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**Optimization of the shelter animals' adoption processes. The case study of  
Estonia, Russia, and Finland.**

Master Thesis

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I have written this Research paper/Bachelor Thesis independently. Any ideas or data taken from other authors or other sources have been fully referenced.

### **Abstract**

Animal shelters have to deal with the overproduction of animals. Due to the lack of resources and capacity, they experience severe difficulties processing the animals they already have and arranging successful adoptions. To address the problem, the study investigates the animal adoption process, whether it differs from shelter to shelter, and whether business analysis and process management techniques may impact its optimisation improvements based on the selected shelters. In the research, shelters (N = 2 per country; selection criteria: no-kill, up to 150 animals, mixed in the financing, non-governmental) countries: Russian Federation, Estonia, Finland) were selected for the interviews to find out the most significant issues for the adoption with the emphasis on ones under the shelter's control. The countries were selected due to such reasons as: statistics proving that there are problems with stray animals that exist on different scales; the geographical closeness, which implies that the countries could have an access to similar ideas, knowledge sharing, views, beliefs in regards to animals; and most importantly, the drastic lack of research and analysis made about the shelter animals management and adoption-related case studies in these countries. The qualitative method was chosen due to the desire to fulfill the theoretical and research gaps and investigate the problem in detail. Multiple business process models were created to support the analysis and make it visually representative. The interview responses were assessed using the "Cost VS Effect" framework to find out that there are 3 "MUST" adoption processes changes that were delivered to the shelter representatives and discussed: elimination of process wastes by being consistently present online via different social media channels, form foster homes databases, and delegate supporting flow process tasks such as transportation to volunteers and owners.

**Keywords:** *Shelter animals, Adoption, Business process management, Optimisation.*

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## 1. Introduction

Animals have lived with humans since time immemorial. Centuries had passed since the domestication of animals, when they provided humans with mainly practical functional benefits like supporting hunting activities and protection. Nowadays, the role of pets and the culture of owning them has changed significantly. In today's reality, dogs and cats are raised as human companions and, in the context of modern life, are the ones who should be protected and supplied with the resources by humans (Friz, 2003). The approximate number of stray dogs and cats in Europe is over 100 million. Unfortunately, this number is not decreasing, creating problems for both animals - who have to survive and frequently face starvation, illnesses, and cruelty, and humans - who might be attacked or transferred diseases from strays.

Given the current context (tendency to be ethical, eco-friendly, co-existing with nature methods), the solution should be humane, allowing process animals to save their lives and satisfy their needs within the 5 animal freedoms framework (Delon, 2021; Animal Humane Society, 2022). That is why placing animals in shelters can be considered one of the most effective methods. However, a problem connected to the method is a lack of capacity due to difficulties finding homes for animals that have already arrived at the shelters and are under their control (King et al., 2021). It puts much pressure on the shelter workers and increases euthanasia statistics. (Bradley & Rajendran, 2021). It is necessary to optimize the adoption process. From the business analysis perspective, elimination of process wastes, internal and external management changes.

There have been no studies covering the topic of adoption processes and how to optimize them, especially relevant for Europe. The most relevant ones were made based on the American and Asian shelters. Going into the details and defining "average" or "universal" adoption is a challenging mission. The process differs from an organization to an organization, a country to a country, and sometimes even from an animal to an animal within the same organization. (Cyrenne, 2015)

Stemming from this gap in the literature, the research **aim** was created:

*To investigate the shelter animals' adoption process in-depth, define its strong and weak parts and different factors, such as technology presence, allocation of resources, and general circumstances.*

To fulfill it, the following Research Questions are set:

**RQ1:** *Can the investigated shelter animals' adoption processes be optimized and improved?*

**RQ2:** *Are there significant similarities and differences in the different countries' adoption processes?*

The Research Questions (RQs) relate to process optimization with the specifics of the scarcity of the process-related resources, bringing the need to use business process management and modeling as core research methods.

For data collection, the interview was used due to open questions and flexible discussion being the best fit to fulfill the research aim. 6 shelter representatives from 6 shelters and 3 countries (Estonia, Finland, Russia) participated, 1 from each shelter. The results show that changes are needed from different parties. Still, focusing on the internal side, which is under the control of shelters, there are various process wastes, some of which should be eliminated, such as motion and transportation. The shelters should also focus on their social media presence and activities, forming a community of stable support - both donators and volunteers, and on the internal training. Surprisingly, the skills and the human potential aren't fully used in the shelters. They are instead suspended with physical labour.

Based on the findings, recommendations were formed. Some result from BPM frameworks-based analysis, and some come from the comparison. Finnish and Estonian shelters appear to perform better than Russian ones in process flow and resources. However, they are worse at building partnerships and driving social media accounts and PR campaigns. The master thesis has the following structure of the work. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the adoption process, introducing the attempts and ways of optimizing it, the work on the topic, and its gaps. Chapter 3 presents the empirical analysis of the thesis and a short overview of the concepts, notions, and terms needed to understand the research narrative, the data collection, visualization method. Chapter 4 summarizes the findings - cross-country comparison, a list of the selected suggestion for the "to be" process, research limitations, and discussion. Chapter 5 provides the conclusion and recommendations on how the adoption-related research can be further developed in the future.

## **2. The Literature Review**

This section presents related work(s) and adoption-related facts and factors. It defines what an adoption process is and its steps. What are the main idea behind the *adoption process*, common definitions, and standard practices? The works discussed how the adoption

processes can be analyzed and improved, and what kind of tools can be used and implemented to make a positive change. Some parts are also followed by the author's comment on what they think might be done or defined differently and what can be discovered more in-depth and added to the existing knowledge.

### **2.1. Relevance - Street animals and Adoption**

Animals have lived with humans since time immemorial. The first mentions of a dog as a pet date back to  $\approx 15,000$  years B.P. With cats, it happened later  $\approx 10,000$  years B.P. - although scientists are still debating about the latter, whether the species were fully domesticated (Driscoll, Macdonald & O'Brien, 2009). Centuries had passed since the domestication of animals, when they provided humans with mainly practical functional benefits. Nowadays, the role of pets and the culture of owning them has changed significantly. Being adopted as guardians of humans and their resources, dogs and cats are raised as companions in today's reality. They serve as friends, emotional support, hobbies partners in sports, traveling and other spheres and less and less often perform some work. Moreover, in the context of modern life, animals are the ones who should be protected and supplied with resources by humans (Friz, 2003). Lately, dogs and cats are reported as the most common victims of animal abuse, which have many forms, from organized (for example, dogfighting, dog hunting, savagery filming, dog and cat mills of terrible conditions) to occasional ones - intentional cruelty. Moreover, Every 60 seconds, one animal suffers abuse (Hrubenja, 2022). The massive number of homeless and ownerless animals significantly contributes to this and makes it possible.

The approximate number of stray dogs and cats in Europe is over 100 million. The real one might be even bigger since some countries, for example, the Russian Federation, have no official control over the statistics of abandoned or homeless companion animals located in the country (ESDAW, 2021). Thus, the problem of homeless animals, especially in less developed countries such as Russia, is acute. The number of animals surviving on the streets is not decreasing, and given the current context, its solution requires humane methods that allow not only to save animals' lives but also to satisfy their needs within the 5 animal freedoms framework (Delon, 2021; Animal Humane Society, 2022). The framework principles can be checked in Appendix G. Placing animals in shelters allows satisfying this goal. That is why it can be considered as one of the most effective methods and has become a focus solution. Shelters not only care for and find homes for an estimated 3 to 4 million

animals annually, but many of them also promote animal wellness and public health and support responsible pet ownership (Pesavento & Murphy, 2014).

However, another problem appears if proceeds with the shelter method, which is a lack of places because the shelters face difficulties finding homes for animals that they already have (King et al., 2021). The euthanasia statistics are extremely devastating – nearly 50% of animals are put to sleep, while 25% are because of the quantitative burden -"oversupply" of animals in shelters with their comprehensively limited resources (Bradley & Rajendran, 2021). Shelters have to manage and process hundreds or, in cases of less developed countries, thousands of animals being severely underfunded (a lot of European shelters are funded by donations only, to be able not to strictly follow the governmental rules of processing stray animals such as put healthy animals into sleep if there is no interest in them in 2 weeks) and barely occupied with human resources to perform basic activities like feeding, cleaning, walking and socializing animals, not talking about equally or even more critical in terms of successful adoption tasks like PR, Social media, interviews with adoption candidates. (Fantuzzi et al., 2010; Tasker, 2013)

To improve the situation, it is necessary to optimize the process of adoption of animals - if it takes place faster and more successfully, the flow of animals that can pass through the shelter, find owners, and stop being homeless will increase. From the business analysis perspective, when there is a decently working process to which one can add efficiency and scope, we should consider implementing technology, eliminating process wastes, and reconsidering the partnership strategy.

It was decided to perform a cross-country multi-case study on the optimization of the shelter animals' adoption processes topic not just because of the aim to investigate adoption in-depth and perform the comparison for the theoretical gap, but mainly due to differences in processes affecting the process positively. Some shelters perform better than others with the same amount of resources. They allocate them differently and design flow in their particular way. Digging into such specifics and noting such differences would help provide process improvement suggestions of a higher quality. As there is almost no proper research held in the adoption sphere, the comparison is made on the country level to note the significant differences that might exist due to culture, experience, social state, regulations, et cetera. Further studies might go narrower and compare shelters within one country, region, or city.

## 2.2. Adoption

According to dictionary.com (2022), “*adoption*” is “the act or process of acquiring a pet, especially a stray or abandoned animal, from an animal rescue organization”. A nice add-in to it is the detail from the definition by Merriam-Webster (n.d.), the act of adoption should be done “voluntarily”. While looking at the definitions of child adoption in some international dictionaries, for example, Cambridge English Dictionary, a particular highlight is put into the “accepting into a family” aspect. It would also be worth mentioning to describe an animal adoption. All the family members should accept the animal to ensure the successful adoption process; otherwise - there is a high chance of returning the animal to the shelter and unsuccessful/uncompleted adoption (Shore, 2005). The unfortunate part in the overview of the “adoption” definitions was that very few dictionaries present the animal-related side of this process, meaning a micro gap in the topic investigation. Thus, the author combined their multiple definitions into a new one that should reflect the process decently and be the closest one to the fulfillment of this thesis aim:

*Animal adoption is the deliberate act or process of acquiring a pet into a family voluntarily, especially a stray or abandoned animal, from an animal rescue organization or shelter.*

While the *unsuccessful adoption* is the process described but with violations like not-deliberate or non-voluntary act or the animal returning to the shelter. However, the definition is just a way to grasp the general idea. As one of the leading research tasks is to define how the adoption works, there is a need to go beyond the definition and investigate the consistency of actions in the process and the process agents (resources) performing these actions.

Unfortunately, very few good research papers investigate the adoption process and test different frameworks and factors like technology or labour division within the team to optimize it held in the countries selected for this thesis research. Thus, the experience of American and Asian shelters was also considered. However, it was used only to form the idea of possible process flows, get some insights and inspiration, and understand what direction the empirical part, especially the interview, can follow.

Going into the details and defining “average” or “universal” adoption is a challenging mission. The process differs from organization to organization, country to country, and sometimes even from animal to animal within the same organization. (Cyrenne,2015) Based on the interviews of 200 + American animal shelters conducted by Homeonanimal

organization in 2016, an average adoption consists of at least 4 mandatory steps, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1

*Criteria for the interviews selection*

Adopters` perspective	Shelter`s perspective
- Fill out the adoption questionnaire	- Check the data provided in the adoption questionnaire
- Participate in an interview conducted by a shelter or rescue representative	- Conduct an interview with an adoption applicant
- Attend the organization, meet and greet animal(s) and shelter management	- Schedule an appointment with the adoption candidate to meet and greet animal(s) and shelter management
- Finalize the adoption: sign all the required documents and follow all the procedures required by the shelter, take the animal home	- Finalize the adoption: prepare all the documentation, recheck that all the required procedures, for example, fee payment or microchipping are done

Source: compiled by the author based on literature from Cyrenne (2015) and Petfinder (2022).

The steps in Table 1 are presented in a common order. First, the adopter goes to the webpage/visit shelter and then fills out the first questionnaire, which is the first filter of candidates for the shelter. Candidates that are evaluated positively are then asked to set a meeting time for the interview (which can be held both online or offline) where the shelter representative(s) assess them further; a background check is crucial as it provides the shelter with an overview, what kind of guidance will be needed and to what extent, what are the adopters` seeking for to match their lifestyle and desires with the animal that has most excellent chances of being a proper fit. After mutual discussion and agreement on both sides' expectations, the visit of the adopter to the scheduled place where the adopter meets the animal and makes the final decision on the adoption. After all the documents are prepared and checked, the shelter and the adopter sign a contract, and the animal is headed to the new home.

However, the sequence of actions might change. Some organizations prefer to arrange the meet and greet before starting to collect any data. Some prefer to see answers from the questionnaire first. (Cyrenne, 2015; Petfinder, 2022)

Another important step that occurs relatively frequently and affects the classic process is adding the complexity, time, and process repetition (the term will be explained in Section 3.2.) is return of the animal if it is not the match. With the possibility of a return scenario, nowadays, many organizations also add a "Trial period" as a must step to avoid any difficulties for both - the shelter and adopters parties.

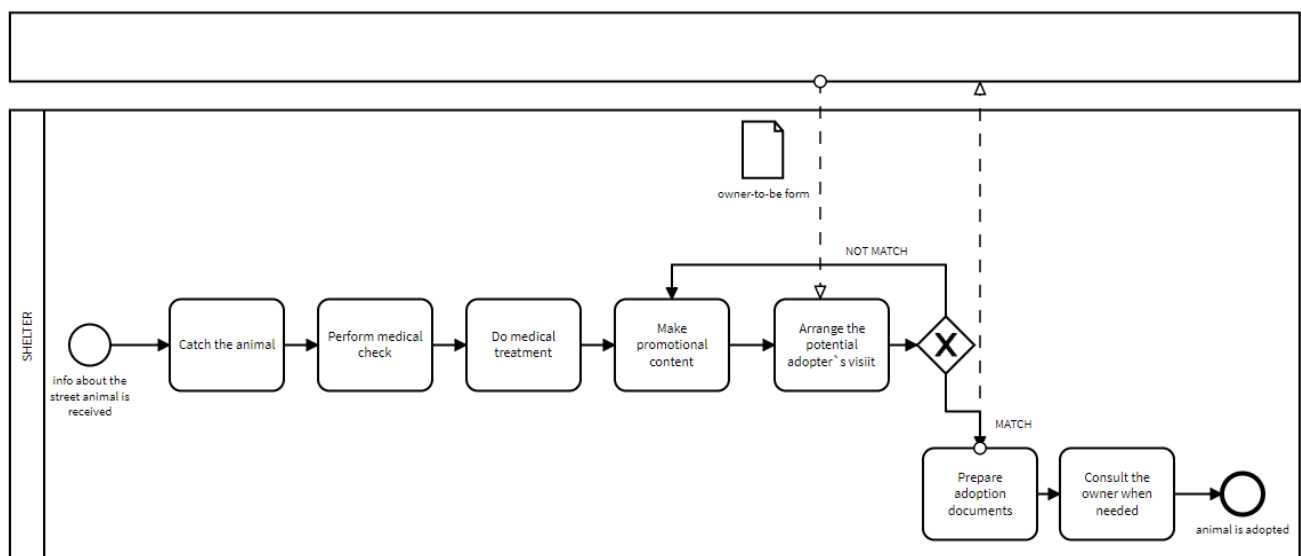
Two adoption approaches are used in the network of rescue organizations, also known as "shelters. " One is called "traditional" and is a more complex one, consisting of several cross-checks for the potential owners. The second more innovative one is "open adoption," which is not so widely used in Europe yet and tolerating not ideal candidates with the possibility to educate and prepare them to post factum. (Balcom & Arluke, 2001)

However, both approaches require at least one form to be filled from the potential adopters' side. It can be done in the shelter on paper or in some places also online before the visit. After the approval of the owner-to-be form, there is a visit to the shelter where all three parties (adopters, shelter staff, and animals) meet and define whether there is a match. If all is agreed, the adoption documents should be prepared and signed. The terms might differ from shelter to shelter. The main purpose of the contract is to bring some logical closure to the process and make the owner understand that they are, from now on, responsible for the animal. It does not protect any party from potential problems in the relationship between the owner and the pet. Perhaps the most important step would be to assure that the animal would be returned to the shelter if things don't go as smoothly as expected. This will help prevent the animal from being abandoned on the street or being handed over to dubious new hands, which could cause the shelter much more problems in the long run. (Polutin & Samoylova, 2017)

Satisfying for the adopters process does not end with the animal leaving the shelter, but with a moment, a new owner does not have any questions on how to take proper care of the pet (Neidhart & Boyd, 2002). Communication online - via email, contact us form, or visiting the FAQ page/app, is another important thing to monitor and maintain to ensure successful adoption. It is worth mentioning that the described process is more or less complete from the perspective of adopters, but it is significantly longer from the shelter staff side. In the context of this paper, the main focus would be on the shelter workers' perspective.

Before the execution of mandatory - “must” steps requiring the participation of all the parties, there are preparational ones made by the shelter only. The process for shelter starts with a Call to Action (CTA) from the locals to catch the animal. When the animal is found and transported to the shelter, it must go through a medical check and receive corresponding documents. After the treatment, there is a quarantine from 10 to 30 days. During this time, the animal is not available for visits. When the quarantine is over, and the promotion starts, it might be in the form of traditional marketing, like printed ads or online. (Tasker, 2013)

The “average” summarized process without any special scenario can be seen below under Graph 1.



