



Welcoming Refugees

Local European Experiences

Report from the conference held in Norrköping 25-27 January 2017

List of contents

Welcoming words	3
Key Notes	4
<i>Setting the Scene – Refugees in Europe 2016</i>	4
<i>What's at stake – Europe at the crossroads</i>	5
<i>Integrating Refugees – The Swedish experience</i>	7
<i>Sweden as a role model in refugee integration</i>	8
<i>Refugee Integration Policies from Below</i>	9
Workshops	10
<i>Accommodation and housing</i>	10
<i>Education and schooling</i>	12
<i>Passing time and getting ready to work</i>	14
<i>Health</i>	16
<i>Co-operation with civil society</i>	18
<i>Interaction with local community</i>	20
<i>Unaccompanied minors</i>	22
Voices from the conference	24
Thanks to	26
Supported by	27
Organising team	27
Appendix	
<i>List of Participants</i>	

● This is a report from the conference “Welcoming Refugees – Local European Experiences” that was held in Norrköping, Sweden from 25 to 27 January, 2017. The conference gathered more than 130 representatives from local municipalities and research institutions from 16 European countries. The report was written during the conference, and published on 27 January 2017. In this report, you will find summaries of the interventions made by the conference’s key note speakers, as well as conclusions and recommendations from its seven workshops. More material, such as podcasts and slides can be found at www.arenaide.se/welref17

Welcoming words

LARS STJERNKVIST

Chair of the Municipal Executive Board in Norrköping

● The background to this conference is the situation in the autumn of 2015, when large numbers of refugees looked for protection in Europe. For many of us, the obvious answer was to co-operate, and to find common solutions. One single country can't manage such a challenge alone. Now was the time for solidarity.

Unfortunately, the trend went in the opposite direction – countries built fences instead of co-operating. It was a great failure that we couldn't find common solution in Europe, and it contributed to undermine people's trust in political solutions and to the raise of support for xenophobic parties. The aim of this conference is to show that it is in fact possible to reverse the current situation and to defend human rights, if we learn from each other and do it together. I am proud you have chose to come to Norrköping to learn, share experiences and inspiration.



CARL-ULRIK SCHIERUP

*Director, Institute for Research on Migration,
Ethnicity and Society at Linköping University*

● Remeso, the Institute for Research on Migration, Ethnicity and Society at Linköping University, gathers more than 40 researchers from different academic disciplines. We believe research should not be conducted in an academic ivory tower. Doing research should be about joining a dialogue with people who are working in their societies and communities, hands-on, every day. So much critical knowledge is produced in local communities, in civil society, among activists, civil servants and in the everyday political life of Europe. Welcoming refugees is a key social issue, and one of the most important political challenges of our time. It is an essential humanitarian concern, and a central policy area. It must also be a focus of research. To us at Remeso, the knowledge that we have had a unique opportunity to share with all of you in this conference is tremendously valuable.



LISA PELLING,

Chief Analyst, Arena Idé

● Today, hope is more important than ever. Across Europe, xenophobic parties are gaining support by spreading distrust, fear and hatred. People seeking protection in Europe are used as scapegoats by politicians who are unwilling or unable to offer real solutions to the challenges their societies face. At the same time, in municipalities and cities in all parts of Europe, politicians, civil servants and activists provide daily proof that it is possible to build welcoming communities and societies. While all local settings are different, all local communities can benefit from lessons learned and best practices developed elsewhere.

When we decided to try to fill a conference hall in Norrköping with experts on how to welcome refugees at the local level, we wanted to contribute to spread inspiration, and hope.



Key Notes

Setting the Scene

Refugees in Europe 2016

● “The most powerful advocates for refugees are people like you, who work with them and have been directly in contact with them, and who have shared the reality of their experiences. You are the ones that can shape public opinion, and form a bridge between refugees and society.”

Pia Prytz Phiri reminded the conference that while approximately 68 million people were forcibly displaced last year, the vast majority of the world’s refugees, 86% are in developing countries. Only one million refugees and migrants arrived to Europe. It should not be a “crisis” for the EU with some 500 million inhabitants.

Nevertheless, in 2015 the EU asylum system proved to be non-functioning, and there was a lack of preparedness and in the Member States.

The impression that governments are not in control – as it indeed appeared to many when the failure to implement a collective, managed response led to scenes of chaos at the borders – leads to a breakdown in trust, and plays into the hands of those who challenge the legitimacy of governments and seek to turn refugees into scapegoats.

Pia Prytz Phiri shared the UNHCR’s perspectives on how confidence can be restored in Europe’s ability to address refugee crises in Europe and globally.

The UNHCR calls for:

- a) An EU that protects through a well-managed common asylum system that ensures access to territory
- b) An EU where integration works for refugees and communities alike
- c) An EU that is prepared to respond possible future arrivals in significant numbers
- d) An EU that is engaged beyond its borders to protect refugees

UNHCR is suggesting the development of a simplified and cost effective system that is rooted in solidarity and responsibility sharing.

