Welfare and Values in Europe

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS\(^1\) ON THREE LEVELS:

The European,

national (regional) and local levels

by Marjukka Laiho, Anne Birgitta Pessi, Eila Helander

\(^1\) In this report “policy recommendations” refer to research-based, concrete, and practical suggestions to policymakers. They aim to give support to political planning, guidance and decision-making. The chosen terminology follows the guidelines of the WaVE Researchers’ Handbook, and is approved by the Finnish NCP for FP6.
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Country Abbreviations

In this report country abbreviations are used as a reference system and refer to specific sources (especially the D9 reports). Country abbreviations at the end of every national or local policy recommendations reveal which case studies paid particular attention to this issue. These findings cannot always be generalized to other cases. Country abbreviations are not used with respect to European policy recommendations, as they are more general by nature and based on a comparison/synthesis of local and national policy recommendations. The country abbreviations are as follows:

DE Germany* (*DEs = Schweinfurt, DEr = Reutlingen)
EL Greece
FR France
HR Croatia
IT Italy
LV Latvia
NO Norway
PL Poland
RO Romania
FI Finland
SE Sweden
UK United Kingdom

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2 As used in the EU context in general. The countries are listed in alphabetical order by the native name of the country.
Foreword

Welfare and Values in Europe (WaVE) was a research project funded by FP6 from 2006-2009. It included thirteen in-depth qualitative case studies in medium-sized towns in twelve European countries. The research illuminated trends in social cohesion and/or conflict between diverse communities as perceptible in the domain of welfare provision. WaVE examined: the values expressed by majority religions in their interactions with minority communities in the domain of social welfare needs and provision; the values expressed by minority groups (especially religious minorities) in their use of welfare services and in their search for alternatives; and the gender-related values underpinning conceptions of welfare and practices in welfare provision in the localities under examination, both in majority and minority communities.\(^3\)

The aim of this report is to suggest policy recommendations based on the overall findings of the WAVE case studies. The recommendations focus on three levels: European, national (or regional), and local. The crosscutting themes of the policy recommendations are religion, minorities and gender. Each of these themes is scrutinized in a variety of contexts.

This policy recommendations report is based on the materials produced in the course of WaVE project which were available at the time of drafting (mid-February 2009). These materials include:

- The policy recommendations included in the case study reports (D9) (excluding the French report which was not available at the time of writing)
- The draft version of the comparative analysis (D11)
- The local dissemination reports (D13) (DEs, EL, HR, IT, LV, PL, FI, UK)
- The national dissemination reports (D14) (DEs, EL, IT, LV, PL, FI, UK).

It should be noted that the causes and consequences of various policy recommendations are closely intertwined (for example poor language skills have an effect on poor success at school). This explains the overlapping nature of at least some of the following recommendations.

Given the present economic situation (spring 2009), the recommendations must be read bearing in mind that money is short – indeed very short – in many parts of Europe, and that many of our suggestions have cost-implications. That said, due precisely to the fact that money is short, the subject matter of the WaVE project is more than ever timely: there are new spaces opening up in Europe for the churches and church-based organizations, not least their welfare activities.

\(^3\) See www.waveproject.org for more information.
Summary

The key political message arising from the WaVE case studies is the crucial relevance of religion (as subject matter) and locality (as the key framework in which to operate) in the domain of welfare provision, if this is viewed from the perspective of majority/minority relations in Europe.

a) Concerning the former, issues related to religion are clearly on the agenda in the domain of welfare in both majority and minority communities. The role of religion is dual: it offers considerable potential but also involves a degree of risk. Thus, greater sensitivity, know-how and information on these questions are urgently needed. This relates closely to the level of action, where more attention should be paid to religion. Thus the message from our studies is: to raise awareness by improving the level of information (see Figure 1 below).

b) Concerning the latter, locality (specifically the local) emerges as the primary context of action in the domain of welfare. Thus, power, resources and support, as well as information are needed at the local level. The role of religion is also evident in the various elements of locality. Thus the second core message from our studies is: to increase effectiveness by improving the action (see Figure 1 below).

Noting the significance of religion and locality, several interrelated improvements in information and action are needed in order to build social cohesion and to prevent tensions or conflicts between majorities and minorities in Europe. In this process, the values of each community (majority/minority) and their social, economic and political resources should be acknowledged in both constructive and critical ways.