Graph 1. Average adoption process map

Source: Compiled by the author based on the literature overview.

### 2.3. Optimization in Shelters - Management

The critical thing to remember is that the process exists in a certain environment. A big part of the flow relies mainly on the environment created by shelter management only. Thus, one of the ways to improve the process is not by modifying it directly but by preparing a decent setting for it to go smoothly and without challenges related to the shelter environment. Choosing an innovative management model and consolidating animal welfare principles and trends application while fulfilling the basic needs is a good start. A good example would be the C4C shelter management model - "capacity to care." The idea behind it is simple and similar to the transit from the economy of scale to the economy of scope in

business and production. Meaning that the optimal amount of animal population should be determined, so each animal gets regular medical check-ups to prevent physical and behavioral problems and sufficient grooming and socializing time with its own kind and humans to make it a prepared and more desirable candidate for the adoption. Even though the initial impression of the model is just helping fewer animals, the reality is that care of a higher quality provided to a smaller number of animals decreases their waiting time for the positive outcome - adoption. Also, it decreases euthanasia rates in shelters where it is allowed and decreases rates of diseases and deaths in no-kill shelter types. (Karsten et al., 2017; Miller & Hurley, 2009; Swanson, 2015)

Further exploring the topic of diseases is one of the biggest problems in shelters, especially in the large ones with thousands of animals like in Russia, where the mentioned problem of "overproduction" or intensive housing is sharp. In these conditions, a significant part of the shelter animals population stays unvaccinated for quite a long time, waiting in a vaccination line or for the financial aid to perform all the required medical procedures. Moreover, even vaccinated animals may be vulnerable while sharing the cage with several neighbors, each having an unknown health history and might be carriers of viruses and infections. Thus, apart from doing a good mission of cleaning streets from stray animals and providing them with a chance of a happy life, big shelters can also be considered the main contributors to severe and highly contagious diseases with high mortality rates such as enteritis. (Holt et al., 2010; Tanaka et al., 2012; Yakimova, 2020)

Some diseases like diabetes start due to the lack of nutrition control and a stressful environment caused by the intensive housing and lack of a unified "shelter health system." To address this problem, some studies show that an excellent add-in to C4C would be a "health system," aiming to act in 2 directions: internal - make a set of rules on how to proceed with new animals, including quarantine, general health examination, and relocation to foster home or another shelter with free individual cages in case of any suspicious health state; external - promote good practices of healthy animal ownership: events, adoption promotions and a first adoption workshops, covering the topics of medical checks, chipping and vaccines. (Karsten et al., 2017; Tanaka et al., 2012). More about the social awareness connection to the adoption can be found in the section.

Another internal aspect that usually decreases the efficiency of the adoption process and drastically lacks attention from the management is corporate culture and emotion management. Focusing purely on the discipline and tasks in the areas connected to animals is

a wrong choice as it can easily cause volunteers and workers to experience mental problems such as Compassion fatigue (CF), traumatic stress (TS and STS), and burnout, bringing their productivity and motivation to 0 and further affecting the human resources. Thus, the manager should keep an eye on the individual workload of each team member, ensuring they have a balanced rest schedule and organize team building and leisure events outside the shelter. In addition, considering a partnership with some mental health preservation organizations would be a big plus. (Schabram & Maitlis, 2017; Monaghan et al., 2020)

#### **2.4. Optimization in Shelters - Technology Usage**

In recent years, the term "optimization" is usually followed by *innovation and tech development* terms. The availability of a wide range of user-friendly software and other technological gifts and tools provide opportunities to speed up the processes, eliminate bottlenecks and increase the quality of outcomes. (Chong & Zak, 2004)

Thus, this subsection provides some examples of how technology can be implemented and used in the shelter context to make shelter life easier. There are quite a few options for how technology can positively affect the process. For example, in the study of Kim, Choi and Kang (2021), based on data from American shelters, it was concluded that with the help of systematizing data and automating statistical models, it is possible to select an individual strategy for promoting animals, which increases their chances for adoption. This study was bounded mainly with the individual characteristics of animals. However, more internal and external factors might affect the process.

Another thing that is of decent help for shelters to decrease the processing and load of animals is mass microchipping. RFID chips inserted under animal skins are painless for animals and not costly for shelters/owners. They can be checked in almost every animal clinic. If an abandoned animal was found, the person who spotted the animal could bring it to the clinic, where the owner will be contacted to collect the animal, and the shelter would not even get involved. Alternatively, even if the shelter would be contacted, many of them have the chip reading equipment, so a volunteer can quickly read the chip and transfer the animal back home directly without any additional resources involved. (Lord et al., 2009)

Going further, the systematization of data may help not only with the final stages of the process, like the promotion of the "ready to be adopted" animals. It can also adjust the preliminary "core" elements, like behavioral patterns. For instance, based on surveys and studies, more active and playful animals are more desirable candidates for adoption. The presence of toys in the spaces where animals lack activity and therefore may lack the

attention of shelter visitors can increase the adoption chances. (Fantuzzi, Miller & Weiss, 2010)

Investigating the topic of toys, people primarily consider their presence as an extra asset for animal ownership, which is not the correct approach. Some animals need toys and games to correct behavioral issues by developing particular stress and anger relief behavioral models through playing. (Marcet-Rius et. al., 2020; Schipper et al., 2008)

However, it is usually nearly possible to allocate time and human resources for these game practices in the context of shelter (Bradley & Rajendran, 2021). There might be an alternative way to implement it - automated toys. The study of Strange (2014) shows that digital and automated toys are effective for behavioral patterns correction for the animals kept in environments where their needs cannot be adequately fulfilled.

Moreover, they might be a multifunctional solution. Many digital toys can track the interaction ("playtime"), providing detailed activity statistics and therefore being a valuable source for compiling the animal characteristics profile.

According to Gourkow and Fraser (2006), there are shelter-management-related factors, such as housing. When housing of animals is done with the consideration of individual characteristics and general placing of the cages, it positively impacts the adoption rate. In the context of limited space that was mentioned before, the time-to-time relocation of animals might play a positive role. For this, the automated relocation schedule might be implemented.

Social media usage, especially the channels that have the targeting and content promotion functions, is also helpful for shelters in terms of an adoption rate increase (Bautista-Hobin, 2015). It is also an excellent way to collect feedback in the form of a short online survey from potential adopters to improve the promotion of animals or internal processes like essential dog pieces of training, et cetera (King et al., 2021).

## **2.5. Social Awareness**

The vast problems usually mentioned by the shelters and rescue centers are the oversupply of animals and the costs of providing sufficient medical treatment to animals to prepare them for adoption. It involves animals that were born on the street from abandoned uncastrated animal couples, acquired diseases or behavioral issues, and former domestic animals that were treated, ignoring the basic rules of medical checks. Due to negligent or cruel treatment, animals in poor health can be singled out as a separate category. For

example, these are animals hit by vehicles, left without first aid, and animals that have become victims of psychologically unhealthy people. These problems could be significantly assisted by increasing society's awareness of animals' ownership and treatment. (Kang & Han, 2019)

Going further, in countries like Russia, people still interact with their pets like with the purchased or found goods they wholly-owned, meaning that they are allowed to do whatever they want with them. Society perceives animals as inanimate objects, ignoring the concept of 5 Animal Freedoms (Appendix G). The government does not educationally support shelters. They do not distribute the materials about the importance of microchipping, castration, or timely animals' vaccinations. (Tasker, 2013; Tyukalova & Alishova, 2020; Yakimova, 2020)

Back to sterilization, approximately a quarter of the population of Russia knows what the process of sterilization and castration is meant for, and only half of them are ready to perform this procedure on their animals; among the popular reasons not to perform it are non-scientific beliefs and stereotypes like an animal will lose its gender, become lazy and slow and change its behavior significantly, as well as the lack of understanding how many potential shelter wards one uncastrated free-walking cat or dog can produce. (Yakimova, 2020; Tasker, 2013)

Another destructive belief, affecting people also in Europe, was discovered during the latest study by Powell et al. (2022) is that people think it is disrespectful and shameful to adopt again after returning an animal if there is no match. This finding shows that it is important for shelters to discuss the return possibilities with adopters candidates and ensure that the return is nothing to shame. In the end, it is beneficial for all the parties: the shelter can offer the animal that will better suit the adopters' needs, and the animal can get into the environment where its needs are fulfilled. (Powell et al., 2022)

Again, unfortunately, administrative units do not provide enough relevant information, and educational materials or support, relevant to the ownership of companion animals like cats and dogs. While developing Animal Welfare-related projects and new policies, the European Commission predominantly focused on farm animals as their keeping is a crucial part of trade and the economy. In contrast, companion animals like cats and dogs hardly get the needed attention (CORDIS, 2022).

There are very few scientific materials and semi-scientific articles created to educate people about the mentioned issues. To help Estonian shelters with social awareness increase

during this research completion, the author wrote the script and organized the production of the social advertisement in the form of a short movie in the cooperation with Tartu Loomade Varjupaik. The details about the film can be found in Appendix F.

The author would like to highlight that the performed literature search and analysis showed that both theoretical and practical coverage of animal welfare topics from the shelter management and abandoned companion animals adoption-related perspectives is abysmal. There is a gap, which provides a massive potential for the researcher interested in applying business and IT knowledge to the areas related to the ethical interaction of humans and nature.

### 3. Methodology

This section explains the study design of the research process and describes the methods of data collection required for answering the research question.

This research aims to analyze current animal adoption process practices, visualize them, perform an inter and cross-cultural comparison of these practices, and see whether some process improvements can be recommended. As the current research is based on several concrete data collection units (shelter of a specific type in 3 countries), the embedded multi-case study usually should be driven by a qualitative analysis (Merriam, 2002).

Another reason behind choosing the qualitative method, interview specifically, is the aim. As the aim of this research is led by the verb "*investigate*," and during the literature overview, it was found that there are no proper studies made about adoption in the countries chosen, the qualitative method is preferable as it usually "seeks to explain", provide a detailed description of complex phenomena, allows to make phenomena interpretation based on the facts shared by process actors of different roles (Lowhorn, 2007; Sofaer, 1999).

#### 3.1. Research Plan

This master's thesis aims *to investigate the shelter animals adoption process in depth, define its strong and weak parts, the different factors such as technology presence, allocation of resources, and circumstances add-in to it*. To see whether process waste elimination and technology presence impact the successful adoption.

To reach the aim of the thesis, the following research tasks were set:

- Define what the adoption is;
- Explain how adoption works;

- Conduct interviews with shelters for empirical study;
- Identify whether there are drawbacks in the adoption processes in the analyzed organizations;
- Analyze the data received and propose a list of recommendations for shelters to improve the situation with the adoption;
- Draw conclusions.

To address the research aim and research questions, as it was mentioned, the qualitative data collection method has been implemented. The Research plan is presented in Figure 2.

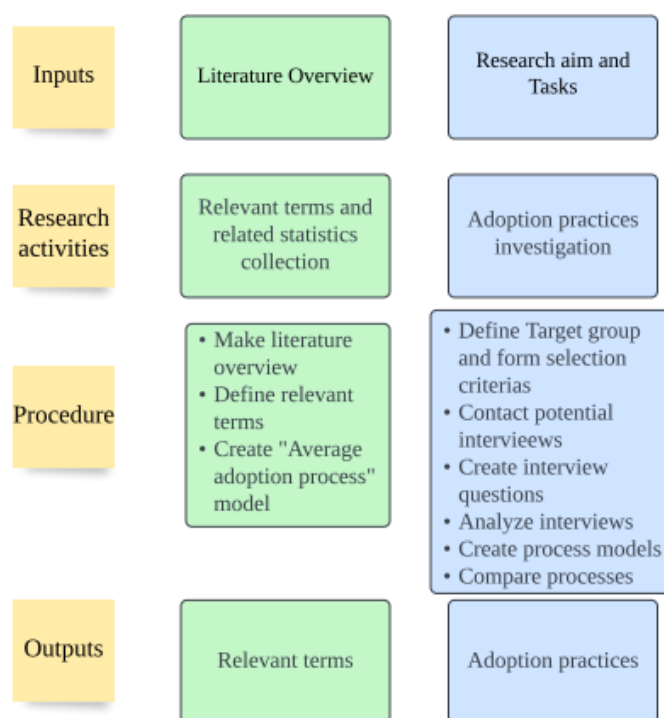


Figure 2. The Research Plan.

Source: Created by the author.

### 3.2. Background

This subsection provides a short overview of the concepts and notions that will be used in the empirical analysis part, and introduces the main terms needed to understand the research narrative fully.

### 3.2.1. Business Process Modeling

Business process modeling is the essential part of the Business Process Management which is rightfully considered both "art and science" of Qualitative Process Analysis and has proved its effectiveness many times. While *Business process management* is all the "methods to discover, model, analyze, measure, improve and optimize business strategy and processes" with the main aim being introspection (Gartner, n.d.; Tallyfy ,2022); *Business process modeling (BPM)* is a graphical representation of a business process and its related elements: sub-processes, resources, and workflows. It is used to analyze the quality of processes from a wide range of industries, from healthcare to education, define bottlenecks and weaknesses, and find the right strategies for the optimization, considering individual constraints like budget availability of the resources and the quality of the process output. (Dumas et al., 2013; Apromore, 2022) BPM is an open-industry gold standard for process modeling and mapping. There are several reasons for it: it is simple and transparent, and teams who have not been into BMP can understand the flow and its logic right after looking through "the language" - elements. (Apromore, n.d.; Tallyfy, 2022) It means that this visualization method is perfect for the current research, as "investigation and inspection" is the main aim of the thesis, which is precisely the function of BPM.

In the context of shelters, where there is a constant lack of resources and problems like repetition (when some parts of the process have to be performed more than once -repeated, like background checks of foster homes or potential adopters), the BPM is a beneficial technique that can help to find viable process improvement solutions.

Furthermore, The chosen Apromore process modeling tool functionality allows putting several models next to each other to compare them, covering both *RQ1* (how to improve) and *RQ2* (similarities and differences). The simplicity of BPM interpretation would be beneficial while transferring the results to the shelters. The Key BPM Visualization elements needed in the context of this research paper are presented in section 4, "Methodology," under subsection 4. 3., "Visualization".

### 3.2.2. Prioritization

As was already mentioned several times, the topic of this research is tightly bound by the scarcity of resources, both tangible and intangible. Based on the literature overview and data gained from the interviews, it is proved that the massive record of process bottlenecks and organizational pain points can be listed, and it is impossible to approach them all

simultaneously. Thus, there should be some "problems ranking." That's the point when the context of prioritization is introduced.

*Prioritization* is a decision-making technique that allows evaluating all the initiatives that the team offers to make the product or, in the context of this research, the process smoother, more efficient, and optimized.

There is a variety of frameworks for prioritization but taking into consideration the availability and quality of the collected data and the main idea to grasp the initiatives from the shelter teams, the priority was given to the "Cost vs. Impact", also known as "Value vs. Complexity" and "Value vs. Effort" (Yonchev, 2018). The algorithm is to create a matrix divided into 4 zones - "telling what to do with this or that improvement suggestion," comparing Impact vs. Effort. It is further represented in Figure 1. The main strengths of the framework are simplicity, visual representativeness, and good returns while implementing the changes from the "focus/winning" zone (Yonchev, 2018; Nandakumar, 2018).

Thinking about the limitations of this method, it is the tendency to overestimate the impact and underestimate the cost. To mitigate the risk of the severe presence of these limitations, some experienced product managers recommend thinking about 3rd factor - confidence, aiming to evaluate the quality of default 2. (Gilad, 2022)

Confidence can be perceived as the validation of cost and impact, meaning to assess cost as, for example, 4 out of 5, it is essential to talk to several people directly involved in the part of the possible process change, who are aware of the current costs and have the relevant data to be able to compare the potential cost and available budget.

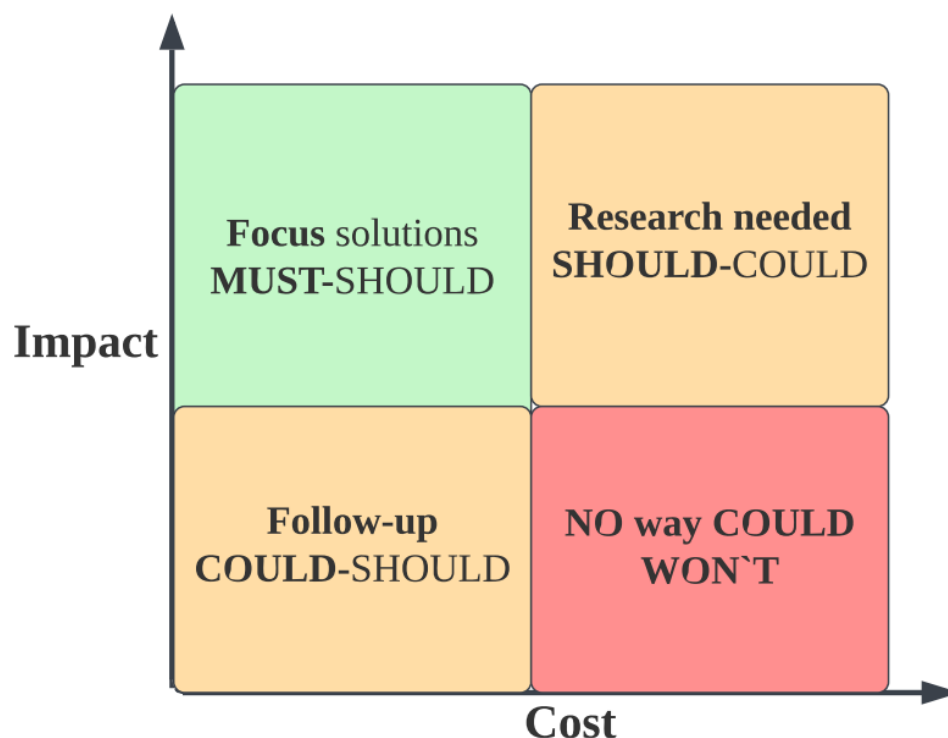


Figure 1. “Cost vs. Impact” prioritization framework

Source: Compiled by the author based on Yonchev (2018); Nandakumar (2018); Gilad (2022).

