

ANNEX III

Summary of the Workshops on Discrimination and Social Inclusion, October 6

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Please observe that this is an annex of the document "6th Baltic Sea NGO Forum Summary", which can be found at www.bsngoforum.org.

Introduction

Presenter: Ms. Soledad Piñero Misa, Sweden

Rapporteur: Ms. Karol Vieker, Sweden

The Essence of Soledad's Remarks

It is not the world that you dream of that makes the difference, but the world you take an active part in creating.

“Practice what you preach.” We have a tendency to not practice what we preach when we're stressed. It's important to do what you say and say what you do.

1. Personal Experience

Soledad's mother came as political refugee to Sweden, and she felt very lonely. So she gave birth to Soledad, whose name means “loneliness” in Spanish. Soledad now feels that “loneliness” is a theme that goes through everything she does, especially in discrimination and social inclusion work. In Sweden people talk about immigrants and Swedes as two opposites. It's important to think about how the words we use include or exclude people.

2. Experience of Working with NGOs

Discrimination: Unfair treatment of a person on the basis of prejudice

We can never get rid of our own prejudices. My prejudice influences what I see. And sometimes people see me as someone I am not, and I sometimes see people as someone they are not.

Organizations who work for human rights and against discrimination must be role models. This is not always the case. They sometimes reproduce the same discrimination they are working against in their own organizations. We need to create the change we want to see.

3. Importance of Intersectionality

Definition: “An intersectional approach to analyzing the disempowerment of marginalized individuals attempts to capture the consequences of the interaction between two or more forms of subordination. It addresses the manner in which racism, patriarchy, class, heteronormativity, oppression and other discriminatory systems create inequalities.

Moreover, intersectionality addresses the way that specific acts and policies operate together to create further disempowerment. For instance, race, ethnicity, gender, or class, are often seen as separate spheres of experience which determine social, economic and political dynamics of oppression. But in fact, the systems often overlap and cross over each other, creating complex intersections at which two or three or more of these axes may meet. Indeed racially subordinated women are often positioned in the space where racism or xenophobia, class and gender meet. They are consequently subject to injury by the heavy flow of traffic traveling along these roads.”

You have to try to be the change you want to see in the world. You must try to have an intersectional approach so that your organization reflects the anti-discrimination values you are working for the rest of the world to have. When you work against discrimination and you yourself discriminate, you damage your legitimacy and do even more damage to the people you are trying to help.

“Later” may never come, so work in the now.

Workshop A: Alternative Reporting on Human Rights

Presenter: Ms. Annika Åkerberg, The Swedish Disability Federation

Rapporteur: Ms. Maryanne Rönnersten, The Swedish Disability Federation

The Presentation: The Swedish Disability Federation and Alternative Reports

The Swedish Disability Federation, HSO, has 43 member organisations. HSO has produced an alternative report to the official Swedish report on the UN covenant on economic, social and cultural rights.

The alternative report consists of three parts:

- Descriptions of the actual situation today for people with disabilities in Sweden in relation to the rights of the covenant,
- What the Swedish organisations of people with disabilities think about this situation,
- Recommendations on what measures are needed to ensure the human rights of people with disabilities in Sweden.
- HSO is now working with a second alternative report on the UN covenant on civil and political rights.

Some Important HR Documents

The Declaration on Human Rights from 1948 is the first and most basic international document on human rights. Basic principles from the Declaration:

- All people have the same dignity and rights,
- All forms of discriminations are forbidden,
- The rights are the same all over the world,
- The state is the provider of the rights,
- The individual is the holder of the rights.

The rights of a declaration are not legally binding. Therefore the declaration was developed into some conventions and in 1966 came:

- The covenant on civil and political rights,
- The covenant on economic, social and cultural rights.

Today there are also other conventions, for example on the rights of women, children and so on. Right now a new convention is waiting for adoption by the General Assembly of the UN – a convention on the human rights of people with disabilities. The conventions are legally binding when a state has ratified it.

The Monitoring System

When a state has ratified a convention the state has – with certain intervals - to report to the monitoring system of the UN on how the state is fulfilling the convention.

Expected Results of Alternative Reporting

A good alternative report will give a summarized picture of the situation for a certain group of people in a country. At the same time the group will get a clear picture of their situation in relation to the rights of the convention and what opinions they have in common and the

recommendations that everyone has adopted. The alternative report will be treated by the monitoring committee as a complement to the state-report. The recommendations of the alternative report might be used as a basis for recommendations to the state in question.

