

# **RAOUL WALLENBERG INSTITUTE**

OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN LAW

## **REPORT FROM THE ROUND TABLE ON SOCIAL INCLUSION WITHIN A HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK IN THE NORDIC AND BALTIC STATES**



The programme is supported by a grant from the Foundation Open Society Institute in cooperation with OSIFE of the Open Society Foundations.

## Background

As is evident from any recent news report, Europe is being seriously challenged by the number of refugees currently seeking asylum within the Union. Thus far, the focus has been on accommodating the newly arrived refugees, the next phase will be to ensure their inclusion in the societies in which they settle. In this task, the universal values enshrined in international human rights agreements provide a critical point of departure and a vital tool for the development of policies and programmes aimed at ensuring social inclusion. In order to being an exploration of what social inclusion within a human rights framework could mean, RWI convened a round table of policy makers and practitioners working with inclusion and integration from the Nordic and Baltic States. The aim was to foster mutual learning and exchange of good practices in order to promote the development of policies and tools for human rights based social inclusion. This report summarizes presentations and discussions that took place during the round table and will form a background for further developing work on social inclusion in the region.

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## Opening Remarks

Opening remarks were made by *Morten Kjaerum, Director of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute* and by *Andreas Hieronymus, Policy Programme Manager, Migration and Inclusion Unit, Open Society Initiative for Europe*.

Mr Kjaerum welcomed the participants to RWI, to what is the first event in a longer process of working with social inclusion in the region. He also thanked OSIFE for their ground-breaking work in the field. Mr Kjaerum highlighted the following points:

- As is clear for everybody Europe is currently confronted with challenges in relation to migration, refugees, growing pressure on our borders. This is sometimes called a 'European Crisis', and in a way it is, especially in relation to regional cooperation. But the real ones in crisis are the refugees themselves.
- Although some wish the 'problem' would go away, UNHCR estimate that the numbers of migrants will increase significantly in the coming decades.
- It is currently the challenge of reception that is in focus, although this is probably the easy part. After reception comes the harder work of including and integrating the people who have now arrived in our societies, and how can this be done within the framework of core European values, human rights and dignity?
- Integration efforts so far have not all been a failure. Many migrants are doing well and contributing to the societies in which they live. But there are a number of areas in which can be improved, e.g. segregation in the school system, labour market and housing as well as issues of gender equality. How can discriminatory barriers that still exist be addressed? This is where the human rights framework may have something to offer.
- Exchange of promising practices between countries is both enriching and has been under-explored. What works and what doesn't?

Mr Kjaerum introduced the agenda, structured to move from the regional, European level to the national and then local levels. The title 'Inclusive societies within a human rights framework' entails inclusivity for all. This is where the human rights framework comes in. As a society we must respect the fundamental rights of all, but within local spheres of influence fundamental rights must also be respected.

Mr Hieronymus introduced the work of the Open Society, a private grant making organization working in more than one hundred countries. The Migration and Integration Unit at the Open Society Foundation in Europe works for more inclusive integration and migration policies. Mr Hieronymus made the following points:

- We are on the dividing line in Europe – there is a need to ask ourselves which way we want to go. Do we want inclusive societies or are we striving towards what Étienne Balibar has called ‘European Apartheid’<sup>1</sup>. There is a divide between those who want to protect our privileges and those who aspire for inclusive societies where our own standards of human rights are respected.
- Marginalized sectors of the host communities must not be forgotten, for example ‘the white working class’. In Berlin, 70% of this group does not participate in elections and in these areas 10-20% of the vote is for the ultra-right wing. This is just a statistical effect as not many people are voting, but perceptions matter.
- OSFIE is not only a grant making organization, but also carries out research – try to create evidence and work to influence policy.
- OSFIE has a lot of experience, particularly in this region. There are a number of concrete problems that that all can agree need to be solved. This is how inclusive societies should be achieved – through working together around concrete issues.
- There is a lot to learn from family histories, e.g. in Germany where many families have had refugee experiences. This is the advocacy approach of OSIFE now. Talking at the top level may work in a centralized state, but we need to take the other route. There is a need to discuss and develop strategies with regions, with cities. There is also a need for civil society engagement as well as cross border cooperation. NGOs must thus overcome national boundaries and work together around common concerns.

