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# **Comparative Analysis of Dialogue Platforms in Estonia, Latvia and Sweden**

## **Report**

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## Introduction

This report is part of the Central Baltic INTERREG IVA Programme, which is studying integration-promoting citizen dialogues with focus on third country nationals in Estonia, Latvia and Sweden.

Europe's existing ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity has been continuously enhanced by migration. This variety contributes to the European long-term development, competitiveness and position in the world. However, many immigrant and ethnic minority communities experience less solidarity and certain barriers in participation in societal life and decision-making process in their host countries; also, the native population feel often certain social distance towards engaging with the immigrant groups. Consultative bodies at the local and national level stimulate and encourage public and social participation by immigrants and improve integration policies by communicating the views of immigrant representatives to governmental and other stake holders. In the countries of the Baltic Sea region, there are consultative structures in the area of integration on national and/or local level. However, there is a growing dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of dialogue processes.

Since across Europe, dialogue platforms have emerged in an unplanned-uneven manner across many different sectors, this Project aims to systematise the role of consultative bodies in the area of integration in the participating countries of the Baltic Sea region. Drawing on the experience outlined first edition of the Handbook on Integration<sup>1</sup> on the role of consultative bodies in enhancing integration and the chapter of dialogue platforms in the Third edition of the Handbook on Integration<sup>2</sup>, the purpose of this Project has been elaborate further the "enabling factors" that can enhance the success of dialogue platforms (local, regional, national). The goal is to enhance the role of consultative bodies and the representation of civil society organisations in defining, implementing and evaluating immigrants' integration policies.

The overall objective of the project is to strengthen the usage of common spaces and activities in which immigrants (incl. third country nationals) interact with the host societies of countries of the Baltic Sea region. The best medium for such meaningful action is through the dialogue platforms (be they more institutionalised or informal, taking place between different actors), which in turn enhances the role of consultative bodies and the representation of civil society organisations in defining, implementing and evaluating immigrants' integration policies. In addition to facilitating factors the activities will also focus on the analysis of the intended outcomes and impact of different kinds of dialogue platforms.

The report is divided into four chapters. The first chapter focuses on the theoretical background and methodology. It gives an overview of methodological approaches to different types of dialogue and theoretical approaches to inter-cultural dialogue. It also contains a section on methodology used for this project (secondary analysis and interviews). The second chapter concentrates on definitions of dialogue platforms and European standards on minority participation, followed by the country analysis. This chapter (three) is made up of four sections: (i) ethnic composition and history of immigration; (ii) coordination of integration policy in Latvia, Estonia and Sweden; (iii) political

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<sup>1</sup> Can be accessed at [http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/resources/detail.cfm?ID\\_ITEMS=1212](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/resources/detail.cfm?ID_ITEMS=1212)

<sup>2</sup> Can be accessed at [http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/resources/detail.cfm?ID\\_ITEMS=12892](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/resources/detail.cfm?ID_ITEMS=12892)

participation and access to political rights; and (iv) overview of the existing dialogue platforms. Chapter four gives and overview of the main findings and results of the interviews with stakeholders that either have organised dialogue activities or have taken part in them.

# 1. Theoretical Background and Methodology

## 1.1 Methodological Approaches to Different Types of Dialogue

There are different ways of classifying the types of dialogue in the society as well as ways of defining the dialogue itself. For example, community dialogue process has been defined as specifically designed processes at the community level (rather than government and institutional) that involve both deliberation and inclusion and are based on the belief that such inclusion is a citizen's right and may improve the accuracy of decision making and/or may assist in the community's acceptance of decisions.<sup>3</sup> Another approach is to define dialogue as creating joint meaning and shared understanding' through conversation.<sup>4</sup> A third way of seeing dialogue is to describe it as a way to deal constructively with conflicts: „As long as you're talking, you can't be shooting“.<sup>5</sup>

However, there are two features that are common to all various dialogue processes:

- Deliberation – careful consideration of evidence, social interaction, discussion and debate, consideration of a range of views, and the opportunity to re-evaluate initial positions.
- Inclusion – involvement of a diverse range of individuals and groups, including previously excluded groups who are not represented in the normal stakeholder discussions.<sup>6</sup>

By objective, it is possible to distinguish between 3 different dialogues:

- transmitting information (unidirectional)
- consultation (bi-directional, but the consulted party frames the issue)
- active participation: based on a partnership in which citizens, stakeholders, experts and/or politicians actively engage in (policy) debate.<sup>7</sup>

Similar approach differentiates between 4 stages of the dialogue:

- positional dialogue in which parties articulate their respective views – which may range from differing to diametrically opposed – as positions and attitudes that merely require acknowledgement
- human-relations dialogue which focuses at the relational level on analysing the causes of misunderstandings and stereotypes, and where the goal is mutual acknowledgement of the person and increased respect by each party for the other
- activist dialogue where the subjects at issue are sorted and analysed in order to identify common ground, and/or to explore how the parties might contain their dispute through joint action

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<sup>3</sup> Dialogue Methods: A Typology of Community Dialogue Processes. Parker, J. & Duignan, P. (2005).  
<http://www.parkerduignan.com/documents/132pdf.PDF>, p 4.

<sup>4</sup> Research integration using dialogue methods / David McDonald, Gabriele Bammer, Peter Deane, 2009.  
[http://epress.anu.edu.au/dialogue\\_methods/pdf/whole\\_book.pdf](http://epress.anu.edu.au/dialogue_methods/pdf/whole_book.pdf), p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> From Resolution to Transformation: The Role of Dialogue Projects. Norbert Ropers, 2004.  
[http://www.un.org.kg/index2.php?option=com\\_resource&task=show\\_file&id=3496](http://www.un.org.kg/index2.php?option=com_resource&task=show_file&id=3496), p 2.

<sup>6</sup> Dialogue Methods: A Typology of Community Dialogue Processes. Parker, J. & Duignan, P. (2005).  
<http://www.parkerduignan.com/documents/132pdf.PDF>, p 4.

<sup>7</sup> Participatory Methods Toolkit. A practitioner's manual. King Baudouin Foundation, 2003.  
[http://archive.unu.edu/hq/library/Collection/PDF\\_files/CRIS/PMT.pdf](http://archive.unu.edu/hq/library/Collection/PDF_files/CRIS/PMT.pdf), p. 9.

- problem-solving dialogue, in which the disputants organize their communication in such a way that they are able to systematically work through the substance of their differences.<sup>8</sup>

With regard to ways of dialogue, there is a variety of methods available that have been used effectively in practice. Most common are the following:

- Citizens Jury – participants of Jury are randomly selected and demographically representative, meet for four or five days to carefully examine and discuss an issue of public significance. In the end, Jury produces a decision or provide recommendations in the form of a citizens' report.
- Delphi Expert Panel/ technique - survey where each respondent (usually expert) completes a questionnaire and then (s)he will get feedback from organisers of the dialogue on the whole set of responses. On the basis of this feedback, (s)he then fills in the questionnaire again, this time providing explanations for any views they hold that were significantly divergent from the viewpoints of the others participants.
- Charrette - intensive face-to-face process designed to bring people from various sub-groups of society into consensus within a short period of time, where the public engage with experts to jointly design solutions, can include brainstorming issues and possible solutions.
- Consensus Conference – a public enquiry for assessment of a socially controversial topic where people put their questions and concerns to a panel of experts, assess the experts' answers and then negotiate among themselves.
- Qualitative discussion: groups/workshops, focus groups - planned discussion among a group of stakeholders facilitated by a skilled moderator.
- Scenarios Workshop/ scenario planning - series of differing views of the same general topic will be presented. Once the participants see several scenarios at the same time, they will better understand their options or possibilities.

In addition, there are other methods that are used e.g.:

- deliberative polling, standing panel, reference panel, advisory council, oversight group, citizen review panel, Public hearing<sup>9</sup>
- PAME (Participatory Assessment, Monitoring & Evaluation), Planning Cells, World Café<sup>10</sup>
- future search conference, most significant change technique, nominal group technique, open space technology, soft systems methodology<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> From Resolution to Transformation: The Role of Dialogue Projects. Norbert Ropers, 2004.

[http://www.un.org.kg/index2.php?option=com\\_resource&task=show\\_file&id=3496](http://www.un.org.kg/index2.php?option=com_resource&task=show_file&id=3496), p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Dialogue Methods: A Typology of Community Dialogue Processes. Parker, J. & Duignan, P. (2005).

<http://www.parkerduignan.com/documents/132pdf.PDF>

<sup>10</sup> Participatory Methods Toolkit. A practitioner's manual. King Baudouin Foundation, 2003.

[http://archive.unu.edu/hq/library/Collection/PDF\\_files/CRIS/PMT.pdf](http://archive.unu.edu/hq/library/Collection/PDF_files/CRIS/PMT.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Dialogue Methods: A Typology of Community Dialogue Processes. Parker, J. & Duignan, P. (2005).

<http://www.parkerduignan.com/documents/132pdf.PDF>

## 1.2 Theoretical Approaches to Inter-Cultural Dialogue

In recent decades Europe has witnessed marked increase in the number of foreign nationals residing on their territory (from 6.9% in 1990 to 9.5% in 2010, UN<sup>12</sup>). This is to some extent for political and humanitarian reasons, but also as a result of differing economic situations and the freedom of movement in the European Union which has led to an increasing number of people have settled with varying degrees of permanence in countries other than their countries of origin (2.5% of EU27 in 2010, Eurostat<sup>13</sup>).

This raises the question of the ways to encourage the migrant residents to participate actively in the community in which they live. Council of Europe Handbook on Local consultative bodies for foreign residents<sup>14</sup> outlines three main mechanisms for advancing immigrant participation in societal life. (i) Fostering integration through simplifying naturalisation procedures. (ii) However many foreign residents are unwilling to change their nationality, therefore, other measures should be sought which would allow them to participate in the social and political life e.g. through promotion of civic rights (freedom of thought and conscience, speech and expression, and religion, but also protection against discrimination) and political rights (freedom of association, the right to assemble, the right to petition, and the right to vote for foreigners who have fulfilled a specific residence qualification). (iii) This can also include mechanisms such as consultative bodies to represent the views of immigrant residents to authorities.

Contemporary culturally and ethnically diverse societies require some sort of power-sharing and for establishing and maintaining viable democracy<sup>15</sup> and consultative bodies can serve as one mechanism of power-sharing and inclusion. Participation in public policy is an important way in which individuals can contribute their ideas, visions and proposals to the development of societies they live in. In democratic state individuals are subject to political power, but they are given a right to participate in electing the members of the governing institutions that will be making decisions on their behalf<sup>16</sup>. If there is a group of people that has to conform to authority, but cannot take part in shaping those institutions, this undermines democratic mandate of the state in their eyes and results on creation of oppositional subculture<sup>17</sup>, because the government lacks complete political and moral support of the minority. Without having a publicly recognised output they will organise a parallel alternative society, because they have not succeeded in finding solidarity from the official society.

In addition to democratic inclusion encouraging contacts between people of different ethnic background is considered an important source for enhancing tolerance and reducing prejudice. Contact theory was initially developed by Allport in 1954<sup>18</sup>. He argued that by bringing together the members of different groups, getting them working towards common goals on an equal footing, leads to decrease in intergroup prejudice. The precondition for observing equal footing for

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<sup>12</sup> <http://esa.un.org/migration/p2k0data.asp>

<sup>13</sup> [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KS-SF-11-034/EN/KS-SF-11-034-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-11-034/EN/KS-SF-11-034-EN.PDF)

<sup>14</sup> Gsir, S. and Martinello, M. (2004). Local consultative bodies for foreign residents – a Handbook

<sup>15</sup> Lijphart, A. (2008). Thinking about Democracy: Power Sharing and Majority Rule in Theory and Practice. Abingdon: Routledge

<sup>16</sup> Lewis, W. Arthur (1965). Politics in West Africa. Toronto and New York: Oxford University Press

<sup>17</sup> Kymlicka, W. (2001). Politics in the Vernacular. Oxford: Oxford University Press

<sup>18</sup> Allport, G. W., (1954), The Nature of Prejudice, Addison Wesley, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

participants is particularly significant because bringing together two groups in an unequal position of power will only serve to confirm those positions and reinforce prejudice.