Firstly, such a system requires a truly common registration system for all arrivals. Secondly, fair and expeditious decision making procedures must be put in place which prioritize family reunion. Third, a responsibility sharing mechanism is needed. Fourth, the protection of children must be ensured. Fifth, increased EU support must be provided to first countries of asylum and to countries of origin. Sixth, a substantial expansion of safe pathways for refugees to move to Europe is required.

Finally, maybe most relevant for the topic of this conference: more focus and more resources are needed for integration, to make it work for refugees and communities alike.

**PIA PRYTZ
PHIRI,**
*Regional
Representative
of UNHCR
Northern
Europe*



Key Notes

What's at Stake

Europe at the crossroads

● Philippe Legrain describes the current debate about the immigration to Europe as fixated on the costs of the refugee reception. In addition, immigration is often– based on xenophobic assumptions and generalisations–connected with terrorism, which further distorts the discussion. Despite the current darkness there are points of light, said Legrain.

– The refugees crisis has brought out the best in people, as well as the worst. Think of the volunteers saving lives in the Mediterranean, and all the unreported good work that all of you do, on a local level.

Legrain highlighted the economic gains of immigration. Pointing out that refugees are not charity cases, but people with lots to contribute. As well as being a humanitarian and a legal obligation, welcoming refugees is an investment that can yield substantial economic dividends, he said.

In one of his most recent publications, “Refugees Work: A Humanitarian Investment that Yields Economic Dividends” (published by the Tent Foundation and the think tank Open in 2016), Legrain shows that for European countries, investing one euro in helping refugees, can yield two euros in economic benefits within only five years. Refugees contribute to the society in many ways: as workers, entrepreneurs, taxpayers, consumers and investors. When the number of inhabitant increases, this stimulates the economy, creating more jobs, boosting innovation and growth.

– If you think about it, the initial spending on welcoming refugees is also an investment, he said. The money the state spends on food and shelter, on translators and other needs of the refugees, acts as a fiscal stimulator, which boosts economic growth. It creates an immediate demand which stimulates the economy.

The fear of some Europeans, that the refugees are going to take local jobs, is convicted by the fact that when anyone take a job, they also help create jobs. Legrain pointed to studies that shows how refugees by taking low-skilled “dirty, dangerous and dull” jobs enable local people to do better paid and higher skilled jobs.

– It is just what the depressed economy of Europe needs right now, Philippe Legrain argued. He summarised his contribution to the conference by stressing the importance of a policy-framework that enables refugees to work, start businesses and integrate into society. The approach is crucial: European governments must perceived the issue of welcoming refugees not just a humanitarian responsibility, but also as an investment in their countries’ wealth.

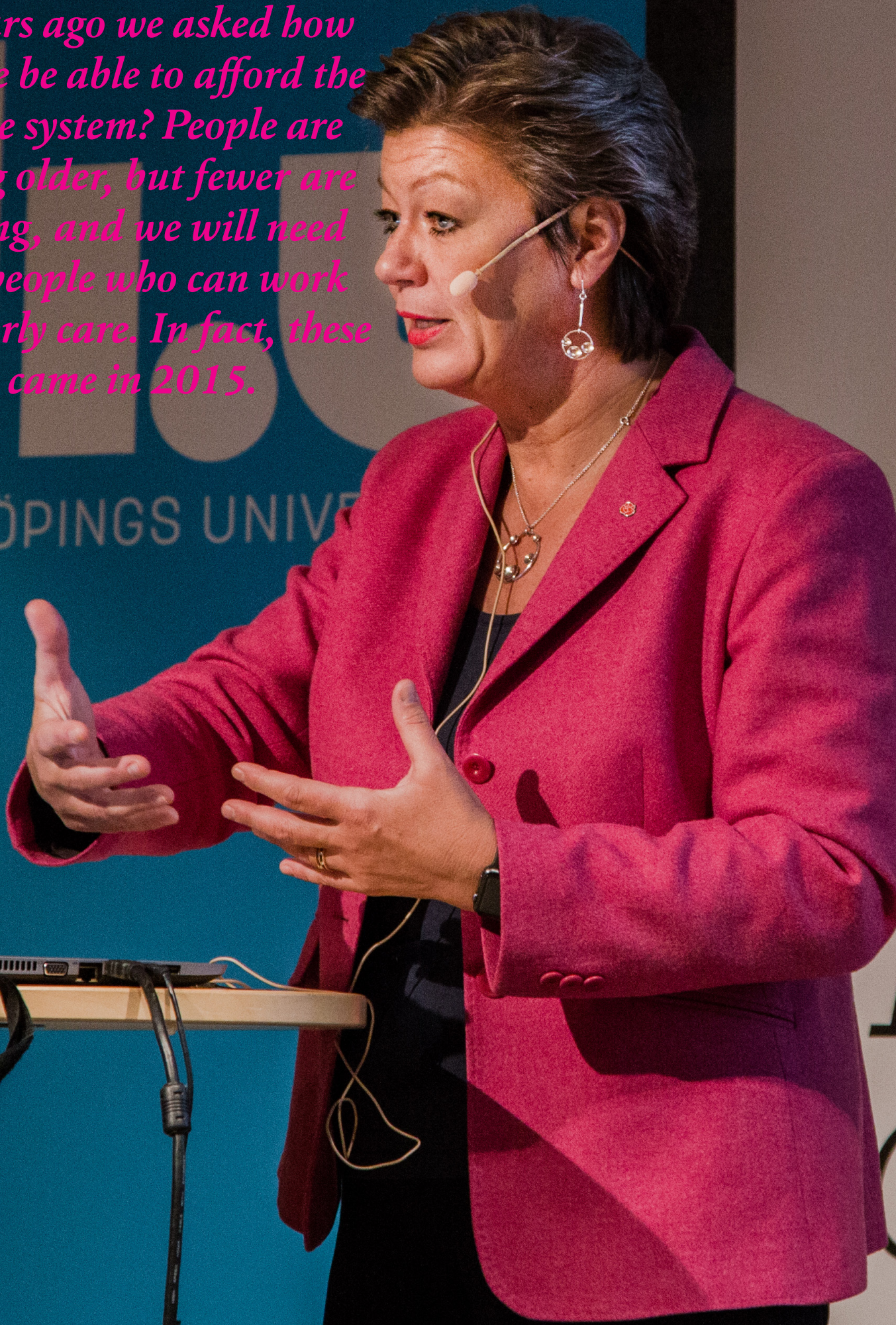
– Refugees are not a burden to be avoided, they are an opportunity to be welcomed, Legrain concluded.

