1. **Case name - Title of the project**

   Social listening -trainings (Finland)

2. **Presentation of the case providers and involved stakeholders –** Describe the case providers *(organization, people/stakeholders involved, background and role) Approx. 100 words*

The case provider is Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos (THL), på svenska Institutet för hälsa och välfärd, in English Finnish institute for health and welfare. THL is a Finnish expert agency that provides reliable information on health and welfare for decision-making and activities in the field.

The contents of the trainings were planned and carried out by two experts from THL. In addition, there was a coordinator helping to carry out the trainings. The training was based on the experiences THL had received earlier from social listening regarding the native population.

3. **Presentation of the case –** Describe the case/initiative *(purpose, background and motivation) Approx. 250 words*

   Questions:
   - What does your case consist of?
   - What type of case is this?
   - What is the purpose of your case/initiative?
   - Why did you start this initiative?
   - What challenges did you experience that this initiative should solve?
   - What kind of information/communication did they use?

According to THL, social listening is defined as the process of monitoring and analyzing conversations to inform communication activities. Social listening is based on the notion that target audiences themselves can best define their own information needs and messages. Social listening, a continuous process to collect online and offline data using standard tools, has grown during the pandemic. Social listening projects have taken many forms.

The case describes social listening -trainings that were given to representatives of municipalities and migrant NGOs in order to improve the communication to migrant communities. Thus, the case is not a communication measure, but a training to improve communication. The need for the training was identified with regard to covid 19, but social listening as a concept and process is not limited to any one particular issue or theme.

In the spring of 2021 six organizations who communicate pandemic-related information to people from diverse cultural backgrounds were trained to establish a social listening system. The training consisted of four online workshops that aimed to provide participants with sufficient knowledge and skills to develop a social listening system based on their own needs and available resources. The workshops provided guidance on the organizational structure and the project cycle including data collection, analysis, and the use of findings to develop communication messages and products. During the workshops, project team members developed their own project structure and flow.

The goal of the training was to enable the participants to carry out social listening in their everyday work, so that communications could be continuously more up-to-date and anticipatory. Covid-pandemic was a fruitful case as there was a lot of mis- and disinformation that had direct consequences to health and health services. These encountered problems were discussed in Round Table bringing together

public authorities, NGOs and migrant communities. The experts from THL presented the idea of social listening there. The idea was also to tighten the relationship and contacts between public sector actors and NGOs within the participating municipalities (cities).

4. **Description of target group –** Describe the target group *(characteristics and needs) Approx. 200 words*

    Questions:
    - What is characteristic for the target group?
    - Why did they have a special need for information? What did they need information about?

The main target groups were municipalities (especially bigger cities) and NGOs. The idea was that the participants from any given municipality could act as a group, who could collect and analyze data and develop communication products. In the end, the cities of Espoo, Helsinki and Vantaa and the Finnish Red Cross were able complete the trainings. For the cities, the main objectives were to identify key concerns among the public to prepare and disseminate appropriate information, to detect and correct misinformation, and to create vaccine demand. For the Finnish Red Cross, the training served the purpose of reflecting how create targeted communication materials in general. The composition of city groups was not ideal, as they lacked NGO participants and some of the groups were small. As social listening as a methodology highlights the need to understand the beliefs, values, and practices of the target audiences based on their own culture, rather than be judged against the criteria of others, the lack in diversity was a challenge.

5. **Development, planning and implementation** *Approx. 250 words*

    Questions:
    - How long has it taken to develop the initiative/case?
    - Who has been involved?
    - What knowledge is the initiative based on? (Theory, practice experience, method)
    - What organizational levels are involved in the case/initiative? (Volunteers, staff, professional leadership, political leadership)
    - How did you organized yourself in the organization to make the initiative work?

The training took place in the spring of 2021 after a short planning and organizational phase. The trainings eventually continued in the fall of 2021 so that it was possible to try to utilize the contents of the trainings in practice

According to THL (forthcoming article, in peer review), during the first workshop participants learned the definition of social listening, how to apply it in their own working environment, and how to build their own social listening process which included defined target audiences, goals and objectives, data sources and roles, and responsibilities to all involved in the process (collecting data, analyzing data, developing risk communication recommendations). During the second workshop, participants familiarized themselves with the principles of qualitative data analysis and coding, and the benefits and limitations of using qualitative methodologies in social listening. In the third workshop, participants learned how to code and synthesize social listening data. During this practical, hands-on training session, participants coded and analyzed real data. The fourth and last training workshop focused on building the capacity of workshop participants to use the findings of social listening in risk communication. The fourth workshop focused on familiarizing workshop participants with some basic risk communication principles to guide the formulation of risk communication recommendations.

