

External evaluation of Sprogland

2023 - 2024

Results at a glance

Sprogland is a volunteer-based online language training initiative for refugees and immigrants, offered by Danish Red Cross.



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Produced by Als Research
for Danish Red Cross

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PREFACE

This publication presents selected results of the external evaluation of Danish Red Cross' language initiatives conducted by Als Research in the period 2023-2024.




The publication is aimed at existing and potential partners, as well as other stakeholders interested in how volunteer-based online language training may support the integration of refugees and immigrants in Denmark through the strengthening of their Danish language skills. Therefore, the focus is mainly on the online initiative Sprogland, on how it works and on the benefits experienced by the target group.

The full evaluation report in Danish can be found [here](#).

All names included in the publication are pseudonyms.

Quotes may have been edited for readability, but never in such a way as to change the meaning of what was said.

The evaluation is based on the following data:

-  10 interviews with immigrant or refugee participants of Sprogland
-  15 interviews with Danish volunteer language coaches
-  Quantitative data collected and provided by the Danish Red Cross

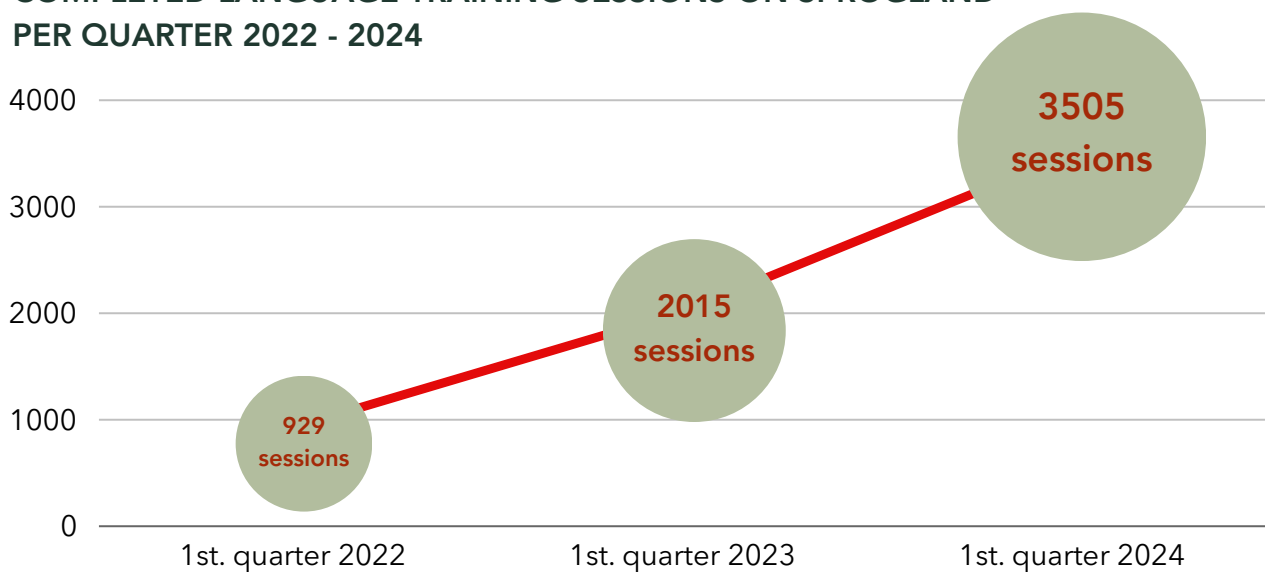
ABOUT SPROGLAND

Sproglan is the Danish Red Cross' online language training initiative for refugees and immigrants in Denmark. The language training takes place on Sproglan.dk, a digital community platform*. Through video, volunteer language coaches meet participants on either phone, tablet or computer and train Danish language skills. The language coaches can help participants with pronunciation, exam preparations, practicing difficult words and phrases etc.

The training is mainly conducted through video, but users can also write to each other and send files, for instance if help with homework assignments is needed. It is up to the volunteers and participants to agree on how often they meet online. Volunteers can also post available time slots on Sproglan.dk, so that new users can book a language training session. This makes it flexible for both volunteers and participants, who can schedule and book training sessions that fit their day-to-day lives.