Thus, information and action provide the main themes of our policy recommendations at European, national/regional and local level. These are summarized in the cycle of social cohesion set out in Figure 1 and in the paragraphs that follow (pp. 6-7); each recommendation is then considered in more detail.4

4 Further, more fully documented examples from the case studies are given in the comparative cross-country analysis (see separate report).
Improve the information:

- According to our research, religious communities can be a remarkable asset in providing welfare services and in promoting communality – but at the same time, there is a real risk of tension and conflict. Notably a faith community that is too dominant or whose self-definition is too narrow is seen at times as a challenge to welfare, which may be compromised as a result.

- The need for multilingual and culturally-sensitive information is noted in many cases. Both the material itself and the channels of information by which it is disseminated need to be developed in order to reach the target groups in question. Public information channels also face new challenges given the need to work in an ever more culturally, religiously and gender sensitive way.

- The involvement of minority communities is crucial in planning and decision-making procedures, for example with respect to social services. The WaVE case studies present practical suggestions on this matter. The active involvement of minorities has many positive effects: the empowerment of the minorities themselves; the enhancement of mutual understanding between majorities and minorities; and the capacity to build more effective social services in a pluralist society.

- There is a need at all levels (EU, national and local) to develop better methods of sharing information between different organizations. This was mentioned in more than half of the WaVE case studies. It is worth noting that the national and local dissemination meetings of WaVE results were frequently seen as examples of good practice in sharing information and promoting cooperation. Many of our cases stress the
advantages of coordinated networks, which necessarily improve the efficient use of resources and the quality of welfare services.

- There are a number of demands for better indicators, statistics, evaluation and research right across Europe (i.e. in both the East-West and North-South axis). In this context, both internationally comparative and locally sensitive approaches are required. Adequate and reliable knowledge regarding the current situation is the fundamental basis for improvements in the area of both culture- and gender-sensitive welfare provision.

**Improve the action:**

- The crucial significance of proximity is a crosscutting issue appearing in a wide variety of contexts in the WaVE case studies. Respecting the local situation and taking local knowledge into account are crucial elements in creating social cohesion. The particular, if at times controversial, place of the family as the primary community of solidarity will be carefully considered.

- The need for majority and minority groups to share a language is a crucial factor in building cohesion and preventing conflicts. Access to training courses in the majority language is therefore central, a need highlighted in almost all of the WaVE case studies – the more so, given that language skills were often connected with more general societal and social activities, including schooling and working life.

- In addition to language skills there are other requirements concerning education and schooling in a multicultural society. These concern majorities as well as minorities, who have both shared and specific needs. Attention must be paid to the quality and content of primary, secondary and tertiary education as well as to access and equal opportunities.

- Many of the WaVE case studies address the need for greater cultural and gender sensitivity in welfare provision. Here our recommendations focus primarily on the education and training of the welfare providers with respect to multiculturalism and communication. Questions about resources inevitably arise.

- Regardless of religion, culture or gender, work has an important role both for the individual and for society as a whole. Equal opportunities in the work place, and a good balance between work and family life or work and migration, are strong factors leading to cohesion. Thus, it is crucial at both European and national levels to promote working opportunities for as many people as possible.

- There are a number of issues regarding political and legal systems, resources, administration, and policy programmes, which require revision and improvement in order to protect the religious, minority and gender-equal values that are crucial for social cohesion. Our evidence indicates that there are significant challenges for the political system, especially in the Eastern and Southern countries of Europe.
1. Improve the Information

1.1. Religion: Opportunities and Risks

The dual nature of religion as an opportunity, but also as a risk, is clearly seen in the WaVE case studies. According to WaVE, religious communities or organizations can be a remarkable asset in providing welfare services and in promoting communality – but there is also the potential for tension and conflict. Notably a faith community that is too dominant or whose self-definition is too narrow is seen at times as a challenge to welfare, which may be compromised as a result. Thus, we suggest that:

- **European level:**
  - The EU recognizes both the opportunities and risks in the interconnections of religion and welfare. Thus the EU should promote and support open discussion on the role of religion, but should also monitor the welfare services offered by religious institutions and the welfare services which relate to religion.