A discussion was held about expectations from the day’s discussions. Most participants stated that they were anxious to learn from one another, but also to try to turn around the general pessimistic attitude in relation to the current debate on refugee inclusion and to get some positive inspiration for future work.

## **Theme1: Integration and social inclusion – a human rights based approach.**

*Agnese Papadia, Policy Officer, European Commission, DG Migration and Home Affairs*

Ms Papadia opened the session by presenting a European regional approach to inclusion. She highlighted that while this is an important moment to talk about integration, it is also a difficult time. The issue is currently high on the agenda of the European Commission and the member states but the discourse is very much dominated by the emergency, and quick fix solutions.

There is also confusion between reception and integration as well as challenges of public opinion. For this reason it is hard to bring forward positive images of integration, and ideas such as reception being a two-way process where both immigrants and host societies must adapt.

This is a picture seen across Europe. But despite this there are a number of promising practices, e.g. new fast track approaches for integration of refugees on the labour market through assessing skills and providing opportunities to learn languages on the job. Access to the labour market has been shown to be particularly difficult for those who migrate for asylum reasons, compared to other groups of migrants. This is especially true for women. The OECD has recently published a study on humanitarian migrants’ integration, including outlining positive practices<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See for example Balibar, E, 2003, *We the People of Europe: Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

<sup>2</sup> See for example, Damas de Matos, A and T. Liebig (2014), “The Qualification of Immigrants and their Value in the Labour Market: A Comparison of Europe and the United States”. In *Matching Economic Migration with Labour Market Needs*, OECD and European Union, OECD Publishing: Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264216501-en>

Two key areas for integration are education and employment and the Commission is active in these.

- Education - There are still issues relating to underachievement of young people with migrant backgrounds with this group being 70% more likely to leave school early. The Commission is working to support teachers to manage diversity, participation in early childhood care, language training, etc.
- Employment – One area of focus is on how to assess the skills of migrants and soon a skills package will be launched at EU level which will address the issue, among other things. And thanks to the work of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, there will soon be indicators available for rights based inclusion and participation. Participation in public life, in trades unions, media and other public professions is still very low for migrants.

## **EU approach to integration:**

At a general level, member states have agreed on common basic principles. These principles go in the direction of inclusive societies and highlight that integration is a two-way process. The principles also refer to respect for the basic values of the EU as fundamental for integration.<sup>3</sup>

Ms Papadia pointed out that integration happens at the local level and it is there that the work has to be done. At the EU level they can provide guidance, funding, exchanges, etc. There is, for example, a network of national contact points on integration and there are many different European funds that can support integration. The Commission is currently working on a new strategy for integration. The focus will not only be refugees, but all migrants. There is also a lot of work being done on anti-discrimination and anti-radicalisation.

The ensuing discussion focussed on developing long-term approaches to the inclusion of migrants. It was mentioned that this has to be developed at the local level. But while the EU focus is on achieving an open and inclusive society, when it comes to concrete inclusion measures, they can only provide ideas and opportunities to exchange best practices.

The categorisation of migrants upon arrival was also raised as a problematic issue. Reception centres were claimed to be places where individuals were deconstructed or deprived of their identity, where, if someone is, say, a doctor upon arrival, by the time they leave the camp this qualification is no longer significant. There is a need to make categories fluid so that individuals are seen as more than just 'asylum seekers'.

Some good practices were mentioned for addressing this, such as the possibility for asylum seekers in Italy to start working on a voluntary basis from when they arrive. Furthermore, skills assessment was discussed and how to combat the fact that most migrants who do find work, work below their qualification level. There is a need to address these forms of structural discrimination that are barring migrants from accessing the labour market.

