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Intergroup Relations and Intercultural Policies in Sundsvall, Sweden



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Foreword

European cities, in particular major cities with strong economies, attract immigrants from all over the world. As a result, urban populations have become increasingly heterogeneous in ethnic, cultural and religious terms. The multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious structures of urban society are, on the one hand, an opportunity for cities. On the other hand, heterogeneity challenges a city's ability to maintain peaceful and productive relations among the different segments of the population.

For this reason, cities have a genuine interest in successful local integration practices. Therefore, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (CoE), the City of Stuttgart and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions ('Eurofound') formed the European network of 'Cities for Local Integration Policies' (CLIP) for migrants. This network, launched in 2006, brings together about 30 European cities in a joint learning process: through the structured sharing of experiences, the network aims to enable local authorities as well as national and European policymakers to learn from each other and, thus, pursue more effective integration policies for migrants at a regional, national and European level. The learning process is accompanied by researchers from six academic research centres.¹

The researchers at efms of the University of Bamberg in Germany are responsible for this report on Sundsvall.² Together with the contact persons from the municipality of Sundsvall, João Pinheiro, Rune Nilsson, Per Östberg and Saleh Dirawi, an enormous effort has been taken to collect the necessary data for this report. Many officials from the city administration and members of the municipal council were interviewed during the city visit in March 2009, as the list at the end of the report indicates. They provided reports, statistics and comments for this report. Additionally, an amazing amount of social partners, representatives of migrant organisations, religious communities, educational institutions, NGOs, the police and the media provided information and useful commentary. I would like to thank all those who have cooperated in providing valuable resources for this report. In addition, further thanks go to Rachel Heidmann for her assistance in editing this study.

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¹ The European forum for migration studies (efms) in Bamberg, the Institute for Urban and Regional Research (ISR) in Vienna, the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies (IMES) in Amsterdam, the Forum of International and European Research on Immigration (FIERI) in Turin, the Institute of International Studies in Wrocław and the Centre for Migration Policy Research (CMPR) in Swansea.

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1. Introduction

Urban populations have become increasingly heterogeneous in ethnic, cultural and religious terms. These multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious structures challenge the ability of municipalities to establish or maintain peaceful relations among the different segments of the population. In this third module of the CLIP project, we are interested in the relations between different groups in the city, local policies established to deal with these relations, and the way in which representatives of migrant associations, religious communities and NGOs assess the local activities.

The concept of ‘group’ used in this CLIP module is rather broad, since “the term ‘group’ basically has two different meanings in the social sciences: on the one hand it stands for stable structures of interaction among persons, on the other hand ‘group’ is understood as a social category that does not necessarily imply relations among the persons that are included in the category. National, ethnic or religious ‘groups’ in a city would be cases of such categories” (Heckmann 2008: 3-4). Hence, ‘intergroup relations’ deals with relations between ‘real groups’ such as the city administration, the city council, welfare organisations, migrant organisations, religious communities and the police, but also with social categories such as ‘the Turkish group’ or ‘the group of Christians’.

As decided by the CLIP network, the relations to and dialogue with Muslim communities are a special focus of this module. This is due to the fact that Islam is by far the largest ‘new’ religion in European countries of immigration, and that Muslims are perceived as particularly disconnected from ‘European life’. Compared to other migrant groups, there are higher rates of discrimination and there is more prejudice against and fears of Muslims.

Led by these assumptions, the CLIP research group developed a questionnaire that has been filled out by city officials. The study at hand is based on the information collected by this questionnaire, on existing literature as well as on interviews with local experts conducted by the researcher in spring 2009.

Since the national situation has an important impact on the activities on the local level, the study begins with background information on Sweden (cf. chapter 2) before delivering background information on the city (cf. chapter 3). The following chapters describe the city’s general intercultural policies (cf. chapter 4), as well as specific policies aimed at Muslims (cf. chapter 5). Chapter 6 illustrates communication strategies of the city administration and local media. Radicalisation, extremist political and religious positions, which could occur both among natives and migrants, are the focus of chapter 7. The study concludes with a summary and some lessons learned (cf. chapter 8).

2. Background information on Sweden

This chapter provides background information on Sweden: the first section describes the history of migration to Sweden and its resulting societal composition; the second section summarises Sweden’s integration policy.

2.1. History of migration and composition of migrant populations

Immigration to Sweden initially started with the arrival of the Vikings. During the Middle Ages monks from different European countries, gypsies as well as a considerable number of Germans, Danes and Fins settled in Sweden. Hence, Sweden has always attracted a certain amount of immigrants. From the mid-19th century until 1930, by contrast, emigration was the main phenomenon: several poor harvests, which hit the rural population, triggered the mass emigration of more than one million people – about one quarter of the population – to North America and some other countries and regions such as South America, Australia and Denmark (Borkert et al 2007, Migration Board 2009, Westin 2006).

Sweden's recent migration history can be divided in three phases. The first phase starts a few years after the Second World War, when the Swedish government stimulated labour migration: migrant labour was essential for meeting the demand for Swedish products throughout Europe. Initially, migrants came from Yugoslavia and Italy in the 1950s; in the sixties, when guest labour was also introduced in the rest of Western Europe, Sweden also signed official agreements for labour recruitment with Spain, Portugal and Turkey. At the same time, the Nordic countries set up a common labour market in 1954, which activated large scale migration from Denmark, Norway and mainly Finland to Sweden during the 1950s and 1960s.

The second phase in Sweden's recent immigration history lasted from the late 1960s, when the immigration management was modified, until the fall of the iron curtain. In 1967, legal provisions such as the introduction of work permits were applied to slow down migration to Sweden; this action limited immigration for most foreign workers with the exception of Nordic citizens, close relatives of immigrants wishing to be (re)united with their families in Sweden and refugees. Therefore, this second phase of immigration was characterised by Nordic immigration, family reunification and the influx of asylum seekers and refugees. Most of the latter came from Hungary and Czechoslovakia, Eritrea, Chile and other South American countries, China, Turkey, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and Somalia. Many of these people were granted asylum on humanitarian grounds.

The third and most recent phase of Swedish immigration started in the early 1990s. As a result of the growing number of refugees, the government introduced a stricter asylum policy in which one can no longer receive asylum on the basis of humanitarian grounds, only on political grounds. Since then, only persons who faced political persecution can seek asylum in Sweden. This coincided with the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the wars in the Balkan region that led to a significant influx of asylum seekers from the former Yugoslavia and the Middle East. By joining the European Union in 1995, Sweden accepted the free movement of all EU citizens within the EU and hence allowed other EU citizens to live and work in Sweden. In 2004, when ten European countries joined the EU, Sweden was one of only three 'old' member states that allowed citizens of the new Eastern European member states to work in Sweden without formally requesting a permit. However, the EU eastward enlargement has only a limited impact on the scale and composition of migration to Sweden. The notable exception to this is the Polish community that has increased steadily (Borkert et al 2007, Migration Board 2009, Westin/Dingu-Kyrklund 2003, Westin 2006).

As a result of these immigration processes, the number of people with a migration background is continuously increasing. The following will present the number and origin of the ‘foreign’ citizens as well as of the ‘foreign-born’ population.

Figure 1: Foreign citizens in Sweden (2008)

Source: compiled by efms based on data from Statistics Sweden 2009a

Among the 9,256,347 inhabitants of Sweden as of December 2008, 562,124 were foreign citizens. Thus, foreigners made up about six percent of the population. The largest groups come from Nordic countries and thus neighbouring states: Finish citizens represent 13.7% of the foreign population, Danish citizens 7.1% and Norwegian citizens 6.3%. Other main groups are Iraqis (8.6%), Poles (6.2%) and Germans (4.8%). 3.2% of the foreigners living in Sweden are Somalis, 2.9% are British nationals and 2.8% are Thai. 41.9% have another nationality; foreigners with an unknown citizenship make up 2.5% of the foreign population³ (Statistics Sweden 2009a; see figure 1).

The number of foreign-born person is larger than the number of foreigners in Sweden. The category ‘foreign-born persons’ includes all persons living in Sweden who were born abroad – thus including naturalised Swedish citizens. In 2008, 1,281,581 persons living Sweden were born in another country – 13.8% of the population. Figure 2 shows a summary of Sweden’s foreign-born population with regard to the ten main countries of birth. A significant number came from the Nordic countries: the biggest share of all foreign-born persons (13.7%) was born in Finland, another 3.6% and 3.5% in Denmark and Norway respectively. Another large foreign group was born in Iraq (8.5%), followed by Serbia and Montenegro (6.5%), Poland (5%), Iran (4.5%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (4.4%), Germany (3.7%) and Turkey (3.1%). The remaining 43.5% were born in one of about 190 other countries (Statistics Sweden 2009a).

³ This group mainly contains citizens of Serbia and Montenegro. After the state’s dissolution into two separate countries, people who did not reconfirm their nationality to the Swedish authorities are now classified as having an unknown citizenship.