- **National level:**
  - Attention is paid to the role of religion in a given context. There is a diversity of approaches concerning religion and welfare, which the policy messages clearly reflect:
    - **Firstly,** whenever it is based on common understandings and shared goals, the cohesive nature of welfare work of religious communities is noted. “Putting values into action: religious institutions supporting minorities” (FI) is an example of good practice and cohesion building. This approach refers to services, which are linked to the spiritual and religious orientation of the giving community but where help and assistance is not tied to the ethnicity, faith or religiousness of clients. This gives space to the viewpoints, values and cultures of immigrants, but also allows non-Christian groups to become familiar with Christian values, thus contributing to the building of social cohesion. At the same time, however, there is a risk of indifference in this approach – i.e. if all values simply become relative and negotiable. (LV, FI, DEr, EL)
    - **Secondly,** particular risks connected to the dominance of one national religion are noted. These examples generally emerged from societies where the Catholic Church was/is dominant. At times, there is a need to challenge this situation, which can lead to the marginalization and discrimination of minority groups. In these cases, careful attention should also be paid to gender sensitivity and reproductive health issues. (IT, PL)
  - Some points concerning religion and welfare need to be noted in all contexts. This includes the following policy recommendations:
    - Religion is an important feature of modern societies and should not be avoided. Minority communities are not in the main afraid of a religious approach, and thus religion could become a bridge to explain the particular needs of minority
communities and their difficulties with the dominant system, for example within healthcare. (DEr)

- Religious communities can function as “forums for citizen participation” and thus as forums for emancipation and empowerment for minorities. They enable feelings of importance and belonging. Also, religious communities can function as “low-level mediators”, i.e. as a voice for the weak or silent members of the community. (FI)

- **Local level:**
  - Encounters between minority communities and the local parishes are encouraged. (DEr)
  - The active participation of the church in local politics is encouraged, especially in its role as “the voice of the weak” – i.e. immigrants, ethnic minorities, women. This means that the church could support minorities by actively defending their needs vis-à-vis politics and politicians. (EL)

1.2. **Multiculturalism: A Need for More and Better Information**

The need for multilingual and culturally-sensitive information is noted in many WaVE cases (for example LV, EL, UK, SE). Both the material itself and the channels of information by which it is disseminated need to be developed in order to reach the target groups. The public information channels, i.e. the media, also face new challenges in learning to work in a more culturally, religiously and gender sensitive way. *Thus, we suggest that:*

- **European level:**
  - The EU provides guidance and financial support for the provision of objective information (for example on welfare services) especially to minorities, immigrants and women. Attention is also paid to the distribution channels for this material.
  - The EU launches a programme to train the media (for example journalists of all kinds) about religion in Europe. This is especially important in relation to Islam.

- **National level:**
  - Educational campaigns are launched to raise awareness on multiculturalism. These campaigns could be planned together with policy programmes. Such 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); the deepening of knowledge regarding marginal religious groups (LV).
  - National programmes to improve information channels and media coverage are arranged, with the aim of supporting improvements at local level (see below). (LV, DEs, DEr, NO, FI)
• **Local level:**
  
  - Both the acknowledgment of and *open conversation* about ethnic and religious groups are encouraged. (LV, DEr)
  
  - **Information channels and media coverage** at local level are improved: for example information channelled to different language groups to reduce segregation; better use of media and the internet in information sharing; training for the local media on how to report on immigrants and minorities; a training course for journalists concerning Islam. (LV, DEs, DEr, NO, FI)
  
  - A common *religious/cultural calendar* is created for workplaces (also schools, hospitals etc.). This will function as an educational tool and will reduce conflicts. (SE)
  
  - More information on the services provided at local level is produced (UK, LV, SE, EL, IT, FI). For example:
    
    o The development of *information packs* (including contact details and information on language classes) for healthcare workers (for example midwives/childcare professionals) as a way to reach women in particular. (UK)
    
    o Better *information about social services* including those provided at national level or by the voluntary sector, which is presented in a way that makes it accessible to all. (LV)
    
    o *Printed information* on welfare services is made available in all major languages. (SE)
    
    o Better information is made available on the church and church-related associations regarding provision for the disadvantaged. With unofficial or oral communication only, certain groups are excluded from these services which are then underused. Communication must be improved. (EL)

1.3. **Involve the Minorities**

The involvement of minority communities is crucial in all planning and decision-making procedures. The WaVE case studies present practical suggestions on this matter. The active involvement of minorities has many positive effects, including the empowerment of the minorities, the enhancement of mutual understanding between majorities and minorities, and the capacity to build social services more suited to a pluralist society. *On the basis of the WaVE case studies we suggest that:*

• **European level:**
  
  - Representatives of minorities are listened to whenever European policies/actions concerning minorities are under review. To support this, the EU contributes to the creation of *an accurate database* of minority associations at EU, national and local levels.
- The EU encourages the Member States to develop policies, which guarantee the consultation of immigrants and ethnic minorities concerning issues that relate to them.