It was pointed out that the integration of migrants varies a lot between cities depending on the policies that are implemented. This is shown in the OSIFE's study on Somalis in European Cities, a good example of where the comparative approach can reveal good practices.

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3 See <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/the-eu-and-integration/eu-actions-to-make-integration-work>

## **Theme 2: What can human rights – as values and law – bring to the table?**

*This theme, focusing on inclusion and human rights at the national level, was opened by Christina Johnsson, independent researcher and advisor on human rights.*

Ms Johnsson outlined the value of human rights in navigation – as a compass for value based direction. There is a need to return to these values that were elaborated as a means to deal with the crisis faced by the world at the end of the Second World War. The values of human rights are stated in article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: ‘All people are born free and equal’. This statement shows that all people in the world have something in common. We all have equal rights and dignity. Ms Johnsson also pointed out the systemic understanding of human rights, that, rather than pearls on a necklace, they are ‘universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated’. She noted that ultimately, it is always the State that is responsible for ensuring human rights. So while much work with integration and inclusion will take place at the local level, and even through civil society organisations, the State cannot delegate its responsibility. There is no exception to this legal duty on the State when it comes to people living in refugee camps or reception centres. Furthermore, it is essential that the State remove the silos that exist between ministries and authorities as they all share responsibility for ensuring human rights.

*A further introductory presentation was given by Johanna Suurpää, Director Unit for Democracy, Language Affairs and Fundamental Rights at the Ministry of Justice of Finland*

Ms Suurpää began by asking how human rights principles are relevant for integration. This question was answered through reference to the UN principles on a human rights based approach. While these are basic, they can also be challenged by the current crisis. These cross-cutting human rights norms include:

- non-discrimination, equality
- participation,
  - Right to participate in the decision-making processes that affect their lives and well-being,
  - Access to information
  - Rights-based approaches require a high degree of participation by communities, civil society, minorities, women etc.
- Accountability & the rule of law, due process, good governance and remedy:
  - States and other duty-bearers
    - answerable for the observance of human rights.
    - must comply with the legal norms and standards enshrined in international human rights instruments.
  - Where they fail to do so, aggrieved rights-holders are entitled to institute proceedings for appropriate redress before a competent court

Again it was pointed out that States are the main duty bearers and responsible for human rights. Ms Suurpää moved on to provide some concrete examples of how Finland has tried to apply human rights principles. This included the campaign ‘everyone’s elections’ in 2015. The aim was to make sure new Finns were aware of their rights and how to participate in elections. Much of this work was done in collaboration with communities and it thus reached the whole of Finland. Working with local organizations, combined with the use of social media, enabled outreach to new groups and audiences.

Non-discrimination and equality are both human rights principles and entry points. In practice, non-discrimination means the enjoyment of all human rights and it is possible to focus on identifying discrimination and discriminatory practices or promoting the realisation of rights. As an example, Ms Suurpää mentioned ‘equality planning’. In relation to new legislation it was decided to adopt a new approach and use the legislation as a vehicle for dialogue with different stakeholders, allowing them to identify shortcomings. This created ownership and avoided a ‘one size fits all’ approach. A net-based tool for participation was developed, including a ‘discrimination test’ that can point to what discrimina-

tion means, and what can be done in the individual's own environment. See <http://yhdenvertaisuus.finlex.fi/en/>

When asked how they reach out to municipalities, Ms Suurpää responded that there was a lot of demand from the local levels and that they worked closely with the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities and that they have reached out with a train the trainers approach. But the Ministry has also reached out directly to the local communities and try to leave Helsinki more frequently. Furthermore, tasks have been shared with the Discrimination Ombudsman that works with schools, corporations, etc.

Discussions focussed on a number of themes including how the current migrant reception systems tend to reduce individuals to one aspect of their identity – the migrant – and how our systems can work to demotivate people; something that was termed the **'deconstruction of the individual'**.

