

# English Summary

## **Chapter 2: Towards a new model of settlement**

In spite of the enactment of a number of targeted settlement strategies during the nineties, Norwegian municipalities were still facing major challenges with regard to the settlement of refugees as the year 2000 began. The municipalities were unable to settle a sufficient number of refugees to cover demand, waiting periods in reception centres for refugees were lengthy, and many refugees quite quickly relocated from the region where they had initially settled. A new settlement model was implemented in 2001, taking effect from 2002. The prime goal of the new model was to improve the settlement process by making it faster and more stable. The key instruments from the previous settlement system remained unaltered even after the introduction of the new model: settlement should be based on voluntary cooperation from the municipalities, negotiations between the central and local authorities, and governmental subsidy schemes compensating the local councils for the costs incurred. The new model comprised the establishment of a National Settlement Council consisting of representatives of central and local authorities who were charged with drawing up more accurate prognoses for the demand for settlement over the coming year. The council was to monitor the settlement situation and discuss possible problems. In addition, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities was given a more active role with regard to motivating the municipalities to settle refugees in line with demand.

## **Chapter 3: Does the process of settling refugees run faster?**

A strong growth in the need for settlement, mainly caused by an increasing number of family reunifications during the period prior to the implementation of the new model, was a key cause of the problems that spurred the introduction of a new model. In the years following the implementation of the new model this demand has subsided, which has facilitated the achievement of the goal of accelerating the settlement process. In the period following 2002, the relationship between needs, requests, municipal decisions and actual settlement has developed positively. However, the municipalities still choose to settle fewer persons than the number requested by the Directorate of Integration and Diversity, and they still settle fewer persons than the number defined in their own decisions. However, these discrepancies are considerably smaller than those that could be observed some years ago. During recent years there has also been a reduction in the number of persons in reception centres waiting for settlement. In the same period, however, the total waiting time spent in reception centres has increased. The slow pace of settlement is not only caused by the quest for approved places of settlement in the municipalities; negotiations between the Directorate of Integration and Diversity and the municipalities on the settlement of specific refugees can also be timeconsuming. In

particular, groups that are regarded as expensive and difficult to settle and integrate are left for long periods in reception centres. A general impression gained from informants representing the central government – i.e. from the regional offices of the Directorate of Integration and Diversity and governmental representatives in the National Settlement Council – is that negotiations concerning the groups that are regarded as “difficult” to settle result in the use of substantial resources. In interviews with the Directorate of Integration and Diversity, the National Settlement Council, refugee advisors and employees at reception centres the impression emerges that this affects waiting periods spent in reception centres. The problems of slow settlement and long waiting times are most pronounced in the urbanised municipalities in the south-eastern part of the country.

#### **Chapter 4: Factors outside the model that affect the pace of settlement**

The refugee advisors primarily mention six different factors outside the scope of the settlement model that they maintain affect the settlement process. In descending order of importance these are: governmental financial frameworks, the capacity of the municipalities’ integration programmes, the desire to comply with requests made by the Directorate of Integration and Diversity, the political composition of the local council, the housing situation in the municipalities and the local labour market. However, the factors that have the greatest effect depend on the approach adopted. In a long-term perspective, the labour market will be decisive for the municipality’s ability to integrate refugees, while a shortage of housing is the most prominent bottleneck preventing follow-up of the Directorate’s requests in the short term. Even if a majority of the refugee advisors is of the view that the integration subsidy falls short of covering the costs incurred by the municipalities for the settlement and integration of refugees, the degree of coverage has improved compared with the situation prevailing prior to the implementation of the new settlement model. Whether the integration subsidy covers the municipality’s expenses will to a large extent depend on whether the refugee can find paid employment or not. Most of the refugees in the majority of the municipalities receive a housing grant from the Norwegian State Housing Bank. Lack of knowledge about these grants may explain why some municipalities have an artificially low usage of the scheme. This may affect the willingness and ability of the municipalities to settle refugees, and thereby also the pace of the settlement process. Although the Housing Bank’s scheme for grants to the municipalities may affect their willingness and ability to settle refugees, the demand for this scheme has declined considerably since the grant limits have gradually been reduced over the last four years. The grant for adult education for refugees has been reorganised: from being paid on an hourly basis it is now a per capita subsidy. So far, the financial impact of this reorganisation on the municipalities is unclear, but we can already ascertain that the new scheme will provide larger economies of scale than the old model and will to a larger extent reward municipalities that have “diligent” students. This latter factor may serve to enhance the problems encountered in settling “difficult” groups. In recent years, the reception centres for asylum seekers have been given the opportunity to establish direct linkages to the municipalities. In some cases this may lead to faster settlement. In addition, the reception centres are able to establish favour-