More recently contact theory has been developed by Hewstone<sup>19</sup>, who argues that the positive correlation between contacts and (more) positive attitudes is dependent on type of contact. Hewstone maintains that the type of contact, and the conditions under which it occurs, are all important and if these are not optimal they can lead to an increase in prejudice. This means that there is evidence that contact between groups does bring about positive (or at least less negative) attitudes and reduces prejudice in more lasting relationships – such as friendship, living and working together etc. This is further supported by the community bridge building approach put forward by Law<sup>20</sup>. Community bridge building is based on the premise that everyone, individually and as a nation, benefits from knowing, experiencing and working with other cultures. In doing so the focus is on what is held in common rather than any differences, and it is these commonalities that bind groups together. In a sum, the research indicates that inter-ethnic interaction achieves the best results when interaction is the by-product of people coming together for another purpose besides a premeditated intercultural activity. Consultative bodies are therefore important for social and political cohesion and help to promote the peaceful coexistence of different ethnic groups and foster development of citizenship among foreign and national populations by providing a forum for dialogue and consultation between ethnic minorities and dominant group. They act as a catalyst for the development of local democracy.

The novelty of this project is manifested in focus on dialogue platforms and activities with specific attention on immigrant and ethnic minority integration. While there are several good general overviews of the preconditions for establishing successful dialogue platforms<sup>21</sup> involving citizens in decision-making process there is a need for a more specific and detailed analysis of advantages and disadvantages, success factors of different types of dialogue platforms on integration. The plentiful literature on intercultural dialogue and dialogue platforms on integration underlines<sup>22</sup> the importance of strengthening intercultural competences in decision-making and promoting immigrant participation in social and political life. It is essential to take the next step and determine the link and type of relationship between existing dialogue platforms and integration policies. The general aim of the research is to enable the role of consultative bodies and representation of civil society in integration policy of third country nationals and immigrants.

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<sup>19</sup> Hewstone, M. Et al, (2007), Prejudice, Intergroup Contact and Identity: do neighbourhoods matter? in Wetherell, M., Lafleche, M., and Berkeley, R.(eds), Identity, Ethnic Diversity and community cohesion, Sage, London

<sup>20</sup> Law, B. Haq,T. And Greavess, B. (2008), Building Intercultural Bridges between Diverse Communities, East Midlands Economic Network, Leicester.

<sup>21</sup> e.g. Slocum, N. (2003). Participatory Methods Toolkit, A practitioner's manual. King Baudouin Foundation; Ropers, N. (2004). From Resolution to Transformation: The Role of Dialogue Projects. Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management; Parker, J. and Duignan, P. (2005). Dialogue Methods: A Typology of Community Dialogue Processes. Parker Duignan Ltd; McDonald, D., Bammer, G., Deane, P. (2009) Research integration using dialogue methods. Australian University Press.

<sup>22</sup> Huddleston, T. (2011). Consulting immigrants to improve national policies. Migration Policy Group/European Economic and Social Committee; Platform for Intercultural Europe. (2008). The Rainbow Paper. Intercultural Dialogue: From Practice to Policy and Back; United States Institute of Peace (2004). What Works? Evaluating Interfaith Dialogue Programs; Bourquin, J. (2003). Violence, conflict and intercultural dialogue. Council of Europe; Political and social participation of immigrants through consultative bodies. (1999). Council of Europe.

Inter-ethnic dialogue brings people of different cultural background together for conversations. These conversations can take a variety of forms and possess an array of goals and formats. They can also take place at various social levels, and target different types of participants. At the same time there has been little research on their effectiveness. This is unfortunate, because those who design and implement dialogue platforms need feedback to determine how to maximize their efforts and resources. Given the range of approaches and techniques currently practiced and the wide variety of geographic, political, and social contexts in which they take place, it is increasingly important to develop methodologies to evaluate what works.

### 1.3 Methodology

In addition to secondary analysis of the existing surveys, legislation and policy documents this report is also based on series of interviews carried out in the course of the project. Interviews were conducted with experts and people who have either organised or taken part in integration related dialogue activities/platform. The questionnaire was prepared by the project team and contained a set of standardised qualitative questions and guidelines for selection of respondents. The interview questions were translated from English to Estonian, Latvian, Russian and Swedish. The selection of respondents was done by the project team.

Fifty seven persons were interviewed altogether in the course of the project. In Estonia there were twenty two interviewees: two politicians (one state one local level), three state and two local authority officials, two researchers from Universities and thirteen NGOs – both mainstream and minority organisations. In Latvia there were seventeen interviews: three interviews with the representatives of state institutions and three with local government representatives, one politician, seven interviews with minority NGO and three interviews with civil society organisations. The final sample for Södertörnje consisted of eighteen people: two researchers, five representatives from NGOs, five municipal and local officials and six municipal politicians.

**Table 1 Interviewees**

	Estonia	Latvia	Sweden
NGO	4	3	2
Minority NGO	9	7	3
Local/Municipal Officials	2	3	5
State Officials	3	3	
Politicians	2	1	6
Researchers	2		2
Total	22	17	18

The questionnaire consisted of six sections. The introductory (i) socio-demographic questions were followed by questions (ii) on purpose of dialogue in the society at large and the function of dialogue in the area of integration. (iii) The following section focused on the personal experience of the respondent in dialogue activities. Respondents were asked to list the different forms of integration-related (e.g. structural consultative councils or roundtables, ad hoc consultative bodies, mandatory consultations before decision-making by authorities, working group for policy-making purposes,

grass-roots-level initiative etc. dialogue which they have participated in and also note what their role was in the particular activity (e.g. organiser or participant). In addition they were also asked to outline which topics were handled successfully or ineffectively during these dialogues. The respondents were requested to indicate which groups took part in the dialogue (e.g. national (traditional) and ethnic minority organisations, other (mainstream civil society organisations, state and/or local authorities, international organisations (e.g. Council of Europe), media representatives and others). (iv) The next section formed the most important part of the questionnaire that examined the content and the impact of dialogue activities. The respondents were asked to assess how successful in their point of view these dialogue activities have been and to name the topics that were discussed – the selection of themes was based on Common Basic Principles. Table 2 lists the topics. They were also asked to consider whether certain preconditions or so called enabling factors were met during these dialogue activities<sup>23</sup>. Table 3 lists the supporting factors. The respondents were also invited to give their impressions on to what extent the authorities have taken into account the outcome (e.g. proposals) of the dialogue and whether new objectives or aspects emerged during the implementation of dialogue and whether the original objectives and tasks changed during the realisation of the dialogue. The two final sections concentrated on assessment of (v) management and funding of dialogue activities and finally the respondents were asked to express their suggestions regarding the (vi) lessons learned and changes that are needed (legislative, financial etc.) to enhance the effectiveness of dialogue activities.

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<sup>23</sup> For more details on prerequisites for facilitating (integration) dialogue platforms please see Issues paper prepared by the Migration Policy Group (MPG) for INTI technical seminar on 'Dialogue Platforms', Dublin, 15/16 May 2008; available at [http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/resources/detail.cfm?ID\\_ITEMS=9036](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/resources/detail.cfm?ID_ITEMS=9036)

**Table 2 Topics Discussed during the Dialogue****Activities**

Topic
participation in social and political life
citizenship of the country, equal opportunities in labour market
basic knowledge of the host society's language
basic knowledge of the host society's history
basic knowledge of the host society's institutions
efforts in education
equal access to institutions, public and private goods and services
frequent interactions between people
practice of diverse cultures and religions
common values

**Table 3 Factors enabling Dialogue**

Factors
Participants have a commonly agreed set of objectives
Equality and dignity of all participants is recognised
All relevant and representative partners are involved in dialogue activities
All participants shared the same baseline knowledge on the topic concerned and toolbox of dialogue skills and techniques
The impact and effects of dialogue are assessed

All respondents were asked the same questions and most of the respondents did not know what the questions were in advance (apart from the few who requested to see the questionnaire prior to the interview). Thus the interviews present their spontaneous opinions and ideas, not pre-prepared answers. The questions were posed in the same order in all interviews, but the respondents were given the opportunity to develop their answers. All interviewees were promised confidentiality and will not be credited. Some respondents were very keen to provide long, detailed answers. Others were answering more shortly. All interviews were summarised in abstracts

## 2 Definitions and European Standards

Unlike the United Nations or European Court of Human Rights, and the Council of Europe, the European Union has no competence to set standards on minority protection. In the EU legislation binding standards only exist in the field of equal treatment and antidiscrimination and are the firmest in the field of employment. The provisions of the EU treaties do not explicitly refer to minority rights.

In the EU context, integration refers mainly to foreigners and third-country nationals in particular while in Estonia and Latvia thus far integration has been based on ethnicity primarily and secondarily on nationality. Integration falls under the shared competence of the EU (freedom, security and justice), but remains mainly under the competence of Member States (as opposed to the area of migration that is more regulated in the Union level). Both 2005 and 2011<sup>24</sup> EC Agendas on Integration emphasise the importance of „Migrants' participation in the democratic process“ and call for removal of legislative obstacles, enhancing involvement of migrant representatives in the drawing up and implementation of integration policies. Creation of consultative bodies and advisory platforms is suggested as one ways to enhance democratic participation. On EU level civil society participation and dialogue is promoted by the European Integration Forum<sup>25</sup>.

The European Union began working on immigrant consultative bodies when the Ministers responsible for integration agreed the 11 “Common Basic Principles” (CBP)<sup>26</sup> in 2004. The EU priority is integration through participation in the democratic process, increasing interaction between migrants and majority population, and supporting the sense of belonging. CBP also mentions immigrant consultative bodies as one way to stimulate this participation as well as mutual understanding. CBP call for giving more attention political participation, especially unequal levels of engagement and membership. Explicitly CBP 7 and 9 form the basis for supporting the formation of consultative bodies and dialogue platforms

- Common Basic Principle 7: Frequent interaction between immigrants and Member State citizens is a fundamental mechanism for integration. Shared forums, inter-cultural dialogue, education about immigrants and immigrant cultures, and stimulating living conditions in urban environments enhance the interactions between immigrants and Member State citizens.
- Common Basic Principle 9: The participation of immigrants in the democratic process and in the formulation of integration policies and measures, especially at the local level, supports their integration.

Council of Europe has the most elaborate approach on defining and managing consultative bodies. The main instrument is the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level (n. 144, 1992). Estonia and Latvia have not joined the Convention; Sweden ratified the Convention in 1993<sup>27</sup>. The aim of the Convention is to provide foreigners with active information on policies and ensuring that account is taken of their needs when making those policies by promoting the creation

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<sup>24</sup> “European Agenda for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals”, COM(2011)455 final

<sup>25</sup> The European Integration Forum provides an opportunity for civil society organisations to express their views on migrant integration issues and to discuss with the European institutions challenges and priorities. Forum is financed by the European Fund for the Integration of Third-country nationals, under Community Actions.

<sup>26</sup> 14615/04 (Presse 321)

<sup>27</sup> As of 2012 eight countries have ratified the Convention: Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Italy, Iceland, Finland, Denmark and Albania.

of local representative bodies for foreign residents. The Conventions consists of three parts. Part A which is obligatory for all signatory states and B and C that contain the opt-out option at the moment of signature. Chapter A contains obligation to respect freedom of speech, assembly, association and the right to be involved in local public inquiries, planning procedures, and consultation procedures. Consultation is presented in Part B as one mechanism that promotes political participation of foreigners. Foreign residents who live in these states should not face legal or any type of obstacle to setting up consultative bodies with authorities. Moreover, the state should encourage and facilitate their creation across the country. They can also impose precise duties on authorities to do so. Section C also contains focuses on granting right to vote at local level after maximum five years (granting right to stand as candidates up to discretion of signatory states).

According to the Convention consultative bodies can take many forms and be established on different levels (national, regional as well as local level):

- participation by representatives of foreign residents in an advisory capacity in the deliberations of local authority committees;
- consultative committees with mixed membership comprising members of local authority committees and representatives of foreign residents;
- consultative councils with purely foreign membership

Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM)<sup>28</sup> which is one of the most sophisticated international agreements on minority rights outlines the importance of democratic participation (Article 15):

- The Parties shall create the conditions necessary for the effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural, social and economic life and in public affairs, in particular those affecting them.

Effective participation is taken to mean involving minorities in the preparation, implementation and assessment of national and regional development plans and programmes likely to affect them directly; participation of persons belonging to national minorities in the decision-making processes and elected bodies both at national and local levels. Convention is ratified by 39 states, including Estonia, Latvia and Sweden.