Figure 2: Foreign-born population in Sweden (2008)

Source: compiled by efms based on data from Statistics Sweden 2009a

Immigration has also had an impact on the religious landscape in Sweden. Traditionally, Sweden is a Christian country. Until the separation of state and church in 2000, Sweden had a state church (the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sweden) of which all persons born in Sweden automatically became members of (Swedish: *Svenska kyrkan*).⁴ According to the Church of Sweden, about 74% of Sweden's population are members of the Church of Sweden.⁵ As result of immigration, however, the religious landscape has become more diverse. According to several estimations Islam has become the second largest religion in Sweden: the number of people stemming from Islamic countries has increased rapidly in recent years to between 250,000 and 400,000 people, representing from 2.7 to 4.3 percent of the Swedish population. Furthermore, there are about 150,000 to 165,000 Roman Catholics (1.6 to 1.8%), and the Orthodox Church has approximately 100,000 members⁶ (about one percent). Sweden has from 17,000 to 20,000 Jewish residents, and the Buddhist and Hindu communities number around 3,000 to 4,000 each. The exact size of each community cannot, however, be given, since religion is not recorded in Sweden. Consequently, there is limited valid information on the religious backgrounds of immigrants, at either the national or local level (Larsson 2007, Svenska Kyrkan 2009, U.S. Department of State 2009).

2.2. National policy context

Sweden is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary government. Sweden has a balance of power between the strong central government and the independent local authorities. In comparison with other European cities, this balance of power is far greater for local

⁴ In 2000, the Church of Sweden was declared a 'faith-community', which, along with other religious groups, such as Catholics, Jews, and Muslims, could register as such with the state and have their church dues collected by the state along with income tax.

⁵ Even after the separation of church and state in 2000, all citizens, whether Swedish Church members or not, remain liable to pay taxes to the church for events such as marriages or funerals. For those who desire Swedish Church membership, a higher rate of annual tax is imposed. An increasing number of people, however, leave the church.

⁶ The main national Orthodox churches are Greek, Serbian, Syrian, Romanian, Estonian, and Finnish.

authorities, especially regarding finances and decision-making. The Swedish welfare state has traditionally been characterised by a high level of social protection, a large public sector and a low rate of unemployment. In developing this welfare state and in Swedish politics in general, the social democratic party has played an important role. Except for six years of non-socialist rule from 1976-1982 and 1991-1994, the Social Democrats were in government, either alone or in coalition with other parties, from 1932 to 2006. Since the election in 2006, however, Sweden has been governed by a centre-right majority government (Borkert et al. 2007, European Parliament 1997, Government of Sweden 2009).

Before the 1970s, Sweden had no official policy for incorporating migrants in Swedish society. Instead, it was taken for granted that migrants, of which most came from other Scandinavian countries, would assimilate into society. In 1975, the Swedish Parliament endorsed an integration policy based on the needs of labour migrants from Southern Europe. The policy was condensed into three principal objectives: *equality, freedom of choice, and partnership*. *Equality* is the central objective. It stated that immigrants residing permanently in Sweden were to enjoy the same rights as Swedish citizens, including access to the welfare system. The *freedom of choice* clause implies that individuals can decide whether they wish to assimilate or maintain their native culture – it should, however, not conflict with essential Swedish values and norms. This is an individual, not a collective right. Sweden accepts and respects ethnic and cultural rights to identification, but does not provide special rights to ethnic or cultural minority communities resulting from immigration. This is different in regard to the five ‘national minorities’ which have specific rights.⁷ The *partnership* clause seeks to encourage participation and interaction with Swedish political institutions and organisations at all levels and designates voting rights in local and county elections. As essential vehicle for full participation in society, Sweden encourages naturalisation of immigrants.⁸ Considered as a whole, these separate principles represent the fundamental basis of the national policy context. Although the terminology has changed, these principles still apply today (Westin/Dingu-Kyrklund 2003, Westin 2006).

Since this integration strategy was not considered very successful, the Swedish government installed several expert committees and developed new strategies. In September 2008, the Swedish government presented a new comprehensive strategy for integration (‘Empowerment against exclusion – the Government’s strategy for integration’). The main focus of this new strategy is increasing the supply and demand of labour, improving school quality and equality in school and bettering conditions for entrepreneurs. The objectives of the integration policy should primarily be achieved as part of general policies applicable for the entire population, regardless of country of birth or ethnic heritage, within several policy

⁷ Sweden recognises five national minorities: Sami, Swedish Finns, Tornedalers, Romanies and Jews. Because of historic presence on Swedish territory, these groups are considered to be a part of Sweden’s cultural heritage. The Swedish government has established a specific ‘minority policy’ with three main objectives: to protect the national minorities, to strengthen the national minorities’ power, and to support and protect minority-languages (Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality 2009b).

⁸ Since citizenship is based on ethnic descent (*jus sanguinis*) in Sweden, children born in Sweden to non-Swedish parents are not automatically entitled to Swedish citizenship. However, the requirements for naturalisation are not restrictive. Normally, it is required that one have permanent residence for five years; refugees need to live in Sweden for four years; citizens of Nordic countries only need two years of residency.

areas and by many different government ministries and agencies. These measures should, when necessary, be complemented by targeted measures to support and facilitate the introduction of newcomers during their first years in Sweden. The Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality is responsible for coordinating the government's integration policies. This ministry is also responsible for the funding of certain activities of importance for integration: introduction courses for newcomers, grants to municipalities for the reception of refugees, Swedish nationality and urban development issues. In addition, preventing and combating discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, religion or other belief and measures against xenophobia and racism are included (European Commission 2009, Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality 2009a, Pinheiro 2006).

In international comparison, Swedish integration policy is regarded as an inclusive, quite successful policy. In a report on the integration policy's results, however, the Swedish Integration Board (*Integrationsverket*) summarised that in all the societal fields studied the situation appears to be worse for foreign-born, or persons with a foreign background, than for those with a Swedish background. Especially people from non-western countries are more often unemployed, have worse housing, have a lower socio-economic status, and their children tend to have poorer academic results (Integrationsverket 2007).

3. Background information on Sundsvall

This section provides background information on the city of Sundsvall. The first section gives a general description on the city, the second section illustrates the composition and the characteristics of the local (migrant) population and the third examines Islam, the – probably – largest of Sundsvall's newer religions.

3.1. Brief description of Sundsvall

The city of Sundsvall is located in the middle of Sweden, within the county of Västernorrland. As of December 2008, the city has 94,955 inhabitants. Considering the last decade, the city has a slightly growing population, gaining about 1,000 inhabitants during the last ten years. Thanks to its location on the sea (Gulf of Bothnia, the northernmost arm of the Baltic Sea), Sundsvall has always been a traditional commercial centre with commercial crossroads to the neighbouring countries Norway and Finland (Statistics Sweden 2009b).

Figure 3: Location of Sundsvall in Sweden



Source: www.wikipedia.org

Sundsvall has a long history starting in the Viking Age. The city was founded in 1621 and consisted, at first, of wooden houses, as is typical for the Swedish countryside. During the Great Fire of 1888, Sundsvall's town centre was completely destroyed. Instead of restoring the city to how it was prior to the fire, the city centre was rebuilt out of stone instead of wood. Since then it has been known as the beautiful 'stone city'.

Figure 4: The city centre of Sundsvall



Source: <http://www.sundsvall.se>

Sundsvall is a historic centre of the timber industry. The city flourished in the mid-19th century and became the first major industrial centre of Sweden, using the first steam-powered saws in its numerous sawmills (Sundsvalls Kommun 2008c).

Today, industrial businesses in Sundsvall concentrate on the export of goods. The timber industry still plays an important role, mainly in producing paper and pulp. Besides, the city hosts a manufacturer of primary aluminium and chemical production companies. After having experienced damage to the environment caused by the industrial sector, the city developed a strong focus on the protection of the environment.

Even more important and larger than the industrial is the service sector. Sundsvall is the home of several government departments, IT, (mobile) telecommunication, banking and insurance companies, various courts of law as well as a university. About 75% of the people working in Sundsvall are employed within the service sector (Statistics Sweden 2009b).

Figure 5: Employed persons according to industries

Source: Statistics Sweden 2009a

The proportion of employed people in Sundsvall is slightly higher than the Swedish average: in 2007, 80% of its population between 20 and 64 years old was employed (Sweden: 78%). The proportion of unemployed persons within this age group is also a little higher than the one in the whole country. Current numbers (as of March 2009) show that the unemployment rate lies at 5%, whereas the Swedish one is 4% (Statistics Sweden 2009b).

The major political institution in Sundsvall is the city council, consisting of eighty-one representatives from eight different political parties. For decades, the social democratic party *Socialdemokraterna* (35 seats) has held the majority in the council. The second largest party, the liberal conservative *Moderata Samlingspartiet*, has 17 seats. The remaining seats are spread over several smaller parties: the liberal *Folkpartiet Liberalerna* (8 seats), the ‘central’ *Centerpartiet* (7 seats), the green party *Miljöpartiet De Gröna* and the Christian democrats *Kristdemokraterna* (both with 4 seats) as well as the socialist, feminist *Vänsterpartiet* (3 seats) and the right-wing *Sverigedemokraterna* (2 seats).