**PHILIPPE
LEGRAIN,**
*author of e.g.
"Immigrants:
your country
needs them"
(2007) and
"Refugees
Work: A
Humanitarian
Investment
That Yields
Economic
Dividends"
(2016)*



”

10 years ago we asked how will we be able to afford the welfare system? People are getting older, but fewer are working, and we will need more people who can work in elderly care. In fact, these people came in 2015.



Key Notes

Integrating Refugees

The Swedish Experience

● During the fall of 2015, Sweden experienced the largest per-capita inflow of asylum seekers ever recorded in an OECD country. In the last months of 2015, Sweden alone received more than half of the total number of unaccompanied minors coming to the EU/EES.

– As a mother, I cannot even begin to imagine how I would feel if had to tell my son: I cannot protect you. If I had to send him along dangerous routes, across dangerous waters to seek protection in a far-away, unknown country. The distress felt by a mother in such a situation is unimaginable, Ylva Johansson said and continued to point out the importance of compensating for the parent's absence with care and warmth in the receiving country.

– I am proud that the Swedish people showed such an enormous empathy during the most dramatic months of 2015. The multitude of responses seeking to support and help refugees was heart-warming. In addition, impressive new initiatives such as “Refugees welcome” took on great responsibility, as well as Swedish civil society organisations, private companies, public agencies and individuals.

Many challenges still lay ahead, Ylva Johansson said.

– The Swedish Government now must ensure good conditions for jobs, education and housing both in short-term and long-term for the many refugees who are granted asylum.

She stressed the importance of integrating the newcomers into the Swedish society on the premises of their professionalism and their skills at work.

– When I became Minister for Employment, I took the initiative to meet with the social partners to ask them if they could help to improve the integration of newcomers. The response was overwhelmingly positive. In March 2015, the Government launched a first round of tripartite talks on “fast tracks”, helping employers finding skilled workers. Through the fast tracks newcomers with skills get a smoother way to a job in their profession.

Ylva Johansson also advocated policies to better use the potential of newcomers.

– The Government is strengthening the efforts to facilitate validation of skills and assessment of foreign education.

Ylva Johansson concluded with a call for a collaborative approach to the integration of the people coming to Europe.

–If we work together, we can manage this.

YLVA
JOHANSSON,
Swedish
Minister for
Employment
and Integration



Sweden as a Role Model in Refugee Integration?

Bosnians in the 1990's, Syrians Today

● Between 1992 and 1995, Sweden received some 60,000 refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina. Being young and relatively well-educated, Bosnians have been some of the most successfully integrated refugees in Sweden. They arrived to a country considered a role model when it comes to integration.

– But Sweden has changed after the financial crisis in 2008. Today, argues Likic-Brboric, the Swedish integration system has broken down. In order for current refugees to be as successful as the Bosnians, we should go back to the system that we know works, that means the years 1996-97, when the government implemented many integration measures that worked well for Bosnians, said Likic-Brboric.

The interaction of immigrants with the host society and its institutions is fundamentally asymmetric, and the host societies policy framework play a more important role for the integration outcome than the immigrants themselves, Likic-Brboric argued.

Likic-Brboric is the co-author of *Citizens at heart*, a comparative study on what affects processes of subjective integration among Bosnian diaspora in Sweden, UK, and Germany. Some of the findings are that acceptance and an early decision to integrate and learn the language is key to successful integration.

– Living in smaller municipalities helps, where it is easier getting teachers, social workers etc. to support individuals. Professional recognition, “occupational citizenship”, through access to the university system, supplementary courses, etc. were very valuable, particularly for highly skilled/educated economists, lawyers etc. Also, retaking university education via general university programs worked well. Those that have experienced a professional ‘glass ceiling’ often feel less socially integrated into society.