### 3.2.3. Process waste analysis

While thinking about optimization through business process management, it is essential to carefully analyze the "as is" - the actual process in real-time and think about its redesign in the context of the transformation of the present tasks, resources, and practices. This means that before inserting some innovations and utterly new know-how, the team or the process analysis has to find the "as-is" process weaknesses and transform them into the solid working parts of the "to be" - optimized process. Under the process weaknesses, we mean insufficient allocation of resources, lack of resources, unexpected repetitions, or different types of *process waste*. (Dumas et al., 2013)

Despite the specifics of the organization or its type - in the context of this research, it is non-profit - the typology of the wastes is pretty identical as well as the main strategies to eliminate them (Madison, n.d). The typology is present in Appendix E.

The valuable part for the non-profit organizations, especially the ones that are financed by the donations only, regarding the elimination methods and activities is that many of them don't require additional financial costs or the regular time ones (which should be considered focus solutions for the practical part of this paper). For instance, the creation of

checklists to deal with waiting and defects, the implementation of discussion panels with the whole team or team event with workshops to deal with talent waste, the division of responsibilities and tasks to deal with transportation and motion, and other waste elimination methods. (Madison, n.d; Dumas et al., 2013)

### 3.3. Interviews

As a part of the qualitative analysis, interviews with the people directly involved in the adoption process were held. As the author's primary goal is to be both exploratory and improving, it requires an in-depth understanding of current adoption practices and "as-is" processes, the interviews were managed in a semi-structured manner (Runeson & Höst, 2009). The semi-structured interview is one of the most widely used qualitative methods. It helps to delve deeply into the social and personal matters of the selected interview participants group. It has some crucial benefits over other types, considering fulfilling the current research aim and answering set RQs. Strictly structured interviews have a high chance of getting rather quantitative data that will not fulfill the "investigate" aim. In contrast, completely unstructured ones tend to lose the researcher's interest's initial main points and direction. (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Lowhorn, 2007).

All the significant descriptive shelter characteristics were listed. After the prioritization, based on the research question, the criteria for the interview target sample were formed (The summary is presented at Table 2). The criteria are of the 2 levels: organizational (shelter) and individual (volunteer/shelter worker).

Starting with the individual level, the participant must be directly related to the process and aware of its flow, not just a contributor. For example, a person who cleans the cages undoubtedly contributes to the overall functioning of the shelter. However, with a reasonably high probability, they do not have all the relevant information and insights to satisfy the purpose of this study - to investigate the adoption process in detail. The second criterion is stability and experience both in the industry and in the organization. Unfortunately, there is a high turnover in shelters due to volunteers' emotional and physical stress (Schabram & Maitlis, 2017; Monaghan et al., 2020). A person with experience can analyze many successful and unsuccessful adoption cases in their practice to provide detailed answers to questions regarding the average process and deviant cases.

Moving to the organizational level, in the context of this research, selected shelters had to be of the no-kill type, meaning that they do not euthanise healthy animals no matter

how long they have been in a shelter. The reasoning behind it is not only morality, ethical principles and animal welfare framework, but also the fact that no-kill shelters experience the stray animal overproduction problem the most and therefore face a worse lack of resources than the shelters allowing euthanasia as a solution. (Delon, 2021; Toback, n.d.)

Selected shelters should also operate with dogs and cats only, not dealing with other animals (some shelters also help decorative birds, ferrets, livestock, etc.) as the process is entirely different with different types of animals, still compared to stray cats and dogs, other abandoned animals aren't such a frequent case and a large scale problem.

Selected shelters were non-governmentally owned and therefore non-governmentally controlled, providing more room and freedom to change and innovate. It is also the only way for the shelter to stay no-kill in many cases. Also, private shelters usually have more skilled and aware of animal welfare and good animal-keeping practices workers and volunteers than the municipal ones, which means that from a scientific perspective, the interview with their people will add more value to fill the existing knowledge gap (Toback, n.d.).

However, despite advantages like a skilled team and freedom of choice, private shelters have a significant challenge of raising funds themselves, meaning they have unstable investments and budgets. In emergencies like a deceased animal or empty food, sand, or medicine warehouse, they had to search for the donators actively (Tyukalova & Alishova, 2020). Considering these difficulties, shelters of mixed financial sources were selected.

For the size of the team and their capacity, averages were taken, as usually small and medium organizations have more flexibility to test and change their processes. More than 50 constant volunteers/hired workers are already considered a large organization, which might bring additional complexity like multilevel hierarchy, lack of transparency, and close communication, which are essential to stay motivated and perform efficiently. (Deutsche Welle, 2022)

Last but not least is the criteria connected with the previously discussed social awareness. The shelter's accessibility to visitors can be converted into temporary or even permanent human resources like volunteers, social media volunteers, nurses, and drivers. Accessible shelters have daily open hours when everyone can visit, learn more about the shelter, its animals, how to contribute, walk a dog, or clean a cat's cage. Visitors can later bring their friends and other visitors, making them a self-accumulated resource, which is one of the keys to process optimization (Tasker, 2013).

Table 2

*Criteria for the interviews selection*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Focus group &amp; Relevance</b>
Type of animals	The shelter deals with: <b>dogs and cats</b> ; cats and dogs are still the main directions of shelter work.
Financing type	<b>Mixed</b> : donations/government/any other kind of financial support; the organization should be able to afford some additional costs for the optimization like, for instance, technology implementation.
Ownership	<b>Individual/initiative group</b> ; governmental organizations might have rigorous control, and change might be challenging to implement.
Size of the team (N of workers)	<b>Up to 50</b> ; More than 50 constant volunteers/hired workers are already considered a large organization (Deutsche Welle, 2022), meaning the potential presence of a multilevel hierarchy, lack of transparency, and other specifics that create a challenging environment for the optimization and change.
Capacity (N of spots/max N of animals)	<b>Up to 150 animals</b> ; The amount differs significantly from country to country. In Russia, the average is 250-300, while it is 50-100 animals per organization in Estonia. Thus, the average is taken.
Type	<b>No Kill - no animal is ever killed for any reason other than to alleviate the animal's suffering (Toback, n.d.)</b> ; The selection is made based on current trends (Delon, 2021), and the research perspective.
Accessibility (the presence of volunteering projects and open days)	<b>The presence of volunteering projects and open days</b> ; It helps shelters to accumulate human resources, even temporary ones, still can be used for optimization.

Employment type	<b>Full-time/part-time/volunteer;</b> The vital aspect is <b>stability</b> ; the person should have the experience to be able to describe all the minor details, process variance, and potholes.
Level of responsibility and involvement	<b>Directly related to the process;</b> The person should have the relevant experience to be able to describe all the minor details, process variance, and potholes.

*Note:* Color-coding was used to differentiate the shelter-related criteria (marked blue) and shelter worker-related criteria (marked green).

Source: Compiled by author.

The interview questions were designed in a way to:

1. Get an understanding of "as is" adoption processes - what is happening right now (contributes to answering **RQ1 & RQ2**);

Example: If trying to define the strength and weaknesses of the current adoption process in your shelter, what comes to your mind?

2. Get feedback about the potential "to be" adoption processes - what should/could happen if the process is optimized. (contributes to answering **RQ1**);

Example: Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the current process? What is the source of these ideas, have you checked some other shelters' practices? - what should be used for it?

There is also an introductory question to double-check the worker-related criteria and a conclusive one to grasp additional insights and ideas, show the participant that their opinion is important and provide the logical end of the conversation.

The complete list of interview questions is available in Appendix A.

In total, six semi-structured open-ended questions interviews were taken, two per country. The workers and volunteers from the following organizations took part: Eestimaa Loomakaitse Liit, Tartu Kassikaitse, Rekku Rescue, Veles, Noviy Kovcheg, Mikkelin Eläinsuojeluyhdistys (Note, all the participant agreed to mention the names of their organizations publicly). The interviews were held online via Telegram, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, and Zoom - depending on the participant's preference. Each interview was held individually with an average duration of 35 minutes.

Participants were promised confidentiality and provided with the Interview Consent Agreement to ensure the trustworthiness and insightfulness of the collected data.

They were informed about the research aim and interview specifics and agreed to the recording and transcription of the interviews. The participants' names were coded based on their country of residence and random numbers for security purposes - EST01, EST02, RU01, RU02, FIN01, FIN02. A short overview of each shelter taking part in the interview with the details about each selection criteria can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

*Short overview of animal shelters, taking part in the interview*

Shelter name Coded	Animals covered	Number of animals (approx)	Country	Year of Foundation	Type of shelter	Financing type
EST02	Dogs, Cats, Livestock, Wild animals	±50	Estonia	2011	Private shelter	Donations
EST01	Mostly Cats; In a very few occasions Dogs as well	±100	Estonia	2007	Private shelter	Volunteers, Donations
RU02	Mostly Cats; Sometimes Dogs	±30	Russian Federation	2015	Private shelter in cooperation with a vet clinic	The clinic, Donations
RU01	Dogs, Cats	±200	Russian Federation	2008	Private shelter	City subsidies, Donations, Foreign partnerships (shelters from abroad)
FIN01	Cats, Dogs	±280	Finland	2006	Rescue association	Donations, Sales on

						the website
FIN02	Cats, Dogs	±200	Finland	1994	Association	Donations, Sales on the website

As was mentioned, all the interviews were recorded and transcribed. As interviews with Finnish and Estonian participants were held in English, they were transcribed right after completing the recordings using the Otter.ai tool. Interviews with Russian participants were transcribed in Russian and then translated manually into English. Then, all the transcripts were reviewed and edited by the author to maintain semantic integrity. However, literacy, syntagms, and word choice were preserved as the interview participants originally shared. The full versions of the interview transcripts can be found in Appendix C.

### 3.4. Visualization

Based on the data gained from the interviews, several process models of adoption were created using Apromore tool. The models are presented in Appendix B. This subsection explains the basics of Business Process Modeling and the elements required to reflect on the visualization part of this research paper.

The key elements of process model creation were used, more specifically:

- Activities: the tasks that shelter and their partners perform;
- Events: start event shows the trigger of the whole process while the end event signalizes the successful goal achievement - the finalization of adoption and transfer of an animal from the shelter to the new family;
- Gateways: reflect decision points, and sequence flows connect all the previously mentioned process flow objects. There are also pools and lanes where all the process elements are placed, defining responsibilities and organizational hierarchy within the process landscape.

In the context of this research, a pool is an organizational unit - a shelter that has its boundaries, internal rules, and resources, while lanes are these resources that perform activities. To simplify, pools and lanes show who, how, and when the process's activity. (Owen & Raj, 2003; Apromore, 2022)

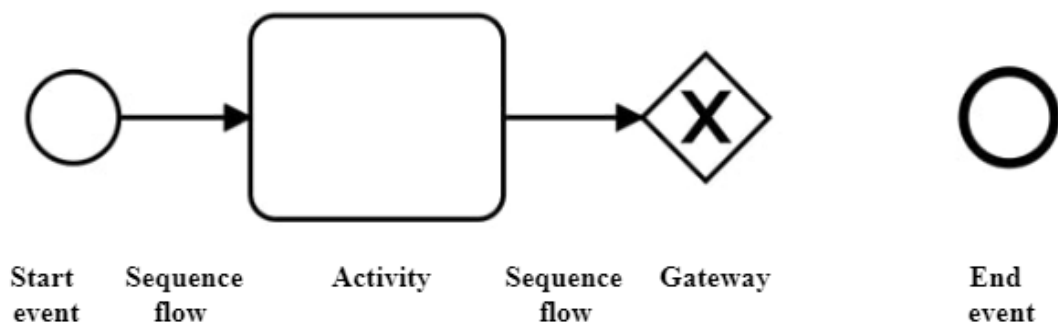


Figure 3. The key elements of BPMN

Source: compiled by the author based on Apromore (2022).

## 4. Findings

This section presents interview analysis findings, using the sub-sections formed based on the categorization of answers: mainly frequently mentioned process drawbacks and pain points, some cross-cultural process similarities, and differences, and improvement opportunities.

### 4.1. Cross-country comparison

This subsection provides an overview of the data received from shelters compared to each other, based on the country of the location and activity.

The general understanding of the adoption process turned out to be similar for shelters regardless of the country. The same goes for a simplified list of mandatory activities: every shelter conducts a medical check-up, does necessary medical treatments, organizes a PR campaign for an animal, and requires at least one meeting with adoption candidates. In this regard, Graph 1, is built based on theoretical data, can indeed be considered as an "Average adoption process map".

Nevertheless, the uniqueness of the processes appears while looking into the details: resources allocation, tasks prioritization, and the meticulousness of their implementation. The main points about the core adoption steps mentioned by the interview respondents can be found in Table 4.

Table 4

*Comparison of different aspects of Estonian, Russian, Finnish adoption processes*

Country of respondent's residence and activity	Identification number	The trigger of the process	Main strengths	Main weaknesses	"Successful adoption"
Estonia	EST01	The call for help - the homeless animal has noticed.	The team spirit and common values.  High motivation of the team.  A robust base of foster homes.	Lack of human resources.  The very time-consuming process of adopter background check.  Lack of administrative units support (city council, region, et cetera).	The foster (trial period) is over, the adopter is happy about everything and would like to sign the adoption contract.
Estonia	EST02	The homeless animal was noticed and the place for it (shelter/foster) was found.	The team spirit and common values.  Society's awareness of animal welfare main principles and goals.  Regular donations.	Lack of spaces.  Inaccuracy of the adopter background check.	When the contract is signed.
Russia	RU 01	The abandoned animal was found and one of the volunteers was informed about the	A large number of partnerships with reliable innovative foreign organizations that help with financing, PR on foreign social, transportation of	Heavy dependence on foreign partners and funds.  Lack of concentration and incompetence of	If animal was selected to find a home abroad - when it successfully crosses the border and reaches the partner

		problem (call, email, meeting) and agreed to take care of this animal case.	animals.	Russian volunteers (especially timing is bad).	organization.  If the animal was not selected for the process abroad, the point of "successful adoption" is after 3-6 months after the animal was taken by the new owner and was not returned.
Russia	RU 02	The abandoned animal was found.	A rich network of acquaintances among people interested in the animal protection and adoption.  Large and active audience in social networks.	Lack of the public awareness of the adoption and homeless animals-related topics, which causes the intense increase in the street animals population.  Inaccuracy of the adopter background check.  Lack of spaces and human resources to socialize animals.	Potential adopters visited a shelter and took the animal.
Finland	FIN01	The call about the abandoned animal was received.	Popularity and high audience engagement in social media (Facebook and Instagram specifically).  Strong and	The lack of pre - adoption communication - lack of accuracy in the background check.  Too much efforts	When the contract is signed and the adoption fee is paid.

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			extensive volunteers segment.	into each animals (extra steps, high standards)	
Finland	FIN02	The adoption form was filled - an animal of interest was mentioned.	The quality and speed of the external and internal communication	The extremely high standards to fit while doing the potential adopter background check that significantly narrows down the adopters list	When the animal is rechecked for the vaccines, all the needed treatments, assembled a "to-go" pack. The contract is signed and fee is paid.

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Source: compiled by the author based on the interview responses.

The differences in the approaches start from the beginning. Russian and Estonian shelters we studied have shown that they try to help all the reported lost/abandoned animals, regardless of whether they have a place or are fully occupied. They begin to contact their partners and look for a foster home. *"We know that there are dogs that need rescue but we cannot help them because we have no place to put them. We don't like this but we don't have a choice at the moment... don't have any foster, everybody's full. So it was a very big stress for me. Because then we had to do the post please like "Does anyone want to foster" and if there is nobody like responding".* (EST01); *"We mostly lack of foster home resources. Even if you have money and everything, then we don't have people who can take care of these animals".* (EST02) In these cases, shelters with possible foster homes contacts database prepared in advance have a significant advantage. They do not need to start the foster search process again and again with each new case.

Russian organizations are experiencing a particular difficulty in this matter since it is not possible to find a free foster home in Russia. People see fostering not as an option to support charity and rescue organizations but as an additional way to earn money.

In this case, based on the experience of Estonian organizations, the educational work noted in the previous sections to improve social awareness about the problems of shelter animals is a necessary step towards the emergence of free foster homes in Russia.

In contrast to their colleagues, Finnish organizations take a more pragmatic approach and try to deal with the number of animals equal to the number of free spots allowed by the

shelter capacity. A “Foster home” approach is a rarity used when an animal needs special care or intensive socialization. That should be why one of the Finnish shelters defines “the adoption form submission with the note of the specific animal interest” as the trigger of the whole process, not the notification of the animal found. For them, the adoption starts inside the shelter with the animals that they already have, not outside.

Coming to the firm and vulnerable parts spotted by the shelters. Estonian shelters representatives unanimously highlighted their internal organizational culture as the main strength that sometimes feels like compensation for the scarcity of tangible resources. The shared beliefs and values keep them motivated even when they are overwhelmed with the tasks.