Alternative Reporting

Step 1 is to find out what conventions the state has ratified. In an alternative report, all rights or some of the rights can be used. The Swedish alternative report covers all rights that we have found relevant for people with disabilities in Sweden.

Four areas should be treated in a report:

- An individual violating focus,
- Laws documenting the way laws violate or protect the HR,
- Case laws,
- General government policies and programmes.

It is important to use the General Comments of the Committee to interpret each article. It is also important to follow the Guidelines of the Committee on how an alternative report can be built up and structured. Cooperation with other groups who might be discriminated against is important to ensure that the recommendations do not violate the rights of any group.

The process when the Swedish alternative report was drawn up was:

- Collection of facts, compilation and analysis,
- Discussions in a work group,
- Contacts with representatives from all member organisations of HSO,
- Seminars to discuss the text to each article,
- Discussions on the recommendations on meetings for the presidents of HSO's member organisations,
- Adoption of the report at the General Assembly of HSO in May, 2006.

The following questions were discussed in two working groups:

Will people have the possibility to exercise the right in the article in your country? If not, what major obstacles are there? Treat every point in the article.

Describe any differences between men and women, older and younger, persons with disabilities, etc.

How can you collect information concerning the situation in your country?

What methods would you use to find out what recommendations the NGOs in your country would like to give to the committee?

Define the work team and actors involved in the process to produce a report.

Does your organisation have the necessary economic or personal resources that are needed to produce a report? If not, what can you do to get them? What will be your first step?

If you had the possibility to produce an alternative report, how would you use it?

Aspects to Report Back On

Major obstacles facing people or groups of people to exercise these rights.

Answers: Sometimes there are good laws but they are not always implemented.

A lot depends on attitudes and lack of knowledge. It is difficult to find real legal obstacles; it is more a matter of practice and attitudes.

Interesting and innovative ways to find statistics and information about the extent of violation of these rights.

Answers: Lots of resources can be used such as authorities, workshops and seminars where people can discuss, the media, other NGOs, surveys, inventories, and universities. It is important to use reliable resources to be sure that the facts are really true.

One way of concentrating the resources (in an organisation with scarce resources) when drawing up an alternative report can be to focus on just one or two articles.

A summary of questions 4 and 5.

Answer: Networking can be a way of identifying the recommendations for an alternative report.

Give examples of how you can use an alternative report in your own country.

Answer: The alternative report can be used as a way of spreading information through the media. The report can be used to inform local authorities on different levels of society, national, regional and locally on the real situation in relation to the human rights. At the same time authorities and NGOs will obtain better knowledge about the situation for different groups.

Workshop B: Prejudices – An Interactive Anti-Discrimination Workshop

Presenter: Ms. Zofia Lapniewska, The Network of East-West Women, Poland

Rapporteur: Karol Vieker, The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights (RFSL)

First part of the seminar: Games and discussion

A. Problem Analysis

Introduction

This interactive anti-discrimination workshop is dedicated to the people from various NGOs who deal with discriminated minorities and marginalized or excluded social groups. Through the various games participants have chance to play the role of such a marginalized person, with her or his problems, and the reality and fears she/he faces every day. The games help in understanding where stereotypes come from and why are they created, what the differences between people are that allow us to categorize and divide the world, and on the other side what similarities connect us, do we follow the facts and knowledge or intuition, are the sources of information reliable and finally what circumstances influences our decisions?

Game: Line of Life

Goals: group integration, getting to know the experiences of others, breaking the barrier of stress by talking to the forum about personal life