Using ethnic networks and contacts to get the right information about possibilities was crucial for some. In summary, recognition of immigrants’ agency is key, as well as individual goals of integration and professional recognition, according to Likic-Brboric.

Can you compare the Syrian refugees of today to the Bosnians? In some ways, yes, said Likic-Brboric. 30% of the Syrians have post-secondary education, similar to what the Bosnians had in the 1990s. But few Syrians have secondary education, and only 39% have primary education. Both groups were faced with harsh social climate, but also met by an incredible engagement from the civil society and great solidarity.

**BRANKA
LIKIC-
BRBORIC,**
*PhD, Associate Professor,
Institute for
Research on
Migration,
Ethnicity
and Society,
Linköping
University*



Refugee Integration Policies from Below

a Comparative Perspective on European cities

● Cities are on the frontline in refugee reception, yet in a difficult context because of austerity policies and budget cuts, says Caponio. A negative view on refugees risks increasing public opinion hostility. A positive view, on the other hand, can foster a welcoming agenda from below.

She described policymaking as a complex and fragmented process, where actors following different logics of actions are involved, which create mainly two different discourses in relation to welcoming refugees: one with a positive solidarity-approach and one with a negative, hostile approach.

Caponio described the refugee local policy arena as a clusters of politicians, the public officials, and the civil society organisations, including both pro and anti-immigration grassroots mobilizations.

How these clusters of actors function in the policy-making process highly depends on the discourse on immigration.

– Where anti-immigrant political parties are in majority, or where the governing parties are experiencing a threat by the anti-immigrant parties, the discourse tends to be negative. Often, there is a lack of civil society organizations to back the welcoming of refugees, and a lack of organised immigrant communities (but not necessarily of migrants).

In cities where political majorities are pro-immigrant or do not feel threatened by anti-immigration parties, the discourse tends to be characterized by solidarity, she said. In these cities, public officials have specialized in integrating immigrants, and civil society is vibrant with high participation from the grass-root pro-immigrant associations.

The context of the city must be understood in relation to multiple levels: to national policy, the EU policies, the transnational city networks and grassroots city movements.

National policies matter, i.e. through economic compensation to the municipality or NGOs. EU policies and transnational city networks matter by providing venues for learning, but also legitimising local policy approaches to migration, and can moderate political opposition and strengthen local networks. Grass-roots cities' movements such as Sanctuary cities, can help building a culture of welcoming refugees and supporting human rights.

– Given a favourable local refugee policy arena, welcoming refugees can be supported and cultivated by favourable national and supranational conditions, Caponio concluded.

**TIZIANA
CAPONIO,**
*Associate
Professor,
University
of Turin,
Department
of Cultures,
Politics and
Society*



Workshops – Sharing Experiences

Accommodation and Housing

● Often, accommodation of refugees has to be arranged fast and at the same time cost-effectively. In this workshop, the participants were able to share experiences and learn about innovative solutions to provide and build accommodation for refugees. Many municipalities who experienced large numbers of arrivals in 2015 have now entered a new phase with a smaller number of new arrivals, but a large number of refugees to be accommodated over a longer period of time. Therefore, we also discussed how to build the bridge between the initial, often temporary accommodation of asylum seekers to the permanent housing of new inhabitants of our cities.

Introductions by

● Anders Fridborg, Municipality of Uppsala, Sweden
Sara van Lunteren, City of Lund, Sweden

Moderator

● Andreas Jankes, Municipality of Kirkkonummen/Kyrkslätt, Finland

Notetaker

● Rudeina Mkdad

Workshops – Sharing Experiences

Accommodation and Housing

What are the key elements for success in the area of your workshop?

- Resources to facilitate cooperation between different actors, including between civil society and housing companies. A strong political leadership: housing needs to be made a priority for construction to increase. Focus on providing long-term housing for newly arrived refugees instead of building temporary housing. Creativity when searching for urgent solutions. Too rigid rules should be relaxed for a time period to allow for innovative solutions. Do not neglect communication: expect the community to have questions about why and how the municipality provides refugees with accommodation.

What are inspiring examples you would like to share?

- Uppsala (SE) rebuilding care facilities and hospitals into dormitories for refugees (and later for students), “Hjärterum” enabling locals to host refugees in their homes by renting out spare rooms to the municipality. Public libraries (FI) helping refugees to apply for flats.

The Call for Lund “Lundauppropet” (SE) included converting schools, office spaces, etc. into temporary housing, and increasing permanent housing through a swap model with housing companies: “apartments for refugees now/land to build on tomorrow”. Model of block lease by the municipality, sublease to newly arrived.

What is your message? How can local communities in Europe be more welcoming to refugees in relation to the topic of the workshop? What is your message to 1) local politicians? 2) researchers: what new knowledge is needed?

- **Message to local politicians:**

Politicians should take more responsibility and show leadership. It is important that local politicians make sure that the state invests sufficient funds for housing, so that new flats can be built and enough flats can be rented to give both asylum seekers and newly arrived refugees decent housing conditions. Controlling the local market prices for housing is essential as well. Demanding for softening of the national laws and regulations which hinder refugees from getting appropriate housing should become a priority. Fund integration projects: it is easier to ask NGO:s for help if you are willing to help from the municipality, too.