All city groups were different in composition. The participants were immigration and integration experts, social media experts and communication experts. As the training aimed to create useful tools for the participants, all the cities worked on the basis of their own needs and goals. The trainings also included tasks to be carried individually in between the training workshops.

6. **Effect –** Describe the effect of the case/initiative? (*Include perspectives from target group if accessible) Approx. 350 words*

    Questions:
    - How was the initiative received by the target group?
    - Did the information/communication succeed in meeting the needs of the target group?
    - What knowledge have we achieved about communicating to this target group based on this case?

The city of Helsinki has used social listening on following how the city guidance and counseling services could communicate better about the various services the city provides and, generally speaking, tackle mis- and disinformation about the services. Thus, the city has piloted the contents of the training. The city of Vantaa, the members of the group used the training to collect data from face-to-face encounters with their clients. One part of this effort looked into the covid vaccinations. A number of factors were identified influencing the vaccine uptake among Russian and Somali speakers. This led to more targeted messages and actions such as discussion events. The interviewee from the city of Vantaa stressed that the added value of social listening is in trying to genuinely convey messages from the grassroot level to "top" or at least to communication function, which often does not have "the right pulse". This could be very important in sensitive service areas such as child protection. The city of Espoo ended up using the contents of the trainings as tools for the participants of the group as issues rise. Social listening has been used also for increasing vaccinations. For the city of Espoo it has been difficult to find a way to systematize the listening process, though. For the Finnish Red Cross, the training contributed to the way the multilingual communication team cooperated and facilitated cooperation among the migrant NGOs participating in the project on improved multilingual covid communication.

THL has carried out qualitative research on social listening trainings and will be publishing a peer-reviewed article on the results, possibly in the autumn of 2022.

7. **Motivations and barriers -** Describe main motivations and barriers to the implementation and execution of the project (*Include perspectives from target group if accessible) Approx. 350 words*

    Questions:
    - What worked particularly well with the case?
    - What didn't work well with the case?

Overall, the trainings were well received, but there could have more marketing and more participants. For the participants the training was mostly about capacity building. Establishing systematic processes within the city organizations or more broadly with migrant NGOs has proven to be challenging. The participants interviewed in this case study, all agreed that the added value would be bigger if one was able to create a systematic process, even a "light version" might be sufficient. However, it is difficult to integrate it into various experts´ monthly, weekly or daily routines. The link to migrant NGOs might be possible to create through contact points in regular dialogue with the NGOs. Thus, the systematic

coding involved did not need to be taken up by everybody involved. However, the longitudinal data would help to see trends of rising and declining issues and mis- and disinformation that need to be tackled by communication in general. All agree that real-time social listening based on qualitative data can help risk communicators produce targeted communication messages and improved communication products. For migrant NGOs the approach and contents of the training seemed intuitively familiar, as their everyday work has a lot to do with genuine listening to various needs and concerns. However, a more systematic process might be lacking to bridge listening to communication. Perhaps a good combination would be if from any given city there was one communication expert and a team with the relevant function and migrant NGOs represented. There could even be two such teams from one city in order to strengthen the implementation in a city organization. The general problem is that such processes are often too tied to certain individuals, not to organization structures.

More piloting and developing is needed in order to build easily implemented working methods that could be taken up by public authorities in joint cooperation with the migrant NGOs and communities. There are certain concerns that need also be tackled head on and with transparency. For example, there might be ethical concerns on "spying" discussions. The timing of the training was not necessarily optimal. The training was addressing an acute crisis situation which meant that all the participants had their hands full. Perhaps such trainings and the building of a more systematic listening process should take place when there is more time available as it can be seen as one element in better preparedness of all kinds of organizations, but especially municipalities trying to reach out to all inhabitants. The fruits will be collected in the time of crisis. Within the training this was acknowledged by everyone leading to flexible approach, loose project organizations and tailored timetables. Despite these challenges the training received good feedback from the participants. In order to be properly implemented, one would need several people from any particular city and in such a fashion that there is a genuine strategic desire within the communication function of the city to improve its communication to migrant communities.

One of the strengths of the approach is that social listening can be targeted to basically any need. It is of importance to define the issues listened on the basis of what can then be solved by better communication. According to the participants sometimes the changes needed in communication can be minor ones, but even these minor changes might make a bid difference on how the message is received. It was also stressed that if the public authorities do not communicate effectively to various target audiences, then somebody else definitely will.