An example of unintentional denial of rights and dignity was provided from Denmark where a municipality carried out research in which they asked newly arrived refugees 'who is responsible for the integration process?' 98% responded that they themselves were responsible. Three months later, the same question was asked and the number that stated 'me' had dropped significantly with the dominant opinion now being that the municipality was responsible. The Nordic model was also questioned and it was queried whether it turns people into passive and pessimistic members of society. That people are treated like helpless children. It was pointed out that ten year old children have more to say about the form of their education, the design of their playground, etc., than refugees have to say about how they live and other decisions that affect their lives.

There was mention of Mind-Spring, a Dutch empowerment project that had been emulated in Denmark in which the idea is to give newly arrived refugees the power to control their own lives. This includes training trainers to work with refugees with the same linguistic and cultural background. Activities are hosted in a local organisation such as a school, day-care centre or municipality. Professionals from the host organisation participate, but do not take control. A manual has been produced with themes that the groups may discuss. This is not education as such, but a way to help the group work through things together so that they can take action in their own integration process and their own lives. There are so many things that are difficult when you don't know how the system works, don't speak the language, etc. Furthermore, the experience of being a refugee affects people. There have been positive results shown from this initiative.

A further example was given in which refugees were connected to local 'friends' when they arrived. This enabled refugees to have contact with someone who is not a professional and can help keep refugees motivated during the settlement process.

It was acknowledged that we are very good at deconstructing refugees. When refugees are received, their religion is problematized, their language, their education – so, there is a systematic deconstruction of the refugee rather than an attempt to meet them where they are. There was also a call to remember our history and how the Nation State has been constructed on the premise that 'we' are not 'them'. The history of multiculturalism is very short in Sweden. It is problematic that people are narrowed down to single identities. Is it possible to use human rights tools without looking at the history and experiences in the construction of 'us' and 'them'? The Swedish policy on migration is still clearly built on these divisions. Refugees are seen as a collective rather than individuals. Human rights are legal tools and they are not perfect. If they are to be useful, we must go back to the human being.

A further theme that emerged was **cooperation between the State and the municipality.**

An example from Latvia illustrated the difficulties that may arise in cooperation between state and municipalities in the reception and integration of refugees, in particular regarding who is responsible for what. At the moment "An action plan for persons requiring international protection, their transfer and uptake in Latvia" is approved and its practical implementation will show if there will be room for a human rights based approach and cooperation possibilities and understanding between the state and municipalities.

### **Theme 3: Local level implementation of social inclusion from a human rights based approach**

*This theme focussed on local level initiatives and was introduced through an example from the City of Malmö presented by Gustavo Nazar, Coordinator for Norms and Values, Anti-discrimination and Sanne Cederstam, Project leader Plugin 2:0.*

Mr Nazar and Ms Cederstam presented the project 'Socially Sustainable Integration and Inclusion of Recently Arrived Pupils' which is run in the City of Malmö. It was started as a pilot in 2013 and targets pupils in Malmö's public upper secondary schools who have been in the Swedish school system for less than 4 years. The target group, comprising around 1000 persons, is at higher risk with a drop-out rate of around 25%. There had also been realisation that these children were not happy in school.

In preparation for the project, Mr Nazar talked to the children and found that one thing they had in common was that 'their rights had been kidnapped'. Some of the basic principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) – non-discrimination, the right to life and development, the right of children to express themselves in matters concerning them and the best interest of the child – were not adhered to. In order to find out what the children needed, deep interviews were held with the children themselves to try to ascertain what the children were lacking in their current situations. The findings pointed to the following:

- Help with homework
- To meet Swedish Friends,
- To learn Swedish,
- Excursions
- To learn about Sweden
- To learn to drive, swim, cycle
- To take part in various sporting activities.

So, through the City of Malmö, 20-30 organisations, such as football clubs, basketball clubs, dance schools, people who offer help with homework, etc. were brought in. It was found that these organisations had been unable to reach out to the children and the children had not known how to contact the organisations. A meeting was held just before the summer holidays (as not having anything to do during the summer was an extra source of anxiety) and hundreds of children signed up to the activities on offer.'