Message to researchers:

Academics should investigate what legal and practical obstacles that refugees face when looking for housing. More academic writings are needed about the benefits of including refugees in the hosting country, and how cities and communities can be built in a way that facilitates the welcoming of refugees.

Workshops – Sharing Experiences

Education and Schooling

● The right to go to school is anchored in the Convention of the rights of the child, and is essential to the well-being of asylum seeking children. In practice, it can be challenging to provide classrooms and teachers, particularly if it has to be done in a short period of time. In this workshop, we explored different ways of organising schools and teaching for children. We also discussed language training for adults and adult education for people who have lost school-years while fleeing.

Introductions by

● Fredrik Franzén, Municipality of Norrköping and Fia Björde, Second Chance School/Hagagymnasiet, Norrköping, Sweden
Dóra Kanizsai-Nagy, Reformed Church of Hungary Refugee Ministry

Moderator

● Livia Johannesson, Stockholm University, Sweden

Notetaker

● Asbjørn Nielsen

Workshops – Sharing Experiences

Education and Schooling

What are the key elements for success in the area of your workshop?

- Individualized education, alternation between practical and theoretical learning, involvement of parents, sensitivity to gender issues, early intervention to prevent drop-out, the same expectations on native and immigrant children, mapping of successful and failed models to find the best practices. All actors must coordinate their work, and have a holistic approach.

What are inspiring examples you would like to share?

- The city of Filipstad has secured employment for many refugees through an individualised approach to education.

Brazil, local initiatives provide language classes in response to the lack of a national language programme.

The reformed Hungarian church run a community center in Budapest providing language education, as well as training of teachers and social workers who work with refugee children.

The Second Chance School of Norrköping provides vocational language training, focusing on oral skills and establishing networks. 75% of students go straight from graduation to work.

Estonia: content and language integrated learning, i.e. learning math in Estonian, and through this learning both languages.

What is your message? How can local communities in Europe be more welcoming to refugees in relation to the topic of the workshop? What is your message to 1) local politicians? 2) researchers: what new knowledge is needed?

● Message to politicians:

Politicians should base their decisions on solid facts, in order for them to make decisions based on actual conditions. This can be done by opening channels for better communication and coordination between politicians and teachers and social workers, as well as giving refugees themselves a chance to voice their needs. Politicians should avoid generalisations that risk obscuring the actual needs of people. They should approach integration as an opportunity.

Message to researchers:

Determine the needs for practical and theoretical ways of learning and how to combine them for refugees to facilitate a lifelong learning process. It is crucial to research and document what methods of integration and learning that work and provide results, as well as identifying why they have been successful. There is also a need to identify better ways of education that facilitates individual needs.

Workshops – Sharing Experiences

Passing time and getting ready to work

● Refugees are generally eager to gain a foothold on the labour market. In this workshop we exchanged experiences from different ways of handling the relationship between refugees and the labour market. While this is often the responsibility of the central state, the discussion revolved around the role of the hosting municipalities and cities. The workshop also provided opportunities to raise issues related to the validation of the education and skills of refugees, as well as vocational training and complementary education.

Introductions by

● Aakash Budathoki, Red Cross/Forshaga Municipality, Sweden
Amelie Silfverstolpe, Axfoundation, Sweden
Janus Hans Hedemann, Municipality of Aarhus, Denmark
Alena Fendrychová, Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren, Czech Republic

Moderator

● Jennie K Larsson, The Swedish Public Employment Service, Sweden

Notetaker

● Mavis Hooi

Workshops – Sharing Experiences

Passing time and getting ready to work

What are the **key elements** for success in the area of your workshop?

- Since job readiness and language fluency are tied, it is important to organize the civil society and volunteers in a smart and efficient way, with low thresholds for volunteering and a given aim. Shortening the processing time is a key to success, and incorporate language training with work-experience.

What are **inspiring examples** you would like to share?

- Since most people generally get a job through contacts and not ads, a wide network is crucial for getting a job. Initiatives such as Öppna-Dörren, Yrkesdörren and Friends Sweden facilitate meetings and match individuals and professionals together which generates benefits for both of them.

The Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren, has created places for the locals to meet with the refugees. Despite the lack of funding from the state, the initiative have been important for people to meet on an individual level and to overcome prejudice. We need to find more structural ways to work like this on a larger scale.

What is your **message**? How can local communities in Europe be more welcoming to refugees in relation to the topic of the workshop? What is your message to 1) local politicians? 2) researchers: what new knowledge is needed?

● Message to politicians:

Politicians should remember that integration is a two-way process. Civil society organisations should not be run like a business that needs to compete for funding. Work towards formalizing qualifications of refugees to match local labour demand. Focus on preparing them for entry level jobs to get a foot in the door.

As role models in society, you have the moral responsibility to advocate for democracy and human rights; there is a need to be less populist and take a stand against the fear that is growing, and not to focus on people only as resources.

Message to researchers:

Research is needed in several areas: what is the impact of non-profit organizations? How does refugees' path to integration and working life look like? What are the obstacles they face and how can these be removed?