Discussion: Examples of times you have experienced or witnessed discrimination

- Children of divorced parents (“not a real family”)
- Children taking the side of bullies in school, but taking the side of the person being bullied outside of school
- Foreigners being beaten up by skinheads
- Girls not allowed to take woodworking class in school; forced instead to take sewing
- Gypsies not allowed to go into restaurants
- Jews not allowed to choose which university to attend
- Jews not inviting Muslims to their homes or workplaces
- Muslim men being viewed as sexist or being openly attacked by young people for no reason
- Children being bullied because they are considered to be “strange”, and others not trying to stop the bullying
- Polish people being considered to be thieves in other countries
- Swedish women considered to want to have sex with anyone they meet
- Difficult for immigrants to get good jobs, even if they have high levels of education
- Criteria for a job appear to be made to fit a certain person or Western Europeans
- At a university, only Asians were in the management of and members of a research team
- Women believed to be unable to provide a technical engineering solution
- Only male colleagues using their own network to form a working group
- Russian women being asked to leave a restaurant because other customers felt uncomfortable with them being there
- No accommodation for a blind man to take part in a seminar
- Different prices for men and women to get into clubs
- People discriminated against because of age or disability
- Children wearing glasses teased and made fun of
- People with certain pets losing their friends because of the pet
- Transgender woman not allowed to attend a party that was only for women

Game: River of Expectations

Goals: expectations from this workshop and forum, discussion about the expectations and motivation to participate in such workshops, getting to know fears connected with workshop participation, letting the presenter to refer to the information received

Inspiration, energy, frustrations, threats, results

Discussion – Key Questions:

What inspires us? Motivates? Equal rights, sisterhood, love, meeting new people, the question of discrimination, equality, activeness in discrimination issues, knowing/meeting people from other countries/cultures, sharing experiences with others, human rights

What gives us energy to do things? Family, friends, the future, working for/with people working for the same goals, community, successful examples, partnerships, love, politics, the dream of evolution, need for equality

What frustrates you? Why do we give up? Societal structures, when discriminated groups fight/discriminate against each other, misunderstandings, bad communication, stupid hate, unjust treatment, nationalism, religious fanatics, lack of integration

What are the dangers and threats? People who don't care, personal agendas, threat of war, desire for money and power, that we consider our issues to be the most important ones, middle-class heterosexual men, different expectations from participants, inability to change

And what is the moral? The message to the world? Results? Same rights and possibilities for all, that all people are the same, tolerant society, more equal and including society, world peace, friendship, open minds, networks/new partnerships and common projects, awareness of the mechanisms behind discrimination

Second part of the Workshop: What is discrimination?

B. Prejudices, Discrimination, Exclusion

Background – Spots Game

Goals: to initiate the discussion about exclusion, to let the participants to feel the emotions of an excluded person, to show the relationship between the minorities and the majority

Discussion

How did the person who wasn't accepted by any group feel?

Invisible, everyone was looking at others, but not at me

Was it difficult to reject that person?

No, we didn't see her

What did you feel while looking for the appropriate group?

Happiness, felt good to find the group, warm feeling to belong to a community

Is this situation somehow related to reality? Can you give some examples?

Yes. Drinking coffee during the break with people from the same country during a conference. Or, just the opposite, trying to distance yourself from people from your home country/people speaking your native language.

Were you ever in a similar situation? Which side did you stand on: the excluded person or the one that is excluding others? What were the circumstances and course of this event?
(NOTE: Question not addressed in workshop.)

We look for our own group and ignore others, often without even realizing that we are doing so.

Stereotypes Clock - Game

Goals: letting the group know how often we use stereotypes, raising awareness about how strong the influence of prejudices and stereotypes is in our relationships to other people, introduction to the discussion about stereotypes and their functions within society

Discussion

Which associations reply often and why?

Why are we simplifying our reality? Why do we categorize?

In which ways do stereotypes appear and become consolidated within society?

(NOTE: Game not carried out due to time constraints.)

Euro Rail La Carte - Game

Goals: raising awareness about the tolerance borders, getting to know the mechanism of stereotyping, confrontation of various stereotypes

Discussion

- Is it harder to choose the people you want to meet in the train compartment or those who you definitely do not want to meet?

Both were considered to be difficult and easy

- Is this situation realistic? Have any of you ever been in a similar situation?

No, you never know who you'll be traveling with.

- When we take a decision – is it up to factual knowledge we have or according to intuitions/generalizations?

According to intuitions/generalizations; easier to make a decision where no risk is perceived
We act on our own prejudices against people we perceive to be “negative” (such as skinheads).

- What are our sources of information concerning those people? Can they be trusted?

(NOTE: Question not addressed in workshop.)

- What factors finally determine the decisions we take? Is it nationality and social and ethnic group belonging or the individual characteristics of that person?

(NOTE: Question not addressed in workshop.)

