WELFARE AND VALUES IN EUROPE:
FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTISE OF SOCIAL COHESION

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This special section of *Beliefs and Values* explores welfare and values in Europe, particularly the findings of *Welfare and Values in Europe: Transitions Related to Religion, Minorities, and Gender (WaVE)* (study conducted from 2006 to 2009). The article's aim is three-fold: 1) to put the WaVE project in the context of European welfare changes and dilemmas, with a focus on introducing the realities and theories of social cohesion in the current transformation of Europe; 2) to examine core policy recommendations formulated on the basis of WaVE studies; and 3) to point out certain future directions of European social cohesion on the basis of policy recommendations linked to current discussion. This article will also briefly introduce the other WaVE articles of this issue.

Keywords: European Union, values, policies, multiculturalism, social cohesion, minorities

INTRODUCING WELFARE AND VALUES IN EUROPE

This special section of *Beliefs and Values* concentrates in part on welfare and values in Europe. A research project entitled *Welfare and Values in Europe: Transitions Related to Religion, Minorities, and Gender (WaVE)*, which lasted for three years (February 2006 – February 2009), was funded by the European Commission Sixth Framework (FP6) and coordinated by the Centre for the Study of Religion and Society at Uppsala University, Sweden. The team of researchers involved included juniors and seniors from 15 universities across Europe, altogether more than 30 researchers.[1] The core topic – European welfare – is very timely; various recent and current changes and discussions include welfare state retrenchments, reduction of public welfare and the increasing role of private welfare solutions, inclusion of minorities inside welfare systems, gender aspects of welfare (including the development of family-friendly policies), the role of volunteerism, and, above all, the social impact of the current economic crisis.

The WaVE project was qualitative and inductive in approach. Through contextually designed case studies in 12 countries and 13 medium-sized towns,[2] the researchers aimed to show trends in social cohesion and/or conflict between different communities throughout Europe in the domain of welfare provision. The studies focused on 1) the values expressed by majority religions in their interaction with minority communities in the domain of social welfare needs and provision; 2) the values expressed by minority groups (especially religious minorities) in their use of welfare services and in their search for alternatives; and, 3) the gender-related values underpinning conceptions of welfare and practices in welfare provision in the localities under examination, both in majority and minority communities. A national and local overview was drawn for each case at the beginning of the project, forming the basis for all analyses and interpretations.

In all WaVE studies, researchers focused on particular groups and themes having relevance to majority-minority relations in their local context. As Fokas (2009)[3] has noted in the comparative cross-country analysis of WaVE studies, the minority

groups studied formed an intertwining network of religious, ethnic, linguistic, and gender groups; for example, Polish immigrants were studied in the Greek case, and Greek immigrants studied in the German case.[4] Also, the thematic perspectives varied from case to case, shifting focus from immigration policy to reproductive health policy, care for the elderly, educational programs, employment policy, or administration of benefits. Despite varying themes, all WaVE studies shared the methodology of in-depth fieldwork, which helped the researchers to dig deep into welfare and values as ground-level practises and expressions. The researchers observed majority-minority interaction in the domain of welfare and, based on the observations, offered analyses of the causes and mechanisms of conflict and/or cohesion between majorities and minorities in Europe. There were both advantages and limitations to such a research design. For example, by focusing on the grass-root level, researchers could grasp manifold information in local circumstances; on the other hand, the local nature of data remains very strong, and generalizations and comparisons need to be sensitive to this fact. In the end, the WaVE project examined a range of problems encountered in the domain of welfare, and proposed various solutions and efforts towards social cohesion in diverse societies across Europe (Fokas, 2009, pp. 6-8).

The comparative cross-country analysis summarized several factors causing conflict and/or cohesion between majorities and minorities, ranging from practical arrangements (such as language differences) to ideologies (such as immigration policies). Furthermore, the analysis showed that the factors having more or less positive results in creating social cohesion were often ambiguous. For example, welfare provision by majority religious communities – which often filled major gaps left by the state welfare supply – was seen as positive in the sense that these services were made available to minorities; at the same time, these services caused problems because of the possible strings attached, such as expectations that recipients participate in religious activities in return for services. Another critique concerned the lack of a systematic approach, or "ad hoc" basis to the services. Having personal contacts was found to be very critical in the meeting of many minority welfare needs, again referring to particularism

rather than universalism in religiously motivated welfare provision. Challenges also were found in the cultural competence -- or rather, the lack of competence -- of welfare workers, leading to the need for better awareness of the religious and cultural needs of minorities (Fokas, 2009, pp. 11-17, 33).

One problem in particular appeared throughout the findings: A one-dimensional definition and representation of minorities appeared to be a crucial issue in all of the WaVE data. This was seen to lead to a more conservative and unison approach towards minorities than needed. The cross-country analysis also showed that the barriers between minorities and welfare were more practical than systemic. Here, the question of adequate information and communication between different groups was a focal point, as in the channelling of information regarding available services in minority languages and through accessible distribution systems. Minorities also seemed to be active within their own networks, especially regarding education, children, and youth, and several interviewees noted that the majority could learn a lot from their social ties, cohesion, and family values.[5] At the same time, these networks led to deeply ambiguous questions. For example, it was very debatable whether such networks were seen to lead to greater social cohesion or to segregation from the majority, depending on each respondent's vantage point (Fokas, 2009, pp. 14-21, 33).

Concerning gender, the WaVE studies interestingly revealed that the major European debates on Muslim women (such as head-scarf issues or female circumcision) rarely appeared explicit on welfare agendas at the local level. Here, the gender needs became apparent in more practical issues like providing sporting facilities which met the needs of women. In addition, women were seen as an important link between majorities and minorities through the healthcare services (like reproductive health issues), and acted in central roles in the above-mentioned social networks. All in all, both positive and negative prejudice prevailed among minorities and majorities (e.g., concerning family values), which also were associated with in-group tension (e.g., between different generations). Many tensions regarding gender issues seemed to prevail in the context of religious and secular

divisions rather than between different ethnic and religious groups (Fokas, 2009, pp. 21-25).

