

Preface

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The partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth is committed to furthering youth research and constructing links with policy and practice; to achieve a better knowledge and understanding of youth has been one of the key priorities of its work programme since 2003. This includes a programme of youth research seminars, promoting dialogue among youth researchers and between them and young people, youth organisations, policy makers and practitioners. The seminars are focused on themes of relevance to young people in Europe that have been identified as key by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and various stakeholders in the youth field.

The programme of each seminar consists of thematic panels, within which the selected research papers are presented and debated by all stakeholders. Those discussions lead to the formulation of recommendations for future reflection and action in the areas of youth research, policy and practice. The presented papers and seminar reports recalling the main debated issues are then published in the Youth Knowledge Books series.

The seminar on Equal Opportunities for All was organised in Budapest from 7 to 9 November 2007 in the European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe. The seminar theme was very broad and encompassed conceptual as well as empirical work on equality and inequality, social exclusion, anti-discrimination policies and youth participation. Particular emphasis was placed on policy development and good practice in the youth field as well as papers that integrated orientations of theory, practice and policy.

The need to promote the principles of equality, equal opportunities and non-discrimination through policies and programmes has become a priority both in the Council of Europe and in the European Union. The Council of Europe's involvement in the development of the principle of equality dates back to 1950, to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. This framework was later complemented by the European Social Charter (from 1961 and revised in 1996), which guarantees social and economic human rights.

Adapted at the 7th Conference of European Ministers responsible for Youth, held in September 2005 in Budapest, the Resolution on the Priorities of the Council of Europe's Youth Sector puts an emphasis on a number of priorities, including the "promotion of intercultural dialogue, inter-religious co-operation and respect for cultural difference" and "facilitating the access of young people to working life and to social rights". In this context, the European Youth Campaign on Diversity, Human Rights and Participation was run in 2006-07, conceived in the spirit of the 1995 campaign All Different – All Equal.

The political priority of Equal Opportunities for All was re-confirmed in Resolution CM/Res(2008)23, by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which stated that human rights and democracy, living together in diverse societies and social inclusion of young people should be regarded as priorities of the future Council of Europe youth policy, with special emphasis on "ensuring young people's full enjoyment of human rights and human dignity", "promoting young people's active participation in democratic processes and structures", "promoting

equal opportunities for the participation of all young people in all aspects of their everyday lives”, “effectively implementing gender equality and preventing all forms of gender-based violence”, and “ensuring young people’s access to education, training, working life” and “decent living conditions” as well as to “cultural, sporting and creative activities”.

The European Union has been committed to the fight against discrimination since its creation. For many years, the main focus was the prevention of discrimination on the basis of nationality and gender. More recently, the focus has been enlarged, in response to the demand from civil society and the changing needs of European society, to include other forms of discrimination. New powers for combating discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnic origin, religion or beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation were conferred under substantive amendments to the Treaty Establishing the European Community introduced by the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997, together with a strengthening of those already agreed in relation to discrimination in general. The promotion of “equal opportunities for all” was also set as a priority by establishing the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All (2007) – towards a just society.

With specific regard to the youth field, the Youth in Action Programme of the EU (2007-13) complements the general European equality policies, stressing, among its priorities, the access of young people with fewer opportunities to its activities and the promotion of cultural diversity.

In the “Resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field” of November 2009, the Council of the European Union agreed that, in the period until 2018, the objectives should be to create more, and more equal, opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market and to promote the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people. To this end a number of guiding principles should be observed in all policies and activities concerning young people, such as promoting gender equality and combating all forms of discrimination.

Despite the significant efforts of the member states, institutions, organisations and citizens in the implementation of anti-discrimination legal instruments, policies and programmes, many young people are still far from having equal opportunities in practice. They continue to suffer from social marginalisation and inequalities at work, in access to education and vocational training, health and social assistance, housing, access to goods and services, etc. Those various types of discrimination raise important questions for law makers, governments and civil society.