- How would you feel in a situation in which no one would like to share a train compartment with you?

How you feel depends on your own experiences and self-esteem (if you are always the one left out, you won't feel good, even if you sometimes want to be alone)

C. How can NGOs cooperate to help solve problems and make use of good practice? What can authorities on the local, national and regional level do? What can NGOs and authorities do together?

Discrimination - Brainstorm

Discrimination – an assumption we make about a group based on prejudice that undervalues the group and creates barriers for the group (either consciously or subconsciously)

Direct discrimination – is usually obvious and you can see it (such as being denied a job because you are a woman)

Indirect discrimination – is more hidden, under the surface, harder to perceive (such as requiring a skill for a job when the skill in reality is not really needed for the job)

Workshop C: Strategic Cooperation – Advancing the Achievements of NGOs

Presenters:

Anette Sjödin, The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights (RFSL)

Zofia Lapniewska, The Network of East-West Women

Eduardas Platovas, Lithuanian Gay League

Rapporteurs:

Karol Vieker and Thomas Laurell, The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights (RFSL)

(NOTE: See also PowerPoint presentations at www.bsngoforum.org)

First part of the seminar: Presentation and discussion

A. Problem Analysis

Introduction

Why this seminar?

NGOs can make a greater impact on society if they cooperate with others. The seminar presents practical and well-tried methods of cooperation, with the aim to influence policies and attitudes and develop the work against discrimination.

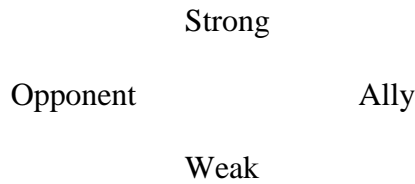
A success factor, not the least from the perspective of NGOs, is cooperation between organizations as well as across national borders. Experiences from cooperating with trade unions, employers, municipalities, governmental institutions, researchers, local authorities and politicians will be presented, as well as experiences from strategic contacts with ministries and politicians at different levels.

The seminar is based on experiences from NGOs in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. The focus is on the practical work that leads to results. Education material, produced in cooperation with other NGOs, as well as successful methods will be presented. Examples of methods for advocacy promoting anti-discrimination will also be presented.

Strategic Thinking

It is important to have a strategy when you start working with an issue. First identify the problem – what is it that we want? Then you have to have a vision of what you want to achieve in the long run. After that, you must identify the next possible step. Then find your allies – who will be willing to work with you on this issue? Who has a common interest in this area and who will benefit? You must also identify your enemies/opponents so that you know how to deal with them. What obstacles exist? Finally, keep to your objectives. There is always something more that you can/want to do, but you must maintain your focus to obtain your objectives.

Model:



An organization could be your ally or your opponent, and they could be a weak or a strong voice in public opinion, for example. The ones who are strong allies are important to work with, and you should also pay attention to those who are strong opponents. Identify them and you will be more effective in your work - you don't need to pay much attention to those allies and opponents who are weak.

Experiences from Poland

We must consider two factors when deciding whether to cooperate with other organizations. Horizontal: Do we represent the same interests? Do we solve the same problems? What plans and strategies do we have? What will the work/funding look like? What will be the results? Vertical: NGOs, governmental sector, corporate sector. On which level do we want to cooperate? Do we want to cooperate internationally (such as on the EU level). Do we want to accept corporate funding from companies that, for example, violate human rights? What are our visions and how will we motivate our partners?

We feel we owe something to other countries that are underprivileged because we once were as well. We have the clear vision that we want gender to be included in the new financial instruments that are being created in the EU. We also want gender to be included in countries' strategy papers. We expect that the outcome will be that women's organizations in underprivileged countries will be able to apply for and receive money.

The idea came from our perspective in Poland. There is no dialog between the government and NGOs, especially women's organizations. No one in the government cares about what minorities think. So we complain to Brussels, and they then bring up the issues with the Polish government.

It is always better to cooperate than to not cooperate. That way, we can achieve more. We can teach other organizations about how they can work in order to succeed and we can share our own experiences with them and others. We fight for the same things and can put pressure on other groups (such as governments).

Discussion:

It's easy to find partners to talk about the vision, but more difficult to really talk about how to really get things done. It's important to have face-to-face meetings. Otherwise you will just talk about the methods and not actually achieve results (get things done).