The city council embodies the leading political body in Sundsvall. It includes eleven committees: the Communal Directorate, the Children and Education Committee, the Social Committee, the Committee for Cultural and Recreational Activities, the Labour Market, Adult Education and Integration Committee (*NAVIT*), the Committee for City Planning and Building, the Real Estate Committee, the Environment Committee, the Committee for Land Surveying, Committee for Legal Guardians, and the Electoral Committee. Excluding the electoral committee, all committees are associated with a specific bureau of the city council.

3.2. Sundsvall's migrant population and its characteristics/main groups

The typical pattern of immigration to Sweden (cf. chapter 2) can also be found in Sundsvall. In the post-war years and during the 1950s and 1960s most immigrants came from neighbouring Nordic countries and central and southern Europe. In the 1970s this (labour market related) immigration ceased and family reunification and refugee immigration became the main factors of immigration.

The city of Sundsvall provides statistics about its population according to migration background. These statistics include information about Sundsvall's foreign population and Swedish nationals with a migration background. The latter group is made up of Swedish citizens born abroad and Swedish citizens born in Sweden having foreign-born parents.⁹

Figure 6 shows Sundsvall's population at the end of 2007 according to migration background. 91.3% of city residents are Swedish nationals without a migration background. Swedish citizens with a migration background (5.3%) and foreigners (3.4%) make up the remaining 8.7% of the city's population.

Figure 6: Migration background of Sundsvall's population

Source: compiled by efms based on unpublished data of the city Sundsvall 2008.

Sundsvall's population with a migration background can be distinguished by their area of origin. Figure 7 provides an overview of the city's population with a migration background (foreigners, foreign-born Swedes and Swedish-born persons with parents, who were both born abroad) grouped according to areas of origin (data as of December 2007). The two main groups consist of people originating from Scandinavia and Iceland (31.4%) as well as Asia (30.2%). About 11.1% have a migration background originating from the EU 27 countries, excluding Sweden, Denmark and Finland and another 10.8% have a heritage associated with another European country (including the former Soviet Union). 8.8% have an African heritage, another 5.3% a South American, 2.1% a North American and an additional 0.3% either come from Oceania or an unknown country.

⁹ Before 2004 statistical data defined a Swedish citizen with a migration background as a Swedish person born abroad or born in Sweden and with at least one foreign-born parent.

Figure 7: Sundsvall's population with migration background according to area of origin

Source: compiled by efms based on unpublished data of the city of Sundsvall 2008

Figure 8 shows Sundsvall's population with a migration background according to the major countries of origin. The by far biggest group stems from Finland (26.5%); the second largest group is from Iraq (7.5%), followed by persons stemming from Iran (4.9%), Norway (3.9%), Yugoslavia (3.5%), Chile (2.7%), Germany (2.2%) and Poland (2.2%). Furthermore, there are residents from Turkey and Lebanon (2% respectively). About 42.5% of the people with a migration background stem from other countries of origin.

Figure 8: Sundsvall's population with a migration according to country of origin

Source: compiled by efms based on unpublished data of the city of Sundsvall 2008

In Sundsvall, some inhabitants with a migration background have created ethnic, cultural or faith-based migrant associations. Currently, there are 16 migrant organisations in Sundsvall. Two of these associations are faith-based: the Islamic Cultural Centre and the Muslim association Ahlu-Al-Bait. Ten migrant associations are related to one specific culture and/or

ethnicity; these are a Finish association and a Finish-Swedish association, a Russian-Swedish association, the Bosnian-Herzegovina association, an Iranian association, a Thai association, two Somali associations and a Brazilian and a Latin-American association. Four migrant associations unite migrants of different origins, namely the International Association, the Sundsvall English Speaking Society, the Women's International Association and an association of female immigrant entrepreneurs.

The activities of these organisations are as diverse as their backgrounds. They include cultural or social activities, cultural education programmes for children and young people to assistance for persons in the migrants' countries of origin. According to several respondents from the municipality and the migrant community, however, the activities of migrant organisations seem to have less importance for immigrants than they had a decade before. The reason for that decline is not exactly known, but the decrease is found in all kinds of political and cultural associations in Sweden. Despite this decline in membership, migrant organisations remain important to their members.

One association that has been mentioned several times for its positive influence in multi-cultural life in Sundsvall is the International Association. Therefore, it will be presented more in detail. The association, which has been established in the 1970s, is apolitical and not associated with a specific religious organisation. It is open to all persons regardless of nationality; currently, about thirty-five families are members; both with Swedish and migrant heritage. The association's members have three goals in their work. First, the members believe it is important to inform the community about various countries, their cultures, religions, natural landscapes, historical developments and social structures. Second, they desire to increase mutual understanding and respect of persons. The members' third goal is to bridge differences between different ethnic groups in Swedish society. Members attempt to reach these goals by fighting prejudices and being active in discussions about questions of integration. They work together with other associations, organisations and the municipality to organise school projects, cultural fieldtrips and lectures.¹⁰

3.3. Sundsvall's Muslim population and its characteristics

As written in the introduction, the CLIP network decided to devote a special focus to Muslim communities. Therefore, this section will provide a short overview on these groups.

Immigration also has had an impact on the – traditionally Evangelical Lutheran shaped – religious composition of the city's population. While the influence of the Church of Sweden has decreased since the separation of state and church in 2000, immigration brought 'new' religions to Sweden and Sundsvall, specifically Islam and Catholicism. According to several estimations, Islam has become the second largest religion in Sweden, as the number of people stemming from Islamic countries has increased rapidly in recent years (cf. section 2.1).

The registration of residents' religion is forbidden in Sweden. Consequently, no statistics concerning the religious affiliation of migrants are available and there is no data on the

¹⁰ For example, in 2007 associations created a school project in which various lectures and exhibits informed school children about the five national minorities in Sweden (cf. chapter 2.2). In addition to the International Association, the provincial government, the branch offices for issues regarding children and vocational training, as well as the integration office FAVI were also involved in the project.

number of Muslims in Sundsvall; neither does a estimation of this number exist.¹¹ According to estimations by representatives of migrant organisations, most Muslims stem from Iraq and Iran, but also from Turkey, Lebanon, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Somalia, as well as other Muslim countries.

Neither the city nor the Muslim communities themselves have data on the social status and socio-economic background of the Muslim population living in Sundsvall. Most respondents guessed that there is a high diversity within this ‘group’. Many Muslims are either former guest workers or their descendents and are thus mainly part of the working class; other members of the Muslim population are refugees. Refugees from underdeveloped countries are often illiterate, while political refugees sometimes have an academic background. Because most refugees are from non-western countries, it can be supposed that their educational background and their socio-economic status are below the city’s average (see summary of the Swedish Integration Board’s analysis, section 2.2).

Concerning the different divisions of Islam, most of the practicing Muslims are Sunnis, followed by Shiites.

Several religious Muslims founded a faith-based association, the Islamic Cultural Centre. In 1993, some members of the Centre split into another association: Ahlu-Al-Bait. Both associations – which continue to cooperate in regard to various issues – are described in the following.

The **Islamic Cultural Centre** (Islamiska kulturcentret), which was established in 1993, is made up of Muslims from many different countries and representing different age groups; most were raised as Muslims, others converted to Islam. Most of the members are Sunnis. Up to a hundred members come on Fridays to the communal prayer in the association.

Members of the Islamic Cultural Centre believe it is their duty to inform others about Islam in order to get past prejudices and misunderstandings in the larger community. The basic principles of the Islamic Cultural Centre in Sundsvall are based on their desire to follow the word of God and the directions from Mohammed. According to the association, Islam teaches that no one should be treated badly and that every person should strive to live in peace and harmony with others – the Islamic Cultural Centre aims at implementing these rules both inside and outside of the association.

In addition to celebrating Islamic festivals together, the association offers a variety of programmes and activities. In various lecture series, the centre offers information about Islam and other world religions, as well as about the Sweden’s laws and constitution. In regard to the constitution, questions of freedom, justice, peace and integration are discussed. The Islamic Cultural Centre also offers Arabic language courses and courses about Islam for Muslims and non-Muslims. To additionally strengthen the cohesion and well-being of its members, the Islamic Cultural Centre organises fieldtrips. It also visits jails and psychiatric facilities in Sundsvall and in the surrounding area regularly.

¹¹ Concerning the number of Catholics, the priest in Sundsvall guesses that about 500 Catholics currently live in Sundsvall. About 85% of these have a migration background. Most stem from Poland; the second largest group is from Latin America, others are from Iraq and Africa.

Hence, the association focuses on supporting the needs of its members, including children and youth in integrating into Swedish society and becoming active in the community. At the same time, the association aims at integrating Islam in Sweden. In order to work toward this goal, it works with other associations, organisations and government offices in Sundsvall and tries to strengthen religious, social and political contact with schools, churches, the university, various associations, political parties and facilities for the disabled. Public media sources such as radio, television or newspapers are used in order to approach a broader audience.

The second Muslim association in Sundsvall, Ahlu-Al-Bait, addresses Muslim and Arabic families that live in Sundsvall and in the surrounding Norrland area. It, unlike the Islamic Cultural Centre, is mostly made up of Shiites. The association currently has about 100 members. The association does not have its own facilities; the members meet in public buildings, private homes or the Islamic Cultural Centre's mosque.