It is important to get a perspective on the impact of the new asylum laws, on civil society programs, and the experiences of people in these projects. This information is crucial to make communities more welcoming in the future.

Workshops – Sharing Experiences

Health

● Providing healthcare for refugees range from giving first-aid at points of arrival, in ports, at train stations and airports, to ensure access to health care at refugee accommodation centers, to provide health care for refugee pupils in school and to deal with long-term health issues such as post-traumatic stress. The workshop focused on the issue of how municipalities can interact and co-operate with other actors to provide cost-effective and qualitative health care and health services. We also discussed how the refugees themselves could be involved in issues related to for instance health prevention and trauma treatment.

Introductions by

● Karina Godoy, The Public Health Agency of Sweden
Merete Mihle Hansen, Municipality of Trondheim, Norway

Moderator

● Kerstin Isaxon, Swedish Association for Sexuality Education, Sweden

Notetakers

● Asher Goldstein
Hargita Horvat

Workshops – Sharing Experiences

Health

What are the key elements for success in the area of your workshop?

- Refugee-centred care: collaborative meetings from multi-disciplinary health care professionals, a holistic family approach and a willingness to learn from refugee communities. Networking between organizations to communicate consistent health information; as well as making sure to map their culturally-specific, gender-sensitive health needs.

What are inspiring examples you would like to share?

- Hageby primary health care, in collaboration with the job centre, is a resource for other health practitioners using John Berry's framework for health and migration. They use gender-specific interpreters who offer nine-week therapies, with weekly 3-hour sessions covering mental, sexual and physical health issues. Effective at reducing treatment consumption by two-thirds, significantly increasing movement quality and fostering integration into Swedish society.

Refugee-specific health program in Trondheim, with a broad mandate to treat all, regardless of status that always uses a professional interpreter. With a broad team of midwives, psychiatric nurses, child care specialists, OTs, GPs, etc.

What is your message? How can local communities in Europe be more welcoming to refugees in relation to the topic of the workshop? What is your message to 1) local politicians? 2) researchers: what new knowledge is needed?

- **Message to local politicians:**

Long-term financial investments in health care enable consistent care and build resilient communities. By advocating holistic, rights-based, refugee-specific care, a supportive and engaged political and administrative leadership can build successful integration programmes. This approach needs to emphasize the factors and institutional collaborations promoting health, rather than viewing migrants as burdens. Collaborating with refugee and civil society groups to support and train staff that engage with refugees within the broad spectrum of general wellbeing. Government guidelines of health-services, that are sustainable over time, to ensure institutional memory of these sites of health care, stability for staff and trust from refugee communities.

- **Message to researchers:**

Forge links with community leaders both within refugee groups and NGOs as critical voices to review policy interventions and barriers to access. Critical research into politicized statements of health as a 'pull' factor and the real costs of health exclusions to society. Health surveys and national statistical agencies need to study the heterogeneity of migrant communities and caregivers; and be open to critical evaluation from those communities, by measuring policy outcomes.

Workshops – Sharing Experiences

Co-operation with civil society

● This workshop looked into co-operation with civil society organisations. Civil society organisations are often at the core of refugee reception: working wonders building bridges into society by offering civic orientation, social get-togethers and meaningful free-time activities. Civil society organisations are also often essential to providing accommodation as well as language education. The workshop dealt with questions like: What is the ideal relationship between city and municipal authorities on the one hand, and civil society organisations on the other hand? Which challenges and opportunities does the self-organisation of refugees pose to municipal authorities and for the established organisations of civil society? The workshop shared experiences and best-practice.

Introductions by

● Dámaris Barajas Sanz, Red Acoge, Madrid, Spain
Consuelo Bianchelli, Trama di Terre NGO, Municipality of Imola, Italy
Belinda Barbato and Merja Svensk, City of Helsinki, Finland

Moderator

● Anders Neergaard, Remeso, Linköping University, Sweden

Notetakers

● Hargita Horvat
Asbjørn Nielsen

Workshops – Sharing Experiences

Co-operation with civil society

What are the **key elements** for success in the area of your workshop?

- Dialogue between government and civil society and respecting each other roles. Meeting points for interactions between newcomers and locals. Recognising both the victimization of refugees and their agency, taking refugees voices seriously. Having a clear understanding of what the aim is with inclusion.

What are **inspiring examples** you would like to share?

- Trama Di Terre (IT) addressing violence against refugee women and their vulnerability, also during transit, including trafficking, giving voice to refugees' experiences. Transforming victims into active agents, through eg. demonstrations against violence against women, art projects such as photo exhibitions, and social events like cooking with local women.

Civil society taking actions that government cannot, like Red Solidaria de Acogida (Welcoming Solidarity Network), a citizens' initiative (SE) born in September 2015 to help refugees transit through Spain and to denounce the lack of support from state institutions.

Meeting points together with NGOs and volunteers in Helsinki (FI) based on listening to the refugees' voices.

What is your **message**? How can local communities in Europe be more welcoming to refugees in relation to the topic of the workshop? What is your message to 1) local politicians? 2) researchers: what new knowledge is needed?