In recent years, a number of important studies have contributed to the debate on equality/inequality and discrimination. However, a lack of specific studies on discrimination suffered by young people is still noticeable. The research seminar aimed at helping to bridge this gap by further exploring the various realities of equality and discrimination as well as policies, strategies and mechanisms aimed at enhancing equal opportunities for all young people. We invite all those interested in its results to study this publication, which hopefully enriches the knowledge of this crucial topic.

Introduction

Serdar M. Değirmencioglu

The youth research seminar focused on equality and non-discrimination in line with the focus of the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All designated by the European Commission and of All Different – All Equal, the youth campaign of the Council of Europe.

In the Council of Europe, the main basis for work focused on equality and non-discrimination is the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms¹ and the European Social Charter (1961; revised in 1996), which guarantees social and economic human rights.² The Racial Equality Directive and the Employment Framework Directive³ define principles that offer everyone in the EU a common minimum level of legal protection against discrimination. In 2004, the European Commission adopted the strategy to promote non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all in the EU, set out in the Green Paper on “Equality and Non-discrimination in an Enlarged EU”.⁴ Following the consultation process linked to the Green Paper, a framework strategy aiming at the achievement of non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all was laid out by the Commission in 2005.

In the eyes of a significant majority of Europeans, violations of the above mentioned rights and principles are widespread, despite the efforts of institutions and organisations.⁵ The research seminar was intended as a means to explore existing realities of inequality and discrimination, as well as policies, strategies and mechanisms that enhance equal opportunities for all.

→ All Different – All Equal campaign

The youth campaign of the Council of Europe, All Different – All Equal, involved a large number of activities across all member states. The slogan “referred to the fact that people all over the world differ in so many ways, for example what people believe in and how people look, but regardless of these differences they should be given equal rights.” The campaign challenged those who took their rights for granted with factual questions and invited youth to respect diversity, to know about human rights and to take action in defending their own rights, as well as standing up against the discrimination of others.

The campaign, therefore, focused upon racism, discrimination (on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, disability or other factors) and placed a strong emphasis on standing up against all forms of discrimination, both for one’s own direct benefit and for other’s rights.

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1. <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/QueVoulezVous.asp?NT=005&CM=7&DF=7/9/2007&CL=ENG>.
 2. www.coe.int/T/E/Human_Rights/Esc/.
 3. Directive 2000/43/EC of 29.06.2000 and Directive 2000/78/EC of 27.11.2000.
 4. http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/justice_freedom_security/combating_discrimination/114157_en.htm.
 5. See special Eurobarometer 263 “Discrimination in the European Union”, <http://ec.europa.eu/public-opinion/archives/ebs/ebs-263-en.pdf>.
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*We live in a confusing world. In some ways we seem to be coming closer together. For the few with access to information highways or satellite television it is possible to be in contact with the other side of the planet in seconds. But nearer to home the distances between us are increasing. We do not enjoy our multicultural societies as we could: as a phenomenon which enriches us with diversity and which we should not allow ourselves to waste.*⁶

The campaign invited youth to consider the fundamental question about diversity and ensuring equal rights to all from a positive perspective. Diversity or differences between people are an asset to a community and to a society. In fact, democracy emerges only when there is diversity: people need democracy when they are different from each other in terms of opinions, interests, lifestyles or other significant ways.

→ Co-ordination of the seminar

The research seminar was co-ordinated by the Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth and was convened by Barbara Giovanna Bello and administered by the Partnership Research Officer, Marta Mędlińska. Karin Lopatta-Loibl represented the European Commission – Directorate General for Education and Culture, Youth Policy Unit.

→ Youth research and youth policy: the institutional commitment

Antje Rothmund, the Director of the European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe in Budapest (EYCB), noted that European citizenship is about diversity which is protected by the provisions of human rights legislation. The references and values provided by the legal framework are needed by young people, as well as by society as a whole. However, research is needed to understand the ways in which young people are not able to benefit from equal opportunities and diversity. Research not only highlights the gaps and the needs of young people for researchers, but also brings these gaps to the attention of policy makers and of young people themselves. If young people are actors of social change, then it is necessary to consider and examine how their participation may make a difference.