The association sees its central purpose to be celebrating Muslim holidays and events with its members. Especially important are the fasting month of Ramadan and Muharam, which is considered a month of sorrow. For these and other celebrations, religious leaders from Stockholm are invited to celebrate with the community in Sundsvall.

Furthermore, the association offers Quran and Arabic lessons for children and adults.¹² Ahlu-Al-Bait also helps newly migrated Muslims and Arabs in dealing with various problems as they get settled in Sweden. The association's members support newcomers, for instance, in completing administrative tasks for the authorities. The association desires to be an information source for these new migrants that therefore also helps reduce difficulties and misunderstanding in encounters with the Swedish culture and Swedish laws. The association also sees itself as a place where persons dealing with problems in the family or in school can discuss these issues with others. Athletic activities, assistance with school work and computer classes are an extension of the association's offerings. Last but not least, the association has established a Muslim cemetery, which makes it possible for Muslims in Sundsvall and in Norrland to bury their deceased according to Muslim tradition (cf. section 5.2).

4. Local intercultural policies in general

The first section gives an overview of the most relevant issues, demands and interests of the local groups (cf. section 4.1). In the following, Sundsvall's general policy approach to integrating migrants and the city's administrative and political responsibilities to integrate migrants are described (cf. section 4.2). Section 4.3 continues by discussing the formal and informal relations and dialogue between the city and migrant as well as religious organisations. Section 4.4 focuses on relations between different migrant groups.

¹² According to the association, these classes strengthen the participants' knowledge of Arabic, as well as of their culture and religion. In addition, respect for Swedish culture and agreement with Swedish laws are taught, and children are educated about the situation surrounding their residency in Sweden.

4.1. Issues, demands and interests

This section first gives an overview of the most relevant issues regarding intergroup relations that are discussed in Sundsvall, and then it focuses on the demands and interests of local migrant groups. There is no survey or other kind of data on either of these topics. Therefore, the information is solely based on the interviews conducted during the CLIP city visits.

An issue that has been mentioned in most interviews is the segregation of certain neighbourhoods in Sundsvall. There are several districts, e.g. Nacksta and Skönsberg, with a relatively high percentage of people with migration background, a high percentage of socio-economically disadvantaged people and with higher crime rates than in other areas of the city. This combination has given these quarters a rather bad reputation and has initiated public discussions. Most interviewed persons, with and without migration background, consider the segregation of these neighbourhoods, and resulting problems at the local school, problematic. Some initiatives have already been established by the city to fight improve the situation, but apparently not yet enough.

A second topic that several respondents referred to concerned the local swimming pool. Following an initiative of a female representative of the local Islamic Cultural Centre, the municipal swimming pool introduced ‘women’s swimming’. As part of ‘women’s swimming’ the pool is open only for women for several hours. This is quite usual in cities across Europe, but it has been heavily discussed in Sundsvall. Some people, including some migrants, did not want to accept this change in the opening hours, because it is considered a ‘special treatment for Muslim women’.

For local social partners, intergroup relations are not an issue on the local level in Sundsvall. Even though some trade unions have people responsible for the needs of immigrants and diversity in general, special initiatives to support migrants or ethnic minorities in general have not been established.

As we shift attention to the demands and interests of migrant groups living in Sundsvall, we must emphasise the heterogeneity of the migrant population. Hence, its demands and interests are very diverse. Nevertheless, some issues were mentioned time and again.

Most migrant organisations have very limited financial resources and therefore require support from the city. They would like to get more financial as well as non-material assistance for their activities and for finding and financing their own premises. Notably, this is true for Muslim organisations. Other issues directly concerning the organisation’s activities, such as recognition by city officials and collaboration with the administration, have not been raised by the representatives.

Most interviewed migrants referred to migrants’ challenges as rather individual problems that only indirectly concern intergroup relations. Nonetheless, these challenges are briefly mentioned in the following, because they appear to be ‘typical’ problems for migrants in Sundsvall. First, segregation and housing were raised as important topics by several interviewed migrants: according to these interview partners, migrants have more problems in getting affordable housing in a non-segregated area than natives do. They would gladly receive more support in finding affordable housing.

Second, language and education are seen as very important issues and challenges. Most interviewed persons complimented the city for offering different kinds of language courses such as Swedish for immigrants (SFI) and the individual programme for pupils without Swedish knowledge (IVIK). Nevertheless, several respondents asked for more support for, and also for more fairness towards, migrant children at school.¹³

Third, migrants reported challenges when looking and applying for jobs. Discrimination, in particular of Muslims and Africans, is seen as a problem; even though it is not very prevalent, it does exist.¹⁴

The desire of more social acceptance in general was also expressed several times. This desire includes the need for society to have less fear and prejudice and more acceptance of people who look ‘different’ (in particular concerning women who wear a head-scarf). Thereby, however, the respondents always emphasised that these are not big issues in Sundsvall and that most people are friendly and open-minded.

The city seems to be aware of these challenges and demands and tries to improve the migrants’ situations in Sundsvall; but since the city has only limited resources, it cannot approve every application and respond to every demand.

4.2. General approach and responsibility for relations to ethnic and religious communities in Sundsvall

After the war, immigration to Sundsvall was first shaped by labour market immigration. The industrial sector was very successful and a lot of workers were needed. The immigrants that arrived between the 1950s and 1970s found a job immediately. In these decades, there was no specific strategy for integrating migrants or for intergroup relations by the city of Sundsvall. It was not regarded as municipal task. Migrant integration took place by including migrants into the labour market and the welfare system, not by specific integration measures.

When the necessity to import a workforce diminished, the immigration was more strictly regulated and the refugee immigration became the most significant group of immigrants, initiating as a new phase in immigration to Sweden (cf. also section 2.1). In this period, Sweden allowed a system to develop whereby people had to first wait some years to get their applications’ results. Individuals that are dependent on social help, and not contributors to the economy, were thus the result of this system (Pinheiro 2006).

Since 2003, the city of Sundsvall has tried to get back on “lost course” as the politician responsible for integration measures states, and emphasize an attitude of seeing people as a needed resource and welcoming the diverse workforce into the labour market and society as a whole. Sundsvall strives to be a place, where differences and diversity are not only

¹³ A particular issue concerning education and segregation is the current discussion on the closure of a small school in a deprived neighbourhood. In that school, more than sixty percent of the 130 pupils have a migration background. One problem is that the school’s results are below average. A second problem is that due to demographical and social effects, there are fewer pupils attending the school than the school could accommodate. The discussion on how to deal with the school and the pupils has been controversially discussed.

¹⁴ According to the interviewed discrimination ombudsman, there were about 20 cases of discrimination due to ethnicity or religion in 2008; most of them related to employment.

recognised, but also appreciated, and where persons can choose to live the life of their choice. Regardless of cultural background, all persons are to feel involved and needed.

A reason for this strategy is the shortage of manpower caused by demographic changes and the related high number of retirements, which are expected in the near future. Furthermore, the responsible committee believes that diversity enriches its community. Thirdly, the committee works towards the goal of full employment because it assumes that work is an important factor of welfare and that unemployment can lead to exclusion. Therefore, it supports persons excluded from the labour market and supports young people to reduce their chances of unemployment. The overall aim is to raise the level of self-sufficiency.

As a result of these assumptions and goals, the city restructured its political responsibilities and the related administrative offices. It created a committee responsible for dealing with issues related to the labour market, adult education and integration. This committee, called *NAVI*, never views integration as a separate entity. There is neither a specific integration policy, nor a policy aiming at bettering intergroup relations. Instead, integration is always viewed in relation to the other areas of its work, the labour market and adult education. Therefore, it can be said that, in regard to integration, Sundsvall has a general and inclusive policy.

The political responsibility for integration and intergroup relations lies within the mentioned committee *NAVI*; the administrative responsibility lies within the affiliated Labour Market, Adult Education and Integration Office (*FAVI*) that implements *NAVI*'s goals.¹⁵ *FAVI*'s most important task is to support residents, regardless of ethnic or national heritage. Each client is to be treated individually and professionally, and each case should be handled as quickly as possible. Thereby, the staff members collaborate with other municipal administrations and externally with NGOs, businesses and social services.

In 2008, *NAVI* and *FAVI* had a budget of 76.9 million Swedish krona (about seven million Euro) which is approximately 1.9 percent of the city council's total budget.¹⁶ Of this money, 1.1 million Swedish krona were allotted to the division focusing on integration (for financing 'Swedish for Immigrants(SFI) courses), which was about 1.4 percent of *NAVI*'s budget and 0.03 percent the total budget of the city council (Sundsvalls Kommun 2009: 50). In addition, *FAVI* received 36.6 million krona (about 3.3 million Euro) from the national government for the reception and integration of refugees.

Sundsvall's approach can be summarised as the following: although the city does not have a specific integration policy, it is very committed to supporting migrants in their 'integration' in Swedish society. The city supports migrants by providing language courses and substantial support in entering into the job market. In parallel, the city enhances migrants' qualifications such as native language competence. The city also does not have any measures specifically aiming at ameliorating peaceful cohabitation, and no strategy was established to bring groups of different ethnic, cultural or religious backgrounds together. Instead, integration, peaceful

¹⁵ Moreover, there are other offices that process applications, e.g. the Office for Culture and Recreational Activities and the Office for Social Services. These are, however, considered to have lower-ranking importance in the issue of integration.