In the course of the last two years, **the number of completed language training sessions on Sproglan has more than tripled.**

COMPLETED LANGUAGE TRAINING SESSIONS ON SPROGLAN PER QUARTER 2022 - 2024



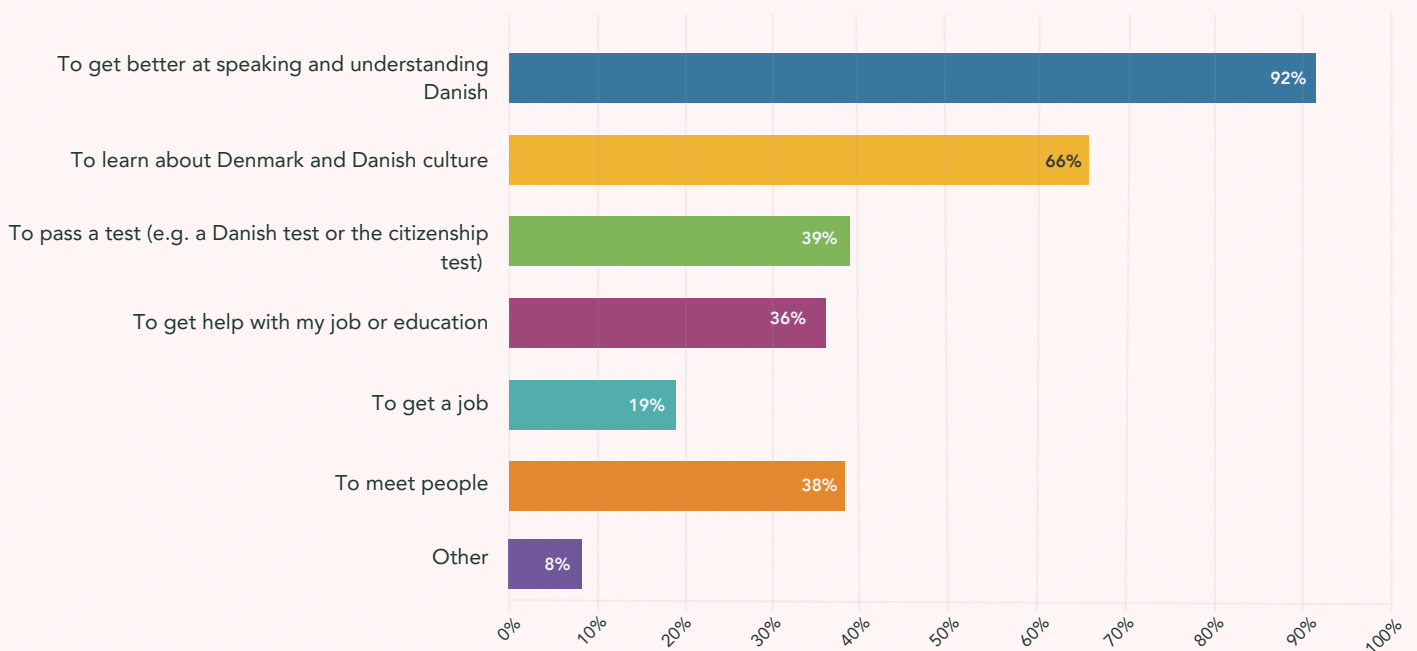
Accommodating the increased demand, **the number of active volunteer language coaches has also increased from 34 in January 2022 to 157 in March 2024.**

*Danish Red Cross delivers the service nationwide in cooperation with the company Boblberg with whom Danish Red Cross has a formal strategic partnership regarding a citizen-to-citizen-platform with 350.000+ users.

PARTICIPANT MOTIVATION

What motivates participants on Sprogland?

"WHY DO YOU WANT TO USE SPROGLAND?"
(n = 145)*



*Source: Danish Red Cross survey to Sprogland participants

PARTICIPANT BENEFITS

The evaluation shows that participants on Sprogland experience significant benefits from the language training. As the form, content and frequency of the language training varies according to participant needs and wishes, participant benefits vary accordingly. The evaluation identifies experienced outcomes tied to three primary areas: **Improved Danish language skills, knowledge of Danish culture, society, and labor market and benefits related to well-being.** The following sections will elaborate on these areas.