The FCNM is complemented with the Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)<sup>29</sup>. OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) is also an institution that has played important role in advancing minority rights in Estonia and Latvia. The recommendations cover wide set of principles regarding participation of minorities in the public life including general principles; participation in decision-making, including arrangements at the central, regional and local levels, elections, and advisory and consultative bodies; self-governance, covering territorial and non-territorial arrangements; and guarantees, including constitutional and legal safeguards, and remedies. The recommendations call for the participation in decision-making both on local and central level, which may include special representation of national minorities, for example, through a

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<sup>28</sup> ETS No. 157, available at [http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/minorities/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/minorities/default_en.asp)

<sup>29</sup> More details available at <http://www.osce.org/hcnm/32240>

reserved number of seats the Parliament and parliamentary committees, cabinet and judiciary positions, or other high-level organs; special measures for minority participation in the civil service is outlined as a separate goal. Not all measures suggested involve appointment of minority representatives. The main goal should be setting up mechanisms to ensure that minority interests are considered within relevant ministries and offices e.g. by setting up consultative bodies on relevant policy issues. States are encouraged to establish advisory or consultative bodies within appropriate institutional frameworks to serve as channels for dialogue between governmental authorities and national minorities. The composition of such bodies should reflect their purpose and contribute to more effective communication and advancement of minority interests. Regarding the competence of the advisory bodies, it is noted that these bodies should be able to raise issues with decision makers, prepare recommendations, formulate legislative and other proposals, monitor developments and provide views on proposed governmental decisions that may directly or indirectly affect minorities. Moreover Governmental authorities should consult these bodies regularly regarding minority-related legislation and administrative measures in order to contribute to the satisfaction of minority concerns and to the building of confidence. It is also noted separately that the effective functioning of these bodies requires that they have adequate resources.

Recently HCNM has also issued the guidelines on integration of diverse societies (the Ljubljana Guidelines<sup>30</sup>) that emphasise that good and democratic governance serves the needs and interests of the entire population, i.e. while democracy implies majority rule in political decision-making, it also includes safeguards against the abuse of majority power. This is achieved by ensuring the protection and participation of minorities, and by facilitating inclusive processes of governance. Inclusive governance encompasses integration policies that embrace among other measures encourage cross-community dialogue and interaction based on tolerance and mutual respect<sup>31</sup>. This means that persons belonging to minorities take part in elaborating, implementing and monitoring integration policies:

- States should ensure that all interested members of society, including persons belonging to minorities, enjoy adequate opportunities to have an effective voice at all levels of government, especially with regard to, but not limited to, those matters directly affecting them. In particular, representatives of all interested groups should be effectively consulted when elaborating and implementing integration policies.

Effective participation entails minority representatives to be able to exert substantial influence on the policy-development process, and thereby facilitating shared ownership of the outcomes. Simply permitting formal involvement is thus not sufficient. Examples of means and instruments that facilitate effective participation include in addition to electoral arrangements, specialized governmental bodies, participatory decision-making procedures also consultative bodies.

Ensuing from the recommendations and definitions above, for the purposes of this project we suggest the following definitions for integration and dialogue platform:

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<sup>30</sup> The Guidelines can be accessed at <http://www.osce.org/hcnm/96883?download=true>

<sup>31</sup> As referred to in Article 6 of FCNM, integration policies should promote contact and exchange between communities and individuals through incentives and by raising awareness of the mutual advantages of interaction, dialogue and participation.

- *integration* is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by ethnic minorities and other members of society<sup>32</sup>
- *dialogue platform* in a consultative body (or an event) for ethnic minorities set up at local, national or regional level to provide a forum for consultation for the goal of:
  - a) policy-making/ decision-making - between elected representatives and ethnic minorities to provide recommendation to integration policy, or
  - b) common understandings in society - within civil society between ethnic minorities and other non-governmental organisations to reach agreement on various issues of community life.

Thus, a consultative body can be either a tool for political participation, representation, defending and communicating the interests of foreign residents and ethnic minorities to decision-makers, or be a mechanism of democratic deliberation within the civil society between different interest groups.

In the case of Sweden we also employ the term “citizen dialogue” which refers to the right and possibility of people to influence their surroundings<sup>33</sup>. For the purposes of this project citizen dialogue is used as a synonym for dialogue platform. Similarly to dialogue platforms, citizen dialogues can focus on different topics. This report will analyse citizen dialogues on integration.

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<sup>32</sup> Adjustment of the definition provided in “A Common Agenda for Integration Framework for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the European Union”, available at available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52005DC0389:EN:NOT>

<sup>33</sup> Beckman and Mörkenstam (2009)

### 3 Analysis of Partner Countries

#### 3.1 Ethnic Composition

Latvia, Estonia and Sweden are all ethnically diverse countries and as other modern societies they are too faced by challenges how to adequately respond to the competing demands that arise from these different groups in their attempts to influence decisions that concern their everyday lives.

Estonia is the smallest of the three and has population of 1.34 million. About one third of current Estonian population is made up of non-ethnic Estonians. Russians are the largest minority group in Estonia - constituting 25% of the total population. Today, in addition to Russians, other bigger ethnic groups are Ukrainians 2%, Belarusians and Finns (both 1%)<sup>34</sup>. All in all there are representatives of 192 ethnic groups living in Estonia. Whereas majority of Estonian residents are Estonian citizens (84.3%), in addition to 8.9% of foreign nationals and 6.8% (ca 92 351 persons) of Estonian inhabitants have no citizenship at all. They have so called “undetermined” citizenship. This is formed of the group of people who did not apply for Estonian citizenship or any other citizenship after their Soviet Union citizenship expired. The status of non-citizen in Estonia (and Latvia) is unique and has not existed previously in international law<sup>35</sup>. The majority of foreigners living in Estonia are citizens of the Russian Federation (94 638 persons), followed by citizens of Ukraine (5 412), Finland (4 650), Latvia (2 780) and Lithuania (1 803)<sup>36</sup>.

Latvia's population amounts to a bit more than 2 million people, among whom 83.7% are citizens of Latvia, 13.7% are Latvian non-citizens<sup>37</sup>, and the remaining 2.6% are foreigners, including third-country nationals. The majority of foreigners residing in Latvia are Russian nationals (1.8%), followed by citizens of Lithuania (0.15%), Ukraine (0.15%) and Belarus (0.09%)<sup>38</sup>. Most of them lived in Latvia for a long time, but for various reasons have chosen to acquire citizenship of other country (not Latvian). Recent immigration to Latvia (and to Estonia as well) is a relatively new issue on the country's political agenda. According to the results of Population Census 2011, representatives of around 170 different ethnic groups live in Latvia. Latvians make up two thirds of the population (62.1%), Russians (26.9%), Belarusians (3.3%), Ukrainians (2.2%) and Poles (2.2%)<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> Statistics Estonia, Population and Housing Census 2011, Population according to the ethnic nationality; available at <http://www.stat.ee/phc2011>

<sup>35</sup> Synthesis Report: Conclusions and Recommendations on the Situation of Fundamental Rights in the European Union and its Member States in 2003, 4 February 2004, p. 90

<sup>36</sup> Estonian Population Registry, <http://www.stat.ee/en>

<sup>37</sup> The Law on the Status of Those Former USSR Citizens Who Do Not Have the Citizenship of Latvia or Any Other State was adopted in 1995, and determines the special status of “non-citizen” for those former Soviet citizens who were registered as living on the territory of Latvia on 1 July 1992, or if their last registered place of residence before that date was on the territory of Latvia and their children - provided that they have no other citizenship. Most of non-citizens arrived in Latvia during the Soviet time and lost their Soviet Union citizenship in 1991 when Latvia regained independence. Officially in accordance with the provisions of Directive 2003/109/EC non-citizens are recognized as long-term resident third country nationals, however in practice they are seen as national minorities. Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, Statistics of the Population Register

<sup>38</sup> Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, Statistics of the Population Register, available on: [http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokumenti/2012/Latvija\\_VPD\\_010712](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokumenti/2012/Latvija_VPD_010712)

<sup>39</sup> Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, On key provisional results of Population and Housing Census 2011; available at <http://www.csb.gov.lv/en/statistikas-temas/population-census-30761.html>

As in Sweden official statistics are not based on ethnicity, there are no exact numbers on the ethnic background of migrants and their descendants in Sweden. Figures given are based on the nationality and place of birth. According to Eurostat<sup>40</sup>, in 2011, there were 1.38 million foreign-born residents in Sweden, corresponding to 14.7% of the total population. Of these, 901 100 (9.1%) were born outside the EU and 483 000 (5.1%) were born in another EU Member State. The total population of Sweden is 9.5 million people. Since the 1970s, Sweden has received refugees, first from Latin America and East Asia, and subsequently more from the Middle East and Africa. Since Sweden's membership of the EU in 1995, immigration from the rest of the EU and the EEA countries has increased

When compared to Estonia (16.1%) and Latvia (15%) the share of foreign-born population in Sweden is similar and all three are well above EU27 average (9%). The per cent of non-nationals however is noticeably lower in Sweden (6.6%, equals EU27) when compared to Estonia (15.7%) and Latvia (16.3%). Latvia (15.9%) and Estonia (14.8%)<sup>41</sup> have the highest share of third-country nationals in EU27. The top five countries of non-nationals in Sweden are Finland (166 723), Iraq (125 499), Poland (72 865), Former Yugoslavia (70 050) and Iran (63 828)<sup>42</sup>. In 2011 according to Statistics Sweden there were 1 858 000 (19.6%) inhabitants with foreign background in Sweden. When in Latvia and Estonia the share of foreigners is declining then in Sweden it has been growing.

Södertälje Municipality is located in East central Sweden southwest of Stockholm and is an important industrial centre (e.g. truck manufacturer Scania AB main location, pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca main site, Volkswagen Group Swedish headquarters are located there). 44% of the population of the city of Södertälje have foreign background<sup>43</sup>. Total population of Södertälje in 2011 was 86 246. A large share of Södertälje's inhabitants with an immigrant background are third country nationals. Main countries of origin are Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Lebanon, with Iraqis being the largest group<sup>44</sup>.

Sweden has five recognised national minorities<sup>45</sup>, of which two are represented in Södertälje Municipality: Sweden Finns and Roma. In Södertälje Municipality Sweden Finns comprise around 13% of the total population<sup>46</sup>. The other official minority group is the Roma, which are very few in Södertälje. In addition to the right to use the minority language in public authorities and courts<sup>47</sup> the law compels the authorities to consult with the representatives of the minorities on issues that have affect their lives<sup>48</sup>. There is no legal obligation to observe such a procedure with other (more recent) minority groups.

In Estonia and Latvia there are no recognised national minorities. In Estonia however minorities have a right to set up cultural autonomies. Currently there are two cultural autonomies in Estonia –

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<sup>40</sup> Eurostat News release 105/2012 (11 July 2012). Foreign citizens and foreign-born population

<sup>41</sup> It should however be noted that for Estonia and Latvia, these numbers also include persons with undetermined citizenship and non-citizens who are treated as third country nationals under the Council Directive 2003/109/EC of 25 November 2003 concerning the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents

<sup>42</sup> Statistics Sweden 2012

<sup>43</sup> People either born abroad or people born in Sweden, both of whose parents were born abroad

<sup>44</sup> Fakta om Södertälje; 2011

<sup>45</sup> Jews, Roma, Sami, Sweden Finns and Tornedalers, , Article 2, Act on National Minorities, SFS 2009:724

<sup>46</sup> Svanberg & Tydén; 2010

<sup>47</sup> Article 1, Act on National Minorities, SFS 2009:724

<sup>48</sup> Article 5, Act on National Minorities, SFS 2009:724

Finnish and Swedish. In Latvia and Estonia there is no separate obligatory legal requirement to consult minorities prior to adopting policy documents and legislation. Consultation takes place on general grounds in the process of discussions with stakeholders for specific initiatives.

## 3.2 Integration policy

Although Estonia, Latvia and Sweden have a rather different immigration history and also different tradition of political consultation (e.g. active engagement in citizen dialogues and dialogue platforms), it is interesting to note that all three countries have in recent years decided to abandon the separate government bodies (be it a separate ministry or minister's office) on integration and merge the responsibilities with line ministries.

### 3.2.1. Coordination of Integration Policy in Latvia

Latvia's immigrant integration policy has been marked as less favourable among 31 European and North American countries. According to the latest Migrant Integration Policy Index (2011), Latvia has projects but no comprehensive policy for migrant integration.<sup>49</sup> Until 2011 Latvia's integration policy was mainly oriented to those ethnic groups who have lived in Latvia for many years and have to a greater or lesser extent become a part of the Latvian cultural and linguistic environment. According to the National Programme for the Integration of Society in Latvia adopted in 2001 social integration has been based upon the Latvian language and Latvian cultural values, while guaranteeing minorities the right to preserve their native language and culture.<sup>50</sup> Although the fact that integration is a two-way process was mentioned in the Programme, the main emphasis was on the tasks of minorities – the need to accept Latvian culture, learn the Latvian language, understand history, be loyal, etc.<sup>51</sup> New arrivals, including asylum seekers, refugees and persons with alternative status were not target groups for the programme. Until October 2011, when the new Guidelines on National identity, civil society and integration policy (2012-2018) was adopted and the framework for immigrant integration and participation was defined, certain initiatives have been implemented with regard to immigrants through different EU funds, such as the European Fund for the Integration of Third Country Nationals or European Refugee Fund.