It was then important to institutionalise the project and the department of education was positive. Structures were created from this visionary effort. A partnership was forged with a number of authorities and organisations in Malmö, including the University in order to promote exchange and mutual learning. The initiative has led to a new School to Work (Plugin 2.0) aimed at lowering school drop-out rates and ensuring that children who leave school have access to university education and the labour market.

What was key here was that the voice of the children was heard – their dreams and knowledge was taken into account and their rights were recognised.

Questions were asked about the inclusion of members of the host society as well as about the gender dimension of the project. Efforts are being made on both accounts and Swedish pupils have expressed a desire to get to know people who have arrived recently in the country. The gender aspect is central to the new Plugin 2.0 initiative. It has been more difficult to reach girls as they are often kept at home so efforts are being made to interact with parents and increase trust in the system. It was acknowledged that there is a need to understand parents better and to find structures for dialogue. It is up to society to find ways of thinking and doing 'together with' rather than 'for' them.

It was also stated that the report of the Malmö Commission<sup>4</sup> a report looking at health and wellbeing of the citizens of Malmö, created a lot of good will towards this sort of initiative. The report recommended knowledge alliances and working together to improve the participation and living conditions of marginalised groups in the city.

The main lessons learned from the initiative included the importance of creating networks and working together, and the ability to be flexible and learn from each other. The participation of the children and taking their views seriously was also key. Using the CRC, was a new way of seeing children—as human beings, with abilities and desires. This way of seeing the children was important throughout.

Finally it was stated that a lot of this seems so obvious – that it is essential to listen, include, ask. But how can these frameworks for actually listening and understanding be created? It is so banal that it is often forgotten and not done. This is the essence of human rights – bringing the human being to the centre, as it is the human being that it is all about.

There was also a discussion about the situation in Estonia where minority policy is primarily directed towards the Russian minorities who arrived in Estonia after the Second World War. Integration is seen as a two-way, or perhaps multiway process and Estonians are included in the process, as are those national minorities that are 'less integrated' when it comes to citizenship and language. The aim is to create common values and, a survey of attitudes of young people showed that both Estonians and non-Estonians have similar values and interests. This points to integration having been successful among the younger generation. There are also attempts to include NGOs in the integration process to encourage meetings between young people of different backgrounds. The new migrants coming to Estonia are also pioneers in a way. People choose to go to Sweden or Germany because they have contacts there – someone else has already paved the way. This is not the case in Estonia.

In Lithuania the context is similar to Estonia, but they are receiving a higher number of refugees and this number is expected to triple in the coming year. There are also efforts to change the integration system which currently is a 'programme of survival'. Social support is very transitory with the state taking no responsibility after the first two years. The municipalities have not been directly involved, but are realising that participating in refugee reception and integration can be a way to get money from the State. The new integration programme includes attempts to ensure the refugees get jobs and learn the language but efforts are too short term. The lack of long-term vision on the part of the authorities is frustrating. Their narrative is that the refugees are in Lithuania temporarily, but this is not necessarily the case and this is people's lives we are talking about – this should not be played with. People must not be denied the 'right to a future'.

With regards to Latvia, municipalities would like to receive refugees once they are integrated, with the maximum possible language and cultural skills that this entails. This is meant to take three months while they are in asylum seekers' position. The municipalities would like to see the integration more as the issue of the central state. CSOs are providing support in terms of social workers and mentors for refugees, integration and language courses, etc.