Karin Lopatta-Loibl briefly outlined the activities of the European Commission, particularly in the youth field, against discrimination and specifically against racism and xenophobia. The Youth in Action Programme of the European Commission made the promotion of diversity and, in particular, the reduction of all forms of racism and xenophobia one of its key priorities in 2005. The European Commission's White Paper on "Youth" emphasises the importance of participation among all young people in Europe in fighting discrimination. Ms Lopatta-Loibl underscored two of the main aims for the seminar, namely, to gain greater knowledge about fields of importance for young people and thus facilitate knowledge-based policy making and to bring young researchers from all over Europe (and beyond) together for networking and to share their research.

Marta Mędlińska noted that the partnership in the youth field between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth emphasises a tripartite relationship between research, public authority and civil society. The aim of this relationship is to ensure that youth policy is evidence-based, building on both the findings of youth researchers and the practice of youth workers and youth activists.

6. <http://eycb.coe.int/edupack/01.html>.

In terms of the theme of the seminar, Ms Mędlirńska stressed the three pillars of the youth campaign – diversity, human rights and participation – and the need for research on these pillars from all angles or disciplines. The EU-COE youth partnership offers tools that can serve as viable platforms for dialogue among researchers, policy makers and youth activists. Among these are the Pool of European Researchers Network and the partnership website, comprising the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKYCP).

→ The legal framework

Barbara Giovanna Bello offered a brief introduction to the Council of Europe and EU legal framework pertaining to discrimination and to equal opportunities. In the Council of Europe's framework, the European Convention on Human Rights, Article 14, is particularly relevant: "The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status."

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) was set up following a decision of the 1st Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe in October 1993. The task of the commission is to combat racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance. The legislative corpus is complemented by other documents, such as the European Social Charter, adopted in 1961 and revised in 1996 and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, signed in 1995.

In the EU framework, the anti-discrimination legislation is employing a new generation of legal instruments, thanks to the changes introduced into Article 13 of the Treaty Establishing the European Community by the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997. With this article, the European Council has the power to, "take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation".

→ Inequalities and the need for a critical research framework

Keynote speaker Dr David M. Fryer presented an overview of the outcomes of structural and emergent inequalities in the developed world from a community critical perspective. The critical emphasis highlighted the key issues and positioned the researcher in a complicated set of power relationships. Dr Fryer first focused on the unequal distribution of health within developed societies: people at the bottom of the social hierarchy have death rates between two and four times higher than those at the top (that is, a 5 to 10 year difference). Next, he focused on the unequal distribution of health between developed societies: richer countries do not necessarily have healthier populations than poorer countries. Given minimal standards of nutrition, shelter, hygiene, etc., a country can be twice as rich as an other without being any healthier. Life expectancy is greater in some countries that are less wealthy in terms of GDP than richer countries. As Wilkinson puts it, "Among the developed countries it is the most egalitarian that have the highest life expectancy, not the richest."

In fact, a wide range of social and psychological problems – including obesity, teenage births, violence, school performance, imprisonment, psychological disorders, social stress, poor social networks, low self-esteem, high rates of depression, anxiety, insecurity, the loss of sense of control, lower levels of trust – are more

common in more unequal societies. Greater inequality seems to harm the vast majority of the population at all levels in the status hierarchy. That is, it is not only the most disadvantaged that suffer.

Unemployment is another major factor that undermines psychological well-being. Unemployment is linked to a variety of facets of psychological health and the results hold across levels of investigation, geographical contexts, a range of historical periods and a variety of methods and designs. Other documented societal causes of distress, illness and injustice have to do with various forms of discrimination and inequality: employment “stressors”, disabling practices, institutionalised oppression, forced migration, homelessness and housing problems, racism, misogyny, relative poverty, and other forms of oppression.

Dr Fryer also emphasised two issues that are often not mentioned in debates about discrimination and inequality. The first is the staggering public cost. About a tenth of adults, an estimated 450 million people worldwide, are affected by psychological disorders at any one time. The other issue is the discrimination that lack of well-being brings about: people with these disorders often experience social isolation, poor quality of life and increased mortality.