Improved Danish language skills

Participants of Sprogland primarily aim at improving their Danish skills. For many newcomers, the pronunciation of Danish is particularly difficult, and participants of Sprogland find that frequent language training helps them improve their pronunciation.

Online training with volunteer language coaches differs from lessons at a language school in that participants simply get more speaking time, allowing for more intensive practice of pronunciation. In addition to better pronunciation, participants find that they gain a larger vocabulary, better insight into Danish grammar and sentence construction, and learn more everyday expressions.

“

At language school, there are many students. There may be 15 students, and I cannot speak much Danish. It might happen for only 2 or 5 minutes maximum. But on Sprogland, I can speak for 30 minutes, and that's a lot for me. It's useful for me because it's private, and I can speak a lot. At language school, we don't have much time to practice speaking – we do, but it's not much.

Mahtab, participant on Sprogland

”

“

I train all aspects of the Danish language. The most important thing for me is understanding how Danes think. We have different cultures. Some things are very normal for me, but strange for Danes, and some things are strange for me but normal for Danes.

It's important for me to integrate into Danish society. It's important because I think if I want to thrive in Denmark, I need to learn Danish and relate to Danes. And language is the key for me.

Maryam, participant on Sprogland

”

Knowledge of Danish culture, society and the labour market

Participants on Sprogland are also motivated by learning about Denmark and Danish culture. Several of the interviewed participants explain that language training with volunteers provides them with knowledge about Danish society, culture, and the Danes. For those preparing to take advanced-level Danish exams, understanding Danish culture and society is significant, as knowledge about these topics will have bearing upon their exam results. Additionally, cultural and societal understanding often greatly affects their sense of belonging.

In some cases, volunteers have helped bring participants closer to the labour market, for instance by helping participants ensure that their CVs and job applications meet Danish job market norms and expectations.

“Sprogland has definitely had a significant impact on my life.

Not just because of the language and the opportunity to learn Danish – there were several situations in my life where volunteers helped me. For example, they helped me write a CV and get a job.”

Olena, participant on Sprogland



Increased well-being

Some participants also experience social benefits from Sprogland and express that conversations with volunteer language coaches have had positive impact on their well-being and sense of security. This is mainly seen among participants who have had conversations with the same volunteer over an extended period of time.

“

When I first came to Denmark, I didn't communicate with many Danes (...) I was very depressed, sad and stressed because of the war in my home country. And it helped me a lot to talk to someone. So it's not just the language, there are more things, and I'm very happy about that. I have gotten to know the volunteers well. They are definitely a part of my life now, and I would actually say they are my family. And it means a lot in my life and helps. I feel safe because I always have someone I can ask, and who can help me.

- Kateryna, participant on Sprogland

”

WHAT WORKS AND HOW?

The one-on-one aspect of the language training is found to be the most effective mechanism of Sprogland. Both volunteers and participants feel that the individual training greatly enhances the participants' benefits of the program. Participants get more speaking time to practice pronunciation and can focus on specific aspects of Danish, they need help with. Because the training is one-on-one, it is more individualized, focused, and intensive.

“

At language school, the teachers have a class with 15 students, and online, there's half an hour just for me. And that's good for me. [The volunteer] can focus on me and correct me, and I can ask my questions without worrying about the students - for example, not disturbing the other students with more questions. So in that way, Sprogland online is very good.

Hossein, participant on Sprogland



The flexibility that Sprogland provides is crucial for both participants and volunteers, in particular with regards to the timing and frequency of language training. Flexibility is vital because many participants have busy schedules with work, education, and/or language school. The online format is particularly important for Ukrainian women, who are often alone in Denmark with young children. Two of the interviewed Ukrainian women are alone with a care-dependent child, making it particularly difficult for them to attend classes outside the home.

“

I have a child who has a handicap, and it's not easy to transport her. So it becomes difficult for me to come [to in-person class], and if I have to do something with her, it won't be easy. So for me, it's easier to learn Danish online.