able linkages that are less accessible to the Directorate of Integration and Diversity. This applies particularly to the settlement of refugees in relatively unattractive municipalities and the settlement of relatively unattractive refugees in the municipalities. The disadvantages of providing such direct linkages are found in the fact that there is a high demand among clients for settlement in popular municipalities – that often make reservations against these kinds of request – and that municipalities may “shop” for more attractive refugees at the reception centres, thus complicating the settlement of less attractive groups.

#### **Chapter 5: Has the new settlement model speeded up settlement?**

A core point in the new model is the effort to solve problems of coordination in the settlement process by giving the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities a more pronounced role as facilitator. The problems were to be solved through the establishment of and participation in the National Settlement Council, active efforts to motivate the municipalities, and a stronger regional focus and responsibilities in the settlement process. The results of this study indicate that the establishment of the National Settlement Council has provided better information on needs and improved routines for allocation of county-wise quotas. Participation in the council by representatives of the municipalities has also ensured an improved basis for consensus and legitimacy within the municipalities for the goals of the national settlement plan, as well as better exchange of information between the parties on key challenges faced in the settlement process. However, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities has not yet assumed the role of facilitator to the extent foreseen by the model. Because of an unclear distribution of responsibilities between the Directorate of Integration and Diversity and the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities, routines are missing for summoning the municipalities to motivational briefings when there is a need to establish further places for settlement. The annual conference that takes place in the autumn has proven not to be an optimal arena to discuss challenges in the settlement process, both because of its tight schedule and because the date of the conference precedes the publication of decisions on settlement. The model presumes increased regional cooperation and responsibility for settlement. Some inter-municipal cooperation concerning integration and qualification takes place, but there is a potential for expanding this type of cooperation. The goal of increasing the regional collective responsibility in order to find more places to settle refugees has proven impossible to implement. Beyond a written agreement signed by the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities and the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, the instruments and responsibilities of this model are only to a limited extent embedded in written policy documents. Neither is the new model founded on any legislative act. As a consequence, the model has not functioned in an optimal manner.

#### **Chapter 6: What factors affect the stability of settlement?**

There has long been a tendency for close to half of all refugees to move away within five years from the municipality in which they were first settled. Mobility patterns among the refugees are basically similar to those of the majority of the population. In