Dr Fryer suggested that critical methodology is needed in any field to reverse the misuse of research and social scientists should intervene to reduce and prevent material, subjective and ideological oppression in everyday societal contexts. It is entirely possible to conduct research that serves the community and the public interest. Examples of community praxis (research and action) are available in the community critical psychology literature and elsewhere.

→ Research on equal opportunities for all

Education institutions are critical to understanding how inequality is reproduced. Bálint-Ábel Bereményi focused on unequal schooling opportunities for Spanish Gitano (Roma) students. The issue has largely remained hidden in academic, political and professional debates on intercultural education. Unlike immigrants, the Gitano are invisible in the mass media. Dr Bereményi examined how legal discourses on cultural diversity, equal opportunities and non-discrimination were received and reinterpreted by teachers. The perceptions of teachers were influenced by negative social representations of the Gitano and by the limited ability of teachers to analyse the sociocultural context of their work. This led to school practices that built further barriers towards equal opportunities. In contrast, a positive school climate appears to play a key role in creating conditions for the integration of Gitano students.

Research on youth often neglects the earlier part of life and treats youth issues as though they are completely unrelated to processes in childhood. In contrast, Dr Anna Kende focused on the critical issue of lack of equal opportunities in early childhood. She looked at the increasingly common practice of holding children back from kindergarten for a year, where the intention is to let children have more time to be ready for school. This practice of flexible admission age policy often leads to upward spiralling performance standards for the first years of school. As the average age of children entering school rises, schools tend to shift the curriculum from play to academic work, which then encourages more parents and educational advisers to decide to keep children longer in pre-primary education or at home, further raising the average age of school entry. Raising the entrance age in school districts may establish an academic environment that divides advantaged children from disadvantaged peers. It may also mean denial of public education for one

year to previously age-eligible children. The impact on upper and middle class children may be small, as they are likely to spend their time in preschools or in more stimulating home environments.

→ Cycles of social exclusion

Ana Azavedo studied the pathways and aspirations of young people outside the regular educational system in Portugal. Students in alternative schools do not seem to appreciate the advantages of the schooling system they are enrolled in, compared to normal schooling. Alternative programmes are designed to provide young people with a quick way to enter professional life, rather than to guide them to further education. Schools appear to exclude the “challenging” students rather than include them. Ana Azavedo suggests that attempts to integrate and work with those at risk of failing academically, should be standard in schools.

Umut Aksungur studied youth facing social exclusion in Ankara. He examined three processes associated with disadvantage: education, the labour market and social capital. Young people facing the worst disadvantage were experiencing long-term unemployment, economic hardship and social isolation. They had been at a disadvantage since childhood. The risk of social exclusion was linked with low educational attainment and low level of qualifications and especially lack of family support. Mr Aksungur argued that social exclusion of young people is multidimensional and the dimensions are inter-related. Experiences of social exclusion are cumulative and compounding. Social exclusion of young people appears to be a “vicious circle” or a “spiral of disadvantage”.

Taken together, these papers indicate that education continues to play a pivotal role and the barriers in the educational system are often structural and therefore more difficult to overcome. The challenges are much less structural and somewhat less difficult to deal with, depending on the context and available support. In the case of marginal groups, such as the Gitano, the challenges are invariably difficult. Falling out of the educational system guarantees social exclusion and young people are often aware of their narrowing horizons. Equal opportunities in schooling are still more rhetoric than reality and how school policies discriminate against disadvantaged young people needs to be studied from early on, preferably before children start school.

→ Needs of minority youth

The second keynote speaker Dr Judit Takács presented an overview of the discrimination that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people experience in Hungary. Following the European Commission’s Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Dr Takács distinguished between direct discrimination (a person is treated less favourably than another in a comparable situation because of their gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation) and indirect discrimination (when an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice disadvantages people on the grounds of their gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, unless the practice can be objectively justified by a legitimate aim).

Dr Takács did not concentrate solely on an individualistic notion of discrimination, which is the approach usually favoured by anti-discrimination legislation, but also highlighted forms of discrimination ingrained in public life which affect LGBT people as a group. A structural concept of oppression is needed to better understand the

disadvantages and injustice suffered by LGBT people as individuals and members of an oppressed social group. These are the consequences of everyday practices which, in turn, result from unquestioned norms and assumptions underlying institutional rules. Structural oppression is far too common in the lives of LGBT people in Hungary and elsewhere.