From 2003 to 2009 the responsible institution for social integration, including immigrant integration, was the Secretariat of the Special Assignment Minister for Social Integration (the Secretariat). According to the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers (adopted 13.11.2007.), the Secretariat implemented and coordinated activities related to promotion of the development of civil society, prevention of racial and ethnic discrimination, interdisciplinary issues of antidiscrimination and promotion of tolerance in society, minority rights, as well as immigrant integration.<sup>52</sup> Due to economic considerations, the Government at the end of 2008 decided to re-organise the Secretariat, and the function of integration policy (including immigrant integration policy) has been shifted between several ministries –first it was moved to the Ministry of Children, Family and Integration Affairs (January 2009), then – to the Ministry of Justice (May 2009) and finally to the Ministry of Culture, which also oversees the European Fund for the Integration of Third-country nationals. The

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<sup>49</sup> British Council and Migration Policy Group (2011), *Migrant Integration Policy Index*, available on: <http://www.mipex.eu/latvia>

<sup>50</sup> The Programme defines integration as: "Mutual understanding between individuals and groups in the context of common state. The basis for social integration is loyalty to the Latvian state, the awareness that each individual's future and personal welfare is closely tied to the future of the Latvian state, its stability and security. At the basis is a readiness to willingly accept the Latvian language and culture, and that of minorities living in Latvia."

<sup>51</sup> Juris Rozenvalds, *The Soviet heritage and Integration policy Development Since the Restoration of Independence*, p. 55, in: *How Integrated Is Latvian Society? An Audit of Achievements, Failures and Challenges*, ed. Nils Muižnieks

<sup>52</sup> Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 764 of 13 November 2007, available on: <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=166986>

projects implemented under the fund focused on the adaptation programs for migrants, training of professional groups and public awareness activities.<sup>53</sup>

New Guidelines on National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy (2012-2018) was adopted in October 2011.<sup>54</sup> The Guidelines covers three main areas: (1) Civil Society and Integration where the one of the goals is to strengthen the traditional and non-traditional forms of civic participation; (2) National identity: Language and Cultural Space; and (3) Shared Social Memory. Among other problems requiring implementation of a specific government policy, the Guidelines also mentioned the following: a large part of population in Latvia does not believe in its ability to influence social and political processes; the NGOs of Latvia are not sufficiently strong financially and administratively, and lack sustainability. Broader involvement of people in forms of civic participation and higher participation of national minority representatives in the public sector are named within the document as some of the policy results which should be achieved. The Guidelines envisage creation of a national-level coordinating system in order to support immigrant participation: the National Integration Center for support of immigrant participation, including access to the information necessary for participation (a single website, informational materials, counseling) and national level Advisory Council with participation of immigrants and representatives of their organizations.

Integration programs, local level civil society planning documents or development programs have been adopted in more than ten municipalities. However, not all of them cover issue of national minorities and immigrants participation. On 25 September 2012, the Riga City Council adopted the Riga city programme for the integration of the society for 2012 – 2017 and the Action plan of its implementation for 2012 – 2014.<sup>55</sup> The Programme includes measures for the integration and public participation of immigrants, including the Latvian language training, provision of information and support activities for the newcomers and organizations representing them, elaboration of adaptation programmes at schools for the newcomers' children, etc.

### **3.2.2. Coordination of Integration Policy in Estonia**

When compared to Latvia, Estonian integration policy scores somewhat more (20<sup>th</sup> among 31) according to MIPEX<sup>56</sup>, the main areas for rather modest achievements are weak safeguards for equal treatment, limited political participation and weak tradition for (minority) consultation.

The 1990s in Estonia were characterised by an absence of coordinated governmental action and policy towards the Russian-speaking population. One can even say that the overall tendency was towards separation of the two communities. It was uncertain whether the Russian-speakers should be encouraged to leave the country or, conversely, be encouraged to integrate into Estonian society. The first steps towards establishing the national integration policy were laid down in 1997 when the minister of special assignment (Minister for Population and Ethnic Affairs) was set up with the task to initiate the first state integration programme and the Integration Foundation created with the goal

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Ministry of Culture *Guidelines on National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy (2012-2018)*, adopted 20 October 2011

<sup>55</sup> Latvia, Riga City Council, The programme and the plan of action is accessible from [www.iksd.riga.lv/public/47020.html](http://www.iksd.riga.lv/public/47020.html)

<sup>56</sup> British Council and Migration Policy Group (2011), *Migrant Integration policy index*, available on: <http://www.mipex.eu/estonia>

to support the integration related projects and programmes. The responsibilities of the Minister included coordinating the integration of non-citizens to Estonian society, enhancing naturalization, and implementation of asylum policy<sup>57</sup>.

In 2000, the Estonian government adopted an official integration policy (the 'Integration in the Estonian Society 2000-2007' Action Plan) with the main purpose to overcome the ethnic divide of the Estonian society. While this was an important step forward in improving the situation, various research results indicate that the success has been modest so far. According to the Final Appraisal of the programme it was much needed response and has contributed to the alleviation of integration problems in Estonian society, however its achievements have been limited since the programme did not receive enough attention in society and the political discussion on the given subject remained modest<sup>58</sup>. It is noted that the programme succeeded in expanding and improving the possibilities of learning the Estonian language, increasing the quality of teaching Estonian and teaching aids, functioning language learning system was established at the preschool and basic school levels in the form of the language immersion and the sustainable financing system was creating for ethnic minority cultural associations. The programme did not include separate dialogue activities and was also reproached for putting too little focus on Estonians and their role in the process of integration.

The launch of the new program "Estonian Integration Strategy 2008-2013" in 2008 marked a shift in the emphasis on integration activities when compared to the first programme. When the first programme was aimed establishing Estonian as the main language of the public sphere and reduction of the number of people with no citizenship then the second programme has taken move towards participation. Knowledge of Estonian language is still important, but the main expected result of the programme is defined as creating opportunities for all inhabitants of Estonia, irrespective of their ethnic or linguistic background to participate in the economic, social, political and cultural life of the society. On the other hand the opportunities to speak other languages and to develop ethnic cultures are also supported<sup>59</sup>. The Action Plan for the Strategy also includes project-based financial support for dialogue activities (e.g. discussions, debates) that support integration.

The mandate of the Minister of Population and Ethnic Affairs came to an end in 2009 due to disagreements in the governing coalition and the responsibilities of the Minister were divided between different ministries. Coordination of ethnic relations was delegated to Ministry of Culture. The department of cultural diversity is now responsible for coordinating the state integration strategy. Ministry also oversees the implementation of European Fund for the Integration of Third-country nationals.

The programme will come to an end in 2013 and the consultations for the third programme Integrating Estonia 2020: The Strategy of Integration and Social Cohesion in Estonia have been

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<sup>57</sup> Order of PM no 145 of May 21st 1997

<sup>58</sup> Final Appraisal of the State Programme "Integration in Estonian Society 2000-2007" Final Report (2009), available at [http://www.kul.ee/webeditor/files/integrotsioon/Riikliku\\_programmi\\_Integrotsioon\\_Eesti\\_yhiskonnas\\_2000\\_2007\\_l6p\\_phindamine\\_inglisek.pdf](http://www.kul.ee/webeditor/files/integrotsioon/Riikliku_programmi_Integrotsioon_Eesti_yhiskonnas_2000_2007_l6p_phindamine_inglisek.pdf)

<sup>59</sup> Estonian Integration Strategy 2008-2013, available at [http://www.kul.ee/webeditor/files/mitmekesisus/Estonian\\_Integration\\_Strategy\\_2008-2013\\_ENG\\_VV\\_11.06.09\\_nr\\_236.pdf](http://www.kul.ee/webeditor/files/mitmekesisus/Estonian_Integration_Strategy_2008-2013_ENG_VV_11.06.09_nr_236.pdf)

initiated<sup>60</sup>. The language of the proposal indicates a shift from ethnicity/language based approach to immigration. The target groups and the needs of the programme are defined at immigrant population which has sparked again the debate regarding the status of Russian-speakers in Estonia – whether they are a national minority (as it is perceived by the majority of community) or immigrants and descendants of immigrants. Since national minorities and immigrant communities are attributed different moral status it has a noticeable impact on policy outcomes.

### 3.2.3. Coordination of Integration Policy in Sweden

According to MIPEX Sweden has scored the most regulation and implementation of integration policies in 2011, but also in 2007<sup>61</sup>. In 2006 special ministry for regulating integration policy – Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality was created. The Ministry took over the responsibilities of the Integration Board and Ministry of Justice. The ministry was dissolved following the 2010 general election and responsibility for state integration policies was moved to Ministry of Employment.

Integration policies in Sweden are transsectorial. This means that the objectives of integration policies are to be realised through initiatives and measures within several policy areas and by many different Government ministries and agencies. The goal of integration policy in Sweden is equal rights, obligations and opportunities for all, regardless of ethnic or cultural background. In September 2008 the Government decided on an overall strategy for integration. An overall focus of the strategy is to increase the supply and demand of labour, and to create quality and equality in schools. The strategy outlines seven main target areas:

- 1) Faster introduction for new arrivals
- 2) More in work, more entrepreneurs
- 3) Better results and greater equality in school
- 4) Better language skills and more adult education opportunities
- 5) Effective anti-discrimination measures
- 6) Development of urban districts with extensive social exclusion
- 7) Common basic values in a society characterised by increasing diversity

Sweden has also separate national minority policy. In 2009 the Swedish government adopted new minority rights strategy *From Recognition to Empowerment – the Government's Strategy for the National Minorities*<sup>62</sup>. The objective of the minority rights policy is to protect the national minorities, strengthen their power to influence and support the historical minority languages in order to promote and preserve them. A new Act on National Minorities and National Minority Languages<sup>63</sup> sets out the administrative areas where minority languages may be used for dealings with the authorities and also the right to pre-school and care of the elderly completely in the minority language.

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<sup>60</sup>Proposal to the Government of the Republic to draft a development plan for Integration and Social Cohesion, available [http://www.kul.ee/webeditor/files/integatsioon/LYIMUV\\_EESTI\\_2020\(23\\_08\)\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.kul.ee/webeditor/files/integatsioon/LYIMUV_EESTI_2020(23_08)_ENG.pdf)

<sup>61</sup>British Council and Migration Policy Group (2011), *Migrant Integration policy index*, available on: <http://www.mipex.eu/sweden>

<sup>62</sup>no. 2008/2009:158

<sup>63</sup>Swedish Code of Statutes 2009:724

The municipalities have great responsibility for many issues that are important for integration. Municipalities are responsible for schooling and for housing planning, for example. The main responsibility for health and medical services is with the county councils at regional level. The county administrative boards represent central government in the regions. They contribute by coordinating the work of central government agencies, municipalities and county councils in the area of integration. Until 2010 the municipalities, including Södertälje, had the responsibility of the establishment of the refugee and immigrant to the Swedish society. From then onwards the State level has taken the responsibility for the main issues of integration. The policy put main emphasises on fast introduction of adults to the labour market. The municipality deals with issues of housing, junior schooling – pre-school, primary school, secondary and upper secondary school, Swedish language courses for adults, adult education on primary, secondary and upper secondary level, skills and vocational training, social benefits and social services after the state introduction period. Apart from the specific measures as agreed on a national-municipal contract/agreement, the municipality offers the same main stream facilities to the refugees and immigrant as to any citizen in the community. The civic society is supported in their mobilisation, culturally and socially. There are newspapers and literature in native languages at the public libraries, there is financial support to the creation of ethnic and other associations or organisations, there is financial support for culture events of specific interest to certain ethnic or other groups within the population in Södertälje.

### 3.3 Political participation

#### 3.3.1. Access to Political Rights in Sweden

Sweden is a pioneer as far as granting foreigners the right to vote and stand for election is concerned. In Sweden political rights were granted to foreigners as early as 1975. All foreigners who have held a residence permit for at least 3 years (without any restrictions or reciprocity requirements) have the right to vote on local elections. According to the Associations Act and the Freedom of Speech Act they can join political parties and form their own associations (as long as values of democracy, transparency, equality and accessibility are assured) which can receive public funding or support at all levels of governance. To vote in a Swedish parliamentary election, one must be a Swedish citizen, at least 18 years of age on Election Day, and have at some point been a registered resident of Sweden (thus excluding foreign-born Swedes who have never lived in Sweden).