The team constantly communicates with each other informally, emotionally supporting each other and sharing tips and tricks on dealing with specific adoption sub-processes and cases. It appears to be team-building, rest, and learning. Finnish representatives mentioned the same. *“Strengths - the communication is swift and very receptive”* (FIN02); *“We have a mission like we have the same view of life”* (EST02); *“The strength, I think, is our organization”* (EST01).

In contrast, Russian shelters reported a rather lousy quality of internal communication and a high rate of internal and external conflicts due to high-stress levels and misunderstandings. *“I would say the main weakness is our people. They forget about the vaccinations or some medical checks, and timing is crucial in such things. Sometimes, our animals have to turn back to foster or wait at the border due to these human factor mistakes”*. (RU01) One Russian shelter that is tightly collaborating with the foreign shelters and rescue organizations (mainly in Germany and Canada) mentioned that European shelter practices in terms of discipline and quality, and transparency of communication are more effective than their local ones.

From the vulnerabilities - similarities side, some “classic” problems like scarcity of resources were mainly listed. For Estonian and Finnish organizations, the biggest problem is human resources: volunteers who can take over some important tasks like transportation, vet visits, adopters interviews, and form check, while for Russians, the biggest issue is funding. A disturbing issue mentioned by all was the adoption candidates' background check. It is time-consuming, whether it is done in several rounds of different formats or by one interview. In addition, it lacks sufficient quality to reduce the number of mistakes and, therefore, process loops and animal returns. Further analyzing how the interviewed shelters manage to

deal with the social awareness problems covered in subsection 3.2, it is worth mentioning that Estonian and Finnish organizations put a lot of attention and effort into educating adopters about the potential problems of animal ownership and specifics of adopted animals.

For instance, if the animal has an anxiety issue, it is possible to expect destructive behavior in a new place. If the animal has a temper and lacks training, it might show aggression towards other animals first. They do it to perform additional candidates check/filtering and increase the chances of success for the adoption. Adopters can assess the upcoming difficulties and build their expectations or plan the training/treatment of animal-based on the shelter feedback and recommendation.

As a result, society has become decently aware of good animal-keeping practices (one of the shelters that had examined other countries' practices and can compare even mentioned awareness of Estonian society as a strength). If they lack expertise in some specific cases, they know where to fulfill this gap and whom to contact. In many cases, shelters themselves are ready to consult and provide guidance. People also tend to donate more with an open and inclusive approach from the shelter side.

This is what Russian shelters lack on the general level. *“Only around 20% are aware about this sterilization and chipping. They know why it is needed and how it works. Many people think it’s an actual chip, and you can track the animal from your phone. Like via satellite. So many don’t even know how it’s done and what goes where. They think that it’s like a surgery where an actual chip is “put” into an animal. Most of the people don’t know why and how it even works”*. (RU02) They put the marketing and the goal to process more animals as the priority, not thinking about improving the general awareness of society, which in the long run creates a lot of bottlenecks, defects, and other weaknesses in the shelter system, like the problems of mass returns, animal abuse, and the violations of animal freedoms. The widely-used concept of 5 Animal Freedoms can be further discovered in Appendix G.

In overall, the 5 Freedoms concept seems to be closely followed by the interviewed Estonian and Finnish shelters, while Russian ones are only at the point of discovering it, thanks to the foreign partnerships. One of Russian shelter representatives stated the following as the main point of process improvement: *“Increasing awareness of needed medical checks, their importance, digging more into the details of documentation preparations, and knowing the reasoning for must sterilization of animals and chipping. Our foreign colleagues’ practices can be kept as an example of a decent and smooth adoption process”*. (RU01)

While Finnish ones are somewhere in the middle, instead they intend to boost their organization's social media only to attract more volunteers. The shelters' idea is that people will be excited about overall animal welfare after getting into the shelter environment. And then word of mouth will help. Both of the Finnish interviewees mentioned the high standards of their organizations while selecting adopters to be. However, these standards cannot usually fit because people do not know about them and what to follow.

The main thing to sum up after the analysis is that there are differences and similarities in the cross-country adoption practices. The priorities in the primary process tasks and activities vary, resulting in different performance outcomes. The point is not to stay as a close organizational unit but seek partnerships and collaborations with others from the industries to learn and adapt well-performing practices to the process. The focus improvement suggestions from this research paper are further presented in Section 4.2.

#### 4.2. Process Improvement suggestions

This subsection continues the analysis of the data gained from the shelter representatives' interviews, focusing on the problems relevant to the adoption processes regardless of the location, and that can be improved internally by the shelter management.

Based on the provided data, mainly discussed weaknesses, the primary process wastes were identified. They appeared to be of the following types: Motion, Defects, Transportation, Waiting, Underutilized people/skills. The description of each can be revised by checking Appendix E. The Suggestions were formed based on the feedback from all the shelters, the literature review and the common process wastes mitigation strategies.

Table 5

*Waste analysis of the adoption processes & the suggestions on how to mitigate them*

Waste	Suggestion	On the basis of info. provided by	Impact	Effort	Prioritization	Decision
<b>Motion</b> Manual background check(s) of foster homes and potential	- Automize or semi-automize the background check of the potential adopters	EST01 EST02 RU02 FIN01 FIN02	High	High	More Research required	Should/Could

adopter						
<p><b>Defects</b> Missing the details about the potential adopters leads to the returns, meaning the rework for the shelter and some extra activities and costs for relocation, animal stress reduction, and the correction of behavior if needed</p>						
<p><b>Excessive Motion</b></p> <p>The foster search starts anew with each new animal, which is extra time for writing posts, communicating, and checking each new candidate.</p>	<p>- Form the foster home base - Having a list of proven foster homes, we can improve the animal socialization system and reduce time costs for not consistently productive communication and start a community of people related to animal protection and adoption.</p>	<p>EST01 EST02 RU02</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Low-Medium</p>	<p>Focus solution</p>	<p>Must/Should</p>
<p><b>Waiting</b></p> <p>While searching for the foster home and then dealing with all the necessary documentation and procedures to approve this foster and then transporting the animal, the animal has to wait on the</p>	<p>- Be present online on popular social media like Instagram and Facebook.</p>	<p>EST01 EST02 RU01 RU02 FIN01 FIN02</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Focus solution</p>	<p>Must/Should</p>

<p>streets, being in danger and wasting to the possibility to be noticed and adopted</p>	<p>According to some shelters' experiences, it helps to allocate resources better, reduce the waiting for the foster or forever home, increase awareness among youth and attract more financial and human resources, sharing tasks in the optimal way.</p>						
<p><b>Transportation</b>  The shelter does all the transportation of animals, meaning the time waste that often leads to the overwork for the leading shelter team and extra costs for the fuel and communication.</p>	<p>- If the transportation to the foster or vet clinic can't be delegated, the transportation to the final home or back to the shelter in the case of the return can be deligated to the adopters.</p>	<p>EST01 EST02 RU01</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>Focus solution</p>	<p>Should/could</p>	
<p><b>Underutilized people/skills</b>  While some people have a very well-organized algorithm for dealing with their part of the process, others</p>	<p>Insert some learning practices for the team led by the experienced members, for instance, discussion of the best practices based on the latest</p>	<p>EST01 RU01 RU02</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>More Research required</p>	<p>Should/Could</p>	

perform their parts poorly, creating process wastes, extra work, and insufficient process outcomes.	successful adoption cases.	
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Source: Compiled by the author based on the interviews and the frameworks explained in subsections 2.3 and 2.4.

## 5. Discussion

Coming back to the research **aim**: *To investigate the shelter animals' adoption process in-depth, define its strong and weak parts and different factors, such as technology presence, allocation of resources, and circumstances.* It was fulfilled by first creating a sufficient definition that explains the core idea of the process and applies to the context of this research. Both: a literature overview and empirical analysis showed that the main factors that affect the process are the allocation of resources, the set process flow (amount of repetitions and other process wastes, the sequence of activities), team culture, and management from the internal side; and funding options, animal specifics (appearance, age, health condition, behaviour with humans and other animals), social awareness about animal welfare, stray animals problem and the local shelter activities and ways to support them from the external one.

Regarding **RQ2**, connected with similarities and differences, the interview showed both similarities and differences in the cross-country processes of studied Estonian, Finnish and Russian shelters. The main differences discovered were the communication style and corporate culture - it nearly exists in analyzed Russian shelters, which affects the process negatively; the approach to the processing new animals and capacity; the existence of the foster home programs, shelters in which it is present has the smoother and more efficient adoption processes, and fewer returns as animals are better socialized and integrated into the life with humans prior to the actual adoption. The main similarities are core processes, medical checks, PR, and medical treatment (vaccination, chipping), even though they might differ in sequence.

Regarding **RQ1**, after the interview data analysis, using the "Impact vs. Cost" prioritization framework, several adoption processes wastes that can be eliminated with the

low effort was identified and marked as focus solution. Meaning that after their evaluation, it can be stated that even if the process does not benefit from their test and implementation, it will not suffer. The overall analysis showed a potential for the active use of the process management and business analysis techniques and methods in the context of the animal welfare processes, mainly adoption. The presentation of the results draft to the interview participants showed that process modeling visualization, prioritization, and color-coding are affordable and understandable techniques for the shelter management and volunteers and might be performed with a certain regularity to get closer to the possible optimized process without waste.

Among the long-term measures to support shelters and optimize their processes would be:

- The changes to the internal shelter management level:

The shelters will manage their activity, considering the business analysis and business process management methods and principles. They would try to eliminate the ordinary process wastes, especially those that can be easily changed, like underutilized skills and labor division. They would also try to keep updated with the common social media trends and reporting tools.

Among the other measures that the shelter can perform to help the adoption optimization process:

- Maintain of the organizational culture by organizing a variety of learning and leisure team events and brainstorming to catch the valuable ideas.

One of the Russian shelter representatives claimed that "*Foreign partners are our main strength, I would say. They are so highly organized, experienced, and helpful; if our side were half as organized and highly motivated, I believe the general situation with homeless animals would improve. And I think it is the only actual strength*". (RU01) Being closely connected with other organizations performing better, shelters miss the opportunity to share experiences and study from the best in their field. It is worth creating discussion and educational events and asking efficient volunteers to present their tips and successful adoption cases. It might be not only external-based like with the partner organization, but also internal-based, where management and experienced volunteers talk to the newbies. For instance, an Estonian shelter representative formed her unwritten checklist of questions to ask during the meeting with the potential adopters to determine better which animal should be offered. This kind of knowledge is unique and practical and cannot be found in any article.

Thus, it would be helpful to document and transfer such things to the other team members so their performance improves.

- Put a close eye on the shelter's social media presence to make society aware of their activities, problems, and needs.

As it was stated by one of the Finnish shelters representative: *"Everybody is there... And I would say that we are pretty popular. And that might be one of the reasons why people are coming to us and maybe share about our animal shelter. It is a little extra work, but it makes life easier than in smaller animal shelters that don't have active social media pages and might sometimes struggle"*. (FIN01) Instagram and Facebook are good choices. Their target audience is people in their 20s-30s who have enough strength and activity to volunteer, support core care processes like walking, socializing, and cleaning cages, and having some financial capabilities to donate. Another advantage of being active in mentioned social media would be posting different content like both writing and pictures, videos that are pretty easy to make and engaging, especially showing animals. (Hootsuite, 2022)

- Track the individual workload of each of the team members in order to allocate and delegate tasks in a way that the productivity of the process does not suffer and shelter workers do not get the burnout.

Russian shelter representative stated: *"Usually, the person who found the animal either transports it to me or asks another volunteer with a car or me to transport it to me"*, *"other volunteers help me with animal transportation to the clinic and then to the partners"*. (RU01) It gives her some rest time to balance her adoption-process activities with work and personal life, preventing burnout and improving the quality of care she provides to the animal. Overwhelmed volunteers make more mistakes in their tasks, meaning more process repetitions and redoes are needed, making the average process time longer. The experience of Estonian shelter representatives proves that. They frequently make adoption cases fully managed by one volunteer. It puts volunteers under pressure, demotivates them, and decreases their concentration level, specifically essential for the background check, which appears to be an activity with the highest mistake possibility, causing returns of the animals. Sometimes the problem might be the lack of human resources, which the implementation of previous suggestion can partially solve - posting on social media attract people. However, sometimes it is lack of communication, and volunteers are not aware of the other volunteers' activities. To improve the situation, no expensive software solution is needed. Even simple group chats in messengers can help. Experience of Finnish and Estonian shelters is that they

write when they are active and for what tasks in chats, where their colleagues react and discuss their plans and updates.

- The changes on the governmental level:

Mainly the implementation of good animal welfare and shelter management policies, such as the increase in the number of shelters per specific region, which will ease the load to each already existing shelter, help them to allocate their resources more efficiently, speed the preparation for the adoption process for animals and make it of higher quality, increasing their chances to be successfully adopted.

- The changes to the administrative shelter collaboration level:

The administration authority can provide financial help to the shelters without overcontrolling and setting their own rules. They are usually out of the topic and cannot recommend the solutions that would cover the animal welfare principles and goals to make the successful adoption. In return, shelters can help to design and implement social awareness programs related to ecological and animal welfare-friendly behavior.

- The changes to the shelters' "ecosystem" level:

Shelters have a severe lack of communication and mutually-beneficial partnerships. They can not only share their experiences, highlighting the best and the worst practices applicable to the specific area of their activities but support each other with the resources and space. There are good examples found in practice during the interviews and in theory during the literature review. For instance: A partner-shelter that has space accepts the other fully-occupied shelter animal, so it starts to get prepared for the adoption instead of waiting in the streets or doing a long search for fosters; A partner-shelter that has some expensive medicines left transfers it to another shelter in the need of this kind of medical treatment for their animals, instead of opening the fundraiser, waiting, spending funds that were planned for something else or, in the worst-case scenario, euthanize the animals.

### **5.1. Limitations**

This section lists possible restrictions and constraints that have been put on the methodology and research in general.

Firstly, as noted in section 4, the interview participants were pre-selected from the entire pool of animal protection organizations workers and volunteers based on several factors: type of accepted animals, financing type, ownership, team size, capacity, accessibility, employment, responsibility and involvement; which allows answering the

research question only in the narrow context of adoption in a particular type of shelter. However, the aim was not to generalize but rather to gain in-depth insights into the processes of different shelters, identify differences and commonalities, and provide evaluated suggestions for improvement. Moreover, multiple people from the same shelter(2) were interviewed not to rely on the perspective of a single individual. So the risk of getting too narrow data is avoided.

Secondly, the research topic is quite emotionally colored, even for people who have been working in animal rescue and adoption for some time. The respondents could potentially distort some answers to interview questions due to subjectivity caused by their personal beliefs and emotional background. To mitigate this risk, questions were compiled in several rounds. The final ones were selected to be capacious and not affect potentially particularly emotional cases outside the scope of the set research question. Also, we search for the responders among people with decent experience, already accustomed to the specifics of their field of work. In addition, the selected semi-structured format of the interview allowed the author to be flexible and redirect respondents to the needed point.

Moreover, to minimize the threat of some misinterpretation during analysis or "leading to the answer" behavior of the interviewer, after the initial process sketching, the author rechecked with the respondents to if their points were reflected correctly and made adjustments if needed.

The findings of the answers received were discussed with other researchers and specialists from the adoption field. Still, we interviewed 6 people only, and thus the generalization of the results is still a limitation. As the further notice, the involvement of more people from the same pre-selected category and analysis of more responses would increase the quality and extent of the generalization.

Another possible bias is the comparability constraint related to the difference in the number of animals and budget, meaning that the distribution and allocation of the budget differ from country to country due to the level of social awareness (number of volunteers and donators) and the intensity of the stray animals in the country (based on different statistics sources like ESDAW, BQA ... the number of stray animals in Russia is about 6-15 million dogs and cats in contrast to Estonia and Finland, where the approximate number is 10-100 thousand).

For example, 10 EUR should be distributed among 100 dogs in Russia, while in Estonia and Finland, the exact amount is meant for two animals only, allowing them to

perform a process of better quality. To eliminate this comparability constraint, the research aimed to discuss the topic of process optimization in the context of the scarcity of resources, focusing on waste eliminations that does not require extra finances.

## **6. Conclusion**

This thesis aimed to research what adoption is and how current adoption practices performed by Estonian, Russian, and Finnish shelters can be improved to optimize the process and make it more efficient.

The visualization of the "average adoption process" and the current adoption processes in different countries were created in a process model form, using the Apromore tool, considering input from experienced shelter workers and volunteers, business management and analysis frameworks, and animal welfare facts and concepts.

To understand how can the current process be changed, a list of interview questions covering the ideas about the "as is" and "to-be" processes were designed. To mitigate the risk of getting biased results, the selection criteria for the interview participants were designed prior to reach them out as well as good interview performance practices were checked.

As the interviews were analyzed, 5+ specific process wastes were identified in addition to the discovery of some generic shelter practices problems. As the outcome of the adoption topic research and the interview analysis, several "must" and "should" suggested changes to the "as is" process were identified in order to get the optimized "to be" adoption. Several additional suggestions to change were offered on the basis of the literature overview and related work analysis: implement BPM and eliminate process wastes, track workload, and delegate tasks if needed, support corporate culture and team spirit, contribute and maintain social awareness, build partnerships, be active in social media.

### **6.1. Future work**

Given the relevance of the topic and considerable knowledge gap in it, proved with a theoretical overview and data gained from the interviews, more research is needed to understand better the possible impact of different internal (for example, tech implementation) and external factors (for example, level of education in the society) that may make the significant change in the adoption process in the mentioned countries. As well as there is a huge room for studies in other countries.