If you have differences of opinions, you may have to find compromises in order to achieve your greater goals.

How do you find similar organizations? Cooperate with other networks to find similar organizations and gain support in your work. However, you don't cooperate with all of the organizations in a network all the time. Rather, you work with one another with different projects and at different times. Sometimes you actually do things together; other times you

just share information with one another. There is strength in numbers – together you can achieve more than you can alone.

Experiences from Lithuania

Have cooperated with national and international NGOs and networks, national equality bodies, national working groups, national authorities, media and researchers.

We want to mainstream equality and non-discrimination issues, and promote human rights understanding, among other things.

We are working with national reports and action plans for strategies for social protection and social inclusion. The government is hostile and does not want to include lesbians and gays in such reports and plans.

Some difficulties we face are lack of understanding of specific human rights/discrimination issues. We have many opponents of our vision of human rights. We are not fully recognized by local civil authorities. We also have problems with bureaucratic treatment of NGOs, and unequal resources (funding challenges). With international cooperation, we also have cultural and management differences.

Some benefits are exchanges of experience and good practices, contributing to the human rights agenda, influencing decision-making processes, promoting inclusive society, gaining better community representation, and enhancing organizational capacity building. We also influence public opinion.

Results achieved included successful lobbying of legislative improvements, empowering groups who experience social exclusion, building alliances, and raising awareness and reducing the scope of discrimination.

Discussion:

Is it easier to get results through Brussels? It should be two in one. You must work on both the national and international level. The international level is especially important if you can't achieve results on the national level. You can lobby the EU parliament and through international networks. The EU and international opinion can then put pressure on national governments to execute the law and apply EU directives.

Cooperation on the national level: Does that bring legitimacy to your organization in public opinion? It is very important, but sometimes we have to tell, for example, the Equality Ombudsman what to do.

Experiences from Sweden

RFSL historically worked very hard to change Swedish legislation, and has achieved quite a bit of success. Lately, RFSL has worked more with projects – working with other partners to, for example, fight discrimination and negative attitudes in working life.

We cooperate with employers, trade unions, research institutions, government authorities, and other NGOs. They are important to us because of the power, influence, responsibilities, knowledge, and obligations they possess.

Difficulties

Sometimes trade unions and employers are on opposite sides and have different agendas/priorities. It can be hard to agree on a message. Also, research institutions want to be independent (they don't want to do what we want them to do). In addition, authorities have government restrictions. And NGOs lack resources and sustainability.

The arguments for how to get organizations involved are the same as why they are important to have included (because of the power, influence, responsibilities, knowledge, and obligations they possess).

There was a common understanding that the legislation was in place and a general opinion that expressed a need. There was a clearly defined area within the line of work for the organization.

Results

You are listened to by different groups, and there is more knowledge and more resources.

Swedish EU/EQUAL Projects (with focus on sexual orientation)

Homosexuals and Bisexuals in the Care System (HoBiCare)

Normgiving Diversity (focus on the police, Swedish church, and the military)

All Clear (which is the result of a merger of the two projects)

Beneath the Surface (focus on the school system)

Access to Justice (focus on age, disability, and sexual orientation)

Discussion:

Have you actively tried to find allies in the media? Yes, some of the projects have a communications officer who works with media contacts.

It is important for cooperating organizations to work towards the same goal, but you also educate the organizations you work with in order to get them to put your issue on the agenda.

Discussion – Key Questions:

You must first clearly identify your goals.

With whom do we wish to cooperate?

Local level: local authorities (depending on the country)

National level: governments, ministries, NGOs on the national level

Find organizations that have the goals that you have – first on the local level. You must then have good communication. Does the organization need you and is it available to work with you? Then you need to have critical feedback.

Why is it important to cooperate with this specific type(s) of organisation(s)?

These are the normal channels of influence to implement/improve legislation

Powerful NGOs have experience and can offer assistance

Because they have the same goals and are available/able to work with you

What difficulties could we expect and how can they be overcome?

Are we still independent or not? It is also very sad to think that governments cooperate with us only because they are forced to. On a local level it is also hard to get them to understand that they need to cooperate with NGOs.

You may have differing principles or different levels of goals.
People in different organizations can be difficult to work with.
There may be structural difficulties in working together (for example, one organization may be able to make decisions quickly while another may be very hierarchical and take a long time to make a decision).
The external political/legal/financial environments may influence the work negatively.