In this article, we will dive deeper into the WaVE from three intertwined and complementary perspectives:

1) We will put the WaVE project in the context of European welfare changes and dilemmas. The special focus will be on introducing the realities and theories of social cohesion in the current transformation of Europe.

2) We will examine policy recommendations, formulated on the basis of WaVE studies, which are closely connected to the research results but add a practical and functional perspective.

3) We will direct the focus to a wider scope, as some European social cohesion can be encouraged through policy recommendations.

At the end of this article, we will also provide an introduction to three country-specific analyses of WaVE data represented in this special section of *Beliefs and Values*.

SOCIAL COHESION AS A CHALLENGE TO EUROPEAN SOCIETIES

Cohesion versus conflict is an everyday dilemma in all welfare systems, including Europe. Discrimination on grounds of ethnic origin was seen by majority (61%) of Europeans to be the most widespread discrimination in the European Union (EU) in 2009, followed by discrimination on the basis of age (58%), disability (53%), sexual orientation (47%), gender (40%), and religion or belief (39%) (European Commission, 2009). Around a quarter of EU citizens report that they have witnessed discrimination in the last 12 months. However, there is a strong connection between being a part of a minority group and the experience of discrimination. Those who see themselves as a part of a minority are more likely to experience discrimination, particularly on the grounds of disability, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. There are massive variations among EU countries in that respect: Swedes, Austrians, and Danes reported having witnessed discrimination to a much greater extent than was the case in Malta, Lithuania, or Romania. That does not mean that discrimination in the latter group of countries is less widespread; rather, it seems clear that social composition (ethnic, religious affiliation, etc.) and public social sensitivity and knowledge about discrimination are important factors in recognizing discrimination.

Furthermore, concerning immigration, European attitudes have become a bit more negative in the period 2006-2009, though half (54%) of EU citizens believe that people from other ethnic groups enrich the cultural identity of their country. Europeans are evenly divided on whether the presence of people from other ethnic groups causes insecurity. This feeling is more prevalent among older people, less educated people, retired manual labourers, and house persons, and is represented to varying degrees in different countries. The highest perception of insecurity caused by immigrants is found in Cyprus (82%) and Greece (78%), followed by Malta, the UK, Denmark, and the Czech Republic. On the other hand, majorities in Poland, Finland, France, and Croatia disagree that the presence of other ethnic groups is a cause of insecurity. It also is interesting to note that although half of Europeans agree with the statement that immigrants play an important role in developing greater understanding and tolerance, one third disagrees, while 12% are uncertain (said it depends), and 8% do not know (European Commission, 2010a, pp. 51-58).

Thus, in spite of all EU programs and welfare state efforts, discrimination on various grounds seems not to be diminishing in Europe; quite the contrary. There is a growing literature that analyzes a possible trade-off between growing ethnic diversity and welfare solidarity (Zrinščak, 2011). One presumption is that growing ethnic diversity undermines the social basis of welfare states, which were built on the idea of solidaristic (more homogeneous) social and national development after World War II. If the European welfare states lose the social grounds for existing welfare models, they eventually can become similar to the American, more individualistic welfare model (Alesina & Glaeser, 2004). On the other hand, this claim is not supported by other analyses. Quite the contrary, in several countries it is exactly those people who view immigrants as a threat who would welcome an increase in the security offered by the state (Ervasti et al., 2008). Still, almost all other analyses leave questions about future trends

open. Peter Taylor-Gooby (2005) has concluded, for instance, that diversity does have a negative impact on welfare spending, but so far a very weak one. Keith Banting and Will Kymlicka (2004, 2006) do not find any significant relationship between multicultural policies and welfare states, and Banting (2005) points to the complexity of relations between ethnic diversity, multiculturalism, and welfare states. Ervasti et al. (2008) have indicated that attitudes are the most positive in the European countries with the highest welfare spending (such as Finland and Sweden); attitudes towards foreigners seem to be most positive in countries with high economic wellbeing and careful social politics. Furthermore, Steffen Mau and Christoph Burkhardt (2009) conclude that inclusion of foreigners into the welfare states is not without problems, but the mediating institutional arrangements are a "key factor [in] whether inclusion is institutionally organized and whether social benefit schemes have been constructed in such a way that they reinforce or lessen conflicts over distribution" (p. 226). Still, the main message seems to be that a considerable shift from "promotion of multiculturalism" to "promotion of integration" or "promotion of assimilation" (Afonso, 2005; Brubaker, 2001; Carrera, 2006; Koopmans, 2009) has occurred, and although analyses of policies do not always confirm the shift, public and political backlash within multicultural discourse has been quite evident (Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2009). However, in examining such processes, differences in national contexts, and particularly in welfare state arrangements, should not be downplayed.

While dealing with the position of religious and ethnic minorities in the welfare system, this article will not go further into the debates on the welfare state, multiculturalism, or social integration. To be more precise, this paper deals with the same subject, but opts for a different approach. This approach is pragmatic – how to move towards social cohesion – and it thus follows the core logic of the empirical project on which it is grounded. Social cohesion is a re-emergent theme in social theory, and reflects a fundamental questioning of the function of societies in the context of rapid social transformation (Green, Preston, & Janmaat, 2006, p. 1; Juul, 2010). As is well known, this question has been at the heart of sociology from its beginning, as sociology itself grew from theoretical reflection about rapidly changing societies in the eve of modernization. Consequently, there is no common definition of the meaning of social cohesion. In different contexts, social cohesion means 1) shared norms and values; 2) a sense of shared identity or belonging to a common community; 3) a sense of continuity and stability; 4) a society with institutions for sharing risks and providing collective welfare; 5) equitable distribution of rights, opportunities, wealth, and income; or 6) a strong civil society and active citizenry (Green, Preston, & Janmaat, 2006, p. 5). These meanings apply to very different contexts, and there are two possible views overall: the individualistic scenario stresses individual rights and choices through markets, while the solidaristic scenario is based on shared values as well as collective and public institutions (such as the collective response to both collective and individual risks in, for example, the Nordic welfare states).