- **National and local levels:**

- The participation and consultation of minorities is encouraged at various levels:
  
  - The public sector consults with immigrants and ethnic minorities, their associations and all those who work with these groups – both officially and unofficially. Immigrants and ethnic minorities are encouraged to participate in national and local politics on designated advisory boards, through institutions such as the churches (EL), or by direct involvement in political parties, decision-making bodies and procedures. This promotes the feeling of solidarity, participation, and commitment. It also functions as an information source for the public sector regarding the needs of minority groups. Minorities are also seen and heard in local festivities. (UK, NO, FI, DEr, DEs, EL, PL)
  
  - Regular meetings (“preventive negotiations”) are arranged on “values in practice” between minorities and institutions – for example, schools, work places, health and medical services. The aim of these meetings is to identify and listen to different views about practical arrangements and to find solutions to these differences. Written agreements are drawn up on the basis of these dialogues. (SE)

- Welfare organizations (municipal, religious etc.) employ members of minorities to work as cultural mediators (for example professional social workers of immigrant origin). Regarding the organizations, this both increases knowledge and helps in the communication with other members of the minority; at the same time it enhances the competence of all those involved. (SE, IT, FI)

### 1.4. Networking: Efficiency through Coordination

There is a need on all levels (EU, national and local) to develop better methods of sharing information between different organizations. This was mentioned in more than half of the WaVE case studies. In this connection, it is worth noting that on many occasions the national and local dissemination meetings of WaVE results were seen an effective way to promote cooperation and sharing information. (PL, HR, IT, DE, FI, UK, LV) Well-coordinated networks clearly improve the use of resources and the quality of welfare services. On the basis of the WaVE case studies we suggest that:

- **European level:**
  
  - The EU improves information sharing between the Member States, for example by strengthening the open method of coordination (OMC) regarding social inclusion. This is

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5 In this section, the policy messages are exceptionally interrelated. Thus, the policy messages are not separated into national and local levels.
also reflected at national and local levels in relation to the importance of data, measurement, analyses and evaluations.

- The EU improves its sensitivity in reacting to cross-border challenges in Europe (recent issues concerning the Romanian Roma in various Member States are a case in point).
- The EU encourages forums where majorities and minorities can meet, but also where representatives from the same minority from different Member States can gather for mutual support.

- **National levels:**
  - Mechanisms of coordination and cooperation are created. For instance, networks are developed for 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 which arise from non-coordinated actions. A good example of effective information sharing is the use of formal/informal “community experts”, who are recognized as link-persons and informants regarding particular minority groups. (PL, HR, IT, FI, UK)
  - A bridge organization or NGO coordinator is created, supported by the local authority. The organization/individual would be responsible for a local database of care-givers and receivers, the coordination of local activities, and the raising of funds from local sponsors, other institutions and the EU. (PL)
  - Meetings are arranged for minorities from different areas and cities (for example the Roma from various Polish cities). Such meetings permit the sharing of knowledge and good practice within certain minority groups. (PL)

- **Local level:**
  - Mechanisms of coordination and cooperation are improved (see national level). Cooperation between the local administration and the voluntary sector is strengthened to develop new social services. Particular attention should be given to volunteers in building solidarity, social exchange, cooperation and contacts. (LV, DE)

**1.5. Better Indicators, Statistics, Research and Evaluation**

The demands for better indicators, statistics, research and evaluation are universal in both the East-West and the North-South axis of Europe. In this context, approaches that are both internationally comparative and locally sensitive are needed. Adequate and reliable knowledge regarding the current situation is the basis for all improvements in culture- and gender-sensitive welfare provision. *On the basis of the WaVE case studies, we thus suggest that:*

- **European level:**
  - The EU engages in developing better indicators and statistics on “risk groups”, including immigrants and ethnic minorities. Peer reviews are arranged on this topic to support accurate benchmarking.
The EU provides resources for further research in order to develop national indicators, statistics and systems of evaluation.