Natalia, participant on Sprogland

From the volunteers' perspective, flexibility makes volunteering at Sprogland attractive. This retired teacher says:

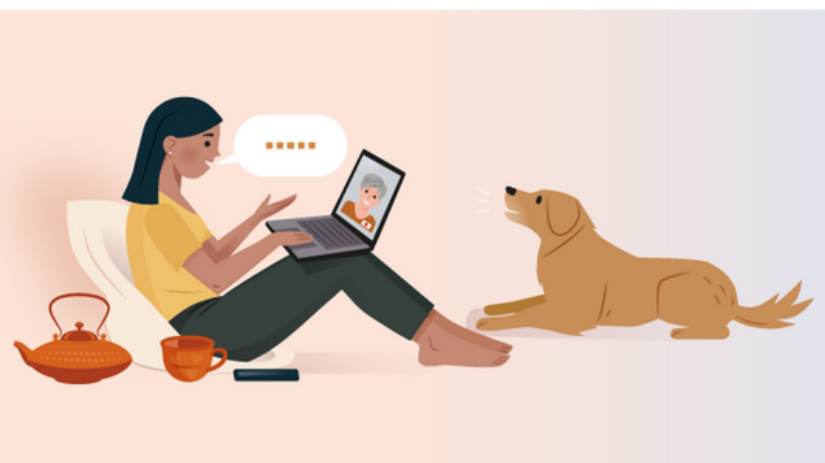
“

I've been tied to a work schedule for 39 years. Teaching and schedules go hand in hand. On Sprogland, I make my own schedule – I can say Tuesday at nine or Friday at three.

Morten, volunteer on Sprogland

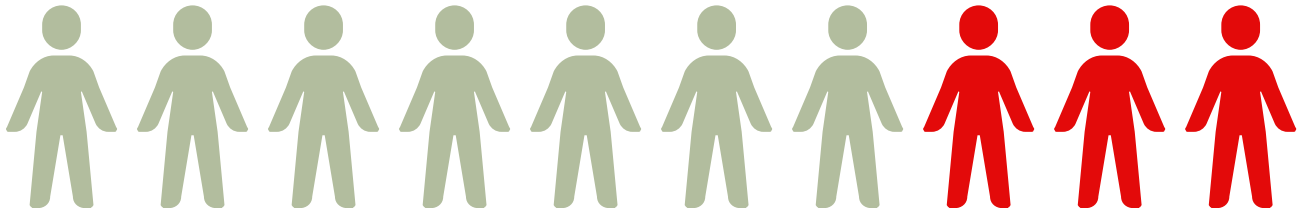
Sprogland volunteers are proficient and have diverse backgrounds. The evaluation indicates that many volunteers have strong teaching competencies; several are former school or language teachers, and others have various pedagogical or teaching-related capabilities and experiences. Other volunteers do not have the same professional backgrounds and prefer to focus on everyday Danish with less emphasis on formal aspects such as grammar. The diversity in volunteers' skills means that participants can train with different volunteers depending on their needs.

Sprogland volunteers are onboarded by the Danish Red Cross before starting. On the Sprogland platform, they have access to online materials that can support the language training. Additionally, they are offered courses and training with other Red Cross volunteers, as well as network meetings specifically for Sprogland volunteers. The volunteers generally express satisfaction with the onboarding process and feel well-equipped to coach the participants in Danish language skills.









WHO USES SPROGLAND?

Over 1,000 unique participants have used Sprogland one or more times between January 2022 and March 2024. A significant majority (71%) are women, and nearly a quarter (24%) are men.



The largest age group is 31-50 years old (62%), while participants up to 30 years old account for 13%, and those aged 51-70 for 20%. Only 5% of the participants are over 71 years old. **The largest group of participants comes from Iran (38%), with the next largest group coming from Ukraine (14%).** The remaining participants come from 26 different countries.

		Pct.
	IRAN	38%
	UKRAINE	14%
	SRI LANKA	9%
	POLAND	4%
	TURKEY	4%
	IRAK	4%
...		



Data indicates a generally high level of education among Sprogland participants, with 80% stating they have a 'Higher education (e.g., school teacher, nurse, engineer or doctor)'.

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