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4 See: [http://malmo.se/download/18.1d68919c1431f1e2a96c8e4/1389601836575/malmo%CC%88kommisionen\\_rapport\\_engelsk\\_web.pdf](http://malmo.se/download/18.1d68919c1431f1e2a96c8e4/1389601836575/malmo%CC%88kommisionen_rapport_engelsk_web.pdf)

## FINAL DISCUSSIONS

The final discussions centred on four main themes that had emerged during the day:

1. The role of civil society;
2. The relationship between the State and the municipality;
3. The 'deconstruction' of the individual migrant.
4. Discriminatory barriers to the labour market;

### *1. The role of Civil Society*

It was acknowledged that civil society has played an important role in the recent reception of refugees. Some positive examples of civil society engagement in the integration process were named. For example a Canadian model was presented in which private individuals or organisations sponsored a refugee and functioned as a bridge to wider society and provided a network. This programme was also adopted in Iceland with some success. In general, however, citizens in the Nordic states are used to the welfare system and expect the state to solve welfare problems. There is not such a proclivity for charity and direct assistance as in say the US.

Some of the more problematic issues of civil society engagement were also raised, such as a lack of structure, capacity and professional qualifications to deal with the complex situation of migrant reception and integration, where good intentions do not always lead to the best results. Furthermore, the dangers of a situation when civil society fills a vacuum of human rights implementation left when the State is not fulfilling its obligations was lifted.

An example of the former was given for Denmark. Although there have been efforts for government to 'co-create' with CSOs, there has only been one entry point – through the council of ethnic minorities, a council elected to provide advice on integration matters. But there have been questions about how representative this council really is, and whether the voices of the majority of migrants are really heard. There are therefore efforts ongoing to collaborate more closely with immigrant civil society, as well as to forge closer ties to NGOs who want to assist in the integration process such as *venligboerne*. From the government there had been a feeling that the good intentions of these latter groups hadn't always led to the best results as they lack the infrastructure and systems. There have therefore been countrywide attempts to find structures for local civil society to work together with government.

An example of the latter came from Malmö where civil society mobilised quickly to assist the refugees arriving in 2015, taking on a lot of the responsibilities of the municipality. To a certain extent the organisers of this effort feel that they were used by the municipality. They are now offering to continue to assist, but are in need of financial support. The municipality has suggested that the CSOs turn to the business community for help and although the municipality should not shirk its responsibilities, bringing in the private sector, creating public-private partnerships, could offer innovative solutions. This led to further discussions on forging alliances between different actors, both state and non-state, as well as a need to rebuild trust in the state.

Also mentioned was the fact that many established NGOs receive government or EU funding, but smaller and more citizen based CSOs do not. The established NGOs have also felt threatened by new organisations moving into their 'territory'.

Also raised was the fact that new populations enhance innovation in society, increases the ability to problem-solve as well as the tax base. This connection is not made in the media, but it is an important factor, i.e. what the state has to gain from migration. For example, four Nobel prizes were awarded to US citizens this year, three of which had immigrant backgrounds.

In sum, it was concluded that there is a need to increase the structure around CSO engagement. There is a need to continue to harness their 'anarchy' and enthusiasm, as this is an important driving force, but at the same time CSO efforts need to be coordinated with overall policies and programmes for

migrant integration. Furthermore, the immigrant communities themselves need to be brought in to a much greater extent.

## **2. The relationship between the State and the municipality.**

It was stated several times during the day that inclusion has to happen at the local level and that local municipalities are central in the inclusion process. In most countries the Central government sets the overall policies, but it is up to the municipalities to implement these. The flow of funding from the centre to local levels was brought up as problematic, with very little funds actually reaching the end user. Disagreements on funding between the central and local government were also common. In Denmark local municipalities are responsible for integration and have to provide language training, jobs, etc. The government pays municipalities to deliver all this. It was mentioned that the government should distribute refugees in a more strategic way, matching the skills and qualifications of refugees to the needs of the municipalities.

In Finland the State regional body has the coordinating role for integration but there are big variations across the country. For example Swedish-speaking communities have been much more open and accepting towards refugees. There is a need to find the good examples and why they worked.