**National level:**

- **Better social and economic data** are developed giving clear and comparable information concerning the social status and social rights of minorities. More information is gathered about people in social distress and about different ethnic and religious groups. The situation of different groups in the society is accurately assessed, enabling specific policies directed towards target groups. (HR, LV).

- **National standards for the evaluation** of institutions, the efficiency of individual programmes and the provision of certain services are both established and monitored. (HR)

- Resources are directed to producing **more research-based information** concerning multiculturalism, including the significance of religion for certain groups. (FI)

- Resources are directed to **the study of smaller towns**. (UK)

**Local level:**

- **Local statistical data** are collected systematically, for example regarding the family, housing, employment, schooling of children, and legal status of immigrants. (EL)

- More **in-depth research** is carried out, especially with regard to recent integration processes and their further development. (DEr)
2. Improve the Action

2.1. Distance Matters: Make It Local and Make It Personal

The importance of proximity emerges as a cross-cutting issue in 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. One (at times controversial) example of this policy concerns the value of family as the primary community of solidarity. On the basis of the WaVE case studies, we suggest that:

- **European level:**
  - The EU recognizes that effective European and national cohesion rests very largely on local cohesion. For example, by:
    - Utilizing to the full the principle of subsidiarity as a means of power and empowerment. The principle could even be stretched to include individuals and their families, recognizing the role of family (notably its educative and civilizing functions) as the basis of a multicultural, peaceful Europe. Such an approach should not, however, imply a reduction in public welfare. Regarding the latter, there is a continuing need for an adequately resourced national response.
    - Acknowledging the value of both subjective value orientations and collective norms as the basis of integration. Citizens must be willing participants in social cohesion.

- **National level:**
  - There is flexibility in the implementation of national guidelines, frameworks, targets and policy recommendations, in order to respect the local situation and to take local knowledge into account. Attention is paid to the different dynamics of large conurbations, smaller towns and rural areas. (UK)

- **Local level:**
  - The significance of local governance and its institutions in guaranteeing the quality of life of immigrants is taken seriously, and attention is paid to improving local resources (for example personnel and equipment). (FI, RO)
  - Active participation in and visits to minority community events are encouraged, alongside the participation of different groups in cultural and sporting activities. Such events unite people through mutual participation and common sharing. (DEr, LV)
  - Local spaces are established where minorities can meet, and where multicultural encounters and other services can take place. (UK, EL, RO)
  - The importance of unofficial support networks, such as friends, neighbours, religious communities and most importantly the family, is acknowledged. At the same time the possibility that family-centeredness might lead to isolation and loneliness is recognized;
contacts to the wider society must also be encouraged. Support to young families is strengthened. (HR, LV, FI, RO)

### 2.2. Language: A Key to Society, Education, and Work

The need for majority and minority groups to share a language by which they can communicate is a crucial factor in building cohesion and preventing conflict. This highlights the need for language training for all minorities. 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. *On the basis of the WaVE case studies we suggest that:*

- **European level:**
  - The EU encourages the Member States to improve their facilities for language training for immigrants and other minorities.
  - The EU supports and offers resources for national and local actors, with a view to providing high-quality language training, which meets the needs of the target groups.
  - The EU provides general guidelines relating to context-based, group-related and personalized language training.

- **National level:**
  - The Member States improve their facilities for language training, in order to fit with the needs of the target groups. Attention should be paid, for example, to the timing of courses (arranging these during school hours so that parents can attend), to the need for special courses for the parents of school children, and to the need for gender-specific courses. (NO, UK)
  - The use of support mechanisms is encouraged, such as interpreters and native-speaking assistants as well as homework assistance programmes and preparatory kindergartens. (NO)

- **Local level:**
  - At the local level more attention is paid to arranging 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. Courses should be advertised in the language of the target groups. (EL) Attention should also be paid to the timing of courses (arranging these during school hours, so the parents can attend) (NO), to the need for special courses for the parents of school children, and to the need for gender-specific courses. (UK, NO, FI, LV)
  - Also at local level, the use of support mechanisms (such as interpreters and native-speaking assistants as well as homework assistance programmes and kindergartens) is encouraged. (NO)
2.3. Particular Challenges for Education

In addition to language skills there are other needs concerning education and schooling in a multicultural society. These needs concern majorities as well as minorities, who have both shared and specific needs. On the basis of the WaVE case studies we suggest that:

- **European level:**
  - More attention is paid to the **quality and content** of primary, secondary and tertiary education in all European societies. **Equal opportunities and access** to schooling are basic priorities, which should be respected at all levels of education and in all social contexts.