¹⁶ This budget consists of money collected through taxes.

intergroup relations and social cohesion are seen as results of a successful – general and inclusive – labour market policy in combination with a functioning welfare state delivering, for instance, high quality childcare.

Migrants also have a certain influence in policy-making in Sundsvall. The political parties with elected representation in the city council have members and representatives who immigrated to Sweden. Of the eighty-one members in the council, five are of non-Swedish origin; hence, they represent about six percent of the councillors. One representative has a very high position within the city: the chairman of the Labour Market, Adult Education and Integration Committee *NAV* is of Portuguese origin. Naturally, the political representatives with foreign heritage are, however, not elected as representatives for their ethnic background, but as representatives of the party they are members of.

To give migrants a separate voice, the city had installed an integration council (known as immigrant council) in the 1990s. This council was composed of representatives of all migrant organisations and was in charge of advising the city council and the administration concerning all matters of integration and diversity, but its level of activity was very low. As a consequence, the council was abolished in the end of the 1990s. In 2007, the municipality tried to re-establish the council, but the migrant organisations did not show any interest to be involved.

The city's attitude towards migrant organisations in general is the following: the city appreciates the activities of the local migrant organisations – may they be religious or ethnic. The city considers these groups helpful for organisations' members, because they provide networks and support, as well as social meeting places and could consequently even support the integration of the organisations' members. Therefore, the city supports migrant organisations: this support will be depicted in more detail in section 4.3.

4.3. Relations and dialogue between the city and migrant groups

This section reports on the regular institutionalised and non-institutionalised forms of relations and dialogue between the city and different groups. The first section deals with municipal interaction with migrants on an individual level, the second with the formal and informal contacts between city and migrant organisations. The third and fourth sections describe two particular initiatives that (indirectly) improve intergroup relations: native language education and projects fostering intergroup relations through athletic activities.

4.3.1. Municipal interaction with migrants on an individual level

The city has barely any initiative actively promoting peaceful intergroup relations. Instead, the main philosophy of the municipality is to focus on the individual's rights; the city wants to handle people as individuals, not as groups.

The city makes the effort to contact every newly arrived immigrant, so that it can provide counselling and advice and determine adequate integration measures. According to a survey carried out among all participants of municipal programmes, the majority of immigrants is

quite satisfied with their contact with the FAVI.¹⁷ This finding has been affirmed by the interviews during the CLIP city visit: most migrants assessed the contact with the municipality very positively and described the city staff members as very helpful. “If you have a question, you just go to FAVI. They are very friendly and service-minded; not complicated at all.”

Some interviewed migrants, for instance several teachers of the mother tongue centre, however, reported that migrants still have a lot of questions, for instance concerning the employment market, administrative things and others, but do not know to whom they can address these concerns. According to these teachers, there is a lack of information transfer from the municipality to migrants. Also participants of Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) reported they would like to get more information, for instance on exiting migrant associations and other organisations.

As explained in the section on the general municipal approach, most of the city’s efforts focus on individuals’ needs regarding language and employment.

For newly arrived school students, the city conducts an individual programme for people without Swedish knowledge, called IVIK. The goals are that pupils learn the Swedish language so that they can attend normal schools in Sweden and are able to pass the exams in Swedish schools, too. Currently, about 950 students participate in this programme. The courses are financed by the national government’s ‘migration board’ and the city of Sundsvall. All IVIK students also have the right to participate in the summer job programme organised by FAVI. In 2008, about 65% of the IVIK students worked for four weeks during the summer, in employment areas such as elderly care, landscaping, and kindergarten.

For newly arrived adults, the city offers ‘Swedish for Immigrants’ (SFI).¹⁸ This programme includes Swedish language classes, and also an introductory programme aimed at improving the immigrants’ integration in the local labour market. All registered residents of Sundsvall, who do not speak Swedish as their native language and lack basic Swedish language skills (excluding Norwegians and Danes) have the right to enrol in a Swedish for Immigrants class.¹⁹ The class is fulltime and free-of-charge for students.

The central aim of the SFI courses is to impart a functional knowledge of Swedish to the students. The improvement of the linguistic skills supports the second goal of helping

¹⁷ Over the last three years the administrative office responsible for integration *FAVI* has carried out a Customer Satisfaction Index (NKI) with all participants of their programmes. The NKI inquiry asks participants in adult education and ‘Swedish for immigrants’ classes and those active in programmes for the unemployed how they are able to influence *FAVI*’s programmes, how participants obtain information about the programmes, how participants contact the staff and how the staff treats the participants. The inquiry found that sixty-five percent of all participants believe that they have many possibilities to influence *FAVI*’s programmes. Seventy-four percent answered positively about the ability to gain information about programmes. Seventy-seven percent consider it easy to come into contact with the staff and eighty percent of the respondents stated that the staff treats them well.

¹⁸ These courses have been developed by the Swedish National Agency for Education *Skolverket* and are offered throughout Sweden.

¹⁹ Sundsvall regards graduates of training programmes, as well as other education tracks, persons with identified and unidentified occupations as well as persons unable to work because they are sick or unmotivated as target-groups of Swedish for Immigrants courses.

immigrants succeed in the work force. The core of the introductory programme are work experience placements based on individual needs and skills, computer-aided learning and a module dealing with occupational specific Swedish, career choice or continued studies. The course determines the person's profession, concentrates on the identified profession, takes measures to find work experience placements and/or job placements. Participants lacking a clear profession will be supported in finding an entry-level job or preparing to re-enter the job market. As part of the preparation for re-entering the job market with a new career, they receive placement in a temporary job, a fulltime internship or individual and profession orientated job trainings. In addition to employment preparation, participants are also encouraged to participate in associations in the city, as a way to start to take on responsibility, as would later be necessary in the work force. Social service organisations, the district parliament and health insurance companies work together to find available jobs and internships for participants, as well as to inform participants of various opportunities for joining community associations.

To further support the migrants' labour market integration, the municipality collaborates closely with the local jobcentre. In addition, the city installed a special business development officer, who is in charge of explaining funding and other support that businesses can receive if they employ an immigrant to local enterprises. One of these funding possibilities is the national 'starter jobs' programme (*instegsjobb*) for newly arrived immigrants (two years), in which the state pays a certain amount of the salary of a newly employed immigrant. By establishing this position within the municipal office *FAVI*, the city attempts to keep qualified migrants in the city and to support the local economy. In addition, the city cooperates with local NGOs, for instance with 'Integrate Us', an association linked to the local football club that is engaged in helping unemployed foreigners and youths to enter the local job market. These and other measures will be described in more detail within the next CLIP module that will deal with integration, entrepreneurship and labour market.

4.3.2. Municipal support for migrant organisations

As written above, the city appreciates the migrant organisations' activities. Migrant organisations are considered helpful, because they provide networks, support and social meeting places. Therefore, the city (a) provides grants to migrant organisations for activities, specific events and fixed costs and (b) maintains continuous contact with the organisations' representatives, provides counselling and other support. Both will be described in further detail below.

(a) The city decided to support migrant organisations, allowing them to promote their culture and identity, cooperate with other organisations and further organise internal and external activities. Depending on needs, the city can provide a start capital, an annual grant (based on amount of activities per year), a subsidy for rent for up to 40% of premises' costs and/or funding for specific events and projects. The conditions for such a funding are that the association is registered, democratically structured, open to everyone (regardless of ethnic heritage), has a finance plan and that the association's members are registered as residents of Sundsvall.

Of the sixteen migrant organisations mentioned in section 3.2, eleven organisations received funding from the city in 2008. (Two organisations were established in 2009, another two organisations did not apply for funding and one application was declined, because the application was incomplete and the association did not appear to actually be active) The received funding totalled 12,400€ and ranged from 180€ to 4.200€ for each organisation.

(b) At least as important as the financial support is the political and organisational support provided by the administrative integration unit's (FAVI) and the responsible political committee's (NAVI) staff. Once a year, the municipality invites representatives of all migrant organisations to discuss possible cooperation, general topics of interest as well as about the migrant organisations' range of activities and the therewith related amount of funding for the following year with administrative officers and politicians of NAVI. In addition, the NAVI chairman is happy to accept the (rare) invitations of migrant organisations to their special activities.

On occasion, the city organises special activities. Recently, for instance, the city provided a course in association management, which focused on establishing an association, defining rules and calculating the budget. The course was offered for all migrant associations' board members and ten associations participated.

The most important contact between the city and migrant organisations, however, seems to be the regular, informal contact between the FAVI office and migrant organisations, either by phone or directly within the administration office or the migrant organisations buildings: the NAVI officers maintain daily contact with the organisations' representatives and provide counselling or other support whenever questions arise. This has been highly appreciated by all interviewed migrant organisations' representatives. Since Sundsvall is a rather small city with only few migrant organisations, the informal, but frequent contact appears to be an adequate method of communication between the city and migrant organisations.