Next, Veronika Honkasalo highlighted the importance of understanding what might be proper for girls from a migrant background in a society very different from the one where they have roots. There appears to be a double standard in the way authorities assess the effectiveness of youth programmes and youth work in Finland. When a cultural problem emerges, the girls' background, culture and its enforcer – the family – get blamed and this is often used to mask the responsibility of the authorities to face the issue of how open youth programmes and youth work affect young people with a different backgrounds. Ms Honkasalo argued that multicultural youth work should emphasise changing the generally masculine character of communal youth work, rather than trying to integrate immigrant girls according to the old practices. The critical issue, then, is understanding what might be proper for girls from a migrant background and accommodating youth work to the needs of immigrant girls.

Karina Chupina focused on hard of hearing young people. From a social science perspective, deafness is more than a disability or a medical condition. "Hard of hearing" (HoH) is not a widely accepted term for identifying people with a hearing loss in Europe and there is a need to examine the experiences of HoH youth from within. Only some deaf and HoH people identify themselves as disabled; others reject equating hearing loss with a disability. Evidence indicates that HoH people, like others with a moderate disability, have lower chances of finding employment. Establishing education and employment programmes for HoH young people appears to be an important policy issue. Ms Chupina noted that without self-acceptance and self-awareness, HoH young people may not be able to organise themselves and articulate their needs adequately. National organisations of HoH adults can help younger generations come out of the self-imposed isolation and provide visibility for the HoH condition. Active and well-integrated HoH young people, by acting as role models and advocates, can also help other young people to accept themselves.

→ **Mobility across borders**

Two papers focused primarily on the challenges facing young people in Ukraine in the post-Soviet era. Dr Alissa Tolstokorova presented her work on economic inequality, social exclusion and labour migration. Over the last decade, large numbers of people have left Ukraine to seek employment in other countries. This economic migration inevitably involved youth, the most flexible and mobile, as well as the most socially and economically deprived demographic group. Dr Tolstokorova argued that external labour migration of Ukrainian youth serves as a mechanism of social exclusion, caused by structural inequality in the labour market, educational disadvantages for young people from low-income families and economic inequalities, among other factors.

Ivanna Temirova, focused on wilful or forced trafficking of youth in Ukraine. The trafficking of young people is most prevalent in the Donetsk region, Lugansk region and Crimea. Despite the extent of the problems, trafficking is not even mentioned in the programmes of the main political parties. The actual number of trafficked youth is still not known. Ms Temirova noted the urgent need for measures to protect the rights of children.

The papers on cross-border mobility and disability indicate that migration presents a major challenge to multiple actors in the receiving country. Particularly important is the need for youth workers to be informed of and sensitive to cultural differences, in order to better support immigrant youth. Secondly, migration is not a unitary experience and may reduce poverty and increase opportunities for parents and their children, provided that there are mechanisms in place in the “sending” and “receiving” settings. Thirdly, alarm bells are ringing in countries peripheral to the EU because domestic and cross-border trafficking is on the rise, putting the vast majority of trafficked youth at great risk of maltreatment and criminal activity. Finally, there is a clear gap in the literature regarding disabilities, reflecting an important bias among researchers. The numbers of disabled young people are not sufficiently reflected in the numbers of scientific studies. Policy and programmes directed specifically at youth (for example, the EU Youth in Action Programme) are often not inclusive of disabled youth.

→ Religion and social exclusion

A number of events, including the 11 September attacks in New York, the murder of Theo Van Gogh in the Netherlands and the 7 July bombings in London, have changed the lives of a large number of Muslim youth in Europe. The “insecurity discourse”, the war in Iraq and the ongoing violence in the Middle East further polarised many, including Muslim youth. Some Muslim youth have become hard-liners, whereas some have chosen to become more active politically to oppose growing discrimination against Muslims. The riots in France in 2005 added to the tension around the issue of “integration” of immigrant and Muslim youth.