- **National level:**
  - **Education policies** are improved and considered carefully. Special attention is paid to equal opportunities and support. This includes the following actions:
    - **Addressing the wide variety of situations and needs** of different groups (both majority and minority), and sensitizing teachers to these issues. (EL)
    - **Encouraging (“putting pressure”)** on Roma parents to send their children to preparatory classes and kindergarten. (PL, cf. 2.2. /support mechanisms/ NO). All children are guaranteed the right to free kindergarten. (RO)
    - **Access to secondary and tertiary education** is encouraged. This includes the offering of language courses and the support for minorities to enable access to secondary and tertiary levels (high school, university and work-related education) (DEr), and to lifelong learning programmes for professional skills. (DEr, LV)
    - **Educational programmes promoting knowledge of cultural plurality and minority religions** (in a given region) are provided in schools. These programmes should include meetings with the representatives of minorities. (PL) Special emphasis should also be given to learning and teaching about the **majority culture**. (FI)
  - A special organization is set up with the aim of providing educational activities relating to family values and interreligious dialogue. (RO)
  - The values of civil society are strengthened in primary education. (LV)

- **Local level:**
  - **Skills courses** are arranged in a cultural- and gender-sensitive way, for example gender specific computer courses at hours convenient for the target group. (UK)
  - The value of a teacher as a role model is noted, especially in schools with large numbers of minority children. (LV)
  - Workshops are arranged for the local community relating to team-work and cooperation between groups. (RO)
2.4. Work: A Common Value Creating Social Cohesion

Regardless of religion, culture or gender, work has an important role for an individual as indeed for society as a whole. Equal opportunities in the work place, and a good balance between work and family life or work and migration, are strong factors leading to social cohesion. Thus, it is crucial at both European and national levels to promote working opportunities for as many people as possible. In this regard, we suggest that:

- **European level:**
  - Special attention is paid to the position of immigrants and other minorities in the labour market. The EU encourages research on how these groups can improve their labour market position.
  - The EU supports policies which guarantee the right to work for as many people as possible. This includes actions which help to reconcile work and family-life and which encourage employers, in both the public and private sectors, to employ persons with a migration background.

- **National level:**
  - Careful attention is paid to the payment of proper wages and of social security contributions for migrant workers (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. (EL)
  - Gender sensitive labour policies are strengthened. Gender discrimination in the labour market is confronted (LV) and better policies for reconciling work and family-life are developed (for example parental leave, part-time and flexible contracts). Care-giving is promoted as the responsibility of everyone, not only women. (LV, IT, RO)

- **Local level:**
  - Encounters between unemployed immigrants and employers are arranged – to respond to the particular needs of both immigrants and employers, and to facilitate contacts and interactions between the two parties. (SE)
  - Special attention is paid to the employment of young parents in order to support young families. (RO)
  - Religious communities are encouraged to provide work, including voluntary work, for immigrants, who often have difficulties in finding employment. Good examples of this already exist. (FI)

2.5. Cultural and Gender Sensitivity to Welfare Services

Many of the WaVE case studies address very directly the need for greater cultural and gender
sensitivity in welfare provision. (NO, IT, LV, FI, EL) Here the recommendations consist mainly in educating the welfare providers regarding issues of multiculturalism and communication. The question of resources cannot be avoided. *These issues are addressed in many of our policy recommendations but in this section we highlight the following:*

- **European level:**
  - European guidelines and standards for cultural- and gender-sensitive welfare are established; such standards must be promoted politically and supported financially.
  - The training of social workers and welfare providers regarding these issues is promoted and supported.