It is worthwhile to note that the city's basic approach is neither to establish new associations, nor to organise the association's activities. Instead, the city puts emphasis on the fact that migrants have to take responsibility for their own lives; the city just wants to support them in doing so. The (informal) motto is: 'help to self-help'.

4.3.3. Appreciation of migrants' competencies: Native Language Education

One of the fundamental principles of Swedish integration policy is the *freedom of choice* clause. People can assimilate, but also maintain their own culture. Additionally, Sweden assesses the language competence of their residents very valuable. Therefore, Sweden finances targeted language support for immigrant children. This is also done in Sundsvall: since the 1980s, immigrant children can take Native Language Education courses for free. In 2005, the city established a Centre for Mother Tongue Education (*Modersmålscentrum*), in which thirty-eight teachers teach twenty-eight languages.

In addition, the city and the centre collaborate in celebrating "International Mother Language Day", initiated by the UNESCO. The celebration in Sundsvall consists of dance, music, and literature events and showing general appreciation for the different migrant languages.

The city and the teachers assessed the teaching of the different languages as very helpful for integration, because, first, it is important for the self-esteem of migrants, since they can better act and express themselves in their mother tongue. Also, they learn that they should view their additional language skills as resources. Second, it is an important institution, because the pupils learn about Swedish society and policy and discuss topics relevant to life in Sweden. Hence, they learn more about the society they are part of.

Figure 9: Native Language Education teachers in Sundsvall



Source: photograph taken by the author

4.3.4. Integration through sport – the municipal supported project ‘fotball plus’

Athletics clubs and other athletics oriented NGOs can play an important role and be a resource in integration processes. The city of Sundsvall supports several successful initiatives; the most interesting one is presented in the following – the project ‘fotball plus’.

Since 2003, the local football club ‘GIF Sundsvall’ has carried out the project ‘fotball plus’ that is financially and organisationally supported by the city of Sundsvall. The basic aim of the project is to strengthen the immigrant children’s self-confidence, extend their social networks and counteract and oppose the feeling of being left out of the community. These goals should be achieved through the children’ meaningful and active participation in one of the various athletics clubs in the city. Members of the football club visit migrants, e.g. at Swedish courses for newcomers, inform them about different clubs and help them to find appropriate leisure time activities. They lead various activities, such as swimming for women, aerobics etc. that allow migrants to try out different sports, and facilitate contact between immigrants and athletics clubs in the Sundsvall area. In addition to being responsible for sports practice, the club also organises a weekly hour of homework help for young football players, in order to support the children’s study habits and school performance.

The club’s projects are highly appreciated by the city. Thanks to these activities the association also won a Swedish award that recognises clubs that are involved in projects to

improve society, the ‘Svenska Spel Community Prize’, and was named the Swedish football club of the year in 2008.

In Sundsvall, there are several other interesting initiatives that combine sportive activities with support for homework and involve migrant children, for instance the project ‘Back 2 Basics’ in the segregated Nacksta neighbourhood and the local Boxing Club that cooperates with other NGOs and welfare organisations, such as the Salvation Army, and with the municipality.

4.4. Relationship between different ethnic groups in Sundsvall

This section describes the relationships between different groups within the city of Sundsvall. Since no survey is available, the following information is based on interviews conducted during the CLIP city visit.

All interview partners agreed that the relationships between different ethnic groups in Sundsvall are very positive and peaceful. The majority of respondents considered most migrants to be well integrated in local society. Some interview partners even stated that there are no visible migrant ‘groups’ in Sundsvall, but just a variety of individuals with a foreign heritage.

Some respondents, however, also stated that some ‘groups’ exist, and that these different groups live ‘side by side’ rather than ‘together’ in communities. The most insular group with little contact to others seems to be a group of very traditional Romani people originating from the North of Finland. This community of between 50 and 200 people forms a closed society and does not appear to be very interested in integration. According to several interview partners, this community experiences a lot of discrimination. Nearly half of the interviewed persons also referred to two other groups that seem to have little contact with people outside of their community and have difficulties in integration: these groups are people from Somalia and from former Yugoslavia.

Between migrant associations, on the contrary, there is a rather high level of interaction and cooperation. There are three or four associations that are considered not interested in socialising with other associations, but all others are very open and happy to cooperate. They collaborate to establish common activities on holidays such as the International Women’s Day, Mother’s Day, United Nations Day and Sweden Day and organise common excursions and smaller activities. Until recently, these collaborations were not institutionalised and occurred only occasionally. Since March 2008, regular meetings and exchange between representatives of several migrant organisations have been organised by the Red Cross’ office against discrimination. As part of these meetings, migrant representatives meet to discuss society in general, conflicts, discrimination and specific events such as ‘intercultural week’. These meetings were initiated by the city and are strongly supported by the municipal administration *FAVI*.

Concerning the contact between immigrants and Swedes in school, some school teachers reported that immigrant youth have a lot of contact with each other but little contact with Swedish youth. In general, however, the contacts seem to be fine. A newly immigrated person stated, “It is not easy to come NOT in contact with Swedish persons, they invite you

to become part of your life.” Hence, there are also several collaborations of migrant associations with Swedish organisations. One example is the cooperation between the Bosnian association and the Temperance Movement's Adult Education Organisation (NBV) with regard to educational work; another example is the cooperation between the County Administrative Board, municipal social services and several immigrant organisations, who work together to focus on eliminating violence towards women and honour-related violence; a third example is the cooperation between a local theatre company, the Islamic Cultural Centre and the Swedish Church dealing with the relations between Islam and Christianity. The city views these collaborations as positive and supports these initiatives.

Until now, on the contrary, there were barely any inter-religious activities. There were (and continue to be) regular common activities involving the two Muslim associations and regular dialogue between the Christian churches, but no ‘inter-faith dialogue’. The Muslim organisations would like to have such kind of dialogue, but did not have the feeling that the Christian communities are interested. The interviewed Christian priests showed interest as well during their CLIP interviews and acknowledged that there has never been a serious initiative because “We think about that too little.” Despite this interest, the actual initiative and pro-activity was not evident. Still, it should be noted that all interviewed partners would be in favour of a municipal initiative to encourage inter-religious dialogue.

Figure 10: Round table of religious representatives and city staff members initiated by CLIP



Source: photograph taken by the author

Relations between different ethnic groups can also be shaped by conflicts or tensions. Almost every interview partner, however, including all representatives of migrant organisations and the police, stated that there are neither visible conflicts nor tensions between different ethnic or religious groups. Even in periods of war or conflict in the immigrants’ home countries such as Iraq, Iran or on the Balkans, there have not been any conflicts or confrontation between immigrant groups. According to the police representative and some other respondents, a reason for that generally peaceful cohabitation in Sundsvall could be that people, who tend to politicise, do not stay in Sundsvall, but move to a bigger city such as Stockholm or Malmö.

Of course, conflicts also exist in Sundsvall, but these are not considered as conflicts between particular groups but as conflicts between individuals. According to the interviews with representatives of educational institutions and welfare organisations, this is particular true for children and youth. Additionally, there are sometimes problems within an ethnic group, in particular within a family clan.

To summarise, the relations between different ethnic groups “could be better”, as one staff member of the city stated, but in general are considered very peaceful and harmonious.

5. Local intercultural policies towards Muslim communities

As explained in the introduction, the CLIP network decided to especially focus on the relations to, and dialogue with, Muslim communities. This is firstly because Islam is by far the largest ‘new’ religion in European countries of immigration and, secondly, because Muslims are often perceived as disconnected from ‘European life’, often facing discrimination and Islamophobia. Therefore, the following sections present issues, demands and interests of Muslim groups as well as the general municipal approach concerning contact with Muslim groups.

5.1. Issues, demands and interests

First, it must be emphasised that the population with a Muslim background in Sundsvall is a heterogeneous one and, subsequently, the demands and interests are also very diverse. Second, it must be acknowledged that there is no research on the Muslim community in Sundsvall. Once more, the following information is based on interviews conducted over the course of the CLIP project.

Muslims’ issues and demands do not vary from those of migrants in general (cf. already section 4.1). They want to be respected and accepted. Additionally, they claim to face discrimination and problems slightly more so than other groups do, especially in the fields of employment, but also in school.

More concrete demands addressed to the city include financial assistance for specific projects and support for the construction of a desired mosque building.

The city is aware of these demands and is happy to support specific projects such as the theatre project, which was organised by the Islamic Cultural Centre together with other organisations (see below); but, since the city’s philosophy is ‘only’ help to self-help, and the city prefers not interfere with the autonomy of religious associations, the city does not finance a mosque or other prayer rooms for religious associations.

5.2. Approach and policies improving relations with Muslim groups

In Sundsvall, there are no policies directly aimed at specific ethnic or religious groups. Hence, the city of Sundsvall has no specific approach or policies to improve relations with Muslim groups. A specific strategy is neither considered necessary nor useful. Instead, the city focuses on individual’s rights and handles people as individuals, not in terms of groups.

Following this general attitude, there are no municipal projects exclusively focusing on Muslim groups or aiming at better relations with Muslims.