It was mentioned that the triangle: state – civil society – municipality needs to be explored more. According to OSIFEs study on the White Working Class, it was clear that there is not trust in official policies. Greater austerity and state funding cuts means that civil society is expected to take over where the state has pulled out. This, it was claimed, is no way to build a future and does nothing to enhance trust in the authorities. Ways to ensure that the state fulfils its human rights obligations must be found, as well as alliances and coordination among various actors. It was also mentioned that municipalities need to bring in new competencies, such as language and cultural skills and experience, in order to be able to meet the needs of new residents.

## **3. The ‘deconstruction’ of the individual**

In relation to the example described above, in which refugees in Denmark quickly moved from seeing themselves as responsible for their integration, to stating instead that the authorities were responsible, sparked a discussion about our systems and how they fail to utilise, and even kill, the migrants’ industriousness. The individual identity of the refugee can be deleted by our ‘one-size fits all’ systems. The well-organized welfare system can act as a barrier to refugees’ inclusion, that the bureaucracy can deny the refugee the ability to take control of their own lives. They are turned into ‘clients’.

This was related to our preconceived idea of ‘the refugee’ as poor and uneducated. In fact, many of the refugees who actually have the capacity to get here are middle class and educated. Our systems need to be able to take this into account. For refugees that arrived in Denmark a decade or so ago, they—especially the women—are doing well with most in secondary or tertiary education. There is a need to get passed the ‘emergency’ thinking, and looking for quick fixes. It must be acknowledged that integration will take time.

It was also mentioned that there is a need to get a diversity of experience into organisations that are key to inclusion, such as social services, schools, job centres, etc. There is a need for both language and cultural skills and a change in attitude and perceptions of recently arrived migrants.

## **4. Discriminatory barriers to the labour market.**

Discussions on labour market integration merged with those on the deconstruction of the individual. A problem that was raised was that refugees no longer have direct contact with the labour market, but that their access is mediated by various authorities, job centres, social workers, etc. This acts to deter refugees from taking their own initiatives. Many, for example, come with experience of running small informal businesses, but our systems don't allow them to start this kind of business on arrival. There is a need to increase opportunities for people to be innovative, to be able to take control of their own lives.

It has, however, been recognized that getting work is a key to wider inclusion. In Lithuania, mini-labour exchanges have been created in towns where reception centres are located in order to provide direct access to employers. In Denmark, however, job centres evaluate each arrival to determine whether they are 'job ready'. According to the current method, only 3% are deemed ready for employment, but in reality these figures are explained by the ability to be able to speak Danish being one of the criteria. The fact that people are expected to be able to provide information via computer in a language and alphabet they are not fluent in acts to exclude many otherwise qualified individuals. So, these bureaucratic hurdles to accessing the labour market must be removed. Segregation is also an issue here pointing to the vicious circle of exclusion. It has been shown that the majority of people in our countries get jobs via contacts. But if you live in a segregated area then you are less likely to have these contacts, which in turn makes it harder to access the labour market, as well as to learn the language – another prerequisite for getting a job.

One suggestion was to lower entry level salaries for migrants. This met with an outcry as it would undermine decades of work on the part of labour Unions and social justice movements. However, there are other innovative suggestions coming from the Unions themselves, such as trainee and internship programmes. In the US, there are examples of mentorship programmes, e.g. through law schools which provide clinics to help people to start businesses, etc. This could be an opportunity for universities here.

There is also discrimination and prejudice in the labour market towards people of different backgrounds. Employers tend to employ people who are the same as themselves. And it is not just a matter of time – The Roma population have been here for generations but still find it difficult to get employment. We are not good at recognizing and taking into account the skills of those who are not exactly like us – there is room to educate employers too.

A positive example was however given from an island in Denmark where the local population welcomed the refugees as they had brought pupils to the local school, customers to the shops, etc., thus revitalizing the community. It was agreed that these stories – about local communities taking up the challenge – often get lost in the mainstream media, but it is important that they are presented as well.

## **Way forward**

All participants agreed that the round table had been a useful and important event, in particular in terms of exchanging experiences and ideas on how to approach inclusion within a human rights framework. It was stated that there is a need on the part of all actors to see beyond national boundaries and to learn from each other.