### **Acknowledgments**

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## Appendix A

### Interview questions (in English)\*

- Could you, please, tell me about your position and responsibilities related to the adoption process?
- What is “adoption”? Could you, please, provide an example of the adoption case you remember very well.
- What is usually the trigger of the adoption process? - What do you use for it in terms of tools and resources?
- When the trigger appeared, what happened afterward? - What do you use for it in terms of tools and resources?
- What is the end of the adoption process from the shelter perspective? - What do you use for it in terms of tools and resources?
- What are the criteria to mark the animal as being “successfully adopted”?
- If trying to define the strength and weaknesses of the current adoption process in your shelter, what comes to your mind?
- Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the current process? What is the source of these ideas, have you checked some other shelters` practices? - what should be used for it?
- Is there anything you would like to add that seems important in the context of animal adoption.

*Note\**-In the appendix, the core structure of the interview is present, while during the interview, based on the responses, the questions may vary.

## Appendix A.1.

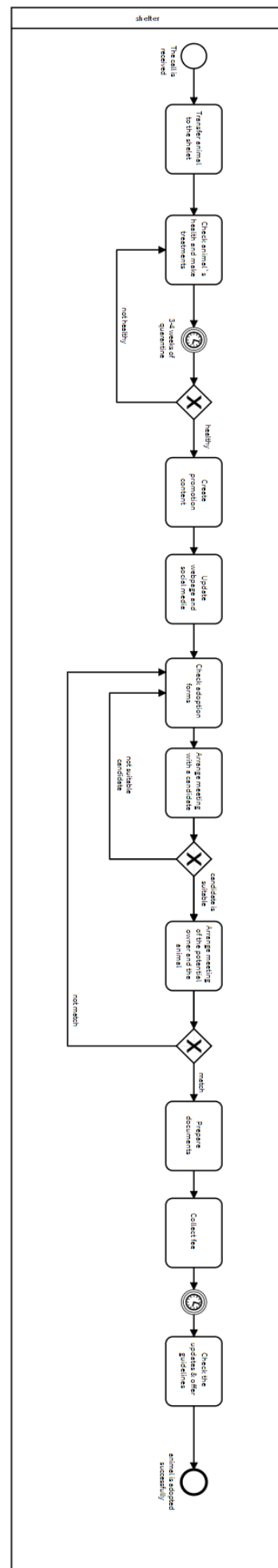
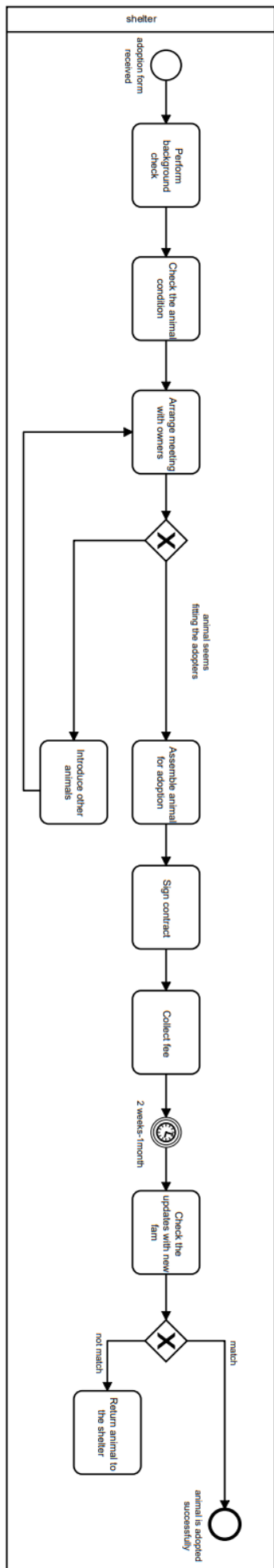
### Interview questions (in Russian)

- Представьте, пожалуйста. Скажите, как Вы связаны с процессом пристройства бездомных животных и за что конкретно Вы ответственны в этом процессе? Уточните сферу персональной ответственности.
- Какие действия Вы предпринимаете для того чтобы .... (действие, сфера ответственности) Не могли бы Вы, пожалуйста, привести конкретный пример.
- Что является стартовой точкой для начала Вашей работы?
- После того, как процесс начался, какие действия предпринимаются потом?
- Что является заключительным этапом в пристройстве с точки зрения приюта?
- В какой момент можно считать животное успешно пристроенным?
- Если проанализировать нынешний процесс пристройства, какие сильные и слабые стороны Вы можете выделить?
- Есть ли у Вас идеи по тому, как можно улучшить процесс, и, если да, это Ваши собственные идеи или есть источники вдохновения?
- Не хотели бы Вы что-нибудь добавить? Что-то, что Вы считаете нужным и важным в контексте данной темы.





**Business process models of the adoption in Finnish shelters**



## Appendix D

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19/05/2022

## Appendix E

### Types of process waste

Waste	Definition	Example
<i>Transportation</i>	Unnecessary resources (tools, documents, process agents) movements.	<p>Movements of the printed documentation from one department to another while the electronic version can be sent</p> <p>Possible adoption-related example: transportation of animal to the foster without the confirmation -&gt; relocation to the approved one.</p>
<i>Inventory</i>	Too much of supply: offer exceeds the demand; Org. production is more than clients` demand.	<p>Keeping sales and marketing-related literature in the office, wasting the space on the shelf that actually can be used to store the documentation/clients` portfolio.</p> <p>Possible adoption-related example: the acceptance of animals without checking the vacant cages/fosters, ending up having more animals than capacity.</p>
<i>Motion</i>	Excessive movements, non-value-added activities, process parts, ergonomics.	<p>Using fax as the main communication tool., prefer centered communication instead of the direct one between the departments to solve small specific inquiries.</p> <p>Possible adoption-related example: Sending printed adopter checks results.</p>
<i>Waiting</i>	The part of the process where there is some bottleneck/ extra activity	Technical tools downtime.

	needed to continue the process, for instance, some approval between steps, the search for the specific resource to complete.	Possible adoption-related example: Appointment to the vet is available only next month, and animal is not allowed to participate in shelter open days before getting fully vaccinated.
<i>Over/extra processing</i>	Unnecessary extra steps, too much effort and resources put into the task(s) that can be completed without it.	Creation of unnecessary reports  Possible adoption-related example: manual entering of animal-related details into several forms(both internal and external)
<i>Over/extra production</i>	Extensive production, too many resources/documentation preparation than actually needed to perform the process activity.	Production of the extra batch of goods that are no longer demanded on the market.  Possible adoption-related example: Printing too much potential adopters forms before the visiting days.
<i>Defects</i>	Mistakes that cause reworks and process loops, errors that affect the quality of process outcome.	Production of a defective batch of products.  Possible adoption-related example: the order of the wrong food -> financial and time wastes.
<i>Underutilized people/skills</i>	Unused skills of people, specifically some special talents like experience, creativity, and time efficiency.	Strictly controlled, multilayered management system without open and transparent space for all-level employees to share their ideas.  Possible adoption-related example: Centralised management system, where approval is needed for almost each process activity, creates a lot of waiting and motion.

Source: Compiled by the author based on Madison (n.d.); Skhmot (2017).

## Appendix F

### Social ad - "The dog"

Movie description: "The Dog" is a short movie social drama about a street animal path to find its place in the world. However, can the world provide it with the love and warmth he is seeking in return for his trust, or is the truth different?

The movie was directed by the author and shot together with the initiative volunteers who are amateur actors; it was shown at the OBJECT short movie festival in Narva Art Residency and delivered to the Tartu Animal shelter to be used as promotional material. It can be watched via [this link](#).

## Appendix G

### The Five Animal Freedoms.

Sources: Animal Humane Society(2022); Michigan State University, MSU Extension  
4-H Animal Science

*The Five Animal Freedoms* is the concept that aims to evaluate the well-being of animals that are in close interaction with humans, such as livestock and pets. Under this concept, the principles to maintain animals' physical and mental health are listed. These include the requirements to the environment, where the animal has to live in; experiences with its own kind, humankind, and other species; the possibilities to express the genetically programmed behavior and needs. The concept has been considered the solid base for developing a variety of animal welfare practices since the 1960s.

#### **Freedoms and their fullfullment examples in the context of shelter.**

1. **Freedom from hunger and thirst** by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigor. It covers the sufficient quality of food that suits the genetically determined dietary requirements. For example, cat food should contain sufficient fats compared to dog meals, where fat should be substituted with protein.
2. **Freedom from discomfort** by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area. It covers the quality equipment like bowls, toys, heating pads, and animal spaces thoughtful setting: with soft and warm places to rest and hide and et cetera.
3. **Freedom from pain, injury, or disease** by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment. It covers timely vaccinations and other necessary medical treatments.
4. **Freedom to express normal behavior** by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind. It covers pairing animal in cages based on temper, so playful animals can help socialize the shy ones and satisfies their own interaction needs.
5. **Freedom from fear and distress** by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

The concept is extremely important while managing the shelter animals adoption practices. As Animal Humane Society states: "*Embracing the Five Freedoms supports the health and welfare of the animals in shelter care and provides adopters with the best possible insight into their personalities. That ultimately leads to more animals successfully placed in loving homes.*"

## Appendix C

### Interview transcripts.

#### The transcript of the interview with RU01 (translated from Russian)

- Hi, thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this interview. I appreciate that. I know that you are a highly experienced volunteer, having a lot of external and internal adoption cases, both leading the process on your own and behalf of the shelter. Thus, I believe that I will get many insights from this interview.

- Oh, thanks. I also hope so.

- First, I would like to remind you that this interview has a purely scientific purpose. For the ease of the data analysis, it will be recorded and stored on my drive during the work on my thesis. It will be deleted right after the paper is finished. Are you okay with it?

- Yes, sure thing. You can record and use it however you like.

- Thank you a lot! Let's start. First, please tell a bit about yourself and specify your connection to the animal adoption process.

- Yes, My name is RU01\*, and I have been an animal welfare activist for almost 15 years. I have been volunteering and working in different shelters, and now I am fostering animals and finding them homes together with other volunteers and animal welfare activists.

- Thank you, RU01, for the introduction. Could you please tell me more about your tasks and responsibilities related to adoption? You said that you foster animals and find them homes. Could you please elaborate on this more step by step?

- When an animal is found, volunteers call each other to find a free space where the animal can stay while doing all the medical procedures, behavioral corrections, documentation preparation, and PR. I am usually this space where animals can live and get prepared for the meeting of the new family. So, usually, the person who found the animal either transports it to me or asks another volunteer with a car or me to transport it to me. I groom animals, make an appointment with the vet, and then with my family - both humans and animals, we do all we can to make this animal feel confident and behave in a way it can be a proper companion. Other volunteers help me with animal transportation to the clinic and then to the partners, do PR and open fundraiser.

- Thank you for the answer. It seems quite a complex process...

- Indeed.

- How long does it take from the point the animal was found till the moment it reaches its forever home on average?

- It depends, but I usually plan everything keeping in mind a 6- 9 months time slot.

- Oh, wow, it is a long time. What about the financial support during this time?

- It is either my own money or primarily donations from caring people.

- So, there is no support from administrative units, city, or grant programs?

- No, because to be applicable for this kind of support, you need to register your activity officially, collect a lot of docs, and go through several rounds of panels. It is a lot of time and effort, and mostly it isn't worth it. However, sometimes our foreign partners help us financially and with PR and finding adopters abroad. Usually, finding a foreign foster or foreign owner is the golden ticket for our cats and dogs. It is like a 100 % successful story. We can be sure that animals won't be abandoned and will be treated according to all the standards and animal freedoms. And my team and I personally prefer to target foreign adopters.

- You mentioned the "success story", when is the point when you can say that the adoption itself is successful. Is it when the animals were taken by new adopters or after some trial period.

- After the animal was taken, we got several positive pictures and video feedback, and it is, on average, 2 or 3 months of animal living together with new owners.

- What is the percentage of foreign adoption in your practice?

- Of course, I try to keep it as high as possible, and now it is about 80 percent. Including the cases where the animal goes not directly to the new home but foreign shelter while they search for a home continues. It happens again thanks to our foreign partners.

- How do you usually promote animals both to local and foreign target groups?

- Social media like Instagram, Facebook, VK, personal pages, partner organizations' websites. I write the text based on the specific animal traits and adapt it for the local audience, while foreign partners translate it and adapt it to the specifics of their local audience.

- It sounds like the process relies on the foreign party a lot... Is it a strength of the process? And if naming other strengths, what would they be?

- Yes, foreign partners are our main strength, I would say. They are so highly organized, experienced, and helpful; if our side were half as organized and highly motivated, I believe the general situation with homeless animals would improve. And I think it is the only actual strength.

- Okay, what about weaknesses and how to deal with them and improve the process?

- \*Laughing\* I would say the main weakness is vice versa, our people. They forget about the vaccinations or some medical checks, and timing is crucial in such things. Sometimes, our animals have to turn back to foster or wait at the border due to these human factor mistakes. Thus, the main suggestion on how to improve is education and discipline.

- Sorry, what do you mean by education?

- Increasing awareness of needed medical checks, their importance, digging more into the details of documentation preparations, and knowing the reasoning for must sterilization of animals and chipping. Our foreign colleagues' practices can be kept as an example of a decent and smooth adoption process.

- Thank you for the conversation. It was very insightful. As the last question, do you have something to add about the adoption topic that you would like to say to the large audience?

- Adopt more, please, adopt more. If you can't adopt, volunteer. There are many ways how one can help. You can walk animals, clean their cages, bring food or warm clothes, help with transportation, and make the regular financial aid transfer. It is vital for animals and the people involved in this rescue process. Also, please, educate yourself about essential treatments and animal freedom concepts.

- Very important message. Thank you! Bye.

### **The transcript of the interview with RU02 (translated from Russian)**

- Hi, so could you tell me how are you connected to the process of homeless animals and what exactly are you responsible for in this process?

- So in this current process I'm a veterinary doctor in the clinic. Before that I was a volunteer in a shelter for many years. Currently, we have a lot of cases where an animal is thrown to the entrance of the shelter and stuff. That happens a lot. Someone from the owners forgets them "accidentally", someone intentionally brings and leaves animals. They just put an ultimatum saying that "you're doctors, you cannot not help animals". So, obviously, we treat and follow up on these animals, do some diagnostics and then look for a home for them. We do posts on the internet, on Social Media and among friends using word of mouth. In the veterinary clinic, we have a place where we keep animals that are in need of a home. Almost every day, we approach visitors and owners of other animals (cats and animals) and ask if they are interested in adopting these homeless animals. We do that kind of work almost every day.

- So it happens that you get unwillingly involved in this process?

- Yes, unfortunately that's actually this is how it is.

- But actually, the animals are lucky that they are in the hands of this kind of doctors like you, and not someone who would leave an animal on the street. So thank you for that. I'd also like to clarify regarding what you mentioned that you post on SM, internet, hang posters in the clinic. On which basis (type of information) do you compile this post? As far as I know, some dogs that are young, nice and fluffy, can find a home faster. So my question is, do you change some characteristics of animals, maybe the advertisement posters or add pictures and etc?

- It's individual depending on an animal. We try to describe the character / behaviour of the animal, how the animal is getting along with other animals and kids because we have many colleagues with children, and when these kids visit the clinic, we can see how these animals behave with kids, and how they react to different triggers. We describe the history of each animal individually, how we got the animal, if the animal has been sick and treated against it or the animal is healthy. So we describe the whole history that we know of and post it. I'm not gonna name the resources because they are confidential.

- Yes, I understand that. I'd also like to come back to the moment where you said that when an animal is thrown up to you, you do a check-up to make sure if there are any medical problems, if the animal has vaccinations or not. So all of this costs money and I'd like to ask what is the source of your finance?

- Most of the money we pay ourselves but sometime we use SM. We, doctors, open a crowdfunding in case we need some things that are expensive, i.e. an expensive medicine. Sometimes, we don't specifically ask for money but instead we ask to buy a specific kind of medicine or maybe food or sheets for animals. Mostly this kind of stuff. Most of the time, we ask for medicine for specific kind of diseases that are usually expensive. We don't ask money for medical tests because we pay for all of that.

- What about when you're keeping the animal. Do you usually keep animals at the clinic or you have cases when you find a temporary foster house? Can you tell me more how you do all this stuff?

- So no one wants to take an animal for fostering for free. Because animals are different and they need many different things. You need to have constant control, i.e. give medicine in the morning/afternoon. Not everyone can do it and no one wants to do it for free, unfortunately.

