

# Recognizing asylum seekers and undocumented migrants in transnational social work

# SEMPRE

## Social Empowerment in Rural Areas

### The Project

SEMPRE aims to equip social service providers in rural areas of the Baltic Sea Region with better tools for service innovation. These tools are based on the idea of empowerment and service user involvement and aim at the individual, organisational and community level.

SEMPRE intends to give vulnerable people in particular a better say in their future and to strengthen their ability to get involved in social innovation processes. Sixteen project partners work with various vulnerable groups; partners in Finland, Denmark and Germany focus on voluntary and forced migrants, such as refugees and asylum seekers.

### Recognition means:

1. Respecting the rights (national and human rights level),
2. Taking care of the needs,
3. Esteeming capabilities and knowhow  
(based on Axel Honneth 1995)

### Recognition in SEMPRE's Practice

- a) Establishing an Afghan Association
- b) Newspaper project to open a public space for intercultural voices
- c) Young refugees organizing activities for others in the local community

#### Respecting rights:

- a) Training public authorities to use rights based approaches with asylum seekers and undocumented migrants and empowering communities to make the undue situations of the families and individuals without right of residence visible.
- b) Unlocking public space so refugees are able to communicate their potential, competence and cultural wealth in their own right.
- c) Supporting to express and stand up for their own interests (jobs, education, participation in democratic processes etc.)

#### Taking care of needs:

- a) Making situations, where needs are not met, visible to public authorities.
- b) Offering a public forum where refugees speak about their expectations and their immediate life situations.
- c) Being empowered and empowering others is a dynamic relationship, which facilitates the social capital of the individual and the community.

#### Esteeming capabilities and knowhow:

- a) Training stakeholders by refugees is a forceful change of perspective and increases the understanding of stressful situations resulting from forced migration.
- b) Writing about their capabilities and skills and sharing them with their local community raises the self-esteem of refugees and underlines their contribution to community life.
- c) Acquiring new skills and making them available to others, facilitates inclusion, self-respect and recognition by others.

### Facts

During the year 2016, about 2.8 million people tried to survive by seeking asylum in Europe. About 40% of asylum applications were rejected as a first decision in EU28 countries, effecting more than 400,000 people altogether. Asylum seekers and undocumented migrants are often forced to survive in societies where their life, rights and contributions are not valued.

### Social Work

"Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work [...]". (IASSW and IFSW, 2014)

A mandate for social work to stretch beyond nation states and to strive for change, justice and recognition.

### Ethical obligation

Social work's obligation is to stay with asylum seekers and undocumented people and enable them to find ways to achieve full personhood and identity formation, which become reality through human rights and interpersonal relations of recognition.

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