Dr Momodou Sallah reviewed evidence regarding the failure on the part of mainstream services in the UK to meet the needs of young Muslims and the strong historical link between this failure and the Eurocentric bias that allows for very little sensitivity to different cultural and religious values and needs. There has been a shift in UK policy from multiculturalism to integration, signalled by the setting up of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion in August 2006. The government’s integrationist approach does not incorporate the needs of Muslims in general and young Muslims in particular. This approach is reflected in the mainstream services. The evidence suggests that there are many barriers to accessing mainstream services for young Muslims and these barriers need dismantling.

Ali Akbar Tajmazinani noted that Muslims are the second largest religious group in the UK and have the youngest age profile. Given the large number of young people among British Muslims and findings that suggest growing extremism among British Muslim youth, the social inclusion of young people is an urgent matter. Evidence suggests that young Muslims are among the most excluded and marginalised in the UK. However, there is little consensus about the main causes and factors of their exclusion.

To help this debate, Mr Tajmazinani first examined the relevance of existent explanatory viewpoints or frameworks, and proposed a new theoretical framework: The Multi-Level Analysis Model of Social Exclusion. To complement this model, a flexible definition of social inclusion is needed. The literature indicates that a) social exclusion is not a simple matter of economic deprivation, but also includes social, political and cultural aspects; b) it results from a process of interplay between various factors; c) it is context-based and can have different meanings and manifestations in various contexts. In the light of these findings, Mr Tajmazinani suggested a composite definition of social inclusion: the desired

situation whereby all members of the society have the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live.

It appears that there is a need for a more rigorous “calibrated” approach to inclusion and exclusion. First, there is still a need for versatile models that can guide research as well as practice in terms of identifying and utilising indicators of social inclusion. Secondly, there is a need for continuous monitoring of these indicators – as suggested in many policy documents. The circumstances of a certain segment of young people in a given country may change drastically following seemingly minor changes in public policy.

→ Resistance and participation

An important and integral component of the debate on equal opportunities is the participation of young people themselves. Reda Šatūnienė described a particular form of youth participation in her study on the punk subculture in Lithuania. Young people interested in punk subculture share an interest in various social problems, national politics, the idea of equal human rights, animal rights, vegetarianism, feminism and ecology. The main values punk subculture members assert are equality, liberty and critical thinking. They emphasise equal human rights for all, anti-fascism, anti-racism, feminism, anti-hierarchy, anti-globalism, anti-consumerism, and the struggle for animal rights and vegetarianism. They try to change what they consider to be a stagnant society, with info-shops, free universities, “do-it-yourself” events, protests, demonstrations, produced “zines”. Members of the punk subculture represent a consciously oppositional and active part of contemporary Lithuanian youth who are eager to change the society.

Eduardo Valenzuela described a new approach to youth offenders. In 2007, laws in France against repeat offenders were stiffened. The Ministry of Justice, however, had suggested “citizenship training” in 2004 as an alternative to imprisonment. Mr Valenzuela described “Citizen Dialogues”, as a way to restore the dialogue between those persons placed under the authority of the judicial system and the various players in the local community: members of the judicial system, local councillors, those in charge of associations. The notion of citizenship is revisited in relation to different daily contexts: by tackling different aspects of “living together” through personal testimonies, this approach opens the door to identifying those factors involved in negative identities and victimisation often experienced by individuals in trouble with the judicial system. The dialogue helps participants reflect on the notion of citizenship, the conditions of “living together” and develop a respect for others and for institutions. The way institutions function and forms of collective engagement and participation are revisited through the concrete examples of the personal experiences of those involved.

→ Immigrant and indigenous youth

Marianna Kotic presented her work on immigrants in Italy, who constitute about 5% of the entire population. Immigration policies in Italy have traditionally linked immigration to the job market, as in other western countries. The institutional approach has, until recently, regarded immigration as a problem and as a matter of security and public order, rather than as a social and inclusive matter. Ms Kotic first compared social-psychological theories about ethnic identity and in- and out-group formation to highlight how “otherness” is constructed. Findings suggest

that the majority of Italians are perceived not to be open to diversity. Participants often believed that most Italians are scared of immigrants due to the way they are presented on the television news. Many believed that Italians tend to associate foreigners and immigrants with a sense of threat.