Looking into European practise, the approach of the Council of Europe to social cohesion emphasizes that social cohesion can be found in the ability of society to secure the long-term well-being of all of its members, including providing equitable access to available resources, respecting human dignity with due regard for diversity, recognizing personal and collective autonomy, and encouraging responsible participation (Council of Europe, 2005, p. 23). This framework is based on four basic dimensions of human well-being: fair and equal access, individual and collective dignity, autonomy of the individual, and participation in community life. The methodological usefulness of this framework can be found in its ability to capture the plurality of interests and identities -- that is, to develop non-violent consensual processes to resolve any conflicts based on distribution or identity (Council of Europe, 2005, p. 26). Taking such methodological usefulness a step further, this framework can distinguish between a negative approach (that is, a social inclusion approach, focusing on insufficient social cohesion such as unemployment, social exclusion, crime, and/or conflicts) and a positive approach (territorial cohesion approach, social capital approach, quality of life approach, and access to right approach) (Council of Europe, 2005, p. 39).[6]

Interestingly, the social inclusion approach (although labelled as negative from the Council of Europe view) is crucial for today's European Union strategy in welfare. Following the subsidiarity principle[7], the welfare system (including the pension system, social care system, unemployment benefit, etc.) has remained the purview of the nation states. However, the Treaty of Amsterdam (enforced in 1999) mentioned for the first time the fight against social exclusion as one of the goals of the Community so as to avoid leaving that task solely to national authorities (Ferrera, Matsaganis, & Sacchi, 2002). The Lisbon Strategy from the year 2000 has made a step forward in that regard, envisioning the EU to "become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion" (European Commission, 2000:5). This social cohesion is meant to be achieved through the so-called open method of coordination (OMC), a policy instrument, which, on the Community level, sets basic goals and indicators while leaving implementation at the country level. However, practice on the national level has to be monitored by jointly established measuring instruments and then compared in order to exchange best practice solutions.

Although the Lisbon Strategy has proven to be the basic anchor for social inclusion policies, it has also experienced major problems in its realization (as the targets set up were not accomplished), acknowledged in a mid-term evaluation in 2005. Thus, a document entitled "A New Start for the Lisbon Strategy" (issued by the European Council in 2005) focused a bit more on growth and jobs by not completely neglecting but putting somewhat aside the concept of social cohesion (European Commission, 2005). That in fact reflects a never-ending debate about finding a proper balance between social cohesion (which, although very important, is a rather costly political goal) and the necessity to boost economic realities and create more jobs. A necessary precondition of the latter is, many argue, a need to lower social costs. This debate intensified in the beginning of 2010 during the preparation of the new EU strategy, Europe 2020, which was adopted in June, 2010 by the European Council (European Commission, 2010b). The strategy focuses on "smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth," and the overall aim is to ensure economic, social, and territorial cohesion. As clearly stated, the European Council wants to put together different shared objectives:

> The European Council confirms the five EU headline targets which will constitute shared objectives guiding the action of Member States and the Union as regards promoting employment; improving the conditions for innovation, research and development; meeting our climate change and energy objectives; improving education levels and promoting social inclusion in particular through the reduction of poverty (European Commission, 2010b).

However, there is also an argument that the overall approach, which is basically driven by economics and employment, has not been altered, and that the prime responsibility for social cohesion has remained with national states (Stubbs & Zrinščak, 2010). Therefore, the question is how the EU member states will implement these goals (i.e., how the social needs of different groups will be met in practice).

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON THREE LEVELS

Social cohesion – defined at the individual or social level – is not easy to achieve. That is because the main responsibility of building a socially cohesive society in Europe seems to fall to the national level, while awareness of various situations on the ground level also is needed. Overall, according to the WaVE comparative cross-country analysis, most majority-minority interaction in the domain of welfare lies somewhere between conflict and cohesion, occupying a large grey area. In addition, notions of conflict and cohesion appear in complex, rather than dichotomous, manners; for example, sometimes a conflict is seen as a prerequisite for long-term cohesion. The resource factors (such as time, space and money) and the communicative factors (such as the role of the media or language) prevailed in many cases, thus revealing conflicts of interest rather than conflicts of values. According to WaVE studies, these kinds of everyday factors have a remarkable role in creating mutually constructive or destructive interactions between majorities and minorities (Fokas, 2009, pp. 2-3).

Considering such multifaceted perceptions of social cohesion and social inclusion, as well as ambiguous messages concerning practical welfare arrangements, the WaVE researchers formulated policy recommendations[8] on European, national, and local levels based on their overall findings. As the WaVE approach was very contextual, the local and national levels of policy recommendations were not formulated as applicable to all contexts but rather as expressions in the chosen local and national contexts. Still, the European level recommendations were drawn as a comparison and synthesis of local and national policy recommendations, and thus were formulated to be much more general by nature.[9] As the European recommendations often include implicit notions for building social cohesion, such as "promoting" open conversation, creating "guidelines," or "sensitizing" European politics to certain issues, we will focus here on the more explicit and concrete policy recommendations, directed especially to the national level, which bear the primary responsibility for creating social cohesion and supporting local level actions.

The intersecting themes of the policy recommendations, like the WaVE project as whole, concerned religion, minorities, and gender, and each of these themes was scrutinized in a variety of contexts. WaVE researchers, while drawing the recommendations, relied on background analysis and case study reports. National and local dissemination reports and feedback gave crucial information for formulating policy recommendations. The key aspects of policy recommendations based on WaVE studies were summarized under thematic focuses concerning eleven themes: religion, information, involvement, networking, better indicators, locality, language, education, work, cultural and gender sensitivity, and ways to influence politics. We will next present each of these in detail.