- So there are not even volunteers who would like to take an animals for fostering?
- All the volunteers are busy and overfull (perezapolneni?). Each volunteer has like 10 dogs and 10 cats, I'm just saying approximately. Someone has more cats, and someone has more dogs.
- From what I hear from you, I have a picture that what you do, you do yourself. I mean that you don't have any support from any shelters or charity funds, or any other volunteers.
- No no. sometimes someone helps with PR. where our clinic is located , we have a lot of kittens with infectious diseases that cannot be fully treated but you can control these diseases with medicine. Most of these medicines are manufactured outside Russia. So usually, animals with "leykoz", immune deficiency, "virusniy peritonid", we give to volunteers that we know. And they do PR themselves, post in groups where they have a lot of followers and etc. they try to help to get financial aid for animals.
- So you mentioned medicine that you need to import. Did you have experience of finding a home for animals in other countries? Was there maybe a case where a volunteer found a home for an animal somewhere in another country.
- Yes, yes. We have had a few cases where animals found their homes in other countries. But it's usually the animals which had clean tests. But in our clinic, it was only a couple of cases. Because usually volunteers try to find a home for the animals they are fostering. Of course, if there a super pretty dog or a cat, then yes, they are ready to take that animal and look for a home for them.
- So about nice and pretty animals. Is there a type of animals that finds a home faster than others?
- Yes, usually a very close "relatives" of breed animals. British (britanci), fluffy ones, special in their colouring kittens. Usually people don't like to take young kittens, they prefer older cats.
- Got it. What about finding a home ? What is the moment that you breath out and think that the animal found a home succesfully? Is it the moment when a person takes an animal from your clinic or is there some specific amount of time so you make sure everything is okay?
- Some time needs to pass. We don't have any specific range of time. maybe a week, maybe 2 or 3. Before, I'd help animals from the street to find a home and help other volunteers, or would work at the clinic where we also had thrown away (podkinutiy) animals, I'd help with finding a home for those animals too. So no, we don't have any specific time range. Someone can return a cat after a year. But this is due to some serious circumstances that happen. But we always say, that in case an animal doesn't suit them. i.e. cats get used to spaces so we need to make sure that the cat likes the apartment and etc. Cats usually choose and decide themselves where they want to live. If it's comfortable, then the cat will stay in that apartment. There were 1-2 cases when a cat simply didn't like the apartment, so we had to find a new home for that cat. And then everything got better and it's still everything is okay. They are still my regular patients when it comes to i.e. vaccinations so I know that they don't get rid of cats. If they need to go somewhere, then they call us and ask if the cat can stay for a while. Someone calls to consult. I don't to call them all the time and ask for pictures i.e. because I have 2 dogs from a shelter so if volunteers called me and asked for pictures, I'd not be very happy. I'm just that kind of person. Depending where the animal is going, maybe a contract of some sort is okay. Sometimes we make a contract and sometimes we don't, depending on the animal again. That paper doesn't really have any legal power. So there is really no point in all of that. We take personal information, address, take pictures of the animal and the owner and that's all. We don't ask for any money.
- Coming back to when you mentioned the return of animals. In this case, do you continue to look for a new home and a new owner?
- Yes, it's us and we continue looking for a new place for the animal. We had a cat and we had to find a new home for her I think 2 times. She just didn't like it and that's all. And then we found a lady and she was alone, so didn't have any kids at home and it was a perfect match for that cat. She became a perfect cat. She started to use her toilet (lotok). Before that she would pee all over the apartment on the bed and the pillows, and etc. She just didn't like the apartment and the owners. It was simply the problem of a cat. When we were looking for a 2nd home for her, we told new owners in advance that these things might happen. But people seemed okay with everything and then they were shocked. And they brought the cat back to us.
- But you usually have a rule that a healthy animal, even with some serious behavioural problems, you still don't put to sleep, right? Always give a chance.
- Yes but except for a case. We usually don't have any aggressive dogs and etc, so in this case when there is no chance of finding a home for an animal. We don't have cases of wild animals because they would rip off the rope and run away. Sometimes wild cats after sterilisation, they go through hormonal changes and they get more adequate. And also sometimes, since we are in the clinic, animals may get stressed when they get injections, we tell the owners in advance that they are stressed and stuff when at home these animals are pretty fine and not aggressive.
- So it also depends on the environment the animal is at?
- We tell as much as possible, that this and that may happen. We instantly tell all those things, even bad things. We always tell all the scenarios what may happen, even very bad things. Like "you know, it's a

cat, she will ruin you wallpaper and furniture. If you want to adopt a cat, then you have to be ready for all of this. Tell everything in details. We don't try to advertise animals from the best possible side, and we prefer to tell everything as it is so owners would not be expecting something WOW. We don't lie like some animal breeders do. Always give owners filler against smell (napolnitet dla zapaxa), we give the food that animals are used to, so they don't have to adapt to new food as well.

- And all of this is also for free? So people donate these things voluntarily.

- Yes, yes. Voluntarily. But I know that in some shelters in Moscow, they have a fixed quote, like if you want to take a puppy, then you have to pay X amount of money. This money goes to the expenses connected to the animal.

- Yes, we actually paid a big amount of money for our very problematic dog. Because all the shelters in the Europe want to be paid for the animal, even without any breed. So yes, that is very true. So you basically, fully prepare an animal and for free.

- Well yes.

- So except for this moment, I mean lack of financing, what other weak sides would you mention? The sides that would be nice to improve but right now you don't have a possibility for that? Or you don't have those moments?

- It would be great that we find a new home for more animals than right now. Also, we chip most of the animals and put them into a database. So just in case anything happens, it's good to have some control one way or another. In case we find an animal somewhere, and if the owner says that the animal "got lost" or like fell out of the window, so we know. We let owners know in advance that animals are chipped and are in database. Maybe sometimes people are afraid of that and try to act better with the animals.

- So as far as I know, in Russia, only veterinary and educated owners know about the process of chipping the animal. In overall, how do you think, since you have a lot of customer, what do people think of this chipping process? How aware are they about this procedure?

- Around 20% are aware about this procedure. They know why it is needed and how it works. Many people think it's an actual chip and you can track the animal from your phone. Like via satellite. So many don't even know how it's done and what goes where. They think that it's like a surgery where an actual chip is "put" into an animal. Most of the people don't know and how it even works.

- That's sad. So the weak moment is that people are unaware and that they have no interest and wishes to learn. What about strong moments? What do you think what makes you happy in this process?

- Many people don't take only 1 animal. Sometimes they take 1 and then come back and take another one. Or they call and say "we took a kitten from you several years ago and we decided to take another cat or dog. We know that all your animals have all the necessary medical check ups and everything is ready, basically with all the documents. We want to adopt an animal from you". Many people approach us like this.

- And what about 2nd and 3rd animals. It's quite common that conflicts arise between animals between a new animal and the one already at home. What do you do?

- We explain as much as possible. From the minimum that the animal needs time to adapt at least for 2 weeks or more. We recommend that owners firstly bring in the new animal to the and only after bring in the one that they had in transportation box.. We also recommend to have cat ferromons (feromoni), it works for some. In our clinic we have them everywhere.

- Is it something like "adaptil"?

- Yes. Usually works for many animals. Or there are some sedative pills. For the first time while an animal is adapting to other animals and would not be stressed. We warn that if the animal is stressed, he may not pee. If the animal doesn't pee for more than 2 days then owners should give this sedative pill so the cat wouldn't have any health problems. There is a case that's called "stressed cystitis" that's common to cats and this happens when they are stressed and they can't pee. And this can become something more serious. We give the new owners some pills to take with them just in case and tell them to watch out.

- So if you found a home for a cat, and the cat starts to have this problem. And people call you and ask questions. Do you consult in these cases when you already found a home for animals?

- Yes, always.

- Got you. Thank you so much, I got all the parts covered that I was interested and wanted to say that I have huge respect for what you're doing. And the last question for today is what would you like to add? Without any questions, just on the topic of homeless animals and their adoption process?

- Oh this will be long.

- Just something short that you'd like other people to know.

- I mostly have many questions and comments to the breeders. The breeding has to be somehow controlled and regulated

**The transcript of the interview with EST01**

- So thank you very much for taking part in this interview. I am doing this for the University project, and this is the only purpose. Are you okay, if our conversation is recorded?

- Yes.

- Thank you. So let us start. Could you please tell me about your position and responsibilities related to the animal sheltering and adoption process?

- I'm a volunteer at Tartu Kassikaitse. My responsibility is to help homeless cats. So if somebody finds them on the street, then I go, and I pick them up, and we take them to the vet, they will get checked. And after that, we will start looking for a foster home. And then permanent home, sometimes it happens that the foster home will adopt the cat, but if it's not the case, then we will advertise it everywhere on our website, do the posts about them, share stories, and, and then if the people see them, and they're interested in the cat, then they feel the adoption form. We look through the forms and call the sufficient from the first impression people. We schedule the interviews with them to make sure that they are suitable home for the cats. And if everything's okay, I take the cat personally to the new place. Moreover, we don't do the adoption papers straightaway. I let people live with a cat for a month or two months to ensure that everything is okay for both sides. The cat is happy with the owner, and the owner is happy with the cat. And only if the person is saying yes, that I'm 100% sure that I don't want to give this cat away, then I'll go back to this place. And then we sign the paper. Because I know many organizations do it straight on the day the person comes to pick up the cat, they do the adoption procedure straightaway. But I think it is a bit risky. Because how can you know that the cat is suitable for your maybe like there's some people who are don't have any experience with cats, they don't know that they need to like clear the litter box and the sand is everywhere. And sometimes it happens that the person is taking the cat for the first time. Then they see that they don't want to be a cat owner. They realize that through this process, and then you know, it's good. They didn't do the adoption straight away, then we'll just find normally, people who are happy to be a foster home. And then we can look for the permanent home again.

- Wow. Sounds like a very thoughtful process. And you mentioned that you do at least like three checks of the owner. Can you please comment a bit more in a detailed way? What are the factors that should be considered important during these checks? What are the stop signs, and what are the good ones?

- It can be the food that the person is giving. We expect good quality food for the cat. Because if you give like a cheap food, the cat will get ill. The bills are not small. And it's better to keep your cat healthy. Because you know it's best for the cat. So the food we're always like talk to people that all this cheap, a supermarket foods are not suitable. And some people are saying "no, I don't believe this. I think supermarket food is good food". And then obviously, this is a stop sign because I don't agree with that. So if the person is 100% against it and says, "No, I will feed my cat with this" then I don't give the cat to the person. The other thing is the area. So if for instance, it's like a flat in the building with many flats or city centre, you can't let the cat go outside or if it's near the motorway, you know, the countryside but near the highway again. And if the person doesn't understand that you shouldn't let a cat go freely, it's a problem. And then the allergies as well. Some people with many allergies, like they say that I have cat allergy, but I still want cat then you know they say that I am going to take medication. But many people you know they return. They think they will cope with this, but you know you can't like to have all these medications taken just because of the cat. You know you just have to go and pet them in your friend's house or something if you have like strong allergies. Or other family members are against it. Yeah, so these are the main... and obviously, we check the black list to make sure that there is not like not animal offenders who like hurting animals. So we always check the name, that name is not in the list of there.

- Okay, but all these checks sound like manual checks. So you are going through the application, making an interview and doing property checks all by yourself?

- I'm doing everything myself. So the form will come in, and I'll do all the checks myself.

- And I suppose it's quite time-consuming, right?

- Yes. So I do all the phone conversations, take the cat to the place as well, you know, I don't ask them to come to the shelter to pick the cat up. I drive there just to make sure that the house is like nice and to meet the family, I see that the children are normal, because some of the children are, you know, are too active as well. So I can like maybe say to the mother that maybe it's not very good if you have a cat because if your children are like two years old, three years old, and they're like hyperactive, it's the cat will get stressed many, many cats starting to pee in like wrong places because they stressed because of the children. And, and the cat starting to be everywhere. And then the mother calls me the cat is peeing everywhere. And I say okay, I think it's because of the children. They don't believe they just think that the cat is bad. But I take the cat to place with no children. And there's no problem you know, so this is already a sign that something was wrong with the house. So there was something disturbing for the cat in the family as the first place.

- Okay, in such kind of cases where for instance, a road problem was or children can't behave, so cat got stressed, you relocate animals. But what if this family with children's were nice and they still want an animal, would you try to find them another matching cat?

- I usually try to find a match, probably, a cat who will be like a kitten who will be like playing with children and probably not having this problem. So sometimes I try to find something like let's try with another cat. Maybe this cat was very stressed and sensitive, this particular cat, so we'll so I don't discourage them if I like the family, but if I see that the mother is like too defensive over her children or something, then I just say that, then I just take the cats and I just say wait till they're a bit older and then adults.

- It also sounds like your organization has this cat resume or characteristics of each trait of the cat, for instance, if the cat is too sensitive or playful or whatever. So how usually is it going like you found a cat, so there is some test period in your shelter or how you try to define these personal characteristics or do you have a database or it's just in your head what cat is like ?

- Yes. So normally, they come to the shelter, and we start finding foster homes straightaway. So the most like information I'll get from foster homes so they will tell me that the cat is like playful kind of shy or the cat is very calm or whatever the cat is aggressive. So I will get the information from the foster home. If we don't find them foster homes, then they stay in the shelter. And then the volunteers who are like going around to play with them to clean they tell me that you know, they describe the cat to me and we write everything down we have a website and all the cats are on our website and these like little small like yeah description. All the information about each cat is on the website. Okay, so the people in there looking as well they can already read it. The person who is willing to take a shy cat they can see that this is a shy cat. So they already have some kind of like picture of what sort of a cat in their head. This particular cat is this and this.

- But if you already see a mismatch while checking the initial application? Do you sometimes try to relocate the interest at this stage?

- I just say that I don't think this cat is very suitable for you that this is a very shy cat sometimes if the children maybe will pet maybe he will like hit with the claws. So I try to offer some other cats. So to lead them to the cats that I think are better match for them. If they insist, I don't proceed, it's no point me taking the cat there. And I know it's not going to work. It's just a waste of time for everybody. So it's better to get like, you know, already to make a better match. So yeah, definitely, if I see that it's not a good match, then I offer a list of the cats that I think are good for the family.

- Okay. It's very wise.

- Yeah, it is for the cat as well. It's stressful, you know, to change so many different places, it's better to be in a shelter to wait for this person to come then to take him to like different, you know, families that and it's not working out or that I know that's not going to work out. No point.

- Sounds reasonable. When you mentioned the whole process, foster home sounds like a crucial step. But in percentage, how many cats are successfully finding a foster home like straight away, like you found a cat, and then you do all the procedures, post and already have some candidates for fostering family?

- This is the only way we worked because we didn't have shelter. So we only had this foster system. And it was tough because I found a cat sometimes I don't have any foster, everybody's full. So it was a very big stress for me. Because then we had to do the post please like "Does anyone want to foster" and if there is nobody like responding, I'm going to put this cat on hold. But this is how we worked. Three years ago, when we didn't had a shelter. This is how we worked because we just don't did the posts and all the cats were going straight to the foster place if we find, if we didn't find that the cat is waiting on the streets, because we don't have no place to take it. But now it's much easier because we have at least some space where we can put them. While in the shelter, we have time to find home or wait till foster home will be empty again. I can take it there. But yeah, the percentage is very small that the cat is going straight to the foster home. They normally go to the shelter first. Maybe 20 - 30% goes only to the foster place anyway. But 70 80% through the through the shelter.

- But how many cats do you have overall like, both in foster homes and in the shelter?

- At the moment? We have about 120. Yeah, about something like this. Yeah.

- And what is the average time of the process? I mean, like of course, adoption time should depend from animal to animal, but average?

- I say six months is approximate. It's like the middle you know. So our aim is to find a home within six months and normally, unless the cat is not very rarely aggressive or shy. We will we will manage, we'll find something within the six months. Obviously, those expect exceptions. Some of them find the home within weeks, some of them a year, and still no hope. There are exceptions, but the middle time is six. And I guess a kitten is usually more adoptable and easily adoptable, for instance, than an old cat.

- So does it somehow affect your social media strategy? For instance, your posting more, or like, in other words about old cats, or, like, compared to kittens, like, most uncomplicated strategy differs depending on the cat's adoptability and some personal characteristics.

- Yes, I mean, the thing with kittens is that we don't even have to advertise. They just go as like warm pies, you know, they just come and they go. And so we don't really need to advertise them, we just put

them on a website and already, the forms are like coming in. So about one with older cats, we try, like, if it's a maybe older person who wants to catch them, you know, it's not wise to take a kitten. Sometimes I do like this, like, I speak to the person. And I say that, that this is older cat calm. And sometimes even say that we can help with the bills because the problem is that people are scared to take older cats. After all, they're scared of the bills, the old cats more problems. . If something if the cat is where it gets very ill, then we can, maybe not in 100%, we can like share the bill. Or if you really don't have any money, we can find the money to pay. People are just scared because, you know, older cats can get ill. I guarantee that we're there in case something happens, then people are like they relax more and are encouraged to take the older cats if they know that they can rely again on somebody, but about in many cases no problem. They take the cat and there is no problem so the main strategy is to show support and all the positive sides of the adoption.

- Let's also clarify your organization and the shelter you're working like on a non-death basis. Even if a cat is not adoptable for more than six months or even years, it still lives in a shelter, right?

- We fight till the end. Even if we get a very ill cat, we do everything that is possible in this veterinary world. To save the cat, we find the money. We do not do for cats less than everything possible. If it's in the suffering, let's say it has a disease. And there's nothing that can be done and the cat is suffering, we don't have a choice. But if there is something that can be done, then we will do it. Yeah, even if there is a guarantee like the chances are 5% or 3%, we still will take this 3%

- This is very, very good approach to deserve respect. Back to the adoption itself, you said that you prefer not to sign the contract right away, you find home, you give them this trial period together? And if the answer is yes from both sides, you sign a contract. Is this a point when you say that this cat was successfully adopted, or you still wait a little more time to make sure there is no return, and only then it's successfully adopted. So when this cat is successfully adopted?

- When foster agreement is done and the person is calling me: "hey, I have this cat. I've been living with this cat for two, three months, whatever time and everything's perfect. Can you come and sign the adoption paper' and then I will sign the paper and this is the time you know, because the person already lived with the cat. This is officially when the contract is signed. And it depends some people are calling me within few weeks. Some people are calling me after four months. Some people like you, you are calling me after nine months. So it varies and it doesn't have specific time limit. I'm not in a rush with this final contract. You know, and sometimes people are like, let's say I had one cat who was in one foster place for eight months. And then the form and I called foster like 'the form came ,do you want to give the cat away?" They said yes. And then adopters went to see, and they were in between two cats. So they chose the other cat. And then, on the ninth month, but the same foster home called me and they said" No. It was so painful for me to think that the cat is going like I needed to give the cat away, then I now realized that I can't give the cat away" so often that, like nine months, she said no. So she needed this for somebody to come. And this reality check that somebody is coming and take the cat, she needed this to realize that actually, she doesn't want to give the cat away.