#### 3.3.2. Access to Political Rights in Estonia

When comparing the differences in rights for nationals and non-nationals the biggest differences are in the area of political rights. While social rights (e.g. social benefits, pensions, education etc.) are provided equally to all long-term permanent residents, there are some differences in political rights. Only Estonian nationals can vote and be elected to the Parliament. Estonian citizens who have attained 18 years of age by Election Day have the right to vote and Estonian citizens who have attained 21 years of age by the last day for the registration of candidates have the right to stand as

candidates<sup>64</sup>. When Estonian and EU nationals can vote and be elected to local government then long term third-country nationals<sup>65</sup> have passive voting rights and can only vote, but not stand for local elections<sup>66</sup>. Estonian citizens and citizens of the European Union who have attained 18 years of age by Election Day and whose permanent residence (address in the Estonian population register) is located in the corresponding rural municipality or city have the right to vote<sup>67</sup>.

According to the Non-profit Associations Act<sup>68</sup> and Foundations Act everyone can establish association of a non-profit association, be a member of the association or take part in its activities. There is only half of the members if the management board should reside in Estonia other Member State of the European Economic Area or Switzerland<sup>69</sup>. However non-nationals cannot be members of political parties. Long term residents have access to most of the labour market positions. There are, however, certain restrictions. Only Estonian and EU nationals can work in public service<sup>70</sup>. Also only Estonian nationals can be bailiffs<sup>71</sup>, captains on Estonian ships<sup>72</sup> or notaries<sup>73</sup>.

### 3.3.3. Access to Political Rights in Latvia

According to Latvian legislation<sup>74</sup>, the right to take part in elections (Saeima and local elections) and referendums<sup>75</sup> is reserved only for Latvian citizens who have reached the age of 18 by Election Day, in some cases extending this right to the citizens of other EU countries residing in Latvia. Non-citizens and other residents do not have the right to participate in elections, but they can be members of political parties, trade unions and other civil society organizations, as well as participate in public political events and protest actions.

According to the Law on European Parliament Elections<sup>76</sup> all Latvian citizens, who on the polling day have reached 18 years of age have the right to vote in the elections of the European Parliament if the information regarding this person has been entered in the electoral register of Latvia. The same rights belong to the citizens of the European Union who are not Latvian citizens, but who reside in the Republic of Latvia<sup>77</sup> and are included in the population register. Furthermore, in order to exercise the right to vote all non-national EU residents have to submit a submission to the Central Electoral

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<sup>64</sup> Article. 4, Riigikogu Election Act

<sup>65</sup> Nor can they vote or stand for European Parliament elections

<sup>66</sup> Article 5(2) Local Government Council Election Act

<sup>67</sup> Article 5(1) Local Government Council Election Act

<sup>68</sup> Article 12, Non-profit Associations Act

<sup>69</sup> Article 26, Non-profit Associations Act and Article 17, Foundations Act

<sup>70</sup> Article 14, Public Service Act

<sup>71</sup> Article art 10, Bailiffs Act

<sup>72</sup> Article 3, Law of Ship Flag and Registers of Ships Act

<sup>73</sup> Article 6, Notaries Act

<sup>74</sup> Latvijas Republikas Satversme (*The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia*), Article 8, Article 9. Available on <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=57980> and Saeimas Vēlēšanu likums (*Law on Saeima Elections*), Article 1, Article 4. Available on <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=35261>

<sup>75</sup> Likums Par tautas nobalsošanu un likumu ierosināšanu (*Law on National Referendums and Initiation of Legislation*) Article 2. Available on <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=58065>

<sup>76</sup> Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanu likums (*Law on European Parliament Elections*), Article 2. Available on <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=84185&from=off>

<sup>77</sup> provision derived from Art. 3 Council Directive 93/109/ EC

Commission not later than 30 days before the elections regarding a wish to vote in the Republic of Latvia.<sup>78</sup>

The most discussed question on political participation concerns voting rights at the local level. According to the Law on Elections of the Republic City Council and Municipality Council<sup>79</sup> in addition to citizens of Latvia, EU citizens are eligible to vote if they are registered in the Population Register. All voters who have reached the age of 18, registered in the Voters' Register and has been registered at his or her place of residence in the administrative territory of the relevant self-government for at least 90 days prior to the day of the elections in order to vote. In order to stand as candidate for the elections, a person must be at least 18, registered at a place of residence in the administrative territory of the relevant self-government for at least the last 10 months, as well as to be either employed or self-employed in that territory for at least the last four months or to own real estate.<sup>80</sup> Latvian non-citizens and third countries nationals do not have any right to participate in elections. Although parliamentary opposition referring to the international organizations recommendations has several times proposed amendments to the Law, which would allow non-citizens to vote in municipal elections, these amendments were constantly rejected by parliamentary majority. The right to vote, it is argued officially, is an integral right of citizenship. Therefore, "granting the right to vote to non-citizens at local elections would have a negative effect on the implementation of the State integration policy and would lessen the motivation of non-citizens to naturalize and thus to integrate".<sup>81</sup>

The Law on Political Parties determines that only citizens of Latvia who have reached the age of 18 can establish a political party, while citizens, non-citizens and EU citizens residing in Latvia can be members of a party. The Law determines, however, that if the total number of party members exceeds 400, at least half of them should be Latvian citizens.<sup>82</sup> According to the Law on Associations and Foundations any person has the right to establish and be a member of non-governmental organizations and associations.<sup>83</sup> The residents of Latvia who work or study have the right to form trade unions and the membership in trade unions is opened not only to citizens, but also non-citizens, EU and third country nationals.<sup>84</sup> Although every person has the right to take part in meetings, marches and pickets, the Law on Meetings, Marches and Pickets specifies that only citizens

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<sup>78</sup> Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanu likums (*Law on European Parliament Elections*), Article 6. Available on <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=84185&from=off>

<sup>79</sup> Republikas pilsētas domes un novada domes vēlēšanu likums (*Law on Elections of the Republic City Council and Municipality Council*), Article 5. Available on: <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=57839>

<sup>80</sup> Republikas pilsētas domes un novada domes vēlēšanu likums (*Law on Elections of the Republic City Council and Municipality Council*), Article 8. Available on: <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=57839>

<sup>81</sup> Comments of the Government of Latvia on the European Commission's Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) fourth report on Latvia, Paragraphs 126-128. Available on: <http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/country-by-country/latvia/LVA-Cbc-IV-2012-003-ENG.pdf>

<sup>82</sup> Politisko partiju likums (Law "On Political Parties"), Article 12, Article 26. Available on: <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=139367>

<sup>83</sup> Biedrību un nodibinājumu likums (Law "On Associations and Foundations"), Article 23. Available on <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=81050>

<sup>84</sup> Likums Par arodbiedrībām (Law "On Trade Unions"), Article 2. Available on: <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=64867>

or non-citizens of Latvia and persons with a permanent residency permit are allowed to be the organizers, leaders, leader assistants and guardians of order of such an event.<sup>85</sup>

Non-citizens of Latvia as well as EU and third country nationals cannot hold certain positions in local and national government, the civil service and other governmental institutions. State Civil Service Law states that beside other requirements, a person may be a candidate for a civil service position if she/he is a citizen of the Republic of Latvia and is fluent in the Latvian language.<sup>86</sup>

### 3.4 Existing Dialogue Platforms

This section will give an overview of the existing dialogue platforms, initiatives and consultative bodies in Sweden, Latvia and Estonia. At first the legislative framework for consultation is outlined. The following analysis focuses on the structure and the mandates of the dialogue platforms, e.g. regularity of meeting, whether they are permanent or ad hoc initiatives, membership criteria (whether members are elected or appointed), how the leadership of the initiative is organised, what the mandate of the initiative is and how these organisations are financed.

#### 3.4.1. Overview of Existing Dialogue Platforms in Sweden

Although migrant associations can be freely elected to consultative bodies at all levels of governance, there is no structural consultation on the policies with ethnic minorities in general in Sweden. There is no legal frame work on dialogues aiming specifically at minority groups. However, on national level there exist several dialogue platforms dealing with minority issues. These platforms in general are initiated by the government or by governmental agencies. Usually these dialogues aim at specific legislative issues and specific minority groups. The ways to nominate and appoint delegates vary.

National authorities could once consult with immigrant representatives through the Centre Against Racism. Immigrant associations are still supported through the SIOS, the Co-operation Group for Ethnic Organisations. Recently, NGOs, municipalities and authorities have signed partnership agreements at local level in 21 cities to better coordinate their work in 38 urban development areas, characterised by exclusion. In the Swedish interview material SIOS has not been mentioned any time. Instead one of the Swedish adult education associations where many minority organisations are members is stressed as a very important actor.

On local level in Södertälje there are or have existed several institutional and ad hoc initiatives for dialogues with minority groups. One of the main forms it takes is the institutional introductory dialogue: The municipality performs a dialogue routine with incoming refugees and immigrants as a part of the process of the establishment of the newcomers. This dialogue is performed both on an individual basis and a collective basis. The aim is to create a mutual understanding of the newcomers' situation and needs, to make the integration process easier for both parts – the receiving society/community and the refugee or immigrant. Between 2006-2009, a number of such

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<sup>85</sup> Likums „Par sapulcēm, gājieniem un piketiem“ (Law „On Meetings, Marches and Pickets“), Article 4. Available on: <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=42090>

<sup>86</sup> Valsts civildienesta likums (State Civil service Law), Article 7. Available on: <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=10944>

dialogues were performed by the municipality in accordance to the needs of the large numbers of Iraqi refugees settling in Södertälje.

On issues of a more general character, ad hoc dialogues are being performed, mostly on the initiative of the municipality, on a political level or social service level, to discuss a certain issue at stake. Just recently, dialogues on the issues of equality, discrimination, human rights have been performed. By the means of dialogue, the municipality has tried to get to grips with certain issues of racism in between the different religious and ethnic groups in Södertälje. In the after-maths of these dialogues, a permanent council, the Inter-Religious Council, has been established to assure the continuous dialogue between the partners, including the Municipality.

The above mentioned dialogues are specifically aimed at third country nationals. Apart from them, there are citizens' dialogues performed as dialogues between the elected politicians and the citizens on issues concerning decisions made in the Municipality Parliament. This method is frequently used, when the parliament deals with issues of a wider perspective, so for example the comprehensive plan of the Municipality. Any citizen or resident can be a part of that form of dialogue.

### **3.4.2. Overview of Existing Dialogue Platforms in Latvia**

Latvian legislation envisages that public administration institutions shall ensure the involvement of society representatives, by including such persons in working groups, advisory councils or by asking them to provide opinion. On 25 August 2009 the Cabinet of Ministers adopted Regulations "On public participation procedures for the development planning process",<sup>87</sup> which aims to contribute to an efficient, open, inclusive, timely and responsible public participation in the development planning process, thus enhancing the quality of planning process and compliance of its results with the needs and interests of the society.

Four national level advisory councils for promoting national minority participation in decision making are working in Latvia: the Minorities Consulting Council of the President of Latvia (established in 1996); the National Minorities NGO Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Ministry of Culture, established in 2006), the Advisory Council for Minority Education Issues (Ministry of Education and Science, established in 2001) and the Advisory Council on Roma Integration Policy (Ministry of Culture, established in 2012). Guidelines on National identity, civil society and integration policy (2012-2018) envisages to establish advisory board for third council nationals, which would gather persons and organisations working on non-citizen, immigrant and refugee integration. The council will be set up under the Ministry of Culture. Integration advisory boards or commissions exist also in around 10 municipalities, including Riga, Jelgava, Jūrmala, Liepāja and Ventspils.

However, in most cases there have been questions about the effective functioning and specific tasks and competences of these councils, including the transparency of appointment procedures, the regularity of work meetings, and the accountability of the authority to which they are attached on

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<sup>87</sup> Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr. 970 „Sabiedrības līdzdalības kārtība attīstības plānošanas procesā” (Cabinet of Ministers Regulation Nr 970 „On Public participation procedures for the development planning process”), Article 2. Available on: <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=197033>

how positions or discussions at the councils are taken into account when decisions are reached.<sup>88</sup> Although there have been no serious assessments of the functioning and shortcoming of the consultative councils, national minority representatives as well as experts stress that in most cases the existence of these councils is a mere formality, as the opinions and decisions of these councils are not binding (usually they have advisory role), the principles of operation are unclear and there is a lack of set membership criteria; as a result, the consultative councils do not enable minorities to influence decision-making process on issues affecting their interests and rights.<sup>89</sup>

All advisory councils established so far are structured dialogue initiatives initiated by state or local government institutions. The work of all councils is based on the statutes which define the goals and objectives of the council, composition, decision making procedure, as well as the frequency of meetings (from two to four times a year in the national level consultative councils, or once in a month in the local integration commissions). Council members are not paid for their work and there is no special budget envisaged for the work of these councils (i.e., there is no special secretariat or responsible official paid for by public authorities). It is usually a civil servant of the relevant institution who in addition to other responsibilities coordinates the work of the council. Two of the national level councils - the Minorities Consulting Council of the President of Latvia<sup>90</sup> and the Advisory Council for Minority Education Issues<sup>91</sup> - are chaired by national minority representative (the chairman of the Latvian Azerbaijani Culture Centre). The two others are led by the representative of the relevant ministry (Ministry of Culture). On the local government level all integration councils or commissions are led by local authorities' representatives.