How do we manage to bring the organisation “on board”?

Talking about concrete suggestions, not just complaints, is a good place to start.
Find common aims and goals, and establish good communication.

In what area is it possible/not possible to cooperate?

It is not possible to cooperate if principles are not the same; we may not have common goals, but we need to respect one another’s goals and find the goals we do have in common.

What results could we expect to achieve, thanks to this particular kind of cooperation?

We become visible and are able to influence others.
We may not have to wait as long to achieve our goals.
Self-assurance increases because our competence and professionalism is recognized.
We reach our goals.

Second part: Conclusion following the conference format

B. How can NGOs cooperate to help solve problems and make use of good practice?

Background (if needed)

Easier to do if you know what your goals are and what you want to do.
Roles of NGOs:
Be a “disturbing factor”
Improve the quality of life

Proposal

Share experiences
Find common values and principles
Tell others (such as authorities) that you are ready and willing to cooperate

C. What can authorities on the local, national and regional level do?

Background

There is a need for cooperation with NGOs.

Proposal

Authorities can ask NGOs for their ”expert” opinion/information.

D. What can NGOs and authorities do together?

NGOs can be an expert partner for authorities.

E. Participants' roles/interest in creating a Thematic Working Group to continue to work with this theme/issue?

Background

What can we do within the Baltic Sea NGO Network, why, and how?

Proposal

- Provide independent, authoritative input
- Involve immigrant organizations
- Make good experiences/results part of the structure of how we work (as well as sharing our mistakes so that others don't make the same mistakes). We don't need to reinvent the wheel.
- Identify the common problems that we have; then we can identify our goals.
- Sustainability – how do we continue to work so that problems finally are solved?
- We need to keep this forum alive!

Workshop D: A Democratic Understanding of Inclusion – The Interplay Between Different Grounds of Discrimination

Presenters:

Annica Holmberg, Forum Syd
Paul Lappalainen, Center Against Rasism

Rapporteurs:

Johanna Hofsten, Sweden's Women's Lobby
Lovise Brade, Sweden's Women's Lobby

First part of the seminar: Presentation and discussion

A. Problem Analysis

This workshop examined the concept of intersectionality, which refers to the way in which different power structures intersect and constitute one another. People live multiple, layered identities. Different types of discrimination occur as a consequence of the combination of identities and experiences. Different categories constitute one another and the intersections result in new categories/positions. Gender is racialised, class is gendered, sexuality is class marked and so on. This way of looking at power means not adding one oppression or discrimination to another, but to see how different identity combinations produce substantively different experiences.

The workshop discussed intersectionality in relation to how organisations work internally and how organisations can cooperate in order to push the anti-discrimination agenda forward.

Discrimination within Organisations. Annica Holmberg

Annica focused on the way we create power, how our work within our organisations may exclude or include other people. She argued that we often tend to enhance the sameness that we experience as a group in order to claim our rights. But this means that we enhance the notion of “us” and “them” and thus forget to look at the structures in our own organisations.

Cooperation Against Discrimination Between Organisations. Paul Lappalainen

Paul spoke of structural discrimination and governmental report “The Blue and Yellow Glass House: Structural Discrimination in Sweden”. He argued that rules, norms, routines, attitudes and behaviour put up obstacles for minorities when struggling for the same rights and opportunities that are available to the majority of the population. We also tend to place the responsibility on the discriminated groups instead of blaming the people who have power to discriminate.

Because of these power structures in society, groups that are discriminated against sometimes do not communicate with one another since they might experience that they need to compete for the very limited media attention available. As NGOs, we need to focus on what we can gain from cooperating with one another instead of on what we might lose.

Second part: Conclusion following the conference format

B. How can NGOs cooperate to help solve problems and make use of good practise?

Background

In order for NGOs to find ways of cooperating, the group felt the need to first of all develop an understanding for our different circumstances as NGOs from different countries. For example, in Sweden we get paid for our NGO work, something which is not always the case elsewhere. It was stressed that resources might not be a requirement for good cooperation. Organisations with very little money have shown how they are working together much more efficiently than those with better resources. We have a lot of issues in common but we need to improve our knowledge and understanding of each other's work.