RELIGION: OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

The dual nature of religion as an opportunity, but also as a risk, was clearly seen in the WaVE case studies. According to WaVE researchers, religious communities or organizations can be a remarkable asset in providing welfare services and in promoting communality; there also is the potential

for tension and conflict, however. Notably, a faith community that was too dominant, or whose self-definition was too narrow, was seen at times as a challenge to welfare. In the Finnish (FI) case, values put into action -- that is, religious institutions supporting minorities -- was found to be a good approach. This approach refers to services linked to the spiritual and religious orientation of the giving community but not tied to the ethnicity, faith, or religion of the recipients. By allowing for the viewpoints, values, and cultures of immigrants, Christian providers enabled non-Christian groups to become familiar with Christian values in Europe, thus contributing to the building of social cohesion; at the same time, there is a risk of indifference in this approach (i.e., all values simply become relative and negotiable), a possibility that was mentioned in many cases (LV, FI, DEr, EL). On the other hand, particular risks connected to the dominance of one national religion were noted. These examples generally emerged from societies where the Catholic Church is in a dominant position (IT, PL, HR). Some researchers saw a need to challenge this situation, because it may lead to marginalization and discrimination toward minority groups. In these cases, careful attention was paid to gender sensitivity and reproductive health issues.

The German case of Reutlingen (DEr) emphasized that minority communities were not in the main afraid of a religious approach to welfare issues. In this case, religion was seen as a positive asset, providing a bridge between majority and minority communities and helping to explain the particular needs of minority communities and their difficulties with the dominant system (for example, within healthcare). The Finnish case (FI) supported this by suggesting that religious communities could function as fora for citizen participation that might focus on emancipation and empowerment for minorities. These communities were seen to enable feelings of importance and belonging, especially for immigrants.

MULTICULTURALISM: A NEED FOR MORE AND BETTER INFORMATION

Related to the needs of better know-how regarding religion, the need for multilingual and culturally sensitive information was noted in many WaVE cases (for example LV, EL, UK, SE). Both the

information itself and the channels through which multilingual information is disseminated needed to be developed in order to reach target groups. It also was noted that public information channels face new challenges in learning to work in a more culturally, religiously, and gender sensitive way. At the national level, especially in the Latvian case (LV), reference was made to the need for educational campaigns to raise awareness of multiculturalism. It was suggested that these campaigns be planned in conjunction with wider policy programs. These efforts could include: the dissemination, in different languages, of objective information about the society as a whole and the activities of different groups; the encouragement of sensitivity towards issues relating to ethnic relations (for example, citizenship, education, language, and history); and the deepening of knowledge regarding marginal religious groups. In addition, many case studies (LV, DEs, DEr, NO, FI) referenced the need for national programs to improve information channels and media coverage.

INVOLVE MINORITIES

In all planning and decision-making procedures, the involvement of minority communities was seen as crucial. The active involvement of minorities was perceived as having many positive effects, including the empowerment of minorities, the enhancement of mutual understanding between majorities and minorities, and the capacity to build social services more suited to a pluralist society. Many cases suggested that participation from and consultation of minorities should be encouraged at various levels, from local to national to European (UK, NO, FI, DEr, DEs, EL, PL). For example, it was mentioned that the public sector should consult with immigrants and ethnic minorities, their associations, and all those who work with these groups, both officially and unofficially. Immigrants and ethnic minorities should also be encouraged to participate in national and local politics on designated advisory boards, through the churches (especially in EL), or through direct involvement in political parties and decision-making bodies. This kind of involvement promotes feelings of solidarity, participation, and commitment, but also functions as an information source for the public sector regarding the needs of minority groups.

The Swedish case (SE) mentioned a need for regular meetings (called preventive negotiations) concerning values in practice between minorities and different institutions – for example, schools, work places, and medical services. The aim of these meetings was to identify and listen to different views about practical arrangements and to find solutions to these differences. Written agreements were suggested on the basis of such dialogues. In several cases (SE, IT, FI), welfare organizations were also encouraged to employ members of minorities to work as cultural mediators (e.g., professional social workers of immigrant origin). A primary goal for mediators should be to increase knowledge and help in communication with other members of the minority; at the same time, this approach should improve the competence of all those involved.

NETWORKING: EFFICIENCY THROUGH COORDINATION

There is a need to develop better methods of sharing information between different organizations on all societal levels. This was mentioned in more than half of the WaVE case studies (PL, HR, IT, DE, FI, UK, LV). It is also worth noting that on many occasions the national and local disseminations of WaVE results were seen as an effective way to promote cooperation and the sharing information. Well-coordinated networks enhanced the use of resources and the quality of welfare services. Specific European tools for sharing information (such as the above-mentioned OMC) were mentioned as European cross-border challenges (as in the issue of Romanian Roma residing in many EU member states). Mechanisms of coordination and cooperation were still needed on a national level (PL, HR, IT, FI, UK). For instance, networks were needed for an information exchange between institutions from the public sector and NGOs (including religious groups) in order to reduce overlapping actions, and thus to reduce the frustration and mistrust that arise from non-coordinated actions.

A good example of effective information sharing was the use of formal or informal "community experts" who were recognized as link-persons and informants regarding particular minority groups. The Polish case (PL) suggested

that a bridge organization or individual should be responsible for maintaining a local database of care-givers and receivers, coordinating local activities, and raising funds from local sponsors, other institutions, and the EU. Meetings for minorities from different areas and cities (for example the Roma from various Polish cities) were also needed, as they could permit the sharing of knowledge and good practices within specific minority groups.

BETTER INDICATORS, STATISTICS, RESEARCH, AND EVALUATION

In both the East-West and North-South axes of Europe, the demands for better indicators, statistics, research and evaluation led to approaches that are both internationally comparative and locally sensitive. Researchers saw adequate and reliable knowledge regarding the current situation as the basis for all improvements in culture- and gender-sensitive welfare provision. Better social and economic data were needed to develop clear and comparable information concerning the social status and social rights of minorities, especially in post-socialist contexts (HR, LV). The situations of different societal groups should be accurately assessed to enable specific policies directed towards those groups. Croatia (HR), for instance, lacked national standards for the evaluation of institutions, the efficiency of individual programs, and the provision of certain services. Finland (FI) requested more resources for research-based information concerning multiculturalism, including the significance of religion for certain groups. In the United Kingdom (UK), a need was found to direct resources to the study of smaller towns instead of the more common focus on large urban areas.