Elena Knyazeva first presented an anthropological analysis of the indigenous culture and the realities as well as the beliefs that shape indigenous lives in northern Russia. Next, she surveyed the various forms of discrimination (cultural and linguistic, racial, religious, economic, educational, etc.) that indigenous people are faced with across multiple domains. Only half of the indigenous population of the north over the age of 15 have elementary or incomplete secondary education. About 17% of the population do not have any form of elementary education and half of these can be classified as illiterate. Among those who enter school, only 55% are able to finish school. About one third of first grade pupils have to repeat first grade. The low educational attainment of the indigenous habitants of the north makes it very difficult for them to prepare for contemporary life. They end up unable to do anything but unskilled physical labour.

At the same time, indigenous youth cannot resort to traditional life, because the traditional activities that sustained the indigenous population (that is, the economic base or livelihood) have disappeared for the most part. The presentation highlighted the many challenges facing an indigenous way of life and the key notion of power. Unlike immigrant minorities, the indigenous people were in their homeland at the beginning and they have been there ever since. However, they do not have the power to protect their way of life anymore.

Ms Knyazeva argued that the small indigenous minorities of northern Russia are at a crossroads. With the fall of the Soviet Union, the indigenous minorities now have an historic opportunity to begin asserting their identities as indigenous peoples. This political recognition has already gained considerable recognition from governments and aboriginal organisations in other countries, particularly within the Arctic region. The protection and articulation of the rights and freedoms of the indigenous minorities of northern Russia represent one of the weakest components of the legal system of the Russian Federation. It is important for researchers as well as activists to help indigenous peoples articulate and protect their rights and freedoms. As the president of the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East noted: "The indigenous peoples of the North, having preserved their individual identity, are not only Russia's assets but those of the entire mankind."

Taken together, the papers highlighted a number of very important issues. First, there is a need to continuously describe the reactions of young people when they experience or perceive systematic inequalities. The reactions could be violent (as in the case of riots) or more systematic (as in the case of oppositional subcultures) and organised (as in loosely-organised oppositional groups or paramilitary organisations). Secondly, there is a serious gap in research regarding the forms and impact of youth participation in the struggle against discrimination and inequalities. Finally, there is a need for research on indigenous youth, who are not immigrants and yet share many experiences with immigrant populations. There is also a need to focus on the concept of power in the practice of youth work.

→ Looking ahead

The last session began with Ms Lopatta-Loibl outlining the Lisbon Strategy and how the intended process impacts on social exclusion and the requirements for the

member states to report on employment, education and youth as the transversal approach that helps put young people on board. Research has highlighted the discrimination that young Muslims are facing and the Fundamental Rights Agency is examining the situation of young Muslims in Europe.

The general discussion identified some of the challenges ahead. One is how equality and equal opportunities can be accomplished and the way young people perceive and construe equality and inequality. Another has to do with the so-called “culture challenge”: where does a culture begin, or end? Culture is hard to define and hard to demarcate. If culture is so elusive, then intercultural dialogue and multiculturalism can prove to be elusive too.

Another challenge has to do with gaps in the literature, partly reflected in the seminar. There is little research on the role youth can play against discrimination and inequalities. There is also a big knowledge gap on disabilities, despite the fact that millions of young people are disabled. European youth programmes are rarely inclusive of the disabled. Existing research often ignores rural youth. Focused research is also needed on the role the media play in generating or reproducing discrimination.

More research is needed to understand processes generating inequality and discrimination. The dynamics of power, in particular, require explicit attention. The seminar highlighted the fact that indigenous people face discrimination just as immigrants do. The issue is not who came first; rather it is about who is left powerless. A related issue is the critical stance toward research. Critical methodology requires the researcher to be aware of his/her and other researchers’ privileges and power dynamics. The question, “How do we conduct ourselves as ethical/politically-conscious researchers?” is a fundamental challenge for future as well as current researchers.