Nonetheless, since the city try to meet the needs of all residents, the city also considers the needs of Muslims. Therefore, the city was supportive to establish a special Islamic corner on the local cemetery – run by the Swedish Church – for that Muslims can being buried close to another. Besides, the city supported the initiative of a Muslim woman to introduce ‘women’s swimming’ hours at the municipal swimming. Even though this initiative launched a public debate about gender roles in Islam, and the role of public institutions, the city followed the Muslim representative’s proposal.

Figure 11: Theatre project ‘Two cultures – same origin’ on Abraham/Ibrahim



Source: http://www.teater-vnorr.se/kalendarium/2008h/abraham/abraham_press.htm

Furthermore, there was an interesting singular initiative from September to December 2008 that can be regarded as good practice initiative: a theatre project on Abraham/Ibrahim entitled ‘Two cultures – same origin’. This theatre project was a joint venture involving the regional theatre company *Teater Västernorrland*, the Church of Sweden, the Islamic Cultural Centre, Sundsvall’s Labour Market, Adult Education and Integration Administration (FAVI), and the Child and Education Committee in Sundsvall. The aim was to gain new knowledge on other ways of thinking and different phenomena, as well as insight in, and understanding of, both differences and similarities of two world religions, Christianity and Islam.

As part of the project, the play, *Abraham/Ibrahim*, was performed for students in grades 8-9 and upper-secondary school for free. The performance was accompanied by a discussion with representatives or the Islamic Cultural Centre and the Church of Sweden. Materials about the play were provided to the students in advance, in order to encourage interaction and learning on a deeper level before the performance took place.

Since the pupils raised a variety of important questions and started interesting discussions, the city as well as the religious representatives were excited to share that this common initiative was a great success and should be repeated in the future.

6. Public communication: strategies of the city administration and local media

Intergroup relations on the local level are greatly influenced by public communication. Public communication, in turn, is highly influenced by the city administration, (local) politicians, and (local) media: the city and the media affect or even decide what is reported, how to report, and also what should not be reported. They influence how the native and migrant populations form opinions and are major actors in setting the agenda of public discourse on intergroup relations.

The city of Sundsvall, however, has neither a press spokesperson nor an official strategy for public communication concerning ethnic and religious groups living in the city. Its general guideline in communication is to see all persons as potential resources for the city and not to exclude specific groups.

In Sundsvall there are two local newspapers and one free weekly newspaper. According to an interview partner, there is no journalist with a migration background; but there is a freelance cartoonist.

Among interview partners there was a general positive opinion of local media sources. Although, these sources tend to express overly positive views of migrants at times, they are mostly balanced and neutral, or it is at least clear that they strive to be. Since 9/11 the media has, for example, continued to present a balanced image of Muslims and allow Muslims to express their views. An interview partner commented that the media fulfils its job as an information provider and shows people with a migration background. Another added that when organisations contact the media with information for a story, the media do show interest and respond by publishing the information.

In addition to the local newspapers, another local media source is the radio station *Sveriges Radio* in Sundsvall, which believes that multiculturalism in Sweden should remain a central theme, and that no differentiation should be made between ethnic groups. In addition to its aim to avoid using prejudices and stereotypes, respect the diversity of persons living in Sweden and support the rights of all social, economic and ethnical groups; it also attempts to make its programmes appealing to people from all of these groups. In addition, all people, regardless of heritage, should be part of the programmes. For example, participants and experts with migration background should be part of all programmes, and not only those dealing with immigration; and all participants and experts, regardless of ethnic and cultural background, should first be seen as individuals and then as representatives of a specific group. Interview partners expressed their appreciation that *Sveriges Radio* reports of topics concerning migrants and includes the voices of migrants in all of their programmes.

In addition to these positive remarks about the local newspapers and the radio station, interview partners did criticise a few tendencies they have noticed in the media. For example, the media portrays the situation of refugees in the form of ‘tearjerkers’; stereotypes are, sometimes, included; and often migrants and topics concerning migrants are only discussed superficially.

7. Intergroup relations and radicalisation

Radicalisation and extremist political and religious positions can occur both among natives and migrants. As the following paragraphs will show, these phenomena do not play a role in Sundsvall.

7.1. Radicalisation within the majority population

Some interviewed persons remembered that in the 1990s, some youth tried to mobilise against the influx of foreigners. Today, however, no one could report any form of organised radicalisation. May it be due to the – compared to other European countries and even other Swedish cities – relatively small number of migrants in the city, or to the attitudes of the residents, a radicalisation process against minority groups has not occurred in Sundsvall. Perhaps one respondent was right when he explained, half-jokingly, half-seriously, that “in the middle of Sweden, the people are more quiet and relaxed and do not get upset about everything.” Whether this is the reason or not, all respondents emphasised that Sundsvall is a tolerant and open-minded city.

Still, fears, prejudices and latent discrimination (particularly on the employment and housing market) also exist in Sundsvall.

Since 2002, two of the eighty-one representatives in the city council represent the right-wing *Sverigedemokraterna* (SD). Hence, xenophobic people are represented in the city council, but all interviewed persons with and without migration background agreed that the election of this party has to be seen as a protest vote in expression of dissatisfaction with established parties rather than as right-wing attitude. In addition, these two representatives are marginalised in the council and do not have any role in decision making.

Also outside of the council, the SD is not well established in the city and is quite marginalised. The party has some sympathisers, but these sympathisers are only a very small group of, as one respondent summarised, “young, angry, badly educated Swedish men”. According to the police and several other respondents, this ‘group’ consists of about five to six people, who organise one demonstration per year (with about five participants). In response to this demonstration, there is usually an anti-demonstration with about 50 to 100 participants. The only ‘crime’ in relation to radical groups the police could report on was a dispute between SD’s sympathisers who travelled to a demonstration in Stockholm, and youth SD opponents, who threw stones against the bus carrying the SD sympathisers.

The section can be concluded with a municipal staff member’s statement: “It is just too cold here to be radical.”

7.2. Radicalisation within the migrant population

Hardly any information is available on radicalisation within the migrant population. According to respondents from the municipality, educational institutions, the Foreigners’ Advisory Council, migrant organisations, religious communities, the media as well as the police, neither political nor religious radicalisation can be identified within the migrant population in Sundsvall.

Some interviewed persons from educational institutions, one political representative as well as some representatives from the Muslim community, however, mentioned that individual Muslim families are very traditional, live in paternalistic family structures and are, as one respondent formulated, “radical in term of traditions and habits”. Another stated, “It is obvious: there are people with more extreme views”. According to these (few) respondents, this is expressed in discussions between parents and teachers about sexual education at school, threats towards other family members and also cases of female genital mutilation and arranged marriages. Some experts are bothered by these developments and alert that it can be the breeding ground for social isolation, inner-family (women’s) discrimination and even fundamentalism. It has to be stressed, however, that all interviewed persons emphasised that these are exceptional, singular cases and that there is no organised radicalisation within the migrant population as a whole.

7.3. General approach, policies and measures against radicalisation

Since radicalisation is not an issue in Sundsvall, the city does not see any need for implementing any provisions that would focus specifically on preventing or guarding against radicalisation.

To prevent crime in general, the city installed round table discussion groups in all fourteen municipal areas. One round table that works quite successfully is the ‘Nacksta Group’ located in the socially and ethnically segregated Nacksta neighbourhood. Its round table includes representatives from the municipality’s social service offices, the Salvation Army and other NGOs, the police, churches, schools and parents; the round table aims at discussing, solving and preventing crime and problems with youth in general.

In another segregated area with rather high crime rates, Skönsberg, the city initiated ‘local development work’. This project involved the municipality, Sundsvall’s local police district, the National Council for Crime Prevention, the regional social insurance office, the public employment service and the Agency for School Development. According to the police officer interviewed, the number of reported crimes declined as a result of the work of this round table.²⁰

Another, more indirect, measure to prevent radicalisation and discrimination is the establishment of an anti-discrimination office. That is installed and paid by the central government’s Board of the Youth; organisational, the office is based in the office of the Swedish Red Cross.

8. Conclusion: Key challenges, lessons and learning for CLIP

The city of Sundsvall is located in the middle of Sweden, on the Gulf of Bothnia, the northernmost arm of the Baltic Sea. Sundsvall has always been a traditional commercial centre and was the first major industrial centre in Sweden, with an important timber industry producing mainly paper and pulp, but also with aluminium and chemical production

²⁰ In 2006, 757 crimes were reported, in 2007 585.

companies. Today, the service sector has become more important, including primarily IT, banking and insurance companies.

The city has about 95,000 inhabitants. Of these, 8.7% are of foreign origin: Swedish citizens with a migration background make up 5.3% of the city's population; foreigners 3.4%. One-third of the residents with a foreign heritage stem from other Scandinavian countries, mainly from Finland. Immigration has not only had an impact on the ethnic, but also on the – traditionally Evangelical Lutheran shaped – religious composition of the local population. However, since the registration of residents' religion is forbidden in Sweden, no statistical information concerning the religious affiliation of migrants is available. Therefore, there is no official data on the number of Muslims in Sundsvall and no estimation of this number is available. According to several estimations, Islam has become the second largest religion in Sweden, as the number of people stemming from Islamic countries has increased rapidly in recent years.