DISTANCE MATTERS: MAKE IT LOCAL AND MAKE IT PERSONAL

The importance of proximity emerges as an intersecting issue across almost all the WaVE case studies and in many different contexts. Respecting the local situation and taking local knowledge into account are crucial elements in creating social cohesion.[10] One (at times controversial) example of this policy concerns the value of family as the primary community for solidarity and cohesion, which leads to using the principle of subsidiarity as

a means of empowerment. It was debated in WaVE discussions whether the principle should be stretched to include individuals and their families (especially recognizing the educative and civilizing functions of the family) as the basis for a multicultural, peaceful Europe. On the other hand, such an approach could imply a reduction in public welfare. It was agreed overall that efficient social cohesion on the European and national levels largely relies on the local level. For example, enough flexibility was needed in the implementation of national guidelines, frameworks, and targets to respect local situations (UK). Some studies (FI, RO) pointed to the significance of local government and its institutions in guaranteeing the quality of life for immigrants, and referred to the need for adequate resources (for example, personnel and equipment). Active participation in and visits to minority community events, as well as shared events, should be encouraged at local levels (especially in DEr, LV), as such events were seen to unite people through common sharing. In some contexts (UK, EL, RO), local spaces were needed for minorities to meet and for multicultural encounters to take place. Many cases (HR, LV, FI, RO) paid attention to the importance of unofficial support networks, such as friends, neighbours, religious communities, and, most importantly, the family. Research recognized the possibility that family-centeredness might lead to isolation and loneliness, and that contacts to society at large must also be encouraged. In the end, it became important that both subjective value orientations and collective norms as a basis for integration should be acknowledged at the European level, as citizens must be willing participants in social cohesion.

LANGUAGE: A KEY TO SOCIETY, EDUCATION, AND WORK

The need for majority and minority groups to share a language by which they can communicate appeared as a crucial factor in building cohesion and preventing conflict. The value of language education for all minorities was thus emphasized. The importance of language skills was stressed in almost all of the WaVE case studies (UK, SE, NO, HR, IT, LV, FI, DE, EL). Language was often connected with general societal and social skills, schooling, and working life. At the national level, a

need was discovered to improve the facilities for language training in order to provide for the needs of the target groups. Attention needed to be paid, for example, to providing special courses for the parents of schoolchildren, to arranging these courses to meet parents' schedules, and to providing gender-specific courses (especially in NO, UK). The Norwegian case (NO) mentioned the need to encourage the use of support mechanisms, such as interpreters and native-speaking assistants, in addition to homework assistance programs and preparatory kindergartens. In many cases (UK, NO, FI, LV), responsibility for language education was assigned to local activists who could arrange tailored and participant-oriented language courses. Local authorities should map out the specific needs present in their area and provide courses which offer an opportunity to learn for as many people as possible, and should advertise these courses in the language of the target groups (as in EL).

PARTICULAR CHALLENGES FOR EDUCATION

In addition to language skills, there are other needs in European societies concerning education and schooling in a multicultural context. These needs concern majorities as well as minorities, who each have both shared and specific needs. At the national level, education policies are in need of improvements and careful consideration according to WaVE studies, particularly in regards to equal opportunities and support. The needs of different groups, both majority and minority, must be addressed, and teachers should be sensitized to these issues (EL).

The Romanian case (RO) encouraged Roma parents to send their children to preparatory classes and kindergarten, and asked that all children be guaranteed free kindergarten educations. Minority access to secondary and tertiary education, particularly in the case of immigrants, needed improvements (DEr, LV) to language courses and courses highlighting lifelong professional skills. At a content level, a request was also made for educational programs promoting knowledge of cultural plurality and minority religions in a given region. These programs should include meetings with minority representatives (PL), but special emphasis should be given to learning and teaching about the majority culture (FI).

WORK: A COMMON VALUE CREATING SOCIAL COHESION

Regardless of religion, culture, or gender, work plays an important role for both individuals and society as a whole. Strong factors leading to social cohesion are the availability of equal opportunities in the workplace and the promotion of a good balance between work and family life. WaVE studies indicated that working opportunities for as many people as possible should be promoted at both European and national levels. Recommended areas of special focus for the EU included the position of immigrants and other minorities in the labour market and policies that guarantee the right to work for as many people as possible. This includes actions in both the public and private sectors that would help reconcile work and family-life and encourage employers to hire persons with a migration background. The need for gender sensitive labour policies was mentioned in several cases, especially in Eastern and Southern Europe (LV, IT, RO). Gender discrimination in the labour market should be confronted (LV) and better policies for reconciling work and family-life should be developed in these countries (examples of problem areas include parental leave, part-time work, and flexible contracts). In addition, care-giving should be promoted as the responsibility of everyone, not only women. In Greece (EL), careful attention should be paid to the payment of proper wages and to encouraging migrant workers to be included in the social security system (especially in agriculture). Checks should be made to confirm that employers are complying with the law; such checks would largely remove (or at least ameliorate) the competition for work in this context.

At the local level, encounters between unemployed immigrants and employers should be arranged (SE) so as to respond to the particular needs of both and to facilitate interaction. Religious communities should be encouraged to provide work, including volunteer work, for immigrants, who often have difficulty finding employment (FI). Good examples of this practice already exist; for instance, immigrants have been asked to volunteer in a volunteer-centre café of the parish and they have been introduced to social networks that might be able to assist them in finding jobs. The cost-

benefit dimension of minority-majority relations is not black and white, and a deeper analysis on the integrative role of work is needed.