● Message to local politicians:

Defend the right to asylum and provide a vision of refugees as "citizens". Take responsibility for meeting the basic needs of refugees, and let civil society be complementary actors in welcoming refugees. Recognize the competence in civil society. Promote volunteer work to counteract hostility and increase hospitality, for the benefit of inclusiveness and community between locals and newcomers. Foster possibilities of stepping outside strict frameworks and take the individual refugee's needs into consideration. Recognize the competence in civil society to act and help refugees.

Message to researcher:

Work with materials and data that is available within municipalities and civil society organisations. Have respect for the knowledge of activists as well as municipal employees. Listen to the voices of refugees, not only as experiences to analyze but as sources of knowledge. Map dynamics between government entities and NGOs to produce the optimal model of cooperation taking into account individual differences.

Workshops – Sharing Experiences

Interaction with the Local Community

● The arrival of refugees and asylum seekers often causes polarised reactions in society: Throughout the dramatic autumn of 2015, refugees arriving in Europe were met not only with an outpouring of popular sympathy and thousands of volunteers, but also with suspicion and sometimes hostility. The workshop raised the issue of how the societies can be better prepared to receive people who seek protection and in what way information and communication can be designed and delivered. The discussion also revolved around the questions of how negative sentiments can be overcome, and positive attitudes be harnessed into action for refugees, as well as on how municipalities and voluntary organisations can take collaborate with networks established by refugees themselves.

Introductions by

● Ulla Lehtonen, and Meeri Kuikka, City of Helsinki, Finland
Pascal Tshibanda, University of Bedfordshire, UK
Pria Bhabra, Leeds City Council, UK
Victoria Herun, Lublin City Hall, Poland

Moderator

● Kristina Hellqvist, Church of Sweden

Notetaker

● Mavis Hooi



Workshops – Sharing Experiences

Interaction with the Local Community

What are the **key elements** for success in the area of your workshop?

- Coffee! It brings people together. Relations face-to-face. Activities like sports, cultural events and language exchanges. Possibilities for the local community to get involved, not least faith communities. Expect the best also from those that are negative. Regard refugees as subjects, not objects.

What are **inspiring examples** you would like to share?

- Growing awareness of the importance of representing and “humanizing” refugees in public discourse, eg. Migrant Voices newspaper (UK), Lublin4all and the Faces of Lublin campaign (PL). Leeds City Council’s Migrant Access Project (UK) helping earlier migrants help newcomers. The Meeting Point café initiative (FI) and programmes like Friend Family at Linnaeus university, Växjö (SE). ÖppnaDörren and related projects Kompis Sverige, Yrkesdörren, etc. (all SE) gather people to exchange and to network. ”Each one teach one” tandem language exchange program (FI). Films about unaccompanied minors in Falköping (SE).

What is your **message**? How can local communities in Europe be more welcoming to refugees in relation to the topic of the workshop?

What is your message to 1) local politicians? 2) researchers: what new knowledge is needed?

- **Message to local politicians:**

Take strong leadership in changing local communities to do their local part in the integration process. Show volunteers appreciation, give refugees a sense of ownership. Be courageous and avoid being populist. Realise the importance of taking the time to make changes. Come up with a long-term strategy, and do not just think of the next election. Accept that migrants and refugees are here. Use local history to give perspectives and show how migration has built society. Be clear that integration is a mutual process. Use humor and dialogue rather than confronting people with facts. Remember that good things take time.

Message to researchers:

Investigate the idea of focusing on interaction rather than integration. Investigate concrete, hands-on methods for inclusion – how do we create organisations and communities that are inclusive? Compare how existing methods differ in different parts of Europe. Innovation is not just for businesses, people need to think out of the box with regards to integration and social cohesion, as well.

Workshops – Sharing Experiences

Unaccompanied Minors

● The reception of unaccompanied minors pose particular challenges. Immigration of children and youngsters can indeed be turned into an asset for ageing European countries, but their first few years will be costly nevertheless. Accommodating unaccompanied minors in families or in institutions staffed 24/7, providing them with classrooms, teachers, health-care, free-time activities. This workshop was an opportunity to share cost-effective, smart solutions to the reception of unaccompanied minors. While the number of arriving unaccompanied minors has diminished in 2016, the challenge on how to integrate unaccompanied children and teenagers into the receiving society is gaining importance.

Introductions by

● Mahboba Madadi, Swedish Association of Unaccompanied Minors
Anna Gärdegård, Nordic Welfare Centre of the Nordic Council of Ministers
Aino-Marja Kairamo and Henna Leppämäki, City of Espoo, Finland

Moderator

● Ulrika Wernesjö, Linköping University, Sweden

Notetakers

● Asher Goldstein
Rudeina Mkdad

Workshops – Sharing Experiences

Unaccompanied Minors

What are the **key elements** for success in the area of your workshop?

- A continuum of support within a plan for transitioning into independence. Facilitation for the UMs to organize themselves, close cooperation and coordination with local politics, NGOs, refugee groups. Provision of normalcy and initiatives that go beyond basic care needs. Use of peer-supports and mentors. Documenting the challenges they face, and mapping existing gaps in service provision.

What are **inspiring examples** you would like to share?