Membership of the council associated with a particular ministry or institution is determined and appointed by relevant minister or head of institution. It means that responsible institution invites concrete persons, experts, ministries or other relevant institutions and NGOs to delegate their representatives to the council. For example, statutes of the Advisory Council on Roma Integration Policy states that: "Ministry invites other ministries, local authorities, education establishments and NGOs, dealing with Roma issues no less than two years, as well as Roma NGOs to delegate their representatives for the work in the Council".<sup>92</sup> No open call or competition is organized. Members of the councils are appointed for two or three year's period and there is no restriction for re-approval. It leads to the situation that some representatives are acting in several councils, while other representatives (mostly those expressing critical or 'uncomfortable' views) are excluded from the consultative mechanisms. So far the only exception was formation of the Advisory Council on Society Integration Issues of Riga City Council when an open call with definite criteria for the NGOs to apply for participation was announced.<sup>93</sup> Based on this example, similar procedure will be envisaged for the

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<sup>88</sup> Brands Kehris I. *Citizenship, Participation and Representation*, in Muižnieks N (ed.) (2010) How integrated is Latvian society? An Audit of achievements, Failures and Challenges – University of Latvia Press

<sup>89</sup> Zankovska-Odiņa S. *Immigrant Integration and Participation in Latvia*, in Muižnieks N. (ed.) (2009) Immigrant Integration in Latvia – Advanced Social and Political Research Institute University of Latvia. Available in:

[http://szf.lu.lv/files/petnieciba/publikacijas/working\\_paper/immig%20integ%20final%20draft.pdf](http://szf.lu.lv/files/petnieciba/publikacijas/working_paper/immig%20integ%20final%20draft.pdf)

<sup>90</sup> The Minorities Consulting Council, available at: [http://www.president.lv/pk/content/?cat\\_id=6407&lng=en](http://www.president.lv/pk/content/?cat_id=6407&lng=en)

<sup>91</sup> The Advisory Council for Minority Education Issues, available in Latvian at: <http://izm.izm.gov.lv/nozares-politika/izglitiba/vispareja-izglitiba/7057.html>

<sup>92</sup> Statutes of the Advisory Council on Roma Integration Policy (adopted on 06.07.2012.)

<sup>93</sup> Rīgas domes Konsultatīvā padome sabiedrības integrācijas jautājumos, available in Latvian:

<http://www.iksd.riga.lv/public/40593.html>

selection of members of planned advisory board for third country nationals. According to the draft statutes of the Consultative Council for integration of third country national, candidate NGOs will be nominated in an open procedure organised by the Ministry of Culture. In order to ensure that, Competition Regulations will be approved and a Competition Committee will be formed. NGOs winning the competition will nominate its representatives in the Council. Such procedure was introduced following discussions between representatives of relevant ministry and three NGO with long-lasting experience in dialogue mechanisms.

A common goal of all consultative bodies on integration is to promote dialogue among minority groups and policy makers as well as to support minorities to take greater part in political, social and economic affairs. Their mandate includes exchange of information and views, right to require information from public authority institutions, evaluation of implementation of relevant policies and preparation of proposals on development of integration policy. For example, National Minorities NGO Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities has a function to develop proposals for resolving legal, social economic, political, educational and cultural problems of minorities, as well as to analyse draft legislation proposals and legislation currently in force and to propose necessary amendments. Advisory Council for Minority Education Issues has the right to submit proposals for the development of minority education to the minister, other officials as well as responsible institutions. However the decisions of all councils have advisory nature and are not legally binding. There are no laws requiring public authorities to consult with consultative bodies before particular policy document and legal act is passed and to respond to the recommendations of the councils, therefore their role is purely advisory. However draft statutes of the Consultative Council for integration of third country national envisages that the chairman of the council will be required to submit adopted decisions to the State Secretary of the Ministry of Culture. Such requirement was included following discussions between representatives of relevant ministry and three NGO with long-lasting experience in dialogue mechanisms.

### **3.4.3. Overview of Existing Dialogue Platforms in Estonia**

In Estonia the most prominent form of dialogue platform is a permanently functioning structural consultative body. This form of dialogue platform is being actively used on all levels – state, regional and local. Ad hoc dialogue platforms are less popular and developed in Estonia, but there are a number of conferences and seminars being regularly organized that tackle relevant social issues. Discussion panels with experts are also often used, as well as open debates with commentaries from their participants. During the preparation stages of state integration programs numerous ad hoc round tables, information seminars and expert panels are organized for consultations.

In general Estonian legislation does not require compulsory consultation with stakeholders and interests groups. The Constitution provides everyone with the right to voice their opinions (to address informational letters and petitions etc.) to government agencies, local authorities, and their officials<sup>94</sup> and to freely disseminate ideas, opinions, beliefs and other information by word, print,

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<sup>94</sup> Article 46, The Constitution of the Republic of Estonia

picture or other means<sup>95</sup>. However the Government is obliged to notify citizens the ways they can participate in the legislative process<sup>96</sup> and to give an overview in the explanatory note to the bill draft proposal which institutions and stakeholders were consulted and which of their proposals were accepted or rejected<sup>97</sup>. The same applied to the drafting procedure in the Parliament and when planning strategies and policy documents.

On national level there are three dialogue platforms. One initiated by the Minister of Culture (Minority Culture Council, re-established in 2005) and two civil society Round Table of Nationalities under the auspices of the Estonian Cooperation Assembly (established in 2010) and the House of Representatives of National Minorities in Estonia (founded in 2007). In addition there are several local and regional initiatives, the most notable being Ida-Viru County Governor Round Table, which was established already in 1994. There is also National Minority Round Table in Pärnu, while in Tallinn there is no advisory council on integration as such, but the city government organises regularly debates and discussions on integration issues under the so called Civic Peace programme (since 2007).

In many instances the questions have been raised how effective these initiatives are and what are their competences and mandates, how transparent the appointment procedures are. More importantly whether and how are the authorities and organisations to which they are attached accountable for opinions and debates that take place at the meetings and whether and to what extent are they obliged to take those proposals into account. There, have been no systematic assessment of appraisals on the work and functioning of integration related platforms, however research on general practice of consultation and involvement in decision-making process in Estonia manifests that suggestions made by interest groups are not taken in account very often<sup>98</sup>.

The national and regional dialogue platforms and consultative councils mentioned above are classified as structured dialogue initiatives, as their work, aims and goals, frequency of meetings is defined in their statutes. Members are not paid for their work and in general there is no separate budget allocated for the activities of these initiatives. However, in the case of Round Table of Nationalities there were separate financed envisaged for involving experts and conducting analysis or research, but it should also be noted that since 2011 the Round Table has no longer convened. Regarding membership it is also important to point out that expect for the Round Table of Nationalities that has ethnic Estonian and non-Estonian participants, all other organisations are ethnically mixed but do not involve Estonians. Round Table in Pärnu has partial involvement of Estonians as the initiator and convener is Estonian.

The Round Tables in Pärnu and Ida-Viru County have more informal setting and nomination of members with no formal statutes and nomination procedure. House of Representatives of National Minorities has a formal statute<sup>99</sup> and membership is based on the application of the organisation and is dependent on the approval of the Boards of the House. In Round Table of Nationalities and the

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<sup>95</sup> Article 45, The Constitution of the Republic of Estonia

<sup>96</sup> Goverment Rules and Regulations

<sup>97</sup> Technical Rules for Drafts of Legislation of General Application

<sup>98</sup> Reesi Lepa, Eveli Illing, Aare Kasemets, Ülle Lepp, Epp Kallaste (2004). Kaasamine otsustetegemise protsessi

<sup>99</sup> <http://www.evek.ee/et/dokumendid>

Minority Culture Council the members are nominated by the initiator. In the first case the members are chosen by the Council of the Estonian Cooperation Assembly<sup>100</sup> and in case of the latter the Minister of Culture<sup>101</sup>. When looking at the size of the membership then the Minority Culture Council has the largest membership (of 34 leaders of national minority organisations and 5 experts of the integration processes in Estonia) of regularly (council convenes at least 4 times a year). Round Table of Nationalities has 15 members while the House of Representatives of National Minorities is and platforms for umbrella organisations and has 18 members representing some 200 organisations, but these two initiatives no longer meet regularly. The state initiated platforms (e.g. Minority Culture Council) is chaired by the chairperson appointed by the Ministry (currently Under-Secretary for Cultural Diversity in cooperation with the first Vice-President of the Parliament). Civil society (Round Table of Nationalities, House of Representatives of National Minorities) and local initiatives (Ida-Viru and Pärnu Round Tables) are led by chairpersons elected by the members. In the statue of Round Table it is noted that presidency last for one year and the chairperson is re-elected annually. In other cases the length of the mandate of the chairperson is not noted. In some cases it has been the case that the same person or group of people (for governing boards) have been responsible for running the organization since the day they were founded.

When looking at the mandates and the topics that dialogue initiatives focus on are strongly related to culture since most of the members in the organisations belong to ethnic and national cultural associations with the exception of the Round Table of Nationalities and its predecessor Presidential Round Table of National Minorities (1993-2010) focused on wider questions of social and political participation .

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<sup>100</sup> <http://www.kogu.ee/ekk/rahvuste-umarlaud/>

<sup>101</sup> [http://dokreg.kul.ee/public/F\\_DOKREG\\_sisse08\\_0317100344\\_001.97717.pdf](http://dokreg.kul.ee/public/F_DOKREG_sisse08_0317100344_001.97717.pdf)

## 4. Main Findings and Results of the Interviews

This chapter focuses on the results of the interviews. The chapter is structured according to the topics discussed in the questionnaire and is divided into four sections: (i) understanding and the purpose of the dialogue platforms, (ii) personal experiences of the respondents in taking part in dialogue platforms, assessment of the content of dialogue platforms, (iii) assessment of leadership and impact of dialogue platforms; (iv) prospects and future challenges.

### 4.1. The Goals and Purposes of Dialogue Platforms and Activities

All interviewees in all three countries expressed the view that dialogue and different consultative mechanisms are important in themselves as a sign that there has to be dialogue with the minorities (although consultation with minority groups is not legally required in either of the countries). It should help to identify main problems and to find the best solutions, as the main aim of the dialogue is to reach the best possible result with all the interested parties involved. It was also stressed that beside promotion of common understanding within the civil society, dialogue should function also as a forum for consultation aimed at producing the basis for policy and decision making. It should be a process which makes sure that the views of national minorities are taken into consideration, especially on issues, which directly influence them.

However there are certain important discrepancies between different respondents as to regarding to the goals of the dialogue activities in general. One important distinction in Södertälje is that representatives from NGOs see citizen dialogues as an instrument through which politicians can make use of their ideas and opinions, but at the same time they do not feel that politicians make use of the ideas and opinions that were produced. Therefore politicians believe that citizen dialogues should function as a forum in which trust is built up for the political decisions that are taken. This is also supported by the officials' perspective that confirms that conclusions drawn during citizen dialogues do not have a legally binding effect. The citizen dialogues thus have a particular function as a forum for listening to the ideas and opinions that are out there, but that these do not have any kind of weight in political decisions. Conducting citizen dialogues is considered to be very important in a democratic society from the officials' perspective and the politician's perspective. However, this does not mean that the result of these dialogues influences decision-making. Politicians make them on the basis of their own interests and officials on the basis of the framework in which they work.

Similar views were expressed also in Latvia. Most interviewees from minority and civil society organization with experience in different forms of dialogue in Latvia noted that it is good that there are consultative councils and working groups at national and local level, as it makes people's voices heard and shows that there are different opinions.