- Notice that many cats find their forever home through foster homes, is it so?

- Yes, many, it wasn't like that before. But now, because it's so popular, you know, people are finding out about oh, I can actually foster first. And then I can see what I want to keep the cat or not. So it's very popular case, like I'll say maybe 40% of cats are actually staying in the foster home forever, which is a very big percent. And it wasn't like that before. Because before our foster homes were people who knew that they can't adopt like a university student, very young people and, and they just loved cats. However, they didn't have the ability to adopt the cat because of the living situation circumstances or whatever. But now, we have many like families and everybody know about this foster system. And this is such a good, way to find out whether you are a cat person or you're not. And maybe because of that, people are actually taking the cats and obviously observing their natural state and people saw they are adorable. Many people realize that. They can't actually give the cat away.

- So overall, this adoption process sounds very complex. Many people involved, many emotions involved, much money, everything. I already heard kind of strengths in the process and some potential weaknesses. But could you please probably define what is, in your opinion, the strongest things in all this process and the weakest parts that you probably would like to improve somehow? If yes, do you have any suggestions on working with the weak part of the process?

- The strength, I think, is our organization. The fact that we don't do the adoption papers straightaway. I think it's a big strength. And because it's for the benefit of the cats, some people, if they only sign the paper on the day, are ashamed of how they are going to call and say, "Can you pick the cat up after like, I already signed the papers". And so many people feel ashamed to do that. But if they are like a foster, they take the cat because they want to help and check the life with cat, I still do the foster agreement, just to make sure that there is a paper that was signed. So they feel responsible but also a bit more relaxed to talk about the problems, you know, because once the final paper is signed, they feel ashamed. So I think it's a big strength that we do this because not many people, not many organization do it, because it takes to work, you know, it's extra. It's so easy, I just signed the paper straight away, I don't need to communicate, don't need to, like resolve any

problems. The person is with the cats with the problems and it's not my problem. But for the benefit of the cats, I think I'm willing to take this extra work to make sure that the cat is you know safe and sound. So for me it's a strength, and the weakness to know the weakness maybe is that... We don't have many volunteers. We would need more volunteers, because it takes to work: you need to drive there and we don't have enough volunteers. So again, the volunteers that we have are over, you know, worked in a way because it's a lot of extra work. And then if we will have more volunteers, it will be more like relaxed, but we don't have that many. It will be much better with a bigger team. All this takes time and all the visitation as well, you know, driving there, too many people are live like in different parts, we normally do in south Estonia. Still, some people live like five kilometers out of like the cities again, you need to drive them on, like take a bus or something. So, it's so yeah, you need these human resources to do that. Unfortunately, we don't have that as much as needed.

- Resources are always a problem for rescue organizations, unfortunately. But what about funding how your organization is funded?

- We have adoption fees. So 40 EUR is for the kitten, who are not sterilized, and 55 EUR is for the cat who is sterilized.

- Oh, it is very small amount of money.

- Yes, but again, we don't want to put some financial pressure, maybe we will increase it because everything is going up. So we need to think about the increase but at the same time we can't put it very high as well because maybe that will you know discourage discourage people again, we have to think about demand and the number of cats that we have, and it's still like this you know, the cats demand isn't high enough, it's everywhere like this. So we can't put the prices very, very, very, high up. So we need to like balance it. And the other thing is a donation. People donate to us sometimes if there is like very complicated cat. Let's say broken limb or something that we do post will say that we found this cat and the operation will cost 1000 euros, and then people donate.

- Do you receive some support from the city or some partners, special rescue funds?

- We don't get anything—nothing from the city, nothing from the government, nothing from no grant programs. We live on donations only, donations, and adoption fees. So all volunteers like I pay for the petrol let's say, you know, I drive around with this cats, nobody's like paying me for the fuel. I support it myself, and nobody like paying you for anything. You're doing it just because you are a kind person.

- Okay. Thank you very much for the interview. It was very insightful. And my last question is there anything you would like to add about the adoption process?

- The cats are amazing. The house where you have an animal, whether a cat or a dog, is different. It's just such a special precious relationship. So I will encourage people to adopt more and, you will definitely, you know, will get a friend for a very long time, loyal friend. I wasn't a cat person. My sister wasn't a cat person before we actually got a cat, and then we realized, Oh, I'm a cat person. Sometimes you don't know you might think that I do not know about this, but once you see their personalities how amazing they are, you realize that and this that's why it's a very good way of doing that by fostering. You don't have to keep the cat if you also realize that you are not the cat person. But maybe you'll you'll find this cat love in yourself.

- Thank you. It's very, very precious words. Thank you.

- Welcome.

### **The transcript of the interview with EST02**

- Is it okay if I record this session? Just for educational purposes.

- Yes, if I can help, I can help.

- Yeah, okay, thank you very much.

- So let's start. Firstly, could you tell me a bit about your position and responsibilities related to the animal adoption process?

- Do you mean in the organization overall or the position in the adoption process?

- Yes, more about the adoption process. Like, even if you volunteer not only in the organization but also yourself, it'll be helpful and very nice to know all these details.

- Ah, you know it's more of a whole process, it's not like a part of it. You know, we always, when we get the message that an animal needs to be saved or in a bad condition, then we try to figure out what is the problem if the problem is serious. And very often people complain just because they don't like that, for example, that dogs are barking or something. So we figure it out what is this problem, how fast we need to deal with it, then we try to get the animals. There are few possibilities how we get the animals. It's like this: we get an agreement with the owner, they just the animal that they don't want and we try to find a new home for this animal. It's called PTE, I don't know how is it in English, sorry. But this is the official organization that has rights to go and check in and takes the animal. And sometimes, they take you as an official partner with them. And then, of course, animals get veterinary procedures, so chip, vaccines, sterilization, castration, neutralization. And then we have a temporary home for them normally. And then post on Facebook, now we also have a new

webpage. And then we talk with the people who offer the home, we want to be sure they know what they do. And, of course, we have contracts behind this. They are simple contracts but there are some main things like no pain, no euthanasia without our permission, and so on. Also not giving animals to others. That's it. Normally this is the procedure.

- Okay. You mentioned that you usually do some posts on FB and your webpage but I know that, for instance, puppies, they are usually more popular among people and they are easier to adopt so to say.

- What is more popular? I didn't get it.

- Puppies you know. I have heard that usually it's way more easier to find a home for puppies compared to an old dog.

- Yes, it is much more easier and there are also different categories. If a dog is looking similar to some breed, it's very easy. If the dog is more friendly, then it's also easier but not always. You know, if the dog is old and friendly, it doesn't help. If the dog has some behavioral problems, it's very complicated. Almost impossible. Until we do something with them, I mean with their behavior. And we normally do because if we have big groups of dogs that are not socialized, then we need to work with them before we can give them to somebody. And, of course, puppies go easier, then young, friendly, nice-looking dogs, breed dogs.

- But does this mean that you will promote them differently on FB? I mean dogs with problems and that younger and friendlier?

- No, we are always very honest in these cases. And if we show puppies then we look more seriously into who we give these puppies to. We won't give this dog to anyone, you know. We choose. First, we get a letter or something or a phone call, we always consider based on our experience how they talk, what kind of special questions they ask, how they think in overall terms about how they are planning to keep the dog, and what is a dog for them. Let's say that we prefer that the dog will be a part of the family not just something outside. So if people start the conversation like this, then we consider these things. If someone says that a dog is only for the outside, then it's a no. There is always a lot of questions, a lot of stomach (gut) feeling and because of this, we always to talk on the phone not only by email or something.

- So my next question would be: you mentioned this thing with the colony of animals (dogs), how frequent is this case with like colonies and people owning a lot of animals in bad conditions in Estonia?

- It depends, if we find someone or get any clues or some people let us know that there is a problem. It depends, we are not the only organization that is solving those problems. And we always check if we have enough time and place. It's not like this that we go and take dogs and cats, we need to know beforehand if we have places to put them. So it's always a very big operation. Like today we need to take 5 big, unsocialized dogs and we don't have places for them. So we can't just go and take them.

- When you're talking about these places, is it like your organization has its own spaces or it's mostly spaces of your partner organizations? How does it work?

- No, it depends always on what kind of colony is this. If they are breed look-alike, small breeds like Yorkie, and Chihuahua, then it's easy because everybody wants them. But if they are no breed and big dogs with behavioral problems, so nobody wants them. Even partners. If you ask, nobody will want them. Somehow, we try to get foster homes, we try to get places, we try to build cages, and so on.

- But how is it all financed? Like your whole organization? Is it only donations or you have some other source of finance?

- Only donations.

- Oh wow, it should be a bit complicated.

- Well, you know, it is like everyday work for most of us.

- So mostly all the people that are working in your organization, they all do it for volunteering purposes?

- Yes, everybody is doing that as a volunteer.

- Okay, so how many animals on average go through your organization per year?

- Hundreds.

- And how many volunteers do you have? How many people deal with this amount of animals?

- Actively? 5.

- WOW

- Hahaha, okay not like this. We have these 5 women who are working as the activity group, or in other words, the managing group. And then we have some more active members, like volunteers. You know we work together with Tartu Kassikatse and we actually rent a room but they organize all these voluntary jobs and home and that stuff. We pay for the ones that we save (I assume cats), we pay for these cats' veterinary costs and food and everything like this. But they help and they can also use our rooms, our place and it's like cooperation with them. They help with the other things. This is in Tartu. If it's in Tallinn or that area, we have 1 group for cats in Harjumaa but right now they don't take new cats because they have a bit over 10 cats staying for a longer time. There was a one-time operation where we saved more than 100 cats from 1 place. It has been a huge work but almost all cats are adopted by now.

- I cannot imagine this amount of cats in 1 home.

- Yeah, it's crazy so it's always very nervous and crazy. And that's why, you know, we are 5 people and we are friends and we have a mission like we have the same view of life. And even if you get somebody, yes we get volunteers and they want to help but it's rare that people understand what exactly this is. This work is very intensive but a lot of people just don't understand that if you come and take responsibility, it's not like this "okay maybe I do 1 thing and then don't do 3 things" something like this. We don't have time for keeping people like this. If you want to be with us then you have to be able to organize work and figure it out by yourself because we don't have time to look over someone's work and help new volunteers. You should be able to organize, i.e. transport to the clinic by yourself?

- Yes from your words, it sounds like as in any organization, your organization has strengths and weaknesses, and now it sounds like the best part is that there is also a team spirit and these 5 people who are together and it really helps. And the worst part is that there is still a lack of resources, like human resources, lack of responsibility.

- We mostly lack of foster home resources. Even if you have money and everything, then we don't have people who can take care of these animals.

- Ah okay, so this is the biggest problem.

- Money is okay but the people are the biggest problem.

- Okay, I understand, yes. Coming more to successful adoption cases. When can you say that an animal was successfully adopted? Is it the moment when the contract is signed or is it after some trial period when the contract is signed? So when do you usually say that "okay, this animal is successfully adopted"?

- Actually we don't make, at the moment when we give a dog or a cat this final contract. Because we say that a lot, not actually a lot, but some cases are like this when a dog is going home and then coming back. Because there can be some problems or I don't know, even if we ask very carefully everything and we try to understand if it's a good or bad home, right people or not. And there are some cases when we make mistakes sometimes, you know. And some mistakes, you know in the first few weeks animals are the best in your home and then the reality happens. Then they feel themselves more at home, more confident and they start to show the "real self". So then the people don't know what to do or they don't have experience or they want to think that the dog doesn't bark and stuff like this. So that's when the dog comes back to us. But always, if there is some problem, then we never keep a dog there.

- Okay, so roughly, on average what's the percentage of these "return" animals to you?

- Not big.

- Oh this is good.

- Because we always want to avoid this situation when an animal has to move to different places. Because this is not good for a dog or a cat.

- So you're trying to check it.

- Actually I have now a dog that was in 3 different places during 1 week before the dog arrived here. The dog is less than 1 year old. But the dog has some behavioural problems but not so big problems, I can handle them. So it's something like biting hands. But first 2 people said that everything is okay but after 1 night they said "no we don't want this dog"

- So even though you tried to do everything to check and communicate, it still didn't work.

- You know there is a trait coming in if they are afraid of a dog. Then it's not helping. I can talk but it won't help if they are afraid of biting or something, then you know. The dog will feel very fast that the owner is afraid of the dog. And nothing will work in this case. You should not be afraid. But very often, people have children or something that's more important than animals.

- But overall it sounds like a very complex process, like adoption, sounds like a process with many hidden things and everything. But still, you're 5 active people and you're still dealing with hundreds of animals. You're doing a lot.

- Yes yes, and there are good examples also. 2 weeks ago I was helping 1 old lady who was writing to me. Actually, this dog wasn't from us, it was from the shelter and before that from Russia. And the dog was also very young, under 1 year old. And he was so scared, he lived for 1 month behind the sofa. Only came out when nobody was in the room. And this old lady was so (something, can't understand the word), even it was impossible to go outside to pee. And after 1 day I was there and right now the dog is very happy and is doing way better. And the lady told me that everyone told her to give the dog back to the shelter and that it's not normal. But she said "no, this is my friend, my dog and I do whatever it needs"

- This is so sweet, I wish more people would be with such more kind approach to animals as this lady.

- Yes, and the lady was old. She is like 60.

- But for instance, when you have such kind of people, I mean very kind, persistent and good for animals but they are old. I mean that there may be a need soon to relocate the animal because we are still people.

- Yes but you know we do like this: puppies we don't give often to old people because it's always like this that they need to understand that the animal can live longer than this person. And we always try to ask if they have support or supporting group, maybe children or grandchildren, someone to take responsibility after the old person dies. This is very important, and then we give an animal to older people. We try to give them a little bit older animals, or maybe smaller. We always look. Of course, we will not give a 1-year-old animal with behavioural problems to a 70-year-old. This is not normal. And also one thing, we get these dogs from people that are dying and relatives don't want to know anything about the dog.

- So, except for these resources part, is there anything else that you think can be improved in the adoption process? Maybe something that can be done differently and might make your life easier and the adoption process smoother?

- I don't know. Foster homes.

- So resources are the main thing, I got it.

- Having a lot of resources is very good. We know that there are dogs that need rescue but we cannot help them because we have no place to put them. We don't like this but we don't have a choice at the moment. We try to get some solution but it's hard. Right now the dogs are not moving much from the shelter.

- Yes, that's unfortunate. Anyways thank you a lot for your answer. It was very insightful and I'll definitely use all of this information for my thesis. So my last question is there anything that you'd like to add, to say to the wider audience, like how to help animals and the adoption process?

- Yes maybe people, sometimes they, you know, if you look on Social Media or these places and there are a lot of posts, like "I want a dog but I look at shelters but I don't want a rescue dog". I don't know why but people think that rescue dogs are problem dogs. They are not problem dogs. So, I want to encourage people to take more rescue dogs. They are so good and grateful, much more than the dog which you raise.

- Yes, I agree and I can confirm it. That's very true.

- It's a special bond between a dog and an animal. It's a different feeling. You know, if there is a demand, there always will be offer. So, if people continuously want puppies but not rescue dogs, then there will always be people breeding puppies and so on. But they will never know what to get from there. So of course, they need a home too but if there is a demand, there is offer.

- That is a very important message, thank you very much. Goodbye.

#### **The transcript of the interview with FIN01**

- Hi, thank you a lot for taking part in this interview. I would like to especially put your attention to the fact that I will use all the data I will receive from you only for educational purposes. Also, this conversation will be recorded. Are you okay with it?

- Yes, I'm fine with it.

- Thank you very much. And again, this recording will be deleted as soon as my work is finished. So, could you please tell me a bit about yourself, your position, and responsibilities connected and related to the adoption process?

- So my name is FIN01(coded). And I'm currently a student of the veterinary faculty of Helsinki University. And a few summers back, I volunteered at one of the animal shelters. And to justify it was a part of my education. And it's become very interesting and important for me. And since then, so being on almost three years now, volunteering at Rekku Rescue, an animal shelter. Yeah. And well, basically, it's an animal shelter that's been founded in 2002. And in this animal shelter, were mainly dealing with cats and dogs. Yeah.

- That's nice. It's like students are still trying to provide some support to animals. It's very kind. Can you please comment more about how volunteering is supported in Finland, or at least in your shelter? Because before, I have talked with volunteers from Russian and Estonian shelters, and I was amazed because, for instance, in Estonia, there are some organizations where volunteers got no money. I don't know if Finnish shelters are paid. But in Estonia, at least many are not paid. And they still like responsible for a variety of things. They're responsible for the transportation of animals, finding the right people rechecking the applications, doing the medical procedures, and everything. I was amazed by this fact because, for instance, in Russian shelters, volunteers don't have like, you know, so much power in the decision-making process of candidates or like so many tasks. So how is it organized in your rescue center?

- Well, I'm not sure if I will be talking for all of the animal shelters, but the one where I'm volunteering now, volunteers don't get paid. However, there are a couple of positions; I would say it's usually no more than two or three positions per shelter that are very important in terms of documentation or administration purposes. Those are usually paid. But I don't think that it's, let's say, I don't think it's a very big amount of money, because it's still mostly NGOs, non-governmental organizations. I don't think that they will have a lot of money and most of the funds that animal shelters are getting are being spent on animals and not the people who work there. So that's, that's my extent of knowledge about the animal shelters in Finland.

- So what are volunteers usually doing? What are their responsibilities? Like, are you helping with walking the dogs? Or probably like I don't know more involved into the process, and you are communicating with potential owners to be of the animals like what are your so to say usual tasks related to shelter?