Proposal

Cooperating successfully in the future requires ways of communicating and sharing information about our work and experiences. We could get together to share good examples of successful methods of anti-discrimination work for example. International networking is important, as well as remembering that not everyone will be able to access information equally since not everyone speaks English, has access to the Internet or is able to see, for example. Therefore we need multiple ways of sharing information. We must be aware of who we exclude when we decide on specific forms of communicating with one another, and make those choices visible. Ways of sharing information could be a joint website, a newsletter or a mailing list, for example.

C. What can authorities on the local, national and regional level do?

See below.

D. What can NGOs and authorities do together?

Background

Very different situations in the different countries. Some organisations take bigger risks with their work since they express opinions not accepted by their government.

Proposal

It can sometimes be problematic cooperating with authorities since the terms rarely will be defined by the NGOs. Many participants feared the consequences of strategic cooperation with official authorities. Therefore, resources should be allocated in order to strengthen the NGOs in their capacity to challenge the government rather than forcing them to act according to governments' requirements.

E. Participants' roles/interest in creating a Thematic Working Group to continue to work with this theme/issue?

To be discussed on Saturday.

THEMATIC SUMMARY: DISCRIMINATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

A. Problem Analysis

In the countries around the Baltic Sea, people are discriminated against on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religious belief, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, and social background. These are often seen as separate spheres of experience that determine social, economic and political dynamics of oppression. But in fact, the systems often overlap and cross over each other, creating complex intersections at which two or three or more of these axes may meet.

People who are discriminated against are unable to lead life to the fullest and are denied their right to social inclusion. It is a basic human right to not be discriminated against.

In addition, organizations who work for human rights and against discrimination must be role models. This is not always the case. They sometimes reproduce the same discrimination they are working against in their own organizations. Therefore, we need to create the change we want to see.

B. How can NGOs cooperate to help solve problems and make use of good practice?

Background

It is easier to solve problems if you know what your goals are and what you want to do.

In order for NGOs to find ways of cooperating, you first of all have to develop an understanding for our different circumstances as NGOs from different countries. For example, in Sweden, you sometimes get paid for your NGO work, something that is not always the case elsewhere. It was stressed that resources might not be a requirement for good cooperation. Organisations with very little money have shown how they are working together much more efficiently than those with better resources. We have a lot of issues in common but we need to improve our knowledge and understanding of each other's work.

Proposal

- Share experiences
- Find common values and principles
- Tell others (such as authorities) that you are ready and willing to cooperate

Cooperating successfully in the future requires ways of communicating and sharing information about our work and experiences. We could get together to share good examples of successful methods of anti-discrimination work for example. International networking is important, as well as remembering that not everyone will be able to access information equally since not everyone speaks English, has access to the Internet or is able to see, for example. Therefore we need multiple ways of sharing information. We must be aware of who we exclude when we decide on specific forms of communicating with one another, and make those choices visible. Ways of sharing information could be a joint website, a newsletter or a mailing list, for example.

NGOs can always use networking, for example as a way to identify the recommendations for an alternative report to influence the local, regional, and national authorities.

C. What can authorities on the local, national and regional level do?

Background

There is a need for cooperation with NGOs.

Proposal

Authorities can ask NGOs for their “expert” opinion/information. They can obtain better knowledge about the situation for different groups by using an alternative report as a source of information.

D. What can NGOs and authorities do together?

Background

Very different situations in the different countries. Some organisations take bigger risks with their work since they express opinions not accepted by their government.

Proposal

NGOs can be an expert partner for authorities. However, it can sometimes be problematic cooperating with authorities since the terms rarely will be defined by the NGOs. Many participants fear the consequences of strategic cooperation with official authorities. Therefore, resources should be allocated in order to strengthen the NGOs in their capacity to challenge the government rather than forcing them to act according to governments’ requirements.

E. Participants’ roles/interest in creating a Thematic Working Group to continue to work with this theme/issue?

Background

What can we do within the Baltic Sea NGO Network, why, and how?

Proposal

- Provide independent, authoritative input
- Involve immigrant organizations
- Make good experiences/results part of the structure of how we work (as well as sharing our mistakes so that others don’t make the same mistakes). We don’t need to reinvent the wheel.
- Identify the common problems that we have; then we can identify our goals.
- Sustainability – how do we continue to work so that problems finally are solved?
- We need to keep this forum alive!