OSIFE expressed an interest to continue to work with the region, although their strategy has not yet been finalized. There is a need to work directly with people from migrant communities, to bring them to the table. OSIFE are looking at constituency building – at bringing people together for long-term cooperation and aim to provide long-term strategic funding. It was noted that challenges are similar both between countries and at different levels within countries and exchange is important, but also exchange with other types of organization. OSIFE also aim to strengthen advocacy capacity and cooperation in the region around solving common problems. For social inclusion, it was stated that it is essential to work at the local level, for example with NGOs and with cities, to identify and share good practice.

RWI thanked all participants for the discussions which had shown how important it is to provide opportunities for exchange and mutual reflection. It was reiterated that Inclusive Societies is now a priority area of the Institute, including a focus on the social inclusion of refugees, in particular the added value that can be brought in through international human rights norms. There is an intention to continue to work with the Nordic and Baltic States and to broaden the constituency to include civil society, especially representatives of migrants and refugees.

## AGENDA

### Social Inclusion within a human rights framework in the Nordic and Baltic States

Lund, Sweden, 18 February 2016

**09.00 – 9:15** Welcome and introductions  
*Morten Kjaerum*, Director RWI  
*Andreas Hieronymus*, Programme Officer, OSFIE

*Theme 1: Integration and social inclusion – a human rights based approach*

**09.15 – 09.30** Opening talk: *Agnese Papadia*, Policy Officer, European Commission  
DG Migration and Home Affairs

**9:15 – 10:30** Discussions and exchanges of promising practices in relation to labour market,  
education, language, etc.

*Theme 2: What can human rights – as values and law – bring to the table?*

**10:45 – 11:00** Opening talk, *Christina Johnsson*, Former Head of Research at RWI

**11:00 – 11:15** Opening talk; *Johanna Suurpää*, Director Unit for Democracy, Language Affairs  
and Fundamental Rights, Ministry of Justice of Finland

**11:15 – 12:00** Discussions and exchanges,

**Lunch 12:00 – 13:00**

*Theme 3: Local level implementation of social inclusion from a human rights based approach*

**13:00 – 13.15** Opening talk, *Gustavo Nazar*, coordinator for Norms and Values, Anti-  
discrimination and *Sanne Cederstam*, Project leader for Plugin 2:0, Malmö Town.

**13:15 – 14:15** Discussions and exchanges

**14:30 – 16:30** Way forward and future actions

*This event is supported by a grant from the Foundation Open Society Institute in cooperation with the  
OSIFE of the Open Society Foundations*

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

### *Social Inclusion within a human rights framework in the Nordic and Baltic States Lund, Sweden, 18 February 2016*

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# RAOUL WALLENBERG INSTITUTE

OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN LAW

The Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law is an independent academic institution, founded in 1984 at the Law Faculty at Lund University in Sweden. It is named after Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat, in order to pay homage to his well-known humanitarian work in Hungary at the end of the Second World War.

The mission of the Institute is to promote universal respect for human rights and humanitarian law, by means of research, academic education, dissemination of information and institutional development programmes. Our vision is to be a centre of excellence promoting the development of societies based on a human rights culture.

Hosting one of the largest human rights libraries in northern Europe and engaged in various education, research and publication activities, the Institute provides a conducive environment for studies and research. The Institute combines academic programmes with an extensive international human rights capacity development programme, mainly for academic institutions, law enforcement and criminal justice institutions, and national human rights institutions. This combination provides a unique platform where theory and practice can meet and interact in order to further the development and application of international human rights law. The work of RWI falls within four focus areas: People on the Move, Economic Globalization, Access to Justice and Inclusive Societies.

The Institute cooperates with a variety of Swedish and international partners. In addition to the close cooperation with Lund University, the Institute maintains relations with other academic institutions, international organisations, government agencies and civil society organisations in different parts of the world. The Institute is member of several Nordic, European and international networks within the framework of its mandate.