- **National and local levels:**
  - Improvements in the *quality and scope of welfare services* are necessary. Our recommendations on this matter include the following:
    - National (and international) actions are prioritized in relation to the mental health needs of immigrants (who need both support and treatment). Healthcare workers are educated to recognize the symptoms of trauma-based depression. (FI)
    - Organizing social services such as “family advisory centres” on a non-discriminatory basis, but at the same time paying careful attention to gender, is likely to encourage cohesion. New welfare activities, including sex education in high school, are needed. (IT)
    - Social assistance should be provided to people in need; the procedures for obtaining state support must be simplified. (RO)
  - Resources are a crucial issue for many of these points. For example:
    - The high costs vs. poor quality of healthcare services need to be tackled. (LV)
    - The working conditions of civil servants who deal with immigration policy must be improved; this should lead to better attitudes towards immigrants. (EL)
    - Better finance is directed to the social security system. This includes adequate salaries for social workers in order to attract professional staff. (RO)
  - The intercultural training of social workers must be encouraged. This training should address the need to adapt the welfare services to respond to different kinds of people, rather than the reverse. In detail, this means:
    - Respect as a corner stone of the welfare activities of religious organizations who work with immigrants and other minorities. This includes respect for personal beliefs and other faiths. (FI)

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6 In this section, the policy messages are exceptionally intertwined. Therefore, the policy messages are not separated into national and local levels.
Improvements in the communication skills of welfare workers (i.e. active listening, efforts to understand, observing non-verbal language, and the need to express things simply). (IT)

The development of culturally appropriate welfare services especially in primary and specialist healthcare. (NO)

2.6. The Core: Influencing the Political Systems

There are a number of issues regarding political and legal systems, resources, administration, and policy programmes, which require revision and improvement in order to protect the religious, minority and gender-equal values that are crucial for social cohesion. The WaVE case studies indicate that there are significant challenges for the political system, especially in the Eastern and Southern countries of Europe. On the basis of the WaVE case studies we suggest that:

• European level:
  - The EU supports national, local, and (above all) context-based solutions to questions relating to ethnic and religious minorities, immigrants and gender, notably with reference to schooling and the labour market. The exchange of information between countries is promoted and peer review is utilized as a means of transnational cooperation.
  - The EU confronts the following at both EU and national level: problems of over-centralization; immigration law; issues of corruption; and the shadow or grey economy.

• National level:
  - Immigration law and related policies are revisited. (IT, EL) In detail, this includes the following:
    o The attitudes of policy-makers towards immigrants and other minorities are improved. Considerate policies that recognize the resources and motivation of the immigrants themselves are encouraged, as well as policies that respect minority languages and education. (FI, LV)
    o The slowness of bureaucracy is tackled. Residence permits are processed rapidly and to support this, electronic systems are developed where needed. Wherever possible, immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers are given an official status, which enables access to education, work and social security. (FI, DEs, EL)
    o Economic policies, especially questions of taxation, are addressed in ways which increase the profitability of work and decrease the attraction of the shadow/grey economy. (HR, LV)
    o The decentralization of power is encouraged: to build more effective governance, to reduce bureaucracy and corruption, and to support cooperation at local level. More space is given to NGOs. (HR)
o **Adequate flexibility** is guaranteed in the integration process of immigrants. Guidelines are established and regularly updated. (FI)

o **Programmes** opposing domestic violence and **initiatives** to support both gender equality and the economic and social empowerment of **women** are encouraged. (HR)

- There is an urgent need to revise the social security and welfare systems to deal with the requirements of immigrants and other minorities. For example:
  
  - **Social security systems** are developed to meet the needs of high-risk groups (for example immigrants, ethnic minorities, and women). Issues of low wages and social benefits must be tackled in order (a) that work is profitable and (b) that – when necessary – adequate social security is guaranteed for all citizens. (LV, NO, IT)
  
  - **The welfare system** is modernized in terms of values and working methods. The welfare system commits itself to the values of equality (of men and women) and non-discrimination (especially in the field of reproductive health). The system is set up with the aim of empowering people, not only distributing financial resources. (IT)

- **Local level:**
  
  - More attention is paid to the **attitudes, structures, human and financial resources** that prevail in local administration. The aim of services should be **quality and care**, ensured by adequate staffing levels. (DE, PL, EL, FI)

  - **Local social programmes** are developed in cooperation with the public sector and other actors (for example NGOs, religious and other minorities) at least every second year. These programmes should establish a social vision for the locality in question, paying attention to both human and financial resources. The programme then functions as the basis for decision-making. A process of evaluation is created and implemented. (HR)

  - Local governments institutionalize “**bridge persons**” or “door openers” as part of the administration. These persons have contacts with different cultural and religious groups as well as the welfare providers and social networks in the field; they are persons with proven intercultural competence. (DEs)