general terms mobility goes from north to south, and from smaller towns and villages to larger cities. However, during recent years there has been a marked decrease in the number of these secondary relocations. Refugees settled after 2002 have been shown to be considerably more stationary than previous cohorts or groups of refugees. This observation may have several possible explanations: better coupling of the “right” refugee with the “right” municipality, enhanced emphasis on the refugees’ wishes with regard to settlement, more centralised settlement to regions deemed to be attractive by the refugees, and the implementation of the introductory programme. We can find evidence that both the Directorate of Integration and Diversity and the refugee advisors increasingly emphasise the establishment of favourable linkages between the refugee and the municipality. At the same time, certain bottlenecks hinder such favourable matches in practice. These comprise deficient information on the refugees that are in the reception centres, as well as deficient information on the municipalities that can be provided for the refugees. As a result, those who are responsible for finding suitable municipalities for settlement have insufficient knowledge of both the refugees and the municipalities, while the refugees themselves have a deficient basis of information that can be used to select a specific municipality to settle in. The enhanced emphasis on achieving a favourable match between the refugees and the municipalities in combination with an extensive degree of voluntariness given to the municipalities in terms of *how many* and *whom* they desire to settle could also serve to legitimise increasing selectivity with regard to whom the municipalities wish to receive. The municipalities therefore spend a lot of time negotiating with the Directorate of Integration and Diversity on the desirable characteristics of the refugees to be settled. This may entail some negative consequences for those refugees whom are deemed to be difficult to settle. Figures from the Directorate of Immigration further show that there has been no increase in the proportion that has its wishes granted in terms of actual place of settlement. The reduction in the number of secondary relocations can to a certain extent be ascribed to an increase in the rate of settlement in the most centrally located municipalities. This increase started in 2000, and can thereby not immediately be ascribed to the introduction of the new settlement model in 2002. In spite of this, the qualitative survey shows that there is a widespread notion among refugee advisors and representatives of the Directorate of Integration and Diversity that the introduction of the new settlement model has entailed an increasing number of refugees having their wishes granted and an increasing number being settled in centrally located municipalities. From 2001 the number of municipalities that receive requests for settlement has been reduced from 380 to 246 in 2005. In other words, the Directorate of Integration and Diversity has become far more selective with regard to the municipalities that are requested to settle refugees. This may imply that the municipalities that currently receive refugees are to a larger extent seen as attractive and as offering certain qualities that enable the persons who settle there to establish a meaningful existence comprising a job, education and social networks. There are also indications that the implementation of a mandatory introduction programme in 2004 has to a certain extent contributed to reducing the rate of secondary relocations since the entitlement to participate in the introduction programme applies only to the first place of set-

tlement. However, this cannot explain the reduction in secondary relocations among persons settled in the years prior to 2004.

#### **Chapter 7: Conclusion – challenges and opportunities for the settlement process**

We can find clear indications that the settlement process has become more efficient and functions better following the introduction of the new settlement model in 2001. A positive development is evident in the relationship between settlement needs, requests, municipal decisions to accept requests, and actual settlement in the municipalities after 2002. In addition, the rate of secondary relocations has been reduced in the period subsequent to the introduction of the new settlement model. Some of these changes can be attributed to the introduction of the settlement model in 2001. However, other factors outside the model have also played a major role. In spite of a certain goal achievement following the introduction of the settlement model, some challenges and obstacles still hinder the achievement of all the goals of the settlement plan. In Fafo's assessment the main problems are: 1) municipalities decide to settle fewer refugees than requested, 2) municipalities settle fewer refugees than the number defined in their decisions, 3) waiting periods in the reception centres are still too lengthy, 4) resources are wasted on negotiations over settling individual refugees, 5) aspects of the financial schemes exacerbate the problems related to the settlement of particular groups of refugees, 6) many municipalities have insufficient knowledge of the grant schemes of the Norwegian State Housing Bank, 7) the collection and dissemination of information in the reception centres is inadequate, hindering a favourable match of refugees and municipalities, and 8) official statistics on settlement are not available, which serves to hinder satisfactory planning of the settlement process. In the context of the prevailing settlement regime, we have formulated the following proposals, which we believe will help to ensure a better, faster and more efficient settlement process: 1) the responsibilities and tasks of the parties must be clarified and formalised, 2) voluntariness on the part of the municipalities with regard to *whom* they want to settle must be curtailed, 3) there is a need to revise funding schemes in order to reduce the risks for municipalities that receive refugees with special needs, 4) solutions need to be devised to counter the challenges faced by municipalities that have a high number of family reunifications, and 5) practices for collecting information on refugees and disseminating information on the municipalities offering opportunities for settlement must be improved.