At the same time it was emphasized that having these councils does not mean that they make a real difference. Interviewees also stressed that almost all councils until now have been established just to demonstrate that dialogue takes place. Frequently councils are a formality, which allows for expression of one's opinion, yet does not have any real influence on political decisions:

*"It is impossible to influence the work of the ministries through consultative councils. Their opinion is not taken seriously. Ministries choose not to hear what presents no interest to them. Most consultative councils are formal bodies. They have been set up to demonstrate that such a democratic mechanism is in place, no more. Even if there are people in Ministries who are ready to listen and hear, they do not have the power to do something." (Representative of minority NGO)*

It was also stressed by the minority representatives that dialogue is more effective on local level. It was argued that at the local level, the distance between the people and the authorities is smaller and authorities cannot simply ignore the people.:

*"At the local level the proposals and their impact on the development of self-government is thoroughly analysed, but it is done only to some extent at state level." (Representative of minority NGO)*

In Estonia respondents noted that the main goals of dialogue platforms, in addition to expressing ones opinion in public, to utilize previously unused human resource, i.e. attracting new professionals and social/political activists to participate in discussing important issues. It was also mentioned that dialogue platforms provide a space to share information with people who are not covered by the same informational field. When compared to Latvian and Swedish respondents there was no such sharp division among respondents regarding the goal of the dialogue platforms between different stakeholders. However there was sharp criticism towards the way dialogue platforms function on different levels.

As in Latvia, it was also stressed by Estonian respondents that dialogue platforms are more successful local level. It was even stated by one local government respondents that: "Dialogues on national level work on paper. Dialogues on local level work on practice. But the national level (politicians) always wants quick results, which do not happen." There seems to be an agreement of the state level as well that more attention should be paid to local and regional variations and that national and local levels require different approach.

*"It's important to focus on regional and local levels. On the level of national institutions people who are dealing with integration have to be on the same page. Regional level has to be aware of the situation in that region. Local authorities should develop connections with civil society" (State official)*

We must bear in mind however that in Estonia, thus far, integration policy has been strongly centralised – there is only one and centralised government approved integration strategy. There are no comprehensive local/regional integration programmes. Certain local governments simply fund integration related activities (dialogue platforms, minority NGO etc.) on ad hoc and project basis. Though there have been in recent years several discussions and assessments to find ways to delegate integration activities local governments, but none of the proposals have been implemented yet.

In addition it was mentioned that dialogue platforms tend to be used as a space to release boiled up emotions and cool off, decreasing social tensions for particular situations, but also the space developing tolerance and defining shared values. Estonia was the only country to mention the contribution of the International Organisation and donors in the area of integration and dialogue activities in particular.

To sum up, there seem to be noticeable difference in how different stakeholders define the goal of dialogue platforms and citizen dialogues, especially in Sweden. In Latvia there is dissatisfaction with the level commitment on the politicians part and in Estonia there is discontent with the dialogue initiatives on the state level. All these observations bear significant effect on the impact that dialogue can have on policy making.

## 4.2. Taking Part in Dialogue Platforms and Activities

Reflecting the structure of dialogue platforms, all but one Estonian respondents have taken part in the activities of one of the other structural consultative council or roundtable, followed by grass-root initiatives and working groups for policy-making purposes, while mandatory consultations before decision-making by authorities scored the least. When asked which topics were discussed successfully then in Estonia then practical questions of solving particular issue (e.g. having bus timetables up at the stops, spring cleaning and alike) also culture was noted on several occasions. These are mostly non-political topics. Politically more salient questions like citizenship for children without citizenship, education (teaching subjects in Estonian or Russian) is mentioned both as success and failure – depending on the time and persons own point of view. E.g. question of granting Estonian citizenship to children whose both parents have no citizenship was very successfully put forward and negotiated by the former Presidential Roundtable in the late 1990s, however any recent attempts to negotiate amendments to citizenship policy have been in vain. One topic that was also considered unsuccessful is the legal status on national minorities in Estonia and changes to educational system were described as particularly problematic:

*The school reform is a very difficult and unfortunately politicized topic in Estonia, which is used widely in media. The fact that it is politicized and constantly heated up in media will keep this topic difficult even though the target groups – schools have warmed up to the idea." (State official)*

Respondents in Estonia noted that dialogues are more influential in general fields such as common values, practice of diverse cultures and religions, efforts in education and participation in social and political life. It was emphasised that dialogues have direct positive effects on participants, but the effect on general population is either small/unnoticeable or difficult to trace. There is no methodology to trace the effectiveness of dialogues.

In Latvia as well number of interviewees (both state and NGO representatives) noted that it is not dialogue that has influenced tackling of the problems or sensitive integration related issues. Decisions rather depend on the political situation in the country and the politicians' will to try to solve something or other:

*„Part of questions... have been dealt with not so much because they have been discussed within the framework of consultative councils but rather because these are questions put forward by political forces.”(Representative of civil society organization)*

On the whole all these questions are usually a response of the management to some tension or resolutions.

In Södertälje assessment of content in citizen dialogues demonstrates that there is a consensus that citizen dialogues have not generally succeeded in their integration-promoting purpose. From a political perspective the results of the citizen dialogues are not implemented, this means that the citizen dialogues do not fulfil their purpose as they often do not function as a basis for political decision-making. A shared view is that it is necessary to develop new methods that push work forward and that citizen dialogues are developed so that they can function as an important forum for influencing political decision-making. One desire is to be able to involve more actors and, because there is no requirement for obligatory participation in citizen dialogues, one important aspect is that of increasing trust in politicians. Officials and representatives of non-profit organisations were in general agreement that politicians should be able to reach different social groups who could contribute ideas and opinions about the integration of third country nationals, but that this does not

often happen as there is usually a top-down perspective. Political decisions are not taken from a bottom-up perspective, which the politicians themselves confirm through their argument that there is no follow-up to the citizen dialogues that are carried out. Politicians use their political aims as a basis. One important aspect, which the researchers also highlight, is that there are problems with the distribution of information. This leads to segregation as the vulnerable social groups can often not participate or are not invited. One interpretation is that citizen dialogues are for discussions that cannot create an environment with shared opinions, but which leave space for opposing views.

In Södertälje all respondents have positive experiences of citizen dialogues and feel that citizen dialogues are necessary to a well-functioning democratic society. However, there are indications that, from the politicians' and officials' perspectives, these initiatives do not lead to political decisions. Citizen dialogues thus do not lead to any particular concrete changes, which was pointed out by NGO respondents as they felt that the results did not have any influence and that the municipality should be more involved and motivated. As regards the municipality's involvement, the officials had the same opinion and wanted a more direct presence from the municipality. Citizen dialogues often result in that there is no continuity or concrete follow-up of the case. Different methods should thus be introduced to the work of developing citizen dialogues.

As regards representativeness, no group felt that it was fulfilled; representatives of the NGO did not think that all the relevant groups were invited to the citizen dialogues. One consensus was that there were few people who actually had time to attend citizen dialogues; one politician thought it was problematic to invite everyone as it wasn't possible to identify which group was driving which issue, while choosing groups in advance contributed to some groups being left in the background. This shows the contradictory character that representativeness has as regards citizen dialogues.

In Latvia as well, the membership selection criteria were regarded as unclear. It was stressed by all NGO respondents that there are no clear-cut criteria according to which organizations are selected for representation in consultative councils. More often than not the Minister chooses 'loyal' organizations and any more radical view is ignored. As a result, it leads to the failure to involve in the dialogue all the relevant partners. However, there was mentioned also one good example, when the City Council announced an open competition with definite criteria for the NGOs to apply for participation.

*"There are no clear-cut criteria for applying for membership in these mechanisms. Everything depends on whether the Ministry will invite you or not. It must be admitted, though, that much depends on the Minister." (Representative of minority NGO)*

*"The main principle in choosing members of the council is to have 'our own people'- those who are unlikely to protest. This is especially typical of cases when there are several societies – the most loyal one is sure to be chosen. As a rule, councils need one person who can criticize in a constructive and diplomatic way, but the majority should be 'our own people'. In the President's Council those who criticize are in minority." (Representative of minority NGO)*

*"Several groups are not represented at all – for instance, one can hardly say that those Russian organizations which are represented in the councils really represent the interests of all community. Likewise, not all regions are represented because people lack money to travel to Riga. The representation of young people is too insignificant." (Representative of minority NGO)*

Representatives of state institutions as well as some minority representatives stressed the knowledge of Latvian as an important tool for effective participation in dialogue mechanisms: „One

of the impediments is also poor knowledge of Latvian which often does not permit these organizations which represent the interests of a certain group to pass this information to state institutions, the more so because the documents under discussion are in Latvian."(Representative of state institution) It was said that poor or insufficient knowledge of Latvia makes arguing or explaining difficult: „One great problem is poor knowledge of the state language. There are people on the councils who do not understand a word in Latvian, so they just agree, unable to express their views." (Representative of minority NGO)

In Estonia the range of groups that take part in dialogue is quite wide. National and ethnic minorities as well as state and local authorities were present in almost all dialogues. International organizations tend to not actively participate in dialogues, but they do observe the proceedings and in some cases provide financial support. This was more important in the beginning of the 1990s. One group, however that was separately mentioned that was not actively involved were entrepreneurs, stating that integration and business are not connected in Estonia. Media was described as almost always present, but it usually in a role of a passive of the observer reflecting on what was happening rather than actively participating. It was also noted that interest and attention from Russian-speaking media is higher than Estonian-speaking media, mentioned by half of the respondents. They noted, for example, that Estonian-speaking media covers integration-dialogues only when there are big public events or some sort of a crisis. Selection criteria was not mentioned as a separate issue among Estonian respondents, though it should be noted that in Estonia, similarly to Latvia there are no clear rules to be followed or principles that have been observed. Members of dialogue platforms are usually nominated by the organiser and there are no fixed terms for membership. In other studies it has however been outlined that there is lack of interest among the minority youth towards their ethnic community and integration topics in general. The questions of succession and sustainability are a challenge to ethnic minority issues in Estonia in general.

In a sum the topics that are discussed in dialogue platforms depend on their political salience the more politically significant the more difficult it is to have successful outcome for the dialogue initiative. Also membership in dialogue platforms is an important issue, because it reflects the representativeness of these organisations and initiatives.

### 4.3. Assessment of Leadership and Impact of Dialogue Platforms

Organisation and leadership of dialogue platforms plays an important role in how effective and influential they can be.

Most of the respondents in Latvia recognized that functions and competences of different councils are not clearly defined and it is not clear what is going on in these councils:

*"It is not quite clear what the President's National Minority Council is doing. It is not clear how effective are consultative councils in the Ministry of Education and Science or the Ministry of Culture. If they worked efficiently, the situation would have developed differently and the sensitive issues would have been dealt with instead of avoiding them until 'the kettle boils over.'" (Representative of civil society organization)*

Some of minority representatives noted that meetings of councils are not called regularly and very often the information comes at the last moment. It was emphasized that there are very limited possibilities to make any changes in the agenda, as coordinators usually monopolize the agenda and all that remains for the participants is to accept it:

*"We receive the information where we are to be, as well as what is going to be discussed, but there is no pro-active work in making up the agenda. But the co-ordinator ought to organize pro-active work and also see to it that the results of the dialogue are made known. That is not being done." (Representative of civil society organization)*

Better situation is on the local level, although much depends on the political leadership and chairman of the council. On contrary, state representatives emphasized that the work of dialogue mechanisms is being done on a regular basis and participants can put their issues not only before, but even during the meeting. The problem is that very often people come unprepared, relying on the organizers:

*"Work is being done on a regular basis. Four meetings a year have been envisaged, but there may be extra-ordinary meetings if necessary. After the meeting has been announced it is possible to come forward with items for the agenda. It is also possible to ask for an urgent issue to be considered!"*

Most of the interviewees stressed that member selection principles and criteria are not clear as outlined in the previous section. As a result, it leads to the failure to involve in the dialogue all the relevant partners:

*"Several groups are not represented at all – for instance, one can hardly say that those Russian organizations which are represented in the councils really represent the interests of all community. Likewise, not all regions are represented because people lack money to travel to Riga. The representation of young people is too insignificant." (Representative of minority NGO)*

One of the obstacles for the effective work of dialogue platforms is low capacity of minority organization and their little experience in cooperation:

*"The capacity of organizations is not the same, and it causes problems. There is one organization which might be very influential. We have invited them both in oral and written form to submit their proposals in legislation to improve your situation. But there are no proposals, there is only dissatisfaction that they are not taken into account. The main problems of the organizations are low capacity, human resources, age." (Representative of parliament)*

It was emphasized that although number of different organizations take part in discussions, there are a few organizations that are able to write a high-quality opinion or prepare substantiated proposals.

