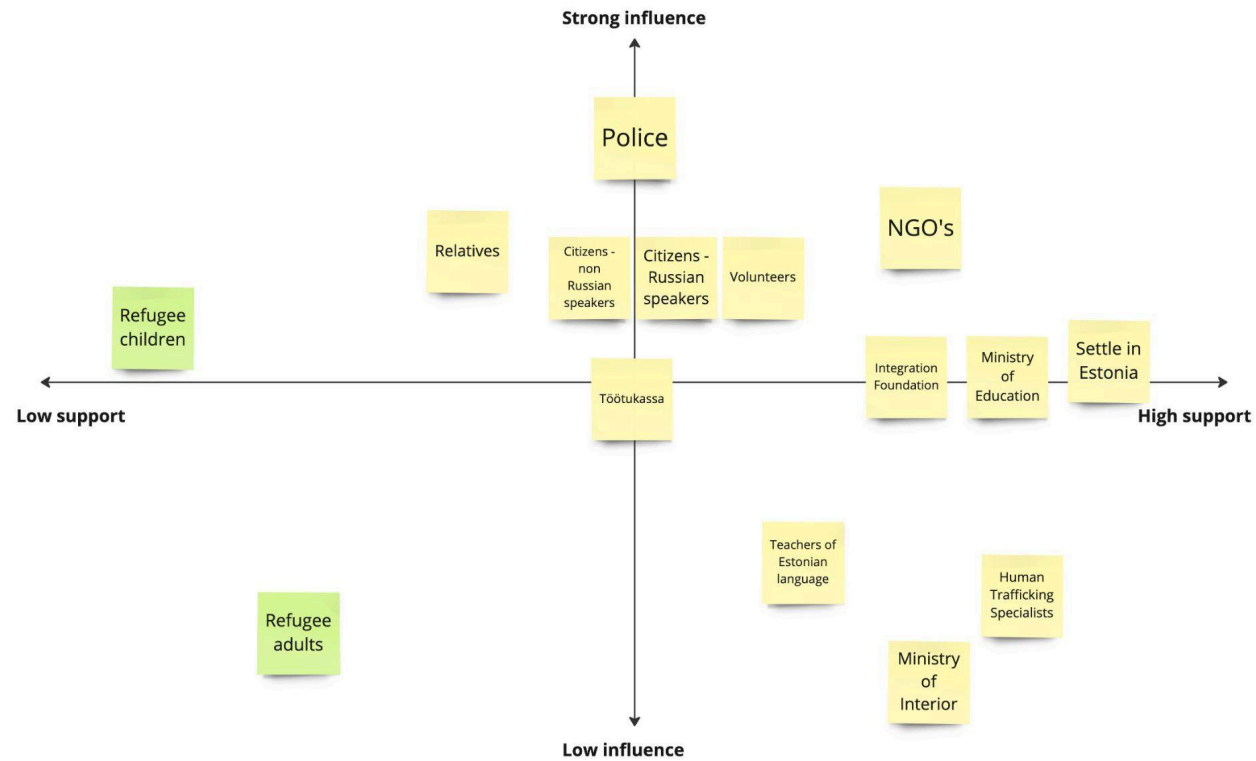
Preparation	Before arrival	Arrival	Hours	Days	Weeks	Months / years	
Campaigning <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ NGOs and GAs need to provide updated information and contacts• Refugees won't always know their rights for safety• Some refugees often think that NGOs and GAs will provide accommodation and free transportation• Some refugees think that they can visit as many EU countries as they can before settlement• There is no legal definition of volunteering in Estonia. Which makes collaborations harder Preparation of accommodation <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ GAs require special training to deal with refugee influx• Local municipalities are aware of available accommodation in south and east Estonia• Hundreds of buildings are unfit for living and require renovation<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Hands for Ukraine• Ministry of Interior must lead the renovation process and give instructions to the locals• Local government not always ready to provide accommodation to refugees	Organisations and relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ GAs may be challenged in executing responsibilities such as emergency planning, identifying those requiring assistance, and arranging accommodation for refugees• Community groups and GAs may have little or no relations between them prior to an arrival, making collaborations and coordination harder• Refugees don't always know which organisations they can trust Preparation and connections <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Local NGOs still experience operational problems due to lack of funding<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ UNHCR◆ IOM■ Refugees intending to come to Estonia face challenges related to accommodation, financial support, and psychological well-being• Refugees who's relatives already moved to Estonia, are not always in position to provide accommodation• NGO experience limitations and cannot always fully prepare until refugee is in Estonia	Attitudes and behaviours <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Refugees don't always realise they have to make immediate decisions upon arrival• Refugees frequently lack readiness in adapting to the local use of the EUR currency• Most refugees don't plan their route until they cross the boarder Stress and abandonment <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some refugees experience PTSD• Some refugees experience fear and stress because of uncertainties about their immediate future and how they will be met• Refugees feel abandoned by GAs Information and guidance <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Refugees want accessible information or where they are already looking<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Mariupoli sõbrad◆ Estonian Refugee Council• Refugees seek precise, reliable, uniform, and authoritative guidance with detailed instructions• Refugees hear important information second hand• Some refugees prefer physical assistance when information is provided	Safety and responses <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Refugees first priority is their family safety• People need to get through the initial hours following arrival – food and shelter<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Mariupoli sõbrad• Emergency services only give information in non-threatening situations First meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none">• People with limited mobility require special accommodation access• Other refugees arrive with heavy luggage and require physical assistance• Refugees require local SIM cards to keep in contact with NGOs and community groups Responders <ul style="list-style-type: none">• GAs can be slow to react and accommodate refugees• NGOs can respond faster to support