- The Thor Heyerdahl gymnasium's national guidelines for tracking UMs (NO). Benchmarking of municipalities using peer-support and mentorship programs for UMs (SE). Seamless aftercare in Espoo (SF), and specialty care workers in "barnhus" for trauma victims (IS, NO). Collaboration with civil society to expand housing in Espoo, and mentoring programs by former refugees. Association for LGBTQI rights offering legal support, social activities, etc. for LGBTQI migrants (SE). Berättarministeriet that empowers teachers to teach refugee children to tell their own stories (SE). Professionalization of legal guardians (NL).

What is your **message**? How can local communities in Europe be more welcoming to refugees in relation to the topic of the workshop? What is your message to 1) local politicians? 2) researchers: what new knowledge is needed?

● **Message to local politicians:**

National guidelines against exploitation and trafficking, particularly of UM who go missing (4% of UM in SE in 2016). Reversal of introduction of temporary permits for UMs, a significant barrier to integration and effective care. Integrating social workers, health care professionals into the asylum process. Reforming the EU mechanisms of family reunification for UMs. Transferring funding from age-testing to after-care programs. Encouraging local contact persons, volunteers as social supports and mentors for UMs. Recognize UMs as a resource rather than a burden.

Message to researchers:

Inclusion of categories of national origin and gender in national statistics. Examination of the role of legal guardians for UMs and how best to improve their work (eg. research by D. Hedlund, SE). Documenting voices of UMs with follow-up studies in various integration regimes (eg. E. Wadensjö and A. Celikaksoy, SE), bringing UM voices into conversation for reform. Asking former UMs to review best practices.

Voices from the Conference

JASMINÉ MEHMO AND CIHAN ARIKAN

“Newcomers”, Swedish network for LGBTQ Refugees and LGBTQ Migrants

What are inspiring examples you would like to share?

● We wish to raise the perspective of the LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer) refugees whose needs tend to disappear while talking about Welcoming Refugees. The reception system today, in Sweden and elsewhere does not take this groups needs into account.

The LGBTQ refugees are a minority within a minority which is affected by double discrimination, inaccessibility to vital information specific to the asylum process, living conditions, and access to the LGBTQ and other communities which can be in support to their establishment in the new societies.

We stress the importance of cooperation between state authorities and the civil society organisations such as RFSL and other local and international actors working with asylum and LGBTQ issues, it is vital to the wellbeing, safety and further establishment in the new societies for the asylum seekers and refugees.



PRIA BHABRA

Commissioning Officer, Migrant Access Project in Leeds

What are inspiring examples you would like to share?

● The Migrant Access Project in Leeds helps to reduce pressures on services where migration and new arrivals to Leeds has impacted the most. In a difficult climate of budget cuts and demands on services Leeds recognised the need to support new arrivals in a way that would benefit all the citizens of Leeds.

Leeds decided to use the experiences and networks of people in local communities to help with the integration of newcomers. Local community leaders were asked to identify the most important factors for long term integration and for services to identify their pressures. With the communities identifying and defining the issues themselves, they also found the solutions of the defined issues. Leeds found that with the communities helping the migrants to help themselves was a key to success.

Today the city of Leeds has trained 90 community volunteers known as Migrant Community Networkers to work with improving access to services and to guide newcomers into a long term integration in society. The Migrant Access Project is abbreviated as MAP, and it is indeed a map of both the needs and the skills in local communities.



Voices from the Conference

DRITON MALIQI
Legis, Macedonia

What are inspiring examples you would like to share?

● Legis is a humanitarian organization that provides humanitarian aid and assistance to refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and people in need. Since 2014, we've handed out 200,000 food packages, as well as first aid, rain coats and wheelchairs, and when we had no wheelchairs we provided wheelbarrows.

We've learned that solidarity can be contagious, having hundreds of volunteers in 2015. Building the capacities of the volunteers is very important, to have reliable staff who can make fast and safe decisions.

We've learned that refugees' own capacities must be strengthened, giving them the power to make their own decisions. Giving refugees the opportunity to work will help them more than giving them the best food three times a day in a camp.

One of the most important lessons that the world has to learn, is that no matter how many fences you build, refugees will not stop coming. As long as there are wars, refugees will seek protection and safety. And this is guaranteed to them by international law. Instead of building fences we should build bridges of humanity.



ESTER BARINAGA
Copenhagen Business School

What are inspiring examples you would like to share?

● Studying stigmatised communities in Sweden, our focus was on different methods and strategies for making cities more inclusive.

We've been looking to three methods with different qualities. The first one was financial methods of social inclusion, like for example microloans. The other one was methods using art, and the third one was citizen-driven community economy methods.

The three methods are all very different, but they share aspects that make them successful. Three main findings: the first finding is that methods which focus on the community instead of the individual tend to be more successful. Microloan schemes work if they are implemented through and in communities, but fail if they only target individuals. The same goes with art, you have to address the whole community. Secondly, successful projects build on collaboration between the public, private and civil society sectors. Lastly, any strategy for inclusion has to have a long term perspective. There is no quick fix, any actor who wants to build more inclusive cities needs a long-term commitment.



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