In Sundsvall, some inhabitants with a migration background have established ethnic, cultural or faith-based migrant associations: currently, there are sixteen migrant organisations in Sundsvall of which ten are related to one specific cultural group, four unite migrants of different cultures and two are mainly faith-based (Muslim associations).

The relations between different ethnic and/or religious groups are considered very peaceful and harmonious. Hence, radicalisation is a phenomenon apparently not found in Sundsvall. May it be due to the small number of migrants in Sundsvall, the attitudes of the native and migrant residents, or the fact that it just has not yet been exposed – none of the interviewed experts (including the police and the discrimination ombudsman) could report on radicalisation tendencies among natives or migrants occurring in Sundsvall; in crime statistics, as well, no radicalisation can be found.

Sundsvall's approach concerning integration and intergroup relations can be summarised as the following: the city is very committed to supporting migrants in their integration into Swedish society. However, the city does not have a specific integration policy. Instead, integration is always viewed in relation to the labour market and adult education, as can be observed in the structure of the city's Labour Market, Adult Education and Integration Committee (*NAVI*) and an affiliated office within the administration (*FAVI*). These units support migrants by providing language courses and substantial support in entering the job market. In parallel, the city enhances migrants' qualifications such as native language competence. Peaceful intergroup relations and social cohesion are seen as results of a successful labour market policy in combination with a functioning welfare state. The overall aim is to raise everyone's level of self-sufficiency; the main tool is help to self-help. By doing so, the city of Sundsvall strives to be a place, where differences and diversity are not only recognised, but also appreciated and where people can choose to live the life of their choice. Regardless of cultural background, all persons are to feel involved and needed.

In addition to these general policies, the FAVI office maintains continuous contact with migrants – notably with the newly arrived migrants –, supports migrant organisations through subsidies, seminars and counselling, and collaborates with NGOs on specific projects. Examples of FAVI's activities include a theatre project on different religions and initiatives

that enhance the integration of migrants through promoting their membership in mainstream athletic clubs.

In contrast, there is no institutionalised intercultural or inter-religious dialogue in the city and no strategy was established to bring groups of different ethnic, cultural or religious backgrounds systematically together. While most interviewed experts, in particular the city staff, did not see the need for such a dialogue, some interviewees – mainly representatives of minority religions and of some migrant groups – regret the absence of such a dialogue and would be in favour of more municipal engagement for this.

To conclude, the city's philosophy seems to be quite successful and most interview partners praised the city's approach and efforts. Several municipal activities such as seminars for migrant organisations and mother tongue education could also be adopted by other cities – as well as the city's general strategy to see migrants as individuals that have individual needs and competences and can contribute to the local society and not as 'special' groups with special needs. Some interview partners, however, would also appreciate a higher level of intervention by the city. Since the city – both the political representatives as well as the administrative staff – has a very good reputation among residents, the city could use this standing to initiate both more inter-religious and more intercultural activities.

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List of persons interviewed

The field visit took place from March 22nd to 26th, 2009. The following 57 experts were interviewed individually or participated in one of the group discussions organised in the course of the city visit.

Abdul Aziz, Siham; teacher at Sundsvall's Centre for Mother Tongue Education for Students (*Modersmålscentrum*)

Aldallal, Abozarr; representative of the Islamic Association 'Ahlu-Al-Bait'

Alhadad, Maha; representative of the 'Islamic Cultural Centre'

Alm, Stefan; member of the municipal council ('Moderata Sanlingspartiet') and member of the 'Labour Market, Adult Education and Integration Committee' (NAVI)

Alsén, Paul; headmaster for compulsory education of a junior high school in Sundsvall-Nacksta

Andersson, Ingrid; project leader of the sport project for immigrant children 'Back to Basics'

Andersson, Thomas; social worker at the neighbourhood centre of the Salvation Army in Sundsvall-Nacksta

Árlind, Conny; priest, Catholic Church

Babadjanov, Kudrat; journalist, intern at 'Sveriges Radio' (Sweden's Radio) in Sundsvall

Barth-Bohlin, Barbara; teacher at Sundsvall's Centre for Mother Tongue Education for Students (*Modersmålscentrum*)

Bektöre, Ozlem; teacher at Sundsvall's Centre for Mother Tongue Education for Students (*Modersmålscentrum*)

Björkmann, Catherina; participant in 'Swedish for Immigrants' at 'Lernia Education'

Bornecrantz, Mona; director of the Museum of Sundsvall

Carmichael, Gordon; interpreter

Dirawi, Saleh; integration administrator of the 'Labour Market, Adult Education and Integration Office' (FAVI), city of Sundsvall

Effati, Habib; member of the municipal council ('Moderata Samlingspartiet') and member of the 'Labour Market, Adult Education and Integration Committee' (NAVI)

Elkahtib, Hicham; project leader at the Red Cross office against discrimination

Engholm, Thomas; business development officer of the city of Sundsvall

Engblom, Lena; representative of the trade union 'ST' (union for civil servants) and the umbrella organisation 'TCO' (Confederation of Professional Employees, the Council in Västernorrland)

Gunnarsson, Karin; teacher in the individual programme for newly arrived immigrant students (IVIK), 'Sundsvalls Gymnasium' (high school)

Habib, Muhammed; representative of the Islamic Association 'Ahlu-Al-Bait' in Sundsvall

Hassan, Fadumo; teacher at Sundsvall's Centre for Mother Tongue Education for Students (*Modersmålscentrum*)

Hedman, Bertil; representative of the trade union 'Vårdförbundet' (section health care) and of the umbrella organisation 'TCO' (Confederation of Professional Employees, the Council in Västernorrland)

Hill, Helena; social worker for the municipal social service

Höglund, Arvid; Administrative Development, city of Sundsvall

Kagart, Annika; representative of the trade union 'Sveriges Socionomers Riksförbund' (SSR), the Swedish union of graduates in social science; personnel and public administration, economics and social work

Kalenga, Ma Gloire; teacher at Sundsvall's Centre for Mother Tongue Education for Students (*Modersmålscentrum*)

Karlsson, Berit; social worker for the municipal social service in Sundsvall-Nacksta

Kamf, Anders; coordinator for ‘Swedish for Immigrants’ courses at ‘Lernia Education’

Karabegovic, Kamal; representative of the ‘Bosnian Association’

Lafta, Sameer; representative of the ‘International Association’

Lehrer, Uwe; participant in ‘Swedish for Immigrants’ at ‘Lernia Education’

Lindén, Maria; social worker (for unaccompanied minor migrants) for the municipal social service

Lindgren, Maria; manager of the ‘Body Shop’ in Birsta City in Sundsvall and Representative of the Association of enterprises, Shopping Centre ‘Birsta City’ in Sundsvall

Mahmotovicz, Hamza; representative of the ‘Bosnian Association’

Matthew, Sarah; teacher at Sundsvall’s Centre for Mother Tongue Education for Students (*Modersmålscentrum*)

Mikkonen, Arja; coach at the Internetcafé ‘Cyberia’ (project for unemployed youngsters)

Mohammad, Berivan; member of the municipal council (‘Folkpartiet Liberalerna’)

Moussa, Kinda; teacher at Sundsvall’s Centre for Mother Tongue Education for Students (*Modersmålscentrum*)

Myran Tjemberg, Rita; teacher at Sundsvall’s Centre for Mother Tongue Education for Students (*Modersmålscentrum*)

Nilsson, Rune; director of the ‘Labour Market, Adult Education and Integration Office’ (FAVI), city of Sundsvall

Nilsson, Stefan; vicar and priest, Church of Sweden

Nord, Lotte; journalist and programme conductor, ‘Sveriges Radio’ (Sweden’s radio) in Sundsvall

Nordin, Bengt; coordinator of and teacher in the individual programme for newly arrived immigrant students (IVIK), ‘Sundsvalls Gymnasium’ (high school)

Norman, Morgan; local police officer

Östberg, Per; activity manager, section diversity of the ‘Labour Market, Adult Education and Integration Office’ (FAVI), city of Sundsvall

Pinheiro, João; member of the municipal council (‘Socialdemokraterna’) and Chairman of the ‘Labour Market, Adult Education and Integration Committee’ (NAVI)

Romby, Eva; director of Sundsvall’s Centre for Mother Tongue Education for Students (*Modersmålscentrum*)

Selmros, Sara; representative of the County Board of Västernorrland

Starrin-Persson, Birgitta; Chairwoman of Sundsvall’s Boxing Association

Strömberg, Cathrin; activity manager of the Internetcafé ‘Cyberia’ (project for unemployed youngsters)

Ulin, Eva-Lott; teacher of ‘Swedish for Immigrants’ at ‘Lernia Education’

Wang, Aiton; participant in ‘Swedish for Immigrants’ at ‘Lernia Education’

Wikström, Henrik; project leader of the sport project ‘football plus – Positive leisure activities for immigrant children’, football club ‘GIF Sundsvall’

Yusuf, Mohamud; employment officer at the Jobcentre in Sundsvall

Zarar, Azad; teacher at Sundsvall’s Centre for Mother Tongue Education for Students (*Modersmålscentrum*)

Zhang, Miaomio; participant in ‘Swedish for Immigrants’ at ‘Lernia Education’