



Poznań Workshop on “Value Agents and Their Practices in Civil Society”

The NOVAMIGRA team got together at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań on 6 -8 March 2019 to discuss and compare findings on value practices in eight European countries: France, Italy, Poland, Hungary, the Netherlands, Greece, Sweden, and Germany. The country studies identified how both public institutions and civil society actors framed, enacted and drew on values in the context of immigrant admission and integration. The findings will be the basis for in-depth studies on how particularly salient values are understood and enacted across Europe, which will be led by researchers from Adam Mickiewicz University Poznań (Poland) and Malmö University (Sweden).

The preliminary findings indicate that different countries follow different paths in terms of prioritizing the values they focus on and how they transmit these values. In some countries such as France, for example, the Constitution and the values enshrined in it, serve as a springboard for transmission of values such as secularism, democracy, and equality of all citizens regardless of creed, race and origin. In Italy the values being transmitted correspond to the ones enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and in the Lisbon Treaty as well as values promoted by the Italian Constitution. Greece, on the other hand, has chosen values directly related to the admission of refugees, including human rights protection, human dignity, gender equality, and hospitality.

Countries also differ in terms of who transmit selected values to newcomers. Some countries--Sweden, for instance--have very formal training and cultural orientation programs aimed at transmission of both European and Swedish values to refugees to facilitate their integration. In other countries--such as Poland, for example--where the national government has no coherent policy on migration or immigrant integration, other entities, including municipal governments and civil society groups, play an important role in facilitating migrant integration. Some of the values these groups invoke include: solidarity, hospitality, human rights protection.

The workshop was complemented by two guest lectures: On Wednesday, Dr Monika Bobako, from Adam Mickiewicz University, gave a presentation on “Europe and Islam. ‘Migration Crisis’ and the Need for Normative Frameworks”, providing a gripping account of the mechanisms of the recent right-wing interests in European values. On Thursday, Dr Agnieszka Halemba, professor in social anthropology from the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw (Poland), gave an intriguing insight into the uses and meanings of ethnography for research on norms and values.

The last workshop day was dedicated to preparing NOVAMIGRA’s first edited book, “Europe and the Refugee Response: A Crisis of Values?”, a compilation of case studies on value practices across Europe expected to be published next year. Project leader Andreas Niederberger (University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany) and the volume’s three editors – Elzbieta Gozdzik, Izabella Main (both Adam Mickiewicz University) and Brigitte Suter (Malmö University) – met with chapter authors and discussed authors’ individual studies in the context of NOVAMIGRA’s research programme.

