Working group 3:

Assessing the progress in social inclusion at national, regional and local level from fundamental rights perspective: are we on the right track?

Background

Social inclusion is a multi-faceted concept that has evolved over time. It is related to (but goes well beyond) social security, equity or reducing income inequality. Thus it is prone to various interpretations, depending on the focus in a particular policy context.

In 2004, the European Commission defined social inclusion as 'a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. It ensures that they have greater participation in decision-making which affects their lives and greater access to their fundamental rights'.

Social inclusion also aims at securing opportunities for both EU and non-EU citizens to participate in social and economic life. Looking at opportunities to participate for those outside mainstream society is crucial for inclusive societies. As FRA data shows, groups like the Roma, LGBTI people, people from a migrant background or people with disabilities often face structural barriers to exercising their fundamental rights. They also experience discrimination. Thus actively promoting and achieving social inclusion requires an understanding of the root causes of social exclusion, such as discrimination, failure in accountability of the state and its institutions, and structural inefficiencies, which should then be addressed. This can be, for example, through targeted action such as the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. The fundamental rights-based approach is an important policy tool in that regard. Normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights, it is also a natural link between EU 'social inclusion' and other agendas (like, for example, the UN Sustainable Development Goals).

Objectives

The workshop sought to review the evolution of the understanding of social inclusion in the EU context. It addressed the implications of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and of the Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States from 2013. Using examples of specific groups at risk of social exclusion (such as Roma, migrant populations, LGBTI people and people with

disabilities), the workshop explored how 'social inclusion' and 'multidimensional poverty' indicators overlap and complement each other. Participants discussed how such indicators can be fine-tuned to better capture social inclusion from the fundamental rights perspective. Data challenges were also discussed. For example, how can relevant and robust data for populating these indicators be generated and what is the role the national, regional and local stakeholders in that regard. The workshop also explored the links between social inclusion monitoring, the related UN Sustainable Development Goals and the European pillar of social rights.

Speakers

- Cornelia Ernst, Member of the European Parliament
- Lívia Járóka, Roma activist and former Member of the European Parliament
- Juul Van Hoof, Senior Advisor, Rainbow cities network Network
- Salla Saastamoinen, Director of Equality, Directorate General Justice and Consumers, European Commission
- John Hammock, Director, Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative
- Isabella Meier, research officer, ETC Graz, Graz University
- Dima Yared, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Main messages

1. Social inclusion is multi-dimensional and cross-sectional. The risks of exclusion do not overlap with group identity. Instead of addressing the risks through "groups at risk", the vulnerability factors (or most commonly occurring risks) should be defined first. Then people at risk of exclusion should be identified.
2. All the right tools for social inclusion already exist: there are policy frameworks, monitoring frameworks and resources and funding. What is needed now is to figure out the challenges in implementing and using these tools.
3. The local level appears to be a bottleneck. Even when people are asked "what do you need?" the answers are often biased towards funding and expected reporting. Action anthropology helps in that regard and enables us to reflect what really happens on the ground.

Promising practices

- Monitoring framework for Roma integration: Measure trends over time of the activities and impact of social inclusion policies (could be adapted to other population groups), DG Justice and Consumers, European Commission.
- FRA LGBT Survey and FRA Violence against Women Survey (examples of collecting information on hard to reach people who risk having their rights violated), FRA.
- Ethnographic/anthropological everyday data collection among vulnerable communities.
- Mapping mechanisms to measure fundamental rights, EU-funded FRAME project.

- Structure, Process, Outcome framework to monitor fundamental rights: such indicators could be populated with data from different sources, also allowing gaps in data to be identified, UN OHCHR.
- Working with regional/local authorities in several cities to develop inclusive policies (e.g., by exchanging good practices), Rainbow Cities Network.
- Global Multidimensional Poverty Index reflecting more dimensions of poverty than just income, Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative.

Next steps

- Civil society organisations with regional outreach should create new communication channels for the voices of socially-excluded groups and provide a platform for alliance building for these groups. This should help these groups link to mainstream society.
- Civil society organisations should consult the people for whom the policies are being created. The policies/strategies could be based on data that comes directly from the excluded groups and involve them to a great extent so that they contribute to building the system where they are supposed to be included.
- Local actors supported by organisations (e.g. think-tanks) with monitoring expertise should promote the effective implementation of existing tools (e.g., policies, monitoring), particularly at the local level (also to enhance people participation).
- Associations of cities and municipalities with support from civil society and think-tanks should monitor social inclusion locally and feed into the design of national and EU policies.
- The European Commission with support from FRA and stakeholders engaged in social inclusion monitoring (National Statistical Offices, Eurostat, World Bank) should create a systematic methodological approach to monitor Fundamental Rights and social inclusion in particular.
- The European Commission with support from FRA and stakeholders engaged in social inclusion monitoring (National Statistical Offices, Eurostat, World Bank) should create indices that are accepted by national governments (simple, transferable, replicable, that create ownership, robust academically, with data availability), so that there is an impact on policy.
- National statistical offices, Eurostat, and FRA should fill in the gaps of data on groups at risk (e.g., undocumented migrants).