CULTURAL AND GENDER SENSITIVITY IN WELFARE SERVICES

Many WaVE case studies address the need for greater cultural and gender sensitivity in welfare provision (NO, IT, LV, FI, EL). Here, the recommendations consist mainly of educating welfare providers regarding issues of multiculturalism and communication. Again, the question of resources cannot be avoided, even though improvements in the quality and scope of welfare services are necessary.

The Finnish case (FI) examined the mental health needs of those immigrants who need support and treatment; it was concluded that national and international actions should be taken and that healthcare workers should be educated on the symptoms of trauma-based depression. Researchers in Italy determined that, while social services such as "family advisory centres" should be organized on a non-discriminatory basis, careful attention should be paid to gender issues. In this context, new welfare activities, including sex education in high schools, were needed. In the Romanian context (RO), social assistance was recommended for people in need, and the procedures for obtaining state support were determined to be in need of simplification.

In many countries, especially in Eastern and Southern Europe, resources were mentioned as a crucial issue (LV, EL, RO, HR). In Latvia (LV), the high costs versus poor quality of healthcare services needed to be tackled. In Greece (EL) the working conditions of civil servants who deal with immigration needed to be improved (hopefully leading to better attitudes towards immigrants). And, in Romania (RO), more money needed to be directed to the social security system, particularly for the establishment of adequate salaries for social workers in order to attract professional staff.

The intercultural training of social workers was seen as crucial, and would address the need to adapt welfare services to respond to different kinds of people, rather than the reverse. Respect must be a cornerstone of the welfare activities of religious organizations that work with immigrants and other minorities, especially regarding the personal beliefs and faiths of others (FI); the communication skills of welfare workers (e.g., active listening, efforts to understand, observing non-verbal language, and the need to express things simply), was singled out in the Italian case (IT), and the development of culturally appropriate welfare services (especially in primary and specialist healthcare) was found to be necessary in the Norwegian case (NO).

INFLUENCING THE POLITICAL SYSTEMS

These policy recommendations include a number of issues regarding political and legal systems, resources, administration, and policy programs that need revising if countries are to protect the religious, minority, and gender-equal values that are crucial for social cohesion. WaVE case studies indicated that there are significant challenges ahead for Europe's political system, especially in the Eastern and Southern countries. Here, the focus was on national, local, and, above all else, context-based solutions to questions relating to ethnic and religious minorities, immigrants, and gender, notably with reference to schooling and the labour market. A greater exchange of information between countries was found to be needed -- for example, using peer reviews, like OMC, as a means of transnational cooperation.

At the national level, immigration laws and related policies (IT, EL) were examined. A need was determined to tackle the negative attitudes of policy-makers towards immigrants and other minorities, with greater respect given to minorities' resources (FI, LV). In many cases (FI, DEs, EL), the slowness of bureaucracy – as in the processing of residence permits via electronic systems, guaranteeing of an official status for immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, and improved access to education, work, and social security -- was determined to be a problem area. Guidance for adequate flexibility was needed in the integration process of immigrants (FI), and economic policies, especially those regarding taxation, needed revising to increase the profitability of work and decrease the attraction of the shadow/grey economy (HR, LV).

In Croatia (HR), a need was found to decentralize power for the more effective building of governance, the reduction of bureaucracy and

corruption, and the support of cooperation at the local level. More space should be given to NGOs. Programs opposing domestic violence and initiatives supporting both gender equality and the economic and social empowerment of women should also be encouraged (HR).

In relation to immigration and special groups, there is an urgent need to revise the social security and welfare systems. In several cases (LV, NO, IT), a need was found to develop social security systems to meet the needs of high-risk groups such as immigrants, ethnic minorities, and women. Low wages and social benefits need to be reformed in order to make working profitable and to guarantee adequate social security for all citizens. In Italy (IT), the values and working methods of the welfare system require modernization. The welfare system should commit itself to gender equality and non-discrimination, especially in the field of reproductive health; the system should be set up with the aim of empowering people rather than merely distributing financial resources.

Furthermore, more attention should be paid to the attitudes, structures, and human and financial resources that prevail in local administration (DE, PL, EL, FI). Welfare services should aim to provide quality care, which can be ensured by making sure staffing levels are adequate and the use of local social programs (HR) created in cooperation with the public sector and other minorities. Such programs should establish a social vision for the locality in question, with attention paid to both human and financial resources, in order to provide a basis for decision-making and a process of evaluation.

FROM POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CYCLE OF SOCIAL COHESION

All of these policy recommendations arise from a specific research setting focusing on grass-root levels, but they clearly carry a more general message, too. Looking at the policy recommendations together, key messages run through all of the WaVE case studies to underscore the crucial relevance of religion (as subject matter) and of locality (as the key framework in which to operate), especially when viewed from the perspective of majority–minority relations. Religion was definitely a key issue in the welfare system in

both majority and minority communities – but not quite in the way the media has presented. The WaVE studies found religion to be a practical more than ideological issue. Noting this, greater sensitivity to the unique obstacles introduced by religion was urgently emphasized in many WaVE studies. In addition, locality (especially on the local level) was shown to be the primary context for action within the domain of welfare. Power, resources, support, and information were requested at the local level and for local level solutions. The role of religion was also evident in the various elements related to arranging local welfare activities. Locality and religion, indeed, often seemed inter-related.

According to the WaVE findings, religious issues and other issues of multiculturalism often seem to be, at the end, about the need for improved information. Additionally, locality in most cases seems to concern improving the action, such as tackling language barriers, improving education, and revising political systems. Based on these core summary themes, the following *Cycle of Social Cohesion* was drawn to depict the dynamics and elements of building social cohesion in Europe.