refugees• Refugees often need assistance from NGOs to speak to GA representatives• Volunteers in NGOs require mentors to discuss the refugee cases■ Frontline volunteers endure burnout because they are overworked, undertrained, and unsupported• Community groups are not always consistent in their	Knowing who is in need <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ GAs don't know who is in need or what their needs are as refugees don't know how to follow instructions and reach help• Refugees don't know what support they are entitled to• It takes time for frontline volunteers to assess refugees needs■ Refugees prefer to refer to NGOs which support their mother tongue and obtain help from people they can empathise with• More vulnerable persons may be priority for help■ Refugees want to retain privacy and dignity while receiving help, yet this often does not happen Food and shelter <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Refugees firsts concern is where to stay• Refugees don't have family and friends to stay with• Some refugees can pay for the hotel• Refugees require cooked meals• Some refugees would seek for help at bus or train terminals	Displacement <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Refugees can be displaced for long period of times, left isolated and unable to do daily routines• Refugee children require permanent residence to obtain education• Emergencies are worsened by an already overloaded housing market• Refugees want to return home Community support <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Community support and businesses desire to aid refugees, however there may be challenges with time frames and the efficiency of support■ NGOs offer counselling services, provide basic needs and food<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Estonian Refugee Council◆ Estonian Food Bank◆ UNICEF• Refugees are grateful for received support• Not everyone is willing to support refugees• Some refugees will try to receive support from as many NGOs as possible• Public attitude changes toward refugee community	Settlement process <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Refugees have to register through Police to obtain asylum• Refugee receives an email from the police regarding enrolment for Estonian language lessons<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ NGO provide programs, education and opportunities for integration<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Estonian Chamber of People with Disabilities◆ Estonian Refugee Council◆ NGO Mondo◆ Institute of Baltic Studies◆ International House Tartu Centre◆ Johannes Mikkelson◆ Kõõmen◆ Ukrainian Cultural Center■ Some refugees require additional assistance from volunteers to complete everyday tasks• Refugees start to experience the lack of language skills• Some refugees require additional financial support• Some refugees need clothing, appliances and furniture	Distress, trauma and mental health <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Refugees need methods to relieve stress and trauma, but many won't actively seek help• Some refugee's sense of self and identity suffers when they lose their home• Refugees are concerned about the possibility of it happening again• Some people don't talk what happened to them• Very few individuals would seek mental health help• Some support programs are not suitable<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ NGO provide mental support programs<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Eluiliin◆ Estonian Refugee Council◆ Estonian-Swedish Mental Health and Suicidology Institute◆ UNICEF◆ UNHCR Accountability and engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Refugees prefer a single point of accountability and blame• There is a lack of openness and accountability around donations• There is no follow-up from GAs