- Since I'm currently a student, I help as much as I can doing some medications and vaccinations and sterilization, for example, when it comes to cats, so I try to assist as much as possible from the health and medical side of the animal shelters. So that's what I usually do, and for example, if a visitor is coming into an animal shelter, I don't always have time for that, but when I am in their, Shelter and I have time I don't have to get any medication for cats or dogs. I gave a tour, and I like to show the visitors the animals that need the most help. Because if the animal goes to the right hands, it can get better medicine and better conditions at home with some loving family. And that's what I try to do because I have a little more information when it comes to the animal's health condition. So that's what I usually do. It's mostly the medical side, and sometimes just short tours and information about the animals and their conditions.

- Yeah, it sounds logical. I guess I'm unsure whether it can be considered an internship program. But still, I think it's a lovely addition to what you're like, basically studying. I'm not sure whether you're the right person to ask that. Do you know more about like, as steps of the adoption process? Because, as far as I know, medication is somewhere, let's say, in the middle of the process. But could you also, if you are aware, comment more about the previous steps that are going before the medical procedures and after it?

- Well, I agree with you that the medical part and all documentation and vaccinations are somewhere in the middle. And however, I would say it's relatively in the beginning phases of adoption. Because once the animal gets to the shelter, especially if it's, it was a homeless animal before, then the animal has to get all of this surgery, vaccinations, and medication and has to stay for a month in some outside quarantine, to make sure that it doesn't have any diseases that other animals can contract from this animal. So that's a relatively beginners step. But also, later, you have to deal with a lot of documentation and everything that comes with what I've done before. So that's the process that starts in the beginning, and it goes along the way. So if they like, let's take a dog for an example. Suppose a dog is staying at the animal shelter for quite some time. In that case, its medications have to be renewed, and all the vaccinations and some annual or semi-annual checkups, like health-related, so that's something that goes along the hallway. And for, for example, if we say that a family has adopted that dog, then you have to prepare all the documents that you've watched, and explain everything we had done before with the animal, like what kind of magic medication did it get and stuff like that. So it starts in the beginning. And it sort of finishes when the animal leaves the animal shelter.

- But I understand that it depends from case to case. But could you please try to say is the average period while the average adoption goes? Like Russian volunteers said to me, usually it's more than half a year, roughly a year, but in Estonia, they say that it's like half a year. So how is it going in your shelter? What is the average period for the adoption of an animal?

- So what do you mean by adoption? Starting from when the family visits the animal shelter and then starts preparing the necessary documents or...?

- No, from the point abandoned animal was found. They call you, you took the animal, and this is we will consider it a start point until the moment when the animal is successfully adopted.

- It depends, but I would say that It's closer to Estonia. So I would say, five to seven months, on average, because the first one and a half, two months, you only spend with all like, with everything that has to be done. So the animal is saved. For example, if it's homeless, it's been a stray dog. So they just go for the first one and a half and two months. And then after the animals are already comfortable at the animal shelter, like, and there are visitors, we can show them that, yeah, and everything is alright, with this dog, you know. So I would say it's five months was the least amount of time I've, I remember, seeing is close to five, it's, it was more than four. And I think it's been close to five months at least. And then it can take more time. It always depends on like the case like, people and stuff.

- As I understand it, there is an ongoing process. You said, there are like constant medical check and recheck. It sounds quite a complex process. And with all complex processes, it's usually like they all have good parts and not really good parts. So from your perspective and opinion, what would you consider, the main strengths of the adoption process in your shelter, and the main weaknesses, and if there are some ideas from your side, how's the weaknesses you think of can be fixed? Could you also please share them?

- I think the very good thing is that we, I'm not saying that in a bad way, but we really take very good care. And we really care a lot about the animals that we get into the animal shelter into our animal shelter. And we spend as much time as needed with them. And that is a little bit that can be considered a disadvantage because we try to maintain a good amount of time with every animal. And sometimes it feels like we spend too much time and don't have enough time for other animals. So that is a little bit of a disadvantage that we haven't been careless a little bit too much. We are trying to do as much as possible. But unfortunately, we're all people. Not always we have time and resources. Another thing that is actually a disadvantage is that some medications

and for example, if the animal, we get the animal into the shelter that is sick, this unfortunately takes a very, very big amount of money to get the necessary medications and not always we can find this kind of medication. So that is a little bit of a disadvantage that we are funded by, let's say, private funds and the money that we are getting from the government is a little but not enough to do everything that we wanted to do. So that is a disadvantage. But I would say an advantage is that we have a lot of people that come on like a weekly or semi-weekly basis and just donate some food or some I don't know, like necessary stuff for the animals like maybe some clothes, or some beds or some warm blankets for the winter because winters in Finland can be very tough. So we are very happy that there are people interested and they just do as much as possible for us and we really appreciate that. So that is a very good advantage. I think it's because our animal shelters are relatively popular, people are trying to help to the extent they can. I hope that answers your question well.

- Yes, thank you. And now the important thing I would like to know is promotion. Your shelter is quite popular. So maybe people are just visiting because they have heard from their friends and colleagues or noticed an animal they would like to adopt. But I believe that some animals, especially animals with some behavioral issues, still need additional promotion and PR. So what are your main channels that are used for advertising, like a website or social media, what do you usually use, and how do you define a strategy, how to promote different animals, because I know that usually puppies and kittens don't need promotions. Everyone wants them, but there are some animals with some specifics or older ones. So what kind of strategy would you use in such cases?

- We actually have a website. And there, we update the animals that we have right now regularly. And for example, for kittens, we try to get the pictures as cute as possible. And the same goes for dogs as well. We have Facebook and Instagram pages. So we're trying to be as active as possible on social media. Because I mean, everybody's there. And I would say that we are pretty popular there. And that might be one of the reasons why people are coming to us and maybe share about our animal shelter. It's a little extra work, but it makes life easier than in maybe smaller animal shelters that don't have active social media pages and might sometimes struggle. So, yeah, okay, that's it.

- Unfortunately, I haven't visited your official page yet. But I know that many European shelters tried to make individual portfolios of animals on the page, like mentioning some important characteristics or traits of character or something like this. So it also can be used as a kind of database. Is it like this with your page as well? And do you have any other kinds of databases to track? To track the correct timing of vaccinations, some personal traits ensure that there will be a match between animal and human. So yeah, basically my question about databases.

- Well, when it comes to medical documentation of each animal, we don't share them online. But we have like, paper databases, so it's a little bit old school. But on our website, we have a short description of animals, and some of them are only in Finnish. However, there are quite a few in Finnish and English. And we also post updates. So maybe there is something new here that has happened with our animals. So we update people by using our website. But more, I would say medical information and behavioral stuff, we also publish on the website, but we don't go very deep. We try to be relatively confidential. I don't know if that's making much sense to you. But we think that it might not be the best idea to put all the information out there on the website. But we try to communicate as much as possible to the point. When we think that it's enough, we do provide more information when someone is visiting an animal shelter. So we tell more than we have on the website.

- Thank you for your answer. Who is responsible for posting on social media? Do you have some exact volunteers or staff members responsible only for it? Or is it mixed? I mean, like everyone who has some spare time responsible for it. So how is it organized? Like? Yeah, who's accountable for promotion?

- We have two people, well, I'm not responsible for that. I only give out information if there's some update. So I just gave information that people ask. But I think we have two people responsible for social media and the website. And it's, I would say, it's like the administration, not all employees of the animal shelter. So they have access to our email addresses and our phone. And they are sitting on social media and checking it out during the day to see if we got any emails or phone calls or messages. So we have two people that do that. But they also do some other stuff, not only social media.

- One more question is about, basically, what kind of tech do you use? I mean, like, do you use any? Of course, you are using some smartphones, laptops, and cameras to make posts and promotional content. Do you also use specific tools or programs like simple Excel or other tracking tools, or do you prefer just paper notebooks to track the animals? Like, how easy is it going? What kind of tools and apps do you use, if any?

- Okay, so I would say that. Well, when it comes to the website, we're using WordPress, and that's it...

- I'm not entirely sure what other volunteers use, but I'm mostly using Google Excel to keep medical logs of the animals. And sometimes I also use Microsoft Word when I'm asked to give a short

description of an animal or something like, just, in that case, I use Microsoft Word, but most of my information, what I'm responsible for, are on Excel.

- Okay, thank you very much FIN02, for this beautiful and insightful interview. My last question for today would be, is there anything you would like to add overall about the adoption process and shelter animals and what he would like to share with the public about it?

- I would like to encourage people to adopt more because that's very important. And as I said before, there are many animal shelters that are unfortunately don't have many resources. So it would be nice if people could adopt more animals and we had more shelters and could sleep a little bit easier at night, so I think that's basically it. Maybe to increase awareness by using short social media and to be nice to encourage people, like maybe some influencers to just get us more popular and discuss the positive like advantages of adopting an animal from animal shelters.

- Thank you, it's very nice advice. I will include it so people know that shelters always need resources, and many animals are waiting in shelters. Thank you very much. Thank you. Bye-bye!

### **The transcript of the interview with FIN02**

- Hi, thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this interview. I would like to remind you that this session will be recorded for research purposes only, are you okay with that?

- Yes.

- Thanks, could you, please, tell me about your position and responsibilities related to the adoption process?

- I am a cat volunteer, my responsibilities are cleaning the room of the cats, ensuring they have fresh water, and giving them food in addition, if I have time and want to, befriend the cats to make them more sociable.

- Good, thanks, but are you aware of the overall adoption process?

- Yes, I have been volunteering for 5 years and my friends are volunteers too, who are responsible for other parts of shelter work, so I know things too. We are working as a team.

- Okay, so what is meant by the "adoption"? Could you, please, provide an example of the adoption case you remember very well?

- "Adoption" is the process of familiarizing yourself with the cat and then having that cat join your family, however big or small. The most vivid case I remember is with Ebe, a very shy and beautiful cat that instantly bonded with her adopted parents and was already actively playing and getting petted after 2 weeks. She was a completely different cat after getting a forever home.

- Nice story, hope to hear more successful stories, by the way, what is the successful adoption for you? When do you feel confident about the cat and its owners?

- When the cat was taken to the family and the cat has adjusted to the new living environment, a certain amount of time has passed (I genuinely don't know how Long), maybe a month or two.

- Okay, and what is the end of the adoption process from the shelter's perspective overall?

- The end process is assembling the cat for adoption - checking its vaccines, and other treatments, and assembling a small go-to home pack. The cat is then handed over, after the signing of the contract and a small contribution fee to ensure the future of the other shelter cats. The cat will be asked after, the news is always welcome, and should it not be possible to home the cat, the cat can be returned to the shelter.

- If the cat is actually returned, what comes next?

- Before adoption, the time is set to come meet the cat and usually an outline of how the cat acts and what type of companion the cat will be. If the cat is not suitable, other cats are introduced in hopes of finding an appropriate one.

- If the cat returns from home, we start to look after new owners and arrange the meeting again.

- Got it, sorry, I forgot to ask, what is the trigger, the start of the whole process?

- The trigger is usually filling of the adoption form - a cat of interest is mentioned. This happens usually via the official webpage, but there's also other social media channels (e.g Instagram) and attendance on different events to spread awareness of the shelter and the cats.

- Okay, we've discussed the trigger and the end, but talking about the overall process, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the current adoption process in your shelter, what comes to your mind?

- Strengths - the communication is swift and very receptive, other cats also have a possibility of getting adopted, if the cat of interest isn't suitable, interest in the cat's wellbeing is strong, due to the volunteers having spent time with them

- Weakness - the criteria of having a cat get adopted are high due to strong morals of the shelter's leaders which might narrow the owners' number.

- Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the current process? If yes, what is the source of these ideas, have you checked some other shelters' practices? - what should be used for it

- Unfortunately, I don't have any idea,nor haven't had time to check other shelters.
- Thank you very much for the interview! Is there anything you would like to add that seems important in the context of animal adoption?
- Adopt more.

## Resümee

### Varjupaiga loomade adopteerimisprotsessi optimeerimine. Eesti, Venemaa ja Soome juhtumiuuring.

Loomad on elanud koos inimestega ammustest aegadest. Loomade kodustamisest on möödunud sajandeid. Sel ajal pakkusid loomad inimestele peamiselt praktilist kasu, näiteks aitasid jahil ja inimeste kaitsmisel. Tänapäeval on lemmikloomade roll ja nende omamise põhjused oluliselt muutunud. Praeguse elu kontekstis on koerad ja kassid inimese kaaslased, keda inimene peaks kaitsma ja varustama ressursidega (Friz, 2003). Euroopas on hulkuvate koerte ja kasside ligikaudne arv üle 100 miljoni. Kahjuks ei ole see arv aja jooksul vähenenud, tekitades sellega probleeme nii loomadele, kes peavad sageli tunda nälga, haiguste all kannatama ning kurjaks muutuma, kui ka inimestele, keda võivad hulkuvad loomad rünnata või kellele võivad loomadelt haigused üle kanduda. Arvestades praegust konteksti (suundumus eetilisusele, keskkonnasõbralikkusele, loodusega koos eksisteerivatele meetoditele), peaks lahendus olema humaanne, Tagades protsessi, mis võimaldab loomadel päästa oma elu ja rahuldada oma vajadusi 5 loomavabaduse raames (Delon, 2021; Animal Humane Society, 2022). Seetõttu võib loomade varjupaikadesse paigutamist pidada üheks kõige tõhusamaks meetodiks. Selle meetodiga seotud probleemiks on suutlikkuse puudumine, mis tuleneb raskusest leida varjupaikadesse juba saabunud ja nende kontrolli all olevatele loomadele kodu (King et al., 2021). See põhineb suurt survet varjupaiga töötajatele ja suurendab eutanaasia juhtumeid. (Bradley & Rajendran, 2021). Lahendamiseks on vaja optimeerida adopteerimisprotsessi ehk ärianalüüsi seisukohalt, protsessihulka kõrvaldada, muutes sisemist ja välist juhtimist. Täna sel päeval puuduvad uuringud, mis käsitleksid adopteerimisprotsessi ja selle optimeerimise teemat ja mis on relevantset Euroopa jaoks. Kõige asjakohasemad on tehtud Ameerika ja Aasia varjupaikade põhjal. Detailidesse laskumine ja "keskmise" või "universaalse" adopteerimisprotsessi määratlemine on keeruline ülesanne. Protsess erineb organisatsiooniti, riigiti ja mõnikord isegi ühe ja sama organisatsiooni raames loomaliikide pidi. (Cyrenne, 2015)

Lähtuvalt sellest uuringuvajadusest sõnastati uurimuse eesmärk:

*Uurida põhjalikult varjupaiga loomade adopteerimisprotsessi, määratleda selle tugevad ja nõrgad osad ning erinevad tegurid, nagu tehnoloogia olemasolu, ressurside eraldamine ja mud asjaolud.*

Selle täitmiseks on püstitatud järgmised uurimisküsimused:

**RQ1:** *Kas uuritud varjupaiga loomade adopteerimisprotsessi saab optimeerida ja parandada?*

**RQ2:** *Kas eri riikide adopteerimisprotsessides on olulisi sarnasusi ja erinevusi?*

RQ-d on seotud protsesside optimeerimisega koos protsessidega seotud ressurside nappuse eripäradega, mis toob kaasa vajaduse kasutada äriprotsesside juhtimist ja modelleerimist kui põhilisi uurimismeetodeid. Andmete kogumiseks kasutati intervjuerimist, kuna avatud küsimused ja paindlik arutelu sobivad kõige paremini selle uuringu eesmärgi täitmiseks. Uuringus osales 6 varjupaiga esindajat 3 varjupaigast ja 3 riigist (Eesti, Soome, Venemaa), 2 igast varjupaigast. Tulemused näitavad, et muutusi on vaja erinevatelt osapooltelt. Keskendudes siiski sisemisele poolele, mis on varjupaikade kontrolli all, on mitmesuguseid protsessihulki, millest mõned tuleks kõrvaldada, näiteks liikumine ja transport. Varjupaigad peaksid keskenduma ka oma sotsiaalmeedia olekule ja tegevusele, stabiilse toetajaskonna - nii annetajate kui ka vabatahtlike - moodustamisele ning sisekoolitusele. Üllataval kombel ei kasutata varjupaikades täielikult inimpotentsiaali. Need on hoopis asendatud füüsilise tööga. Uuringu põhjal koostati soovitus edasiseks adopteerimisprotsessi arendamiseks. Osa neist tuleneb BPM raamistikel põhinevast analüüsist ja osa võrdlusest. Soome ja Eesti varjupaigad paistavad protsesside kulgemise ja

ressursside osas olevat paremad kui Venemaa omad. Halvemini esinevad nad aga partnerluste loomisel ning sotsiaalmeedia kontode ja PR-kampaaniate juhtimisel. Käesolevas magistritöös on järgmine struktuur. 2. peatükis antakse ülevaade adopteerimisprotsessist, tutvustatakse selle optimeerimise katseid ja võimalusi, teemat käsitlevaid töid ja nende puudujääke. 3. peatükis esitatakse lõputöö empiiriline analüüs ja lühiülevaade mõistetest, mõistetest ja terminitest, mis on vajalikud uuringu narratiivi, andmete kogumise, visualiseerimise meetodi mõistmiseks. 4. peatükis tehakse kokkuvõtte tulemustest - riikide võrdlus, loetelu valitud ettepanekutest protsessi optimeerimiseks, uurimuse piirangud ja arutelu. 5. peatükk on kokkuvõtte ja soovitusel selle kohta, kuidas adopteerimisega seotud uuringut tulevikus edasi arendada.

Märksõnad: Varjupaikade loomad, adopteerimine, äriprotsesside juhtimine, optimeerimine.