IMPROVE THE INFORMATION
Religion, multiculturalism, involvement, networking, statistics and research

Minorities (values, resources)

Majority (values, resources)

IMPROVE THE ACTION
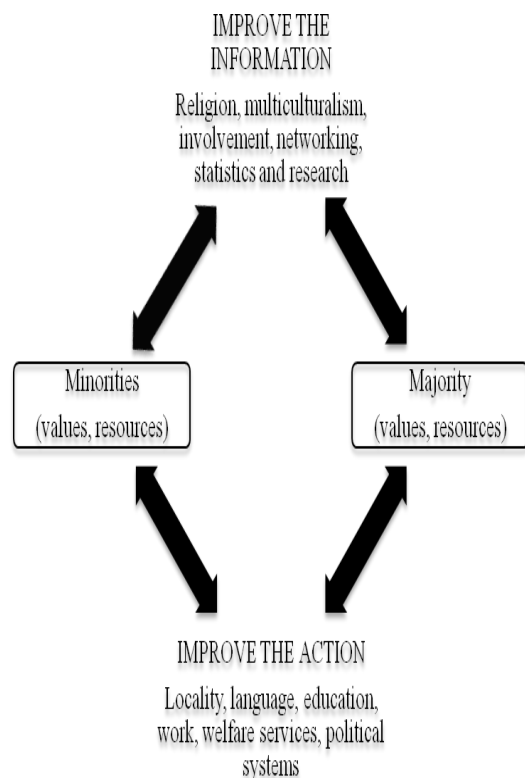Locality, language, education, work, welfare services, political systems

Figure 1. The cycle of social cohesion. The values of each community (majority/minority) and its social,

economic, and political resources should be acknowledged in both constructive and critical ways, as both values and resources play a crucial role in the positive "Cycle of Social Cohesion.".

DISCUSSION AND INTRODUCTION TO OTHER ARTICLES OF THIS ISSUE

This article has explored the core findings and the policy recommendations based on said findings, of WaVE, a project focusing on European welfare and values and the way they apply to minorities. The strongest message captured across WaVE countries seems to be a wish by minorities to be integrated while respecting their different ethnic, religious, linguistic, and lifestyle needs. The idea is to change the concept of integration to mean peaceful coexistence rather than ways for clashing cultures to become similar or identical. "Europeans want a free society in which solidarity and social equality are of primary importance," and "the chief element of a European identity is to have democratic values, and the strongest factor in terms of being European is to 'feel European'" (European Commission, 2010a, p. 162). Indeed, being open-minded and having contact with minorities are both factors with great positive influence on people's attitudes towards minorities (European Commission, 2009).

Concerning concrete policy recommendations, our article has indicated that social cohesion as both a value and a practice may be achieved only if attention is paid to its different concrete aspects, summarized in Figure 1. Although the EU 2020 leaves the application of social inclusion and the reduction of poverty to national authorities, our findings suggest that this approach is not without its dangers. Different countries may provide different reasons for granting low priority to the issue of social cohesion. There is also a great opportunity presented by this approach, because effective policies should be locally tailored and adjusted to the needs of different social groups in very different national and local contexts.

Though we wish to promote and encourage each of these policy recommendations by writing this article, it has to be noted given the present economic situation that these recommendations must be read bearing in mind that money may be short in many parts of Europe, and that many of our policy recommendations have cost-

implications. That said, due precisely to the fact that money is short, the subject matter of the WaVE project is more timely than ever. Things are opening up for alternative welfare providers, such as local minority networks, informal help, and majority churches taking an active role in welfare.

The negative factors tearing down the possibilities for greater social cohesion range from practical to ideological. These include the lack of cultural competence of welfare providers, the external labelling of minority groups, promotion of stereotypes by the media, spatial segregation of different groups, and language barriers. Insider knowledge is not always utilized, and so professional helpers are not always able to meet minority needs. Immigration policies seem to be poorly formulated, thus highlighting both differences and conflicts (Fokas, 2009, p. 34). As indicated in our *Cycle of Social Cohesion*, several of these elements have to do with locality and the need for further competence as related to local welfare activities, as well as with religion, which often is tightly and deeply interwoven with other matters and so difficult to depict or even detect.

In relation to minorities and positive social cohesion[11] religion may be a specifically challenging matter in Europe as compared to the United States. Even if diversity has been part of the European integration process from the outset (de Schoutheete 2000, p. 63; Prügl & Thiel, 2009), the crucial difference between the European and American methods of integration lies in Europe's costly welfare state versus the United States' more privatized welfare solutions. Because of the primarily collective welfare arrangements which give more public protection to citizens, the full integration of immigrants in Europe is much more difficult and costly.[12] As Casanova (2005, 2009) has pointed out, due to the homogeneous religious history (particularly national Christian churches) of Europe, the idea of homogeneity is still implicit today; it is much harder for Europe to embrace multiculturalism and multiple religions than it is for the States. As Casanova (2009) has noted:

> The manifest difficulty [for] all European societies in the integration of Muslim immigrants can be viewed as an indication of the problems which the model of the European nation-state has . . . in regulating deep religious

pluralism. . . . Islam is indeed the elephant in the room in any discussion of religion and secular modernity. (p. 25)

This raises the question: do we need to have a truly secular state (which still is not the case in several European countries, even in the North) in order to have a truly multi-faith, multi-religious community? These are indeed massive issues; one recent example of the rather drastic role that minority religion may play is in Levitt's analysis on the way that immigrants are changing the face of religious diversity in the States. According to Levitt, new realities of religion and migration (particularly, immigrants often keep one foot in their countries of origin through their religion once in the States) are transforming, and indeed challenging, the very definition of what it means to be American (Levitt, 2007). Levitt's analysis underscores the fundamental differences between the States and Europe in this respect.

Most recent discussions concern the novel and rising public role of religion, particularly in the field of welfare and social issues;[13] even post-secularity, there is renewed interest in spiritual life and the novel public roles of churches.[14] Religion is gaining influence not only worldwide but also within the national public and local spheres, particularly in community based interpretations in the public arena of secular societies (Habermas, 2008). In order to promote both locality and religious pluralism, one particular notion has to be attended to: citizen participation with immigrants on the local level. Such interaction will promote social cohesion in the long run.[15] Congregations, in the best scenario, may serve as melting pots of diverse membership; those who participate in multiracial congregations in the States are far more likely to have multiracial circles of friend (Emerson & Woo, 2006). Is it truly possible for members of minorities and majorities to participate in all forms of social life at the local level, both religious and non-religious? The power of citizen participation towards such ends may be immense.