Appendix 5. Co-design session

A.5.1 Stakeholder mapping with participants

1. Using sticky notes, identify stakeholders who are related to those who have received temporary or international protection (refugees).

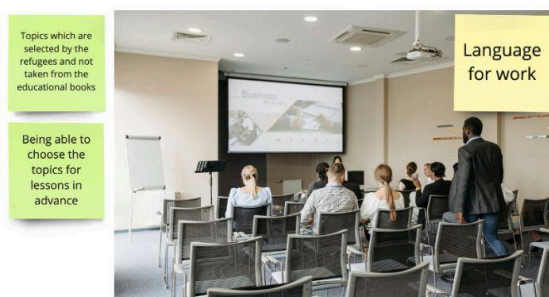
1. С помощью sticky notes определите заинтересованных лиц, которые имеют отношение к тем кто получил временную или международную защиту (беженцы).



A.5.2 Visualisation of preferred services

2.
a. Identify the needs of refugees and write about what they need using sticky notes.
b. Visualize a better future using photographs and images.
Stock images: <https://www.pexels.com/>

2.
a. Определите потребности беженцев и напишите о том в чем они нуждаются используя sticky notes.
b. Визуализируйте лучшее будущее, используя фотографии и изображения.
Стоковые изображения: <https://www.pexels.com/>



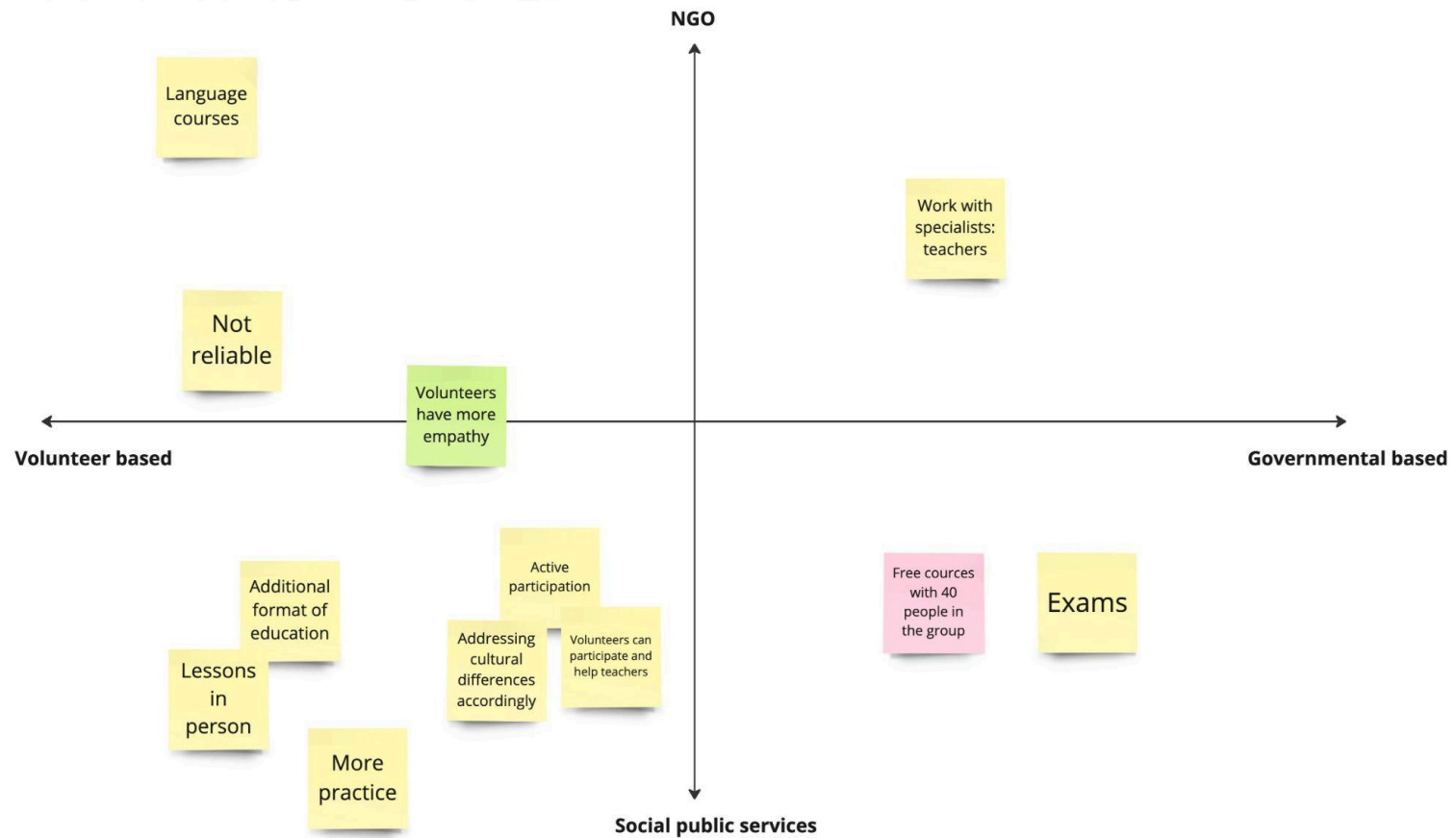
- Online doesn't always work
- No stability, refugees might leave the course
- No provision of long term problem solving
- Cards for speaking and enabling learning new words
- Refugees require stability
- Being able to work with another teacher