Their outlook very often is restricted to their narrow interests. To solve this problem, it was proposed to facilitate cooperation between NGOs:

*“It is not easy to involve national minority organizations because of their insufficient capacity... For many organizations this is learning process. One can't expect everybody to be highly talented; however, the organizations should be able to come up with criticism, offer their own solutions and substantiate them. They should be able to present concrete measures, say what these are likely to cost, familiarize themselves with all the background documents. How can this problem be solved? – The only way is to facilitate cooperation between NGOs. As a result those who can substantiate their point of view would work together with those who can't. This would also strengthen the capacity of these organizations. Otherwise none of the dialogue parties is satisfied.” (Representative of civil society organization)*

The main weakness of dialogue mechanisms is its formal nature. Decisions of advisory boards are not binding on the Minister or politicians - usually they have advisory role. Therefore, according to the NGO representatives, only few proposals are taken into account:

*“No essential change or opinion that the new integration guidelines should be based on other principles was taken into account. It is just a place to present a program or decision, everyone is welcome to speak and then things go on as if nothing had ever been discussed. The meeting has been held. On paper. No action. Looks like life in parallel worlds.” (Representative of minority NGO)*

Different view was expressed by the representatives of state institutions, which noted that all reasonable proposals are taken into account:

*“Everything worth considering and reasonable is taken into consideration. There are difficulties with new issues where we do not have sufficient knowledge, for instance, the issue of asylum seekers – we are not yet fully aware of all the aspects.” (Representative of state institution)*

Both NGO representatives as well as state and local institution representatives acknowledged that no impact of dialogue mechanisms has been evaluated so far: „There is some research, but the effects of the dialogue have not been evaluated at the level of the state. What matters is that a council has been set up. How well it works, is it effective, what impact does it have – nobody cares.” (Representative of minority NGO) Main reasons for that are shortage of knowledge and financial resources: “Neither the quality of the process nor its effectiveness has been evaluated due to shortage of financial resources.” (Representative of state institution)

In Latvia some of the interviewees stressed that very often councils meet after decisions have been taken, and the role of the councils is to inform NGOs about decisions. It was stressed, that these councils do not work as forum where NGOs can set the agenda or influence decisions:

*„Existing forms of dialogue do not take into consideration real problems. In Latvia, everything is decided in advance, nothing can be changed. Agenda and outcomes are pre-determined by the authorities. If the NGOs could formulate the agenda – that could be reflect reality, because the NGOs know what the real problems are. Currently, if the Ministry of Culture wants something, it calls the NGOs to sign / rubberstamp policy of the Ministry.” (Representative of minority NGO)*

It is political situation not a dialogue which reveals gaps:

*“On the whole it is often the political situation which reveals gaps and then we resort to remedying the consequences. These are not questions that have emerged in the course of dialogue by which problems are consistently solved. Instead it is a response to the consequences.” (Representative of local government)*

Therefore dialogue has a very limited impact on the process of integration in society in the different fields:

*“There are achievements but they are hardly the result of dialogue; they rather depend on the wishes of the politicians and on the activities of the NGOs themselves.” (Representative of minority NGO)*

An opposite opinion was expressed by representatives of state institutions:

*“All groups are heard out and proposals are taken into account, but this is a gradual process. It takes a lot of negotiations and cooperation between institutions.” (Representative of state institution)*

and supported by some civil society NGO:

*“In most cases our conclusions were taken into account; sometimes it took a lot of effort and convincing, but the result was good. Mostly people listen although they do not always care to hear the essence.” (Representative of civil society organization)*

However it was also mentioned by some NGO that the situation is changing gradually:

*“It must be admitted that in the last few years the situation has changed for the better and you can't say that your arguments are altogether ignored. Of course, there are individual cases when you understand that you won't be able to influence things, for instance, in the process of discussing new integration guidelines, or municipal electoral rights for non-citizens, or the non-citizen status – all these are issues that require the political will.” (Representative of civil society organization)*

The primary barrier to the effectiveness of consultative bodies in Latvia is their belated involvement in the development of policy and legislation and the failure of policy-makers to take into account their recommendations:

*„Although formally the consultative councils are convened, in practice no serious decisions have been taken. Most integration-related questions have only been dealt with after they were raised at different protest activities, after collecting signatures and the like. Thus it might be said that dialogue, formal in character, has always followed as a reaction to some tension in society or to a problem arisen.” (Representative of the civil society organization)*

The similar disparity between the assessment on the outcomes of dialogue activities was manifested in Södertälje. While all of the officials and politicians were satisfied with the leadership and coordination of the citizen dialogues, they also felt that the participants' commitment and cooperation in the preparations for the citizen dialogues worked satisfactory, then majority of the representatives from NGOs felt that the invitations were problematic as they were often invited via email. The representatives believe that there is a battle between the officials and politicians and that it is often difficult to see solidarity between them. The representatives also believe that there is often a lack of expert knowledge and that it would be beneficial to invite experts. We can also see differences of opinion on this point; most politicians consider that it is not usually necessary. However, the officials' and the politicians' viewpoints differ as regards whether it would be beneficial to invite experts.

In Estonia as well it was stressed that participants of dialogues platforms rarely have the same knowledge on topics discussed. Respondents' opinions got divided on whether it is a positive or a negative factor for the overall effectiveness of dialogues.

*“Round Table of National Minority Culture Organizations under Ida-Virumaa County Governor. The level of participants was very uneven. Some people received basic information about discussed topic*

*“during the meetings. This is not right – it would have been more effective if people didn’t have to be fed this background information” (NGO)*

*“50/50, some people had to be educated on the spot. I think it’s good, the participants list has to be diverse. People raise their level of knowledge.” (NGO)*

*“Diversity is a positive thing. Experts are invited, everybody can learn something.” (Minority NGO)*

*“And that’s not bad – discussion by equally skilled experts might be more productive, but an element of learning is important.” (Minority NGO)*

As expected, based on the results from Latvia and Södertälje, in Estonia as well, there is a disparity between politicians and NGOs and researchers regarding effectiveness and assessing the impacts of dialogue platforms. The participants feel that impact assessments is the weakest link and it rarely carried out, while the decision-makers argue that all suggestions are followed-up.

*“This is the weakest link – hard to evaluate as it’s not practiced very often” (Researcher)*

*“The actual influence is not being measured. Reports are being written, but what does it mean?” (NGO)*

*“Yes, every meeting (at Minority Culture Council under the Ministry of Culture) gets an overview, practical projects are evaluated. The main result – umbrella organisations improved their connections to each other.” (Politician)*

Funding dialogue platforms and initiatives was a very controversial topic even in this small sample of respondents in Estonia. Majority of respondents support long-term funding strategy, more oriented towards specific organisations and more systematic approach on the part of the state. It was also mentioned the so called neutral funding (non-state) is important for being able to work independently from the state/local government.

*“If money is distributed towards short-term projects, people start to lose motivation when the results are not visible enough. Usually the money granted is not adequate, so goals can’t be accomplished anyway. The next year the same story repeats itself. More time is needed to accomplish serious projects.” (Local/ municipal official)*

It was also noted that the aim of funding schemes should reflect technological advances and media requirements:

*“Funding internet projects such as etnoweb.ee. is important. Paper brochures are now useless and a waste of money. Technical level of people should be raised – this is where young people can actively contribute.” (Politician)*

Respondents argued that funds should be directed towards regional and local levels. People “on the ground” are more competent in solving local practical problems. Promotion of joint activities that involve several communities through funding was also regarded as important.

In addition to funding another aspect that was mentioned as one of the impediments for advancement of integration policy in general, but also for successful dialogue platforms, that was mentioned over and over was that there is no central supervising/coordinating body that would monitor the progress of integration:

*“Too many organisations are currently engaged in problems of integration. We need an official consultative body that would establish a direct contact with the state. It has to be more official and concrete. Local authorities are not involved in the dialogue process except in Tallinn – they only handle the funding.” (NGO)*

*“There is no authoritative figure, a “mascot” who would be responsible for integration as a whole. Since the Office of Minister of Population was disbanded there is no minister of integration. The idea was solid but the minister had no power or authority.” (NGO)*

*“There is no centre, where all the connections of various organizations would lead to.” (NGO)*

Some respondents think, similarly to colleagues in Latvia and Södertölje, that some of the dialogues are being used for personal gain of the organisers:

*“Some dialogues are created for personal goals of organizers. There is too much bureaucracy involved in funding of umbrella organizations.” (NGO)*

*“Many dialogues exist only because there are funds available for them. Some use dialogues to push their own career – especially young people.” (Minority NGO)*

Another important impediment is the obstructed flow of information, it is felt that information and suggestions generated during dialogues does not find its way downwards, especially when different people attend every meeting and there is no continuity

Lack of effort and motivation on the part of politicians and decision-makers was also mentioned since the continuity and sustainability of the dialogue depends on political will of current people in power:

*“No desire of politicians in power to influence and improve dialogue process.” (Researcher)*

*“Dialogues are too dependant on political will. If Bronze Night happens – we have dialogues. When elections are getting closer – we have dialogues. We don’t have an official body that would deal with it on a regular, constant basis. An independent one is needed, so that when a certain minister leaves, it wouldn’t have to be automatically disbanded.” (NGO)*

*“It’s important to have a juridical regulation of integrational body. The Office of Minister of Population was too dependant on a minister.” (NGO)*

#### **4.4. Prospects and Future Challenges**

On the basis of the interviews it can be argued that dialogues platforms for integration have not met the targets that they were set to achieve. In many cases they were expected to serve as the basis for political decisions, where the values found among residents are taken into account in the decision-making process. Dialogue platforms should, function as a link between local citizens and elected officials.

The foremost challenge facing citizen dialogues in Södertälje is that citizen dialogues should include a number of different social groups. Officials and politicians share the opinion that the municipality should be more committed to involving more non-profit organisations. The municipality is more active in analysing the groups it hasn't succeeded in reaching. This is also a point made by those involved with the organisations, who say that officials and politicians should increase their cooperation with organisations as regards integration-promoting citizen dialogues. One example they provide is that of investing in open days and concrete improvements. The non-profit organisations indicate that the municipality should take over more issues, which is not the current state. Because there are different interests, it is important that there is clearer cooperation to achieve concrete improvements. The primary aim of integration-promoting citizen dialogues is to involve third country nationals in social issues that affect them and have an implicit influence on contemporary society. However, as one politician clearly stated, there are structural and ideological problems that contribute to citizens being unwilling or unable to get involved.

Citizen dialogues require long-term work with more local actors. Initiative that should be taken by the authorities is increased cooperation, such as creating local forums and meeting places. According to the respondents, such forums would increase the citizens' trust in political decisions. The officials and the respondents from organisations share the opinion that this would contribute to developing trust between local citizens and politicians. On this basis, open forums can promote citizen dialogues. Another important point is that a range of information brochures should be available. This would contribute to increased understanding as regards various social and community concerns that affect third country nationals. In turn, third country nationals will be motivated to join a participatory culture when they notice that authorities care about the needs of various social groups and try to reach out to them. In association with this, the conclusions arrived at during the citizen dialogues should be followed up and evaluated. It is also important to be able to the conclusions drawn during citizen dialogues. A major investment is that of involving various local associations as these have many opinions and an inside perspective on how to integrate third country nationals. Because people involved in organisation and association experience the contact that takes place via the authority as lacking, it is also important to visit these organisations and possibly send invitations not only via email. Personal contact from the authorities is an important conclusion; more commitment is required and the authorities could motivate this partly through personal contact and clearer information about the citizen dialogues. One important aspect is that the recipient community and its authorities function as a link for integration by developing citizen dialogues. With this, citizen dialogues can be legislatively standardised and demands placed on authorities for continual follow ups and evaluation of the citizen dialogues. Also, information and contacts with organisations and the local actors can take place through a legislated framework.

In Latvia as well, in order to improve dialogue platforms, it was proposed to define clear criteria for selecting members of consultative councils by organizing open competitions and ensuring unbiased evaluation and to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are involved. Other suggestions include

- To raise ability to listen and understand – task of politicians is to listen and hear, be sensitive to people's real needs. There must be awareness that open discussions are needed;
- To make it a compulsory requirement for councils to account for their work once a year. There should be an annual report reflecting the work of the council;
- To make it a rule that the decisions of the council cannot be ignored. Responsible institutions are obliged to analyse them and provide a motivated answer;
- To educate society and NGOs on different forms and practical aspects of participation;
- To use of social platforms and media that has not been used so far.

In Estonia, “lessons learned” and suggestions includes two types of propositions. One is regarding the need to establish official consulting body, a coordinating bureau that would be independent from government change (at ministerial or governmental level) that would serve as a professional structure, body has to be created which would deal with integrational issues. Second type of suggestions refer to widening training opportunities to members of minority communities.