Policies – concerning both religious and other matters – supporting minorities and their distinctiveness are problematic in relation to integration and cohesion in wider society. Some scholars[16] have concluded that dominant cultural groups should preserve minority cultures, which

have considerable intrinsic value. However, the best case scenario – a scenario in line with our core conclusion on the central role of locality and religion in the cycle of cohesion – may actually be more about a multi-ethnic, cohesive approach that promotes active citizenship and social participation. This stance is in line with the argument for recognition of cultural collective rights (Parekh, 2006). As philosopher Amartya Sen (2007) has concluded, against (what he calls) singular identities, all majorities and minorities are in the end equally heterogeneous. True free-will and true social cohesion have to rise from acceptance of diversity, not from any particular group, including minorities. Such a trajectory takes us toward segregation and a nation made up of multiple identities.

On these fascinating themes, the other articles of this issue (by Olav Angell, Annette Leis-Peters, and Martha Middlemiss Lé Mon) will offer important points to ponder further. To present their core themes from the smallest to the largest unit of analysis, Middlemiss Lé Mon will start with her focus on motherhood in society and, specifically, on care and career in minority communities. She will ask what kinds of tensions are created by conflicting values, and what kinds of perspectives, or even solutions, interlink within this dynamic? Motherhood indeed is, within the dynamics of the communities studied, an important factor that can both draw women closer to mainstream society -- and also push them away.

Following this, Leis-Peters will focus on minority community associations, particularly on the transmission of values between generations and on value change. She will reflect on how minorities transmit values from generation to generation and create social capital. As pointed out by Leis-Peter, social activities within minority communities, while they are considered to have an important bonding function within the community, do little to bridge the gap between minority and majority cultures. Her theoretical discussion relates to intergenerational value change and to theories of civil society and social participation.

Finally, Angell will focus on the struggle for integration and equality from an unprivileged social position, and on the advancement of, and resistance against, minorities. His case is concerned with the Muslim-based homework support

programs in a Norwegian school context. Angell's core question is about what kind of integration strategy is being applied, what is expected from minorities within this context, and what kinds of reactions such programs have received.

Even if these articles provide novel analysis to the field, various themes remain to be explored, such as issues related to identity and the empowerment of minorities, interaction, communication between minorities and majorities, and the clarity and concreteness of the EU goals. Hopefully, the articles of this issue will inspire future research and discussion along these and other lines.

NOTES

1. Many of the researchers who have contributed to this special section of *Beliefs and Values* have been members of the WaVE research team. For country specific analysis on welfare and religion in Europe, see Bäckström et al. 2010, based on an earlier project, WREP (Welfare and Religion in European Perspective) of eight European countries.

2. The towns (and countries/EU-acronyms) were: Gävle (Sweden/SE); Drammen (Norway/NO); Lahti (Finland/FI); Ogre (Latvia/LV); Darlington (England/EN); Schweinfurt (DEs) and Reutlingen (DEr) (Germany/DE); Evreux (France/FR); Przemysl (Poland/PL); Sisak (Croatia/HR); Padua (Italy/IT); Medgidia (Romania/RO); and Thiva (Greece/GR). The main criteria for selection were the size of the town (medium-sized towns in the countries concerned) and the presence of minorities in the town (which could reflect majority-minority relations on the national level) (Fokas, 2009).

3. The text by Fokas (2009) summarizes the overall findings of WaVE; thus it is often referred to as an introduction to the WaVE project in the beginning this article

4. The groups studied in WaVE included: Muslims ('old'/'new', native/immigrant, first generation to fourth generation), Roman Catholics, Protestant groups (mainly Evangelical and Pentecostal), Russian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, and Greek Catholics; Roma and travelling communities, Finnish and German repatriates (recent returnees from the former Soviet Union and former eastern bloc countries), Russian-speaking communities, and Polish, Ingrain, Albanian, Romanian, Nigerian, Pakistani, Indian, Turkish, Bosnian, Ukrainian, Russian, Algerian, Moroccan and Greek immigrants; female labour migrants; and male labour migrants (Fokas, 2009, p. 6).

5. This was the case in the Finnish data. See Juntunen et al., 2010.

6. Similarly, Juul (2010, p. 266) has argued that the concept of solidarity means three things: recognizing the person in question as an equal and worthy partner of interaction, basing society on just distribution of the possibilities for recognition, and a just order of recognition. Each is a precondition of social cohesion.

7. According to the subsidiarity principle, defined in the Treaty establishing the European Community, decisions should be taken as close as possible to citizens. This limits the decisions and actions taken at the Community level to only those that are in its exclusive competence or are justified by the principles of proportionality and necessity. For more information, see Zrinščak, 2006 and, for an example, the Europa Glossary website, 2010.

8. "Policy recommendations" refer to research-based, concrete, and practical suggestions to policy-makers. They aim to give support to political planning, guidance, and decision-making. The chosen terminology follows the guidelines of the WaVE Researchers' Handbook and was confirmed by recommendations from the Finnish National Contact Point for FP6/European Commission.

9. Three WaVE participants representing the Finnish team formulated the original policy recommendations document to the EU. See Laiho, Pessi, & Helander, 2009.

10. This naturally arises, and becomes underscored, partly on the basis of the research setting in WaVE (focusing on local contexts).

11. We use the notion of "positive social cohesion" to refer to minority-respecting policies towards networks, cohesion, and integration–policies in which plurality is considered a positive value in itself.

12. For recent articles on the role of religion in relation to social justice for immigrants, see Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007.

13. See Bäckström et al., 2008; Pessi, 2008.

14. See, Dalferth, 2010; Habermas, 2008; Knauss & Ornella, 2007, Ziebertz & Riegel, 2009.

15. Already, the notion of social cohesion implies the definition of a society as inclusive and founded upon a sense of communal responsibility (Helly 2003).

16. Musschenga, 1998.

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