A.5.3 Exploration of the scenarios

3. Choose the best scenarios and figure out how you can achieve a better future.

3. Выберите лучшие варианты сценариев и придумайте как можно достичь лучшего будущего.



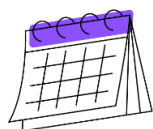
A.5.4 Discussion notes



Appendix 6. Questionnaire for Personalised Plan

Name: _____

Date: _____



Questionnaire

for Personalised plan



1 What is your current level of Estonian language proficiency?

- a) Beginner (A1)
- b) Elementary (A2)
- c) Intermediate (B1)
- d) Upper Intermediate (B2)
- e) Advanced (C1)

2 What are your main goals for learning Estonian?

- a) For employment
- b) For education
- c) For daily life communication
- d) To prepare for Estonian language exams level ____
- e) Other: _____

3 How many hours per week can you dedicate to learning Estonian?

- a) 1-3 hours
- b) 4-6 hours
- c) 7-10 hours
- d) More than 10 hours

4 Do you have any special needs or circumstances we should accommodate?

- a) Accessibility requirements
- b) Scheduling conflicts (work, family obligations, etc.)
- c) Other: _____

5 Select the activities that pique your interest for learning Estonian:

- a) Excursions and field trips
- b) Games
- c) Debates
- d) Presentations

6 Choose topics which you are interested in:

- 1. Introducing Yourself and Greetings
- 2. Daily Routines and Activities
- 3. Family and Relationships
- 4. Food and Cooking
- 5. Travel and Transportation
- 6. Shopping and Bargaining
- 7. Health and Well-being
- 8. Weather and Seasons
- 9. Hobbies and Interests
- 10. Education and Learning
- 11. Work and Employment
- 12. Technology and Social Media
- 13. Cultural Traditions and Festivals
- 14. Nature and Environment
- 15. Sports and Fitness
- 16. Arts and Entertainment
- 17. History and Heritage
- 18. Politics and Society
- 19. Future Plans and Aspirations
- 20. Making Plans and Invitations
- 21. Giving Directions and Locations
- 22. Celebrations and Special Occasions
- 23. Daily Challenges and Problem-solving
- 24. Personal Values and Beliefs
- 25. Learning Estonian Proverbs and Idioms

Name:

Date:

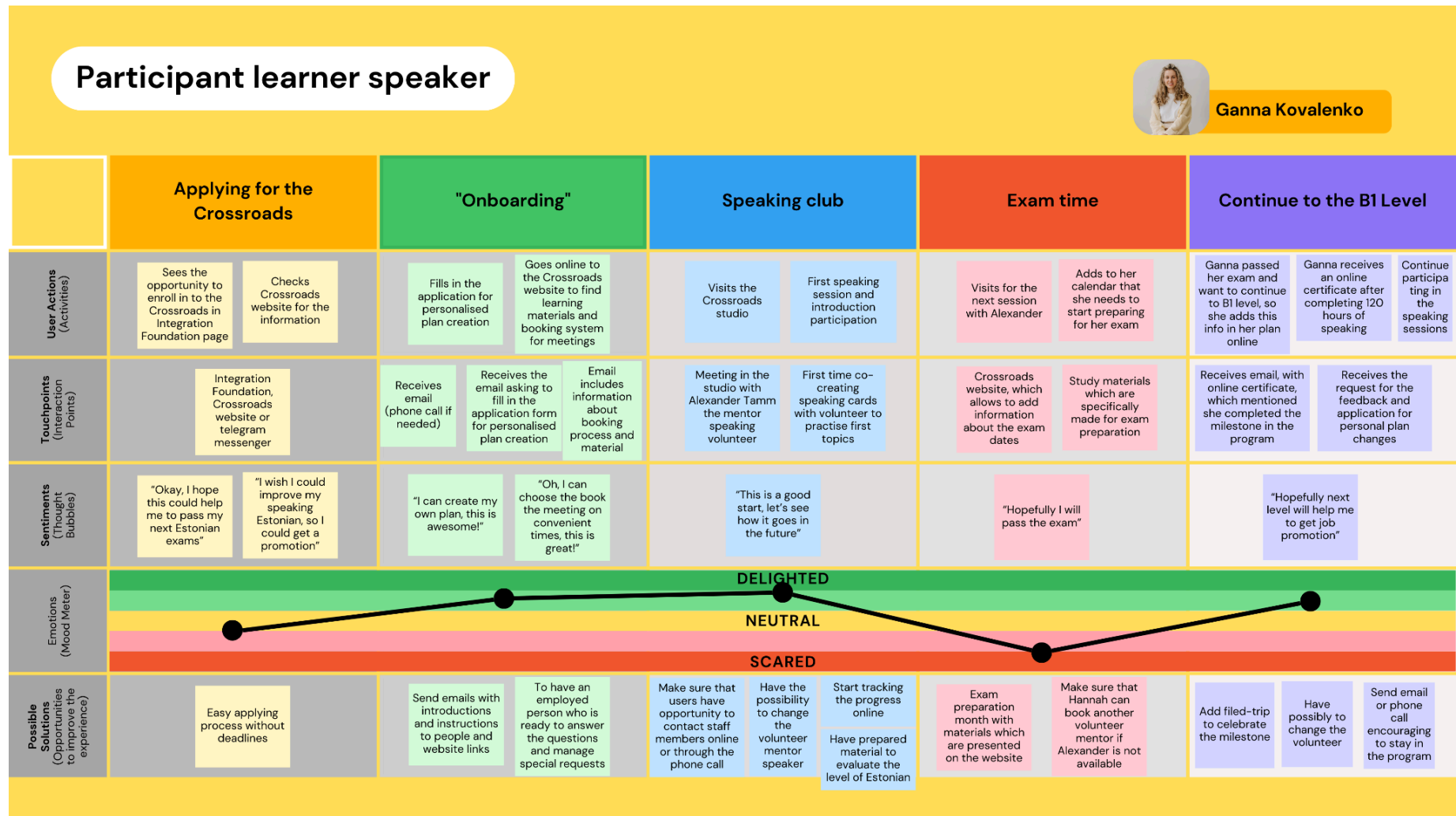
7 Write 5 topics or you are interested in:

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____
- d) _____
- e) _____

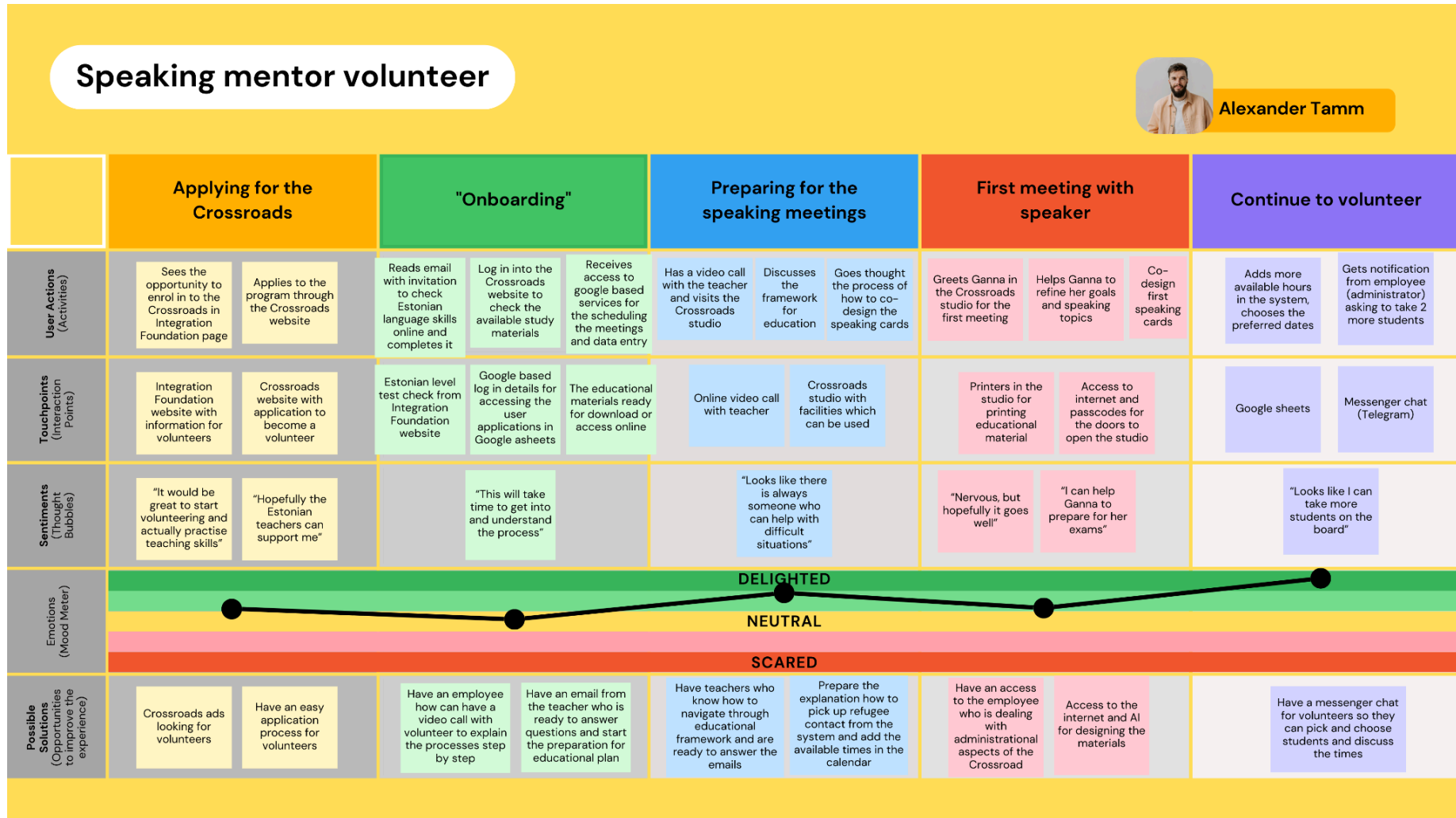
8 What duration are you aiming for in your Estonian speaking learning journey?

- a) 6 months
- b) 1 year
- c) 1.5 years
- d) 2 years
- e) I don't know

Appendix 7. User journey of the participant speaker



Appendix 8. User journey the volunteer speaking mentor



Appendix 9. Service blueprint map

